THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Exploring the Relationship Between Policy Generation and Policy Implementation: An Investigation of Testbed Learning Communities Pilot

Being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Education in the University of Hull

By

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Summary of Thesis submitted for the EdD by Raymond Shore on:

**Exploring the relationship between policy generation and policy implementation: An Investigation of the Testbed Learning Communities Pilot**

This thesis explores the relationship between policy development and policy implementation with particular reference to the Testbed Learning Communities Pilot as outlined in the Skills Strategy (2003). The policy process, it is argued, is an important aspect of government and, as such, successful implementation is a desired outcome. The key proposition at the heart of this research is that: *the relationship between policy generation and policy implementation is critical to the achievement of the intended policy outcomes.* This thesis begins by discussing the concepts of Lifelong Learning and Learning Communities within the context of globalisation and it is argued that globalisation exerts an influence on public policy. This is particularly apparent in the fields of learning and skills, which, through the Skills Strategy (2003), are connected directly to economic success.

Case Studies of two Testbed Learning Communities contextualise the policy implementation process and from the subsequent analysis four common themes emerge. These are evaluation, project duration, axiological issues and the extent to which the project took account of existing practice. The analysis and discussion of themes from the Case Studies supports the proposition above and also suggests that the policy process undermined the achievement of the intended policy outcomes. This thesis proposes that the values deployed in support of policy should be a fundamental part of the policy process, providing the framework within which policy can be defined and deployed. The implications of the findings from this research lead to a conclusion that a change is required in the way that policy is developed and implemented and that this change must begin within the political culture of the government itself.
Exploring the relationship between policy generation and policy implementation: An Investigation of the Testbed Learning Communities Pilot.

Chapter 1 Thesis Overview

Introduction

Lindblom and Woodhouse (1993: 2) ask the question 'Why are humans not more effective in...solving social problems?' The authors then move to posit the failure of what they term 'a range of grand assaults' on a 'myriad of [familiar] social problems' which, according to Lindblom and Woodhouse, cast some doubt on 'human aspirations for intelligent public policy' (ibid: 3). Whilst there is a significant and documented history of attempts to implement policy, it would appear that success in this field remains somewhat fragile.

This thesis originates from this very debate and the circumstances that Lindblom and Woodhouse describe as a 'formidable task'. What would appear to be a straightforward issue requires a 'substantial rethinking of what social problem solving is about' (ibid: 3). In the case of this thesis 'the apparently simple and straightforward task' to which Lindblom refers is the implementation of the Testbed Learning Communities (TLC) Pilot. Why is this important? The answer to this is based within the policy itself and also on the ideas attached to policy. If it is the case, as the Skills Strategy (2003)¹ argues, that learning may be the key to a more inclusive and fairer society then it is clearly in everyone's interests, in particular those who are 'excluded', for this policy to achieve its aims and objectives. If successful implementation is not secured, then, in order to inform future policy process, it is in everyone's interests to understand why this is not the case.

¹ The full title of this document is Twentyfirst Century Skills: Realising Our Potential. It is referred to in the text as the Skills Strategy (2003) or the Skills Strategy.
This chapter begins with an outline of the origins and purpose of the TLC Pilot and moves on to a preliminary discussion of policy implementation. It then gives a brief outline of Policy Development, Globalisation and Lifelong Learning. The concept of globalisation is deployed in support of the Skills Strategy. This thesis argues that the influence of this globalising discourse impacts on a number of policy domains and, in particular, those that link to the economy and, in this context, learning and skills policy. The final section of this introductory chapter contains a brief outline of the proposed research. The themes and issues raised in this introduction, and which support the development of the research questions, will be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters.

**The Skills Strategy and Testbed Learning Communities.**

The Skills Strategy (2003) details one approach taken by the government of the United Kingdom to develop policies that promote both economic prosperity and social justice in the 21st Century. The Strategy aims to ensure that:

> across the nation, employers have the right skills to support the success of their businesses and organisations, and individuals have the skills they need to be both employable and personally fulfilled (2003: 17).

The Skills Strategy is designed to enable businesses to compete in the global market and assist individuals to ‘...raise their level of employability and achieve their ambitions for themselves, their families and their communities’ (2003: 7). This focus on skills and the interdependence of social and economic issues has a number of drivers. One of the most important of these is the assertion that the global economy has changed our understanding of employability to the extent that we can no longer speak of a job for life rather we should focus on ‘employability for life’ (*ibid*: 11). The Skills Strategy
proposes that, by increasing the ‘...skill levels of underrepresented groups, we will develop a more inclusive society that promotes employability for all’ *(ibid: 18)*. Accordingly people who are better educated and trained are ‘...better able to use their skills for the benefit of their families and their communities’ *(2003: 18)*.

Ivan Lewis, the Minister for Skills and Vocational Education at the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in 2003, added further emphasis to the proposed link between social and economic imperatives by promoting the inclusion of a section on Learning Communities within the Skills Strategy. The paragraphs on Learning Communities highlight an approach which Lewis anticipates will ameliorate the effects of disadvantage, low achievement and a culture of low aspirations which have become endemic in some communities. The development of Learning Communities offers an opportunity to break what Lewis terms as ‘... the cycle of deprivation, underachievement and worklessness’ *(ibid: 105)*. The Skills Strategy also proposes that, by encouraging ‘connectivity’ between different members within a community, individuals ‘...can both contribute to, and be helped by, the learning and skills of others’ *(ibid: 106)*. This, the Skills Strategy notes ‘... could be a powerful way of tackling inequality and helping disadvantaged communities to help themselves’ *(ibid: 106)*. The ideas, such as those outlined above and which are deployed in order to support or justify a particular policy direction are clearly an important element in the policy/implementation process. They are used to give substance to the choice of a particular policy theme and, in this case, are based on fundamental concerns about the nature of what the Skills Strategy terms as, our ‘most disadvantaged communities’ *(ibid: 106)*. This theme will be developed and discussed in subsequent Chapters.

Whilst the Skills Strategy itself does not contain a precise definition of a Testbed Learning Community, some clarification can be found in a DfES document entitled Developing Learning Communities (2003), subsequently
referred to as the 'Scoping Document' (See Appendix 2). In a section about vision, aims and objectives the Scoping Document notes that:

A Testbed Learning Community will be an aspiring and ambitious community where people are motivated and want to learn and where people and organisations provide mutual support to help each other learn and raise the local employment skills base. Testbed Learning Communities will encourage and enable increasing numbers of their members to reach Level 2 qualifications (2003: 3).

The Scoping Document goes on to state that the aim of the Testbed will be:

To develop sustainable approaches which use learning and skills development to connect adults together and to promote social cohesion, regeneration and economic development through the active involvement of all parts of the community (ibid: 3).

The government envisaged initially piloting the concept of Testbed Learning Communities over a two-year period from April 2004 in areas of long-term systemic low aspirations. Requests for nominations for the pilot programme were made to Government Offices in each region. Yarnit notes that, as part of this pilot programme, twenty eight Testbed Learning Communities were established across the regions (2006: 11).

As I have stated above this thesis is about an exploration of the relationship between the generation and implementation of the Testbed Learning Communities Pilot initiative. In particular one of the fundamental aims of this research is to question whether the implementation process facilitated or inhibited the achievement of the policy's intended outcomes. Having briefly discussed the policy itself, policy implementation is the subject of the next section.

Policy and Implementation

Policy implementation inevitably embraces change and I have for many years been interested in the implementation of change programmes and their
impact, both positive and negative, on the organisation and individuals involved. From personal experience it would seem apparent that even the most well-intentioned changes might be undermined by the implementation process. For example the funding of adult education has undergone significant change in recent years. The government has focused limited resources upon those deemed to be most in need. However the overall effect of policy in this case, is a ‘...significant decline in the overall number of adult learners undertaking learning’ Tuckett (2008: 7). This decline should be set alongside an acknowledgement in a report entitled Eight in Ten and published by NIACE which states that:

Two out of every three new and replacement jobs vacancies over the next decade will be filled by adults since the cohort of young people entering the labour market will not be large enough (2005: 1).

Whilst the policy itself appears to be laudable, i.e. targeting a limited public resource at those with most need, the unintended consequence may be a significant decline in the infrastructure that supports learning for adults. One could argue therefore that a further, and perhaps unforeseen, consequence of this change will be a step away from the idea of fostering a ‘learning society’ and the parallel notion of lifelong learning promoted in the Skills Strategy (2003).

The literature on change and implementation is comprehensive and perhaps reflects the increased importance that this area has engendered over the past thirty years. See for example: Fullan (2001), Fullan et al. (2006), Bottery (2004), Hall and Hord (2001) and Gilley (2005) all of which outline a significant momentum for change within the fields of education and business. Bottery, in particular places his discussion of educational leadership within a global context that, he suggests ‘poses fundamental questions for society’ (2004: 3). Despite our apparently increasing knowledge and experience in this area, success appears to remain elusive. This view is reinforced by
Pascale et al., who offer an estimate of the cost of change programmes in the private sector stating that:

Corporations around the world now write cheques for more than $50 billion dollars a year in fees for change consulting.... Yet consultants, academic surveys and reports from “changed companies” themselves indicate that a full 70% of those efforts fail (2000: 12).

The imperative for change continues to occupy a pre-eminent position in terms of activity generated by government as evidenced by the continuing flow of government policy set alongside a prevailing discourse in the literature on social and organisational policy. This discourse promotes the idea of change as endemic to the new global condition. Fullan, for example, states that it would be ‘...naïve to hope that the overall pace of change will noticeably decrease’ (2003: 24). The foreword to the Further Education White Paper, Further Education: Raising Skills. Improving Life Chances asserts that: ‘Evolutionary and incremental change will not be enough’ (2006). This view of change as pervasive and continuous is also echoed in other recent government documents. For example The Future of Local Government (2004) sets out a 10-year strategic vision for local government. The Local Government White Paper: Strong and Prosperous Communities outlines a ‘radical agenda for change...[putting] in place reforms to ...give communities a bigger say in the things that matter to them’ (2006: 13).

There are two concerns arising from the above, both of which are central to this research, and which find their origin in the idea of constant change and the parallel notion that success may be a somewhat fragile concept. The first of these is that change inevitably requires resourcing. Secondly the interventions defined by policy will impact directly on people’s lives. The potential for the promotion of negative attitudes through inadequate policy preparation or implementation failure may exacerbate the very circumstances that policy was intended to address. This concern draws attention to the
values attached to policy and is of particular relevance in the case of vulnerable and excluded communities which, through the Testbed Learning Communities Pilot, provide a focal point for this thesis. These issues are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

Two key research questions arise from this section. Both questions draw attention to the concern highlighted above that the target group for this policy is essentially defined as disadvantaged. This circumstance reinforces the important point that policy advocacy is value driven, an issue which will be discussed in more detail in subsequent sections. The questions are:

- Are the issues surrounding purpose and value given sufficient priority during policy development and implementation?
- Is it possible to prejudice important aspects of policy by giving the issues of purpose and values insufficient priority from the outset? Would, for example, a policy extolling the virtues of consultation be undermined by an approach to implementation that was entirely programmed?

A full list of research questions can be found on page 52 of this thesis.

**Policy Development, Globalisation and Lifelong Learning.**

The background to the Skills Strategy (2003), which contains the section on Testbed Learning Communities, is located firmly in a discourse of globalisation and the necessity to build a successful and dynamic economy in the face of increasingly strident competition. In addition it also embraces the importance that the government attaches to the link between skills (learning) and social inclusion. As previously stated, The Skills Strategy (2003: 11) emphasises that globalisation has made the idea of a job for life 'extinct', a
point reinforced by the Minister, Ivan Lewis on a number of occasions. In order to compete we must do so on the basis of our capacity to innovate and add value to goods and services. Thus the Skills Strategy notes that 'the skills of our people' are not only a vital national asset in relation to the development of the economy and national prosperity, they are also vital to the achievement of a 'fair and more inclusive society' (2003: 1). An earlier Green Paper, The Learning Age, emphasises the fundamental position of Lifelong Learning as the key to national prosperity, noting that, in the context of global competition:

> We have no choice but to prepare for this new age in which the key to success will be continuous education and development...investment in human capital will be the foundation of success in the knowledge-based economy of the twenty first century (1998: 7).

This is, The Learning Age notes, why '...the government have put learning at the heart of its ambition' (ibid: 7), reinforcing the view that encouraging a culture of continuous or lifelong learning is paramount. Ivan Lewis reprises this theme in a speech made to the NIACE Autumn Conference (27.10.2004) on the subject of Testbed Learning Communities. He states that:

> I think we should see lifelong learning as the modernised welfare state in action, which has the capacity to empower and liberate individual citizens, to build the capacity and activism of whole communities and ultimately to strengthen the economic and social foundation of our society.

Research

To date there has been no systematic national evaluation of the TLC Pilot, a circumstance noted in the minutes of the Testbed Learning Communities Project Board (26.01.2005) which stated that: ‘...there will be no formal evaluation, instead the DfES will capture success on an ongoing basis'. This thesis evaluates the TLC Pilot from the perspective of two case studies. In doing so it proposes to consider the way in which policy was interpreted and
implemented at regional and local level. This approach facilitates an analysis of the efficacy of the implementation process set against the policy and its proposed outcomes. As detailed in Chapter 3 the research adopts an essentially qualitative approach which attempts to understand the practitioner experience of the implementation process. In doing so it acknowledges the role of the researcher in developing the framework within which the research takes place. However at all times the researcher remains vigilant in relation to the potential introduction of personal bias (see for example pages 65, 66, 70 and 79 of this thesis).

This chapter has given a brief introduction to this thesis and in particular to the policy discourse that gives rise to the idea of Testbed Learning Communities. Chapter 2 provides a more detailed analysis of the key themes that underpin the proposed research. It begins with a brief resume of the Skills Strategy (2003) highlighting its centrality to this research.
Chapter 2

Policy Development, Globalisation and Lifelong Learning

The Skills Strategy and Testbed Learning Communities.

This Chapter begins by explaining the purpose of the Skills Strategy (2003) and the place of TLCs within it. In considering purpose a number of related themes are identified for discussion. These include globalisation, which this thesis argues, forms a major underlying driver for policy development, lifelong learning and the related notion of learning communities. The final section of the chapter highlights and discusses the importance of implementation in the policy process.

The Skills Strategy (2003) Outlined

The Skills Strategy's primary aim is ‘...ensure that employers have the right skills to support the success of their business’ and also that ‘...individuals have the skills that they need to be both employable and personally fulfilled’ (2003: 11). It defines skills as a ‘vital national asset’ that not only contributes to the success of business but which also ‘...helps individuals to raise their employability, and achieve ambitions for themselves, their families and their communities’ (ibid: 7).

The requirement for a Skills Strategy stems from the assertion that, whilst the United Kingdom’s education and training system is improving, there remain serious weaknesses in the way that we develop skills. For example, it is argued that productivity and output differentials between industry in the United Kingdom and competitors such as the USA, France and Germany, indicate a relative lack of competitiveness (ibid: 12). Accordingly, in order to ensure a more competitive and productive economy that delivers prosperity...
for all, we need to ensure ‘an ever growing proportion of skilled, qualified people’ (2003: 7). This issue of a skills deficit is also highlighted in a subsequent White Paper, Skills: Getting on in Business, Getting on at Work (2005) and also in the Leitch Review, World Class Skills (2006) and the Government’s response (World Class Skills, 2007).

Interestingly, in outlining the scale of this challenge the Skills Strategy emphasises that its proposals are not ‘predominantly’ about new initiatives but about making more sense of what is already there ‘...integrating what already exists and focusing it more effectively’ with an overriding aim of ‘ensuring that everyone has the skills they need to become more employable and adaptable’ (2003: 12).

The Skills Strategy makes a strong argument for effective national and regional collaboration heralding ‘a new social partnership for skills’ (ibid : 100). In this context the Regional Development Agencies (RDA) are tasked to take the lead in the production of Frameworks for Regional Employment and Skills Action (FRESA). These regional frameworks are designed to translate the skills agenda into a plan for skills development generated at local level and reflecting the needs of employers and individuals in the regions. The outcome of the process is an action plan that establishes regional priorities and defines the role that each partner has in achieving them. There is some emphasis on local flexibility within the documentation that supports the TLC Pilot, in particular the Scoping Document (2003), and an acknowledgement that a local response is required to reflect significant regional variation. As emphasised in the foreword to the Skills Strategy, ‘the problems and priorities of one region are not the same as those encountered in another’ (2003: 8).

The Testbed Learning Communities section of the Skills Strategy (2003) is constructed on the premise that ‘In many disadvantaged areas, low
expectations and aspirations are a significant factor holding back the prospects for economic and social development' (2003: 105).

The government envisages '...trialling the [TLC] concept initially in areas of long term systemic low aspirations' (ibid: 106). This transfers the previously mentioned idea of local flexibility to community level. The Government's Neighbourhood Renewal Programme is used to illustrate the importance that skills and learning can bring to tackling disadvantage. They can, as the Skills Strategy states, help to 'break the cycle of deprivation, underachievement and worklessness that is often perpetuated from generation to generation' (ibid: 106). This is a recurring theme within the Skills Strategy and is further emphasised by linking the idea of a productive and competitive economy to that of a more inclusive society. We will not, the foreword states, '...achieve a fairer and more inclusive society if we fail to narrow the gap between the skills rich and the skills poor' (ibid: 7). Some weight is added to this argument in later sections of the Skills Strategy, which emphasise the importance of skills to employability and aspiration.

The Skills Strategy argues that in the new global economy there is an even greater emphasis on skills and that the proportion of jobs requiring higher levels of skill is growing. Employment rates reflect the same phenomenon with increasing opportunities for employment in jobs that require higher levels of skill. Conversely for those without any qualifications opportunities are decreasing. This point is reinforced by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which notes that 'those with low educational attainment are both less likely to be labour force participants and more likely to be unemployed' and also that '...unemployment rates fall with higher educational attainment' (2007: 127).
Testbed Learning Communities

It is important at this point to restate that the TLC pilot is an integral part of the Skills Strategy (2003) and that aims and purpose of the pilot are firmly located in the overarching framework provided by this strategy.

As outlined above the emphasis of the Skills Strategy is on an economic imperative. However it also promotes the view that the skills challenge is not just about economic concerns but that it is also about social issues noting that:

By increasing skill levels of all underrepresented groups we will develop a more inclusive society that promotes employability for all. When people are better educated and trained they have the chance to earn more and use their talents to the full both in and out of work (2003: 18).

The section of the Skills Strategy devoted to Learning Communities (ibid: 105) maintains the link to the economic imperative and also introduces social themes by drawing attention to some of the problems faced by disadvantaged communities. Disadvantage is then linked to low aspirations and the perpetuation of a culture of long-term systemic underachievement, factors which are associated with holding back the 'prospects for economic and social development' (ibid: 105).

The term Testbed Learning Community is not clearly defined within the document and there are no specific targets attached to the policy. In the absence of an overarching definition of a TLC a number of ideas are proposed (ibid: 106). The first of these is the development of intergenerational learning as a means by which learning and skills levels across a whole community can gain strength. According to this suggestion, as a result of raised levels of skill, more people will be in a position to:
gain sustainable, rewarding jobs or move into self employment and more people can gain the confidence and know how to set up and run social enterprises or take part in voluntary activity (2003: 106).

Secondly the idea of membership of the Learning Community is promoted with membership bringing ‘... locally determined benefits’ in order to confer some of the ‘status and value associated with club membership’ (ibid: 106). This notion of membership is also attached to the broader aim of changing the ‘culture of learning’ within communities.

The Skills Strategy also suggests that, by encouraging a range of organisations in the learning and skills fields to ‘connect’ with the community and with different members within a community, the overall effect could be ‘... a powerful way of tackling inequality and helping disadvantaged communities to help themselves (ibid: 106). This theme of encouraging local connections has two strands. Firstly it reinforces the importance of integrating or joining up policy and action at local level and secondly encourages the idea that individual success can act as a catalyst for positive community wide change and development.

This section has given a brief summary the Skills Strategy (2003). It will be clear that it is arguing that, in order that the United Kingdom can compete in the global marketplace, the United Kingdom needs to ensure that a greater proportion of its workforce is equipped with the skills that business needs to achieve this. The Skills Strategy brings together economic and social imperatives. Thus by enabling individuals to develop their skills and thereby sustain existing employment or move from unemployment into employment, there is a broader social benefit (ibid: 18). The means by which this improvement to the national skills base will be achieved is through creating:

a coherent policy framework which supports frontline delivery and develops an education and training system which is focused on the needs of employers and learners (2003: 21).
Coherence in this policy also relates to the idea that at both national (governmental) and local level, there is a need to ensure that policies are ‘joined up’ and that the range of ‘partners’ involved in particular aspects of policy delivery are working together to reduce confusion, minimise duplication and optimise outcomes.

Chapter seven of the Skills Strategy outlines a role for Testbed Learning Communities in helping to deliver this agenda in what are termed ‘disadvantaged communities with low expectations and aspirations’ (2003: 105). However the Skills Strategy itself gives neither a definition of a Learning Community nor detailed guidance about expectations of the Learning Community.

**Globalisation, Policy and Lifelong Learning**

**Globalisation**

The preceding section outlines the key elements of the Skills Strategy (2003). It identifies that its supporting logic is embedded in the notion of improving economic competitiveness and reducing social inequality in the face of increasing globalisation. A highly skilled workforce able to compete in the global marketplace becomes, in policy terms, a headline aspiration alongside the need to embrace a culture of lifelong learning.

Whilst recourse to globalisation within the domain of policy is clearly evident, the meaning attached to the term by policy makers is rarely elucidated and a degree of discussion is therefore required.

Globalisation, as George and Wilding (2004) outline, is a phenomenon that permeates the contemporary discourse of social policy affecting all aspects of
society, economic, political, social and cultural. The vocabulary of
globalisation has entered almost all of the world’s major languages, bringing,
as Scholte states ‘continual reference to global communications, global
finance, global health problems, global markets, global migration and global
justice’ (2005: 14). George and Wilding offer a similar assessment proposing
that globalisation was:

the concept of the late 90s and remains dominant today, pervading
debates in social sciences and used increasingly by politicians,
including many on the left, as a justification for their policies (2002: 1).

Globalisation is now such a commonplace part of everyday life that, according
to Hudson and Lowe, it is a concept that is ‘...embedded in society’ (2004: 1)
and, as Weiss notes, the language itself has become a global phenomenon
‘infecting all levels of society from poets to prime ministers’ (1998: 167).
Giddens (2002: 7) makes a similar observation.

In spite of its ubiquity, globalisation remains a complex and contested notion
which, according to Scholte, suffers from a lack of definitional rigor and
‘oversimplification, exaggeration and wishful thinking’ (2005: 1). Bhagwati
refines this debate by discussing what he refers to as different dimensions of
globalisation. He suggests that the current discourse of globalisation tends to
blur the lines between ‘dimensions’ and speaks ‘... of globalisation...as if it
were a homogeneous undifferentiated phenomenon’ (2004: 7). Bottery (2004:
34) draws attention to a number of different ways of approaching globalisation
from descriptive forms such as cultural and demographic globalisation to what
he determines as more prescriptive forms which include economic and
political globalisation.

This thesis acknowledges the disputed nature of globalisation and the range
and complexity of interrelated ideas that the term embraces. However the
following discussion is based primarily on reference to aspects of economic globalisation within the previously mentioned Skills Strategy. In the following discussion the key proposition is that combinations of the economic and political aspects of globalisation exert an influence on the policies of nation states.

Globalisation constitutes a number of interrelated processes that effectively embrace all aspects of life from economic activity through social, political and cultural activity. It describes a circumstance where an increasing range of processes has developed a global dimension rather than being confined to contexts that are primarily national or regional. These circumstances are captured effectively by Giddens (1990), cited in Hudson and Lowe (2004: 17), who refers to three factors that shape globalisation. These are growing economic integration, the growth of transnational companies, and the globalisation of communications.

Economic integration is one of the most significant driving forces behind the move to a single global economy. Leys notes that by the end of the 1980s financial deregulation and computerisation had resulted in the 'elimination of most significant geographical barriers in all kinds of financial activity' (2001: 15). The notion of economic integration rests within a dominant neoliberal ideology and the assertion that the 'needs of global capitalism impose a neoliberal economic discipline on all governments' (Held et al. 1999: 4). George and Wilding (2002: 18) offer a similar perspective. This circumstance has an effect on the roles and responsibilities of the nation state. Accordingly global markets shape the global economic context and, it is argued that it is they, rather than nation states, which are now the driving force shaping the course of world events. Leys' (2001: 1) for example, argues that politics everywhere are now market driven to the extent that if governments are to survive in office '...they must increasingly manage national policies in such a way as to adapt them to the pressures of transnational market forces'. This
position presupposes that all public spending plans are highly sensitive to market opinion and that 'national policymaking is now pervasively influenced by this new circumstance' (2001: 25).

Taken to its extreme, this perspective promotes the idea that state power is undermined to the extent that the 'authority and legitimacy' of the nation-state is challenged and its actions constrained by the expectations of the market (Held et al. 1999: 4). This effective denationalisation of the economic and political power of the nation state becomes the precursor to the displacement of traditional forms of sovereign government. This heralds the emergence of more global forms of governance and what Held et al., determine as 'the first truly global civilisation' (ibid: 4). Organisations such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation exemplify the idea of global governance, as does the emerging importance of global business in the form of transnational and multinational corporations.

The idea of the reduced importance of the nation state in the face of the increasing pre-eminence of global capital supports a view that the policy flexibility and discretion hitherto exercised by nation states is being curtailed, if not entirely emasculated. Thus national policy is influenced by global circumstances. In a discussion of the impact of increased economic interconnectedness on policy Held and McGrew also propose that:

the increased mobility of capital, induced by the development of global financial markets, shifts the balance of power between the markets and states (generating) powerful pressures on states to develop market friendly policies (2002: 22).

As outlined above this argument also maps the increasing importance of global business and the rise of transnational (TNC) and multinational (MNC) corporations. Bottery, in discussing a range of factors affecting economic
globalisation, makes an important point about the growing influence of global business when stating that TNCs:

exert a force on national government policies through their ability to relocate their capital, factories and workforce around the world resulting in competition between nation states to encourage these companies to do business in their country (2004: 45).

The inference here is that TNCs and MNCs, within the increasingly flexible space of the global economy, have the power to relocate, and would therefore look to the governments of nation states to provide a propitious and stable economic climate within which they can operate. Wickham-Jones quotes Tony Blair, speaking at a business conference in New York (1996), where he spoke in unequivocal terms about the influence that global business exerts when observing that 'governments had to meet the aspirations of global capital or suffer a response that is likely to be prejudicial to economic growth' (1997: 257).

However this is not the only perspective and there are those who argue that the nation state is not a victim of globalisation but one of the key activists in its development. Globalists, Weiss (1999: 194) argues, have overstated the degree of state powerlessness and consequently nation states 'may matter more rather than less' (ibid: 195). Scholte (1997: 441) supports this position proposing that 'states have played an indispensable enabling role in the globalisation of capital'. Similarly Higgot (1999: 26) argues that the idea that increased globalisation is a constraint on government is 'too determinist'. Held and McGrew also support this position in describing what they term a more sceptical position with regard to globalisation. They note that:

national governments remain, for the most part, the sole source of effective and legitimate authority in the governance of the world economy, while also being the principal agents of international economic coordination and regulation (2002: 50).
The changes outlined briefly above suggest that although nation states are no longer the ‘sole centres or principal forms of governance or authority in the world’, ceding some power to transnational organisations and the lobbying of MNCs and TNCs, they may have become more flexible and outward looking as their power is ‘reconstituted and restructured in response to the growing complexity of governance in a more interconnected world’ (Held et al. 1999: 9). However, in the process of adapting to changing circumstances and in particular to the realities of global markets, it can be argued, as observed by George and Wilding (2002: 30), that nation states are perhaps more mindful of the presence of ‘mobile capital’ at the policy table. This circumstance is perhaps more evident in some policy areas than others.

The above discussion had outlined some of the issues concerning economic globalisation and the parallel growth of large and powerful transnational and multinational corporations. Giddens (1990), as previously stated, also highlights the importance of communication technology as a factor shaping globalisation. Whilst it is inappropriate to discuss the technology of global communications in detail it is important to note that communications technology provides the electronic architecture that facilitates transactions in the global market place. Without advances in communications technology globalisation would be an entirely different phenomenon. Giddens (2002) discusses what he terms the sceptical and radical positions towards globalisation. In this discussion he cites the facility to transfer vast amounts of capital from one side of the world to the other ‘at the click of a mouse’ as one of the reasons why globalisation ‘as we are currently experiencing it’ represents a cultural, technological, political and economic revolution (ibid: 10). This position is echoed by Castells’ view of what he terms the ‘network society’, referring to the twentieth century as ‘an interval characterised by the transformation of our material culture by the works of a new technological paradigm organised around information technologies’ (2000: 28).
Regardless of the range of complementary or competing conceptualisations of globalisation there can be little doubt that it features in much of the public debate about the state of the world. From the perspective of this thesis, globalisation forms an important and recurrent element in the government’s justification for policy, and the dynamic nature of both policy and social change. For example Phil Hope, at the time Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for Skills, in a speech made towards the end of the TLC Pilot in January 2006, and with relevance to this thesis, made use of the ‘global’ imperative when stating that:

We live in exciting but competitive times. Times where we compete in an increasingly global market place; in the face of ambitious emerging economies such as India and China who are investing massively in skills. Today’s world economy means that more than ever before businesses and people can’t afford to stand still. This [global] economy demands flexibility, application, innovation and enterprise.

More recently Gordon Brown in his response to the interim report of Leitch Review (2005) reinforced the importance of global trends when stating:

to become world leaders in any sector we must become world leaders in education. All of us know that as global restructuring moves mass production to other areas, the United Kingdom’s future success will be founded on high levels of skills (Pre Budget Report, 2005).

The above represent powerful statements and a perspective operationalised in support of a particular policy direction. The need to improve the nation’s skills base and develop a culture of lifelong learning are linked through policy (and its supporting discourse) to the influence of globalisation.

Parsons (1995: 87), promotes the idea that the ‘genesis of a policy involves the recognition of a problem’. The recognition of this problem legitimates the arena as one in which government can (and should) become involved. In addition the discourse surrounding the generation of the issue may also define the parameters within which the ‘problem’ is addressed and within which the policy is ultimately framed. Thus in terms of generating policy about learning where do we look for the problem?

The problem in this case is located in the globalising agenda previously outlined and the proposal that, in order to ensure a successful economy within the global marketplace, we need a flexible highly skilled, well-motivated workforce. The economy of the United Kingdom, whilst currently seen as relatively successful, is, in terms of the international community, underperforming. This apparent lack of a competitive learning edge provides both the legitimising rationale and the ‘issue energy’ for policy development. The Corporate Plan for the Learning and Skills Council offers some supporting evidence:

Of all the OECD countries, only Mexico and Turkey have fewer 16-18 year olds in education and training than we do. An estimated one in five adults in the United Kingdom has difficulties with basic literacy and numeracy…approximately 30% of our workforce is qualified to an intermediate skill level (considered to be a measure of employability) compared with 51% in France and 65% in Germany (2003: 6).

This argument has been restated a number of times since the Skills Strategy (2003) most notably in the Skills White Paper (2005), the Leitch Review (Dec: 2006) and World Class Skills (July: 2007).

Government, having raised concerns about this ‘problem’, needs to act. Inactivity, in the globalised world outlined above, may provide a very visible
political message for competitor nations and potential investors. Failure to address the acknowledged skills deficit through policy may signal a nation resigned to its destiny as a low skills economy. From a ‘global’ perspective of those wishing to invest in this country as a base for future production, or as a home for purely financial investment, a reluctance to fill this policy vacuum would provide a powerful statement of intent (or in this case a lack of intent). The problem, as outlined above therefore, becomes the legitimate territory for policy formulation.

This issue, along with its global origins, is, to an extent, illustrated by a cursory glance at some of the media reporting on skills. For example Philip Thornton writing in the *Independent* (29.09.2005) in an article entitled ‘UK slips further down the competitiveness league’ cites information from a report by the Global Economic Forum noting that low educational attainment is just one of the reasons why Britain has slipped down the competitiveness league two places, from 11th to 13th since 2003. This article also notes that the Treasury, using evidence from the same report, asserted that Britain was the best performing economy in the European Union and is ‘well positioned to rise to the challenges of increased international competition from China and India’. In *The Independent* in May of the following year, in a report entitled ‘Skills shortage is London’s big barrier’, Philip Thornton cited a report by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) which stated that ‘the shortage of skilled staff has now overtaken transport problems as the biggest barrier to business in London (12.05.2006).

Again, in *The Independent* (29.09.2006), Atwood emphasises that, as a result of skills shortages, Rolls – Royce is searching overseas for staff. The article quotes the Chief Executive of the company who states that:

> The competitive landscape is changing rapidly as a result of globalisation and demographics which are transforming the nature of work and the demand for particular skills.
Presenting a different perspective, Amrit Dillon, writing in the *Times* (16.10.2005), reported that 'The Skills Shortage Hampers India'. The article goes on to explain that 'weighed down by antiquated labour laws, shabby infrastructure and half hearted economic reforms' the education system in this economy was having some difficulty in keeping up with new technologies and moreover that India was now grappling with '...an acute shortage of skilled workers'.

It is arguable that the discourse surrounding policy may limit some of the policy parameters. Parsons notes that 'the way in which we define a problem has a crucial impact on the policy response' (1995: 89). If, for example, the 'problem' in terms of learning is defined as being a low skills base, the answer becomes one of providing a means by which the skills base can be raised. If the issue is an insufficient number of the workforce qualified to degree level then the policy solution may take a different form. Along with other nations facing similar issues, the solution in this case, becomes one that is linked directly to the provision of more learning focused on the workforce and the 'skills required by industry' in a competitive global economy.

At one level this somewhat instrumentalist approach is compelling; its simplicity and familiarity are readily understood and implementation does not therefore present the potential destabilising risk of the unknown or unfamiliar. It offers a linear and rational solution to a (perceived) problem. At the same time the rationality of a discourse within an existing paradigm has the effect of discouraging any challenges that may redefine the problem or that may elicit alternative proposals to the existing (policy) solution.

Emphasising the global nature of the trend linking education with national economic well-being, Wolf asserts that, at the start of the 21st Century, we inhabit a world in the grip of consensus:
The world's voters think their governments can and should deliver economic prosperity. Their elites agree with them and even agree with each other how to do it. Increasingly they sign up to the same package: free trade, market economics, the virtues of entrepreneurship and education, education, education (2002: 1).

Clearly Wolf's view defines a degree of pressure for policy convergence in this particular area echoing the earlier arguments about the pervasive influence of globalisation. This perspective is echoed by George and Wilding (2002: 68) who note the significance of globalisation as a 'strong force' in the expansion of education and the emergence of a 'number of trends and patterns. This includes '...more stress on skills training and more stress on linking education to the world of work'. George and Wilding quote Green who, whilst acknowledging differences between states, concludes that there is 'significant evidence of a general process of convergence in educational systems across the world' (1997: 174).

This idea of convergence and the growing potential for standardisation in the arena of policy parallels Ritzer's analysis of what he sees as the almost universal availability of a number of well-known products and brands. McDonalds, for example, is known and recognised the world over, its branding and products are standardised across the globe (2004: 147). The McDonalds experience is the same '... no matter where it is in the world' (ibid: 88). In the same way governments across the world are developing responses to what is becoming a standardised set of policy issues, for example, economic management, welfare policy, international trade, education, health, poverty and concerns about the environment. This thesis argues that learning and skills is one of the more prominent and universal policy areas.

This section has offered an analysis of globalisation and global influences upon the policy arena. It has focused in particular on national policy related to
learning and skills. The next section focuses on learning, highlighting the contested nature of the term and also its ubiquity as a solution to the social and economic consequences of globalisation. It moves on to discuss Learning Communities and social capital in relation to the cultural changes which are promoted as a potential outcome of the Testbed Learning Communities Pilot initiative.

The Centrality of Learning

Field notes that Lifelong Learning, ‘...the recognition that learning may stretch out across a lifetime – is the new educational reality’ (2000: 1). Field also notes that, whilst Lifelong Learning emerged onto the policy scene with the 'suddenness of a new fashion', the idea was widely reported in the early 1970s ‘where it briefly won a degree of political favour’ (ibid: 3). Boshier (1998: 2), in a critical analysis of the work of Faure (1972), notes that the concept (as outlined by Faure) rose from the political ferment of the 1960s at a time of ‘...provocative critiques of formal education by innovative thinkers’. Faure’s description of the conditions for the development of a 'learning society' has, according to Boshier, been transformed by ‘...neoliberalism and the architects of the new right’ (ibid: 4).

Faure’s vision of Lifelong Learning and a learning society was essentially humanist. It was, from this perspective, concerned with the ‘... fulfilment of man through the flexible organisation of the different stages of education... through the recognition of informal and non formal as well as formal learning’ (Field 2000: 5). Couched in these terms, this version of Lifelong Learning recognised the integration of the age of participants and context within which learning takes place. This approach is also supported by Boshier (1998: 7). Thus, in order to achieve a learning society, learning should take place in a range of formal and informal settings and engage across the whole of the age cohort. In this context learning becomes an arena for citizenship and
participation. This discourse, according to Boshier (1998: 13), facilitates the notion of citizenship and social democracy, and is one of education.

The Learning Age (1998: 7), the first White Paper on the importance of Learning and Skills by the new Labour Government elected in 1997, outlines the contribution that learning can make to both social and economic prosperity. The White Paper supports the development of a 'civilised society' and promotes 'active citizenship'. In addition there are links to the role of learning in community development, strengthening the family and promoting access to the arts and literature.

However the strongest connections in the Learning Age are those that echo the relationship between learning and global economic prosperity. As a generalisation this approach exemplifies the idea of a learning market, in which institutions provide learning opportunities for individuals as part of their participation in and development of the market economy. From this perspective: ‘Lifelong Learning is a key instrument to further economic development’ (Boshier 1998: 12). In this context undertaking a learning episode becomes a rational decision taken by the learner ‘ taking advantage of the (learning) opportunities that appear to best meet their need’ (ibid: 12). The sum total of these individual decisions becomes the impact of policy. This is, according to Boshier, in an article reflecting on the 25 years since Faure, ‘the discourse of lifelong learning’ (ibid: 12).

In many publications the terms learning and education are used almost interchangeably. However, in the context of the above discussion, learning and education represent quite different perspectives. Boshier, summarises the tensions between these views as follows:

Practitioners should be wary because lifelong learning denotes a less emancipatory and more oppressive set of relationships than does lifelong education. Lifelong learning discourses tend to render social
conditions invisible. Predatory capitalism is unproblematic. Lifelong learning is nested in vocationalism. Learning is for acquiring skills that will enable the learner to work harder, faster and smarter and... enable their employer to better compete in the global economy (1998: 8).

On the one hand education is seen as emancipatory, a route to freedom and choice, and on the other primacy is given to the skills required to sustain a successful and competitive economy. In this latter manifestation the needs of the business community and of the economy appear to merit a higher value than those of the individual. Gorard and Rees argue that the ‘call for lifelong learning has been reduced to the simple claim: ‘...education and training are good because they earn you money’ (2002: 132). This, they believe, is in contrast to a more complex but, in their view, more realistic view that ‘education and training are good because they are fulfilling and they could earn you money’ (ibid: 133).

Accepting the idea that learning and success in learning can have positive implications for the individual is not problematic. I have alluded to this at an earlier point in this thesis. There is a positive association between time spent in learning and future earning power. Wolf notes that:

Whether or not education is financially good for their country, the past half-century teaches that it is certainly good for the educated. The more education you acquire, the higher your income is likely to be, and the less likely you are to experience long periods of long or even short term unemployment (2002: 15).

From a policy perspective and in the context of sustaining a highly skilled, flexible and globally competitive workforce, encouraging and embedding the notion of Lifelong Learning would appear to be essential.

Successful learners are not only better off financially, they are more engaged and more connected. Successful learners are more likely to engage in
learning in the future. Those who are not so successful illustrate a different picture. Only half the adults with poor literacy skills have a job compared to four out of five adults with the best literacy skills.

The terminal age of initial education is also a key and consistent predictor of participation in learning as an adult. Sargant states that:

seventy eight percent of those who are current learners are likely to take up learning in the future... only 13% of those who have not participated since leaving full time education expect to participate in future learning (2002: xiv).

For these more 'reluctant learners' for whom educational success has proved somewhat elusive, the notion that 'learning pays' is, for many reasons, not quite so self-evident as the above would indicate. Whilst the policy focus is on workforce development and the economy we have already noted that there is also a social context. This social context aligns learning with the wider notion of a civilised society embracing social regeneration, community and the arts.

Given this tentative elaboration of purpose, what are the imperatives for implementation and change? One of the policy solutions proffered by government is the development of learning communities. This proposal, as previously outlined, features in the Skills Strategy (2003: 105) and is worthy of further examination.
Learning Communities.

Griffin states that:

As in the case of other desirable social objectives there is often a perceived gap between the ideal and the reality, the theory and the practice, the promise and the performance (1998: 22).

Ivan Lewis (2004: 12) asserts that 'learning communities' is a concept whose time has come. This statement echoes that attached to a number of related, and from this perspective, linked themes. The learning society for example could sit adjacent to the notion of learning cultures and could also be seen as the overarching outcome from the development of learning communities.

According to Longworth:

A Learning Community is: 'a city, town or region which mobilizes all its resources in every sector to develop and enrich all its human potential for the fostering of personal growth, the maintenance of social cohesion and the creation of prosperity' (1999: 109).

An earlier DfES publication, Practice, Progress and Values, describes the learning community in the following terms:

a true learning(community) is one which develops by learning from its experiences and those of others. It is a place which understands itself and reflects upon that understanding ... Thus the key characteristic of the learning community is the ability to develop successfully in a rapidly changing socio economic environment (1998: 1).

Cara and Aldridge, in a paper for the DfES that describes some contemporary examples of learning communities, offer the following definition cited in Yarnit (2000):

A learning community addresses the learning needs of its locality through partnership. It uses the strength of social and institutional relationships to bring about cultural shifts in perception of the value of
Learning. Learning communities explicitly use learning as a way of promoting social cohesion, regeneration and economic development which involves all parts of the community (2003: 4).

The link between social and economic issues is central to all the above along with collaboration, partnership and importantly engaging the community. As with the notion of lifelong learning the flexibilities within both definition and the consequent generation of meaning allow for the concept to be colonised from a range of perspectives. For example, the notion of a Learning Community can accommodate both marketised and humanist/citizenship models of lifelong learning previously outlined. As Bottery notes:

learning community is a phrase of the moment [which] like so many other concepts, can easily be fitted into the agendas of different pressure groups, to be filled up with different meanings (2004: 12).

The term learning community also offers something of a comfort zone. There is a synergy between the two words and a sense of added value in the combined effect of learning and community. Learning and the idea of continuous learning is seen as beneficial to both the individual and, in the context of economic competitiveness and social cohesion, to society as a whole. Boshier suggests that:

there is considerable enthusiasm for learning (lifelong) which, in its most exaggerated or utopian elaborations, is touted as the New Jerusalem which leads to a bountiful and promised land (1998: 4).

The term community can itself have a number of meanings ranging from the defined geographical area in which people live, through to groups that share common cultures, race, ethnicity or religion or groups with common interests and concerns such as sport or political beliefs. Thompson, in a booklet designed for community learning practitioners, describes community in the following terms:
Community is a word that unlike group, area or neighbourhood has a tremendous feel-good factor associated with it. Community is about feeling secure, being on the same wavelength...being able to count on each other especially if you are poor or a member of a relatively powerless minority (2002: 9).

Meanings and definitions however overlap and a defined geographical area may also be the location of a particular culture, ethnic group or community. Importantly the term itself may offer both benevolent or malevolent undertones, some communities may be exclusive rather than inclusive. Aldridge et al. illustrate this idea when referring to social capital. They note that for example that: "bonding capital may have a negative effect...facilitating rather than reducing crime, encouraging truancy and discouraging achievement' (2002: 33). This leads to a consideration about the notion of social capital, an area in which Aldridge et al. note ‘there has been an explosion of interest’ over the last ten to fifteen years (2002: 9).

Thus learning communities, as a concept, can appeal to a range of different groups for quite different reasons. Policy makers and politicians can link the idea to the flexible and dynamic economy required to be competitive in the globalised market place of the 21st Century. Learning community can also be linked to the regeneration of social capital, community networks and some of the more intrinsic and democratic aspects of learning. Gilbertson et al., in a study of the impact of regeneration on communities, state that:

social capital is increasingly recognised as an important factor in economic growth ... there is (they note) growing evidence that social capital contributes significantly to sustainable development .... growing opportunity requires an expanding stock of social capital (2003: 7)

The Organisation for Economic Development (OECD) proposes that both human and social capital have a role in realising economic and social development. Interestingly the OECD defines human capital as ‘the
knowledge skills, competencies and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being' (2001: 12). This definition fosters a similar connection between learning and social change that is captured in the Skills Strategy (2003) and the language used by the Minister in its justification.

Learning Communities and Social Capital

Putnam's (2000) analysis of community and the range of support and affiliation potentials within communities offers insights about the mutual obligations that are generated and sustained through social networks. It is also apparent that when one considers the idea of the Learning Community, in particular in the context of the TLC policy, the notion of social capital becomes a bridge between learning and the proposal that cultural change is an anticipated outcome of the learning experience. For example Putnam proposes that:

social networks are important in all our lives, often for finding jobs, more often for finding a helping hand, companionship or a shoulder to cry on [and also for] the rules of conduct and mutual obligations they sustain (2000: 20).

Ivan Lewis, in his role as Parliamentary Undersecretary for Skills and Vocational Education, links learning and community within the context of relative exclusion and the need for honesty about the immensity of the restructuring taking place in the world. Lewis believes there is a need to raise the status of learning in communities in which low aspirations are endemic. In an article published in Adults Learning he observes that: ‘People trapped in these circumstances need to feel that they are members of a learning community right down to the affiliation and recognition of a membership card’ (2004: 11). Lewis moves on to emphasise the need to tackle community aspirations stating:
You can get better leadership, better support, but if you don’t tackle the fact that in many areas there is a sort of culture of low aspiration which permeates that community in every sense there will always be a glass ceiling in terms of what you are able to do to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential (2004: 12).

Thus, the inference is that, by implementing the concept of the Learning Community, aspirations will be raised and the idea of learning becomes part of a way of living, ‘...ingrained in the psyche of every individual, family and community, every workplace’ Lewis (2004: 12). The Learning Community, in this context, addresses the issue of cultural change and becomes the answer, not only to economic success, but also to exclusion, social division and community regeneration.

Individuals working together, share success and gradually build networks and confidence within the community. Success may increase individual and community esteem, having the effect of lifting the collective aspirations of the whole ‘community’. Further to this, Gilbertson notes that ‘investment in social capital has enhanced levels of human capital and helped people into work’ (2005: 56). This circumstance emphasises the potential links between economic and social capital. The key point here being that, by encouraging learning and developing and sharing approaches to learning, individuals and groups of individuals achieve success. Faris reinforces this perspective stating that:

Human and social capital are mutually reinforcing; both are created formally and informally, in the workplace, in local communities, and within families, rightly noted as an important learning environment’ (2005: 28).

The extent to which these successes are shared and celebrated, the extent to which supportive networks are formed and the extent to which the knowledge gained by individuals is then transferred into the community, for mutual
benefit, is a measure of the success of this approach to the development of a learning community.

Recent Surveys of Learning Community Activity

The Scoping Document acknowledges previous work in the field of Learning Communities noting that there are '...a large number of initiatives already working on the ground including...innovative learning community models. Ivan Lewis M.P., the Minister with responsibility for this policy field, also stated that the idea of Learning Communities wasn't something that was plucked from thin air but was about 'building on a lot of existing work' (Speech to NIACE Conference 3.12.2003). In the light of these statements it is important to reflect on the nature of this previous work and consider the extent to which it was used to illuminate the TLC Pilot (2003). This section considers some of this existing work, focusing on three recent surveys commissioned by the DfES and its forerunner the DfEE. These are: The Learning Community: Background and Models, NIACE, (2003), Practice, Progress and Values, DfEE (1998) and Towns, Cities and Regions in the Learning Age, Yarnit (2000).

Similarities between these three reports and the TLC Pilot are illustrated in Table 1 on page 40.

The Learning Community: Background and Models, NIACE (2003) (Report 1)

In 2003, NIACE was commissioned by the DfES to report on existing models of the Learning Community. This report, Learning Communities: Background Models, published in September 2003, highlights a number of examples of learning community practice that align with the intentions expressed in the Skills Strategy. Report 1 quotes an earlier publication by Yarnit (2000) that
builds on work conducted under the aegis of the Learning City Network. Interestingly Yarnit offers a definition of learning communities, previously quoted on page 31 of this Chapter, the content of which is particularly apposite to the TLC (2003) pilot. Its emphasis on partnership, networks, the value of learning and the linking of social cohesion to learning and economic development echo important aspects of the policy as outlined in the Skills Strategy (2003).

In addition this report emphasises the importance of partnership and collaboration to community development. Particular attention is drawn to the role of ‘learning champions’, drawn from the local community, and of empowering the community through active involvement and consultation (ibid: 5).

Promotional activities of the type mentioned in Case Studies 1 and 2, (see Yarnit 2006: 31), are evidenced as a way of targeting those communities that are not engaged in learning on a regular basis or, in some cases, not engaged at all. One of the important elements of promotion is the use of family learning programmes.

 Whilst Report 1 acknowledges the importance of a focus on the economic element linked to personal development and social inclusion it also states the difficulty of establishing the connection between these elements. This connection is also implicit in the Skills Strategy (2003) and the Scoping Document.

The report also highlights the difficulty of tracking how initiatives are able to influence planning and funding. This lack of connectivity, Report 1 notes, is often apparent between initiatives and the individual activities of providers and in some cases between departments within the same local authority. This ‘lack of connectivity’ demonstrated a degree of resonance with the notion of
joining up policy at local level, one of the ambitions expressed in the Skills Strategy and one of the five objectives for the TLC pilot outlined in the Scoping Document.

**Practice, Progress and Values (DfEE 1998)**

The second example of previous work is an earlier report, Practice Progress and Values: Learning Communities: Assessing the Value they Add (Report 2). This research report collates work undertaken on behalf of the Learning City Network and states that the Learning City Network has been an innovative development using learning to ‘promote social cohesion and economic development. It develops partnerships to stimulate and respond to the demand for learning’ (1998: ii).

Report 2 offers a definition of the learning community (1998: 1) and supports the move to the concept of the learning city through reference to the impact of global change (*ibid*: 1). It notes that, in periods of such transformation, learning becomes central to our future. It also asserts that:

> only if learning is central can communities harness and develop their traditions and capacities to the challenge of regeneration in the learning age. The central value of learning for communities is that it secures understanding of the purposes, tasks and conditions for social and economic regeneration (*ibid*: 1).

The essence of Learning City practice is captured under three headings, partnership, participation and performance all of which are important in the context of Testbed Learning Communities as outlined in the Skills Strategy (2003). Partnership is perhaps an almost universal prerequisite for accessing project related funding. Additionally, when one considers the complexity of communities and community relations, the necessity for partnership can be taken as axiomatic. In this context Report 2 notes that in general ‘little attention is given to overlapping roles’ (1998: 9). This is consistent with the
idea of joining up policy at local level as emphasised in the Skills Strategy (2003).

Participation is the second category and Report 2 points to the need to involve the ‘wider community’ in learning and therefore making changes to the community as a whole. This is particularly important in the context of non-participants where community involvement is seen as a prerequisite for sustainable change. Finally performance or, more realistically, the evaluation of performance, is highlighted as crucial to the assessment of value added and progress against targets (1998: 6).

Towns Cities and Regions in the Learning Age, Yarnit (2000)

Yarnit (2000), in a survey which provides an overview of developments in Learning Communities, offers an analysis of policy about learning communities and cites a number of examples of good practice in case study format. Interestingly, of the six case study sections, one section outlines developments in Family Learning and a second concentrates on Skills for Life. Both themes feature strongly in the Testbed Learning Communities (2003) initiative. Yarnit also highlights the importance of participation at local level stating that: ‘the beneficiaries themselves must be directly involved in the planning and delivery of services’ (2000: 6). Yarnit believes that this will require, not only a national campaign of capacity building, but also a ‘significant change in attitude for those who hold power’ (ibid: 6).

It is apparent from this brief excursion into work commissioned by the DfES and its forerunner, the DfEE, that these three reports have the potential to inform the implementation of the Testbed Learning Communities Pilot. In the case of Report 1 it was commissioned to inform the initiative. This leads to a further research question, namely: How much use was made of previous
work in the field of Learning Communities when implementing the TLC Pilot (2003). The full list of Research Questions is on page 52 of this thesis.
Table 1 The Skills Strategy: A Comparison with Three Recent Surveys

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Policy Implementation

The preceding sections have covered the influence of globalisation on the policy process and, within that, the centrality of the concepts of Lifelong Learning and Learning Communities. Social capital has also been discussed as a bridge between the learning episode and the transition to a learning community. The final section of this chapter discusses the implementation process.

Whilst the earlier sections of this thesis have discussed the background to policy and the context within which policy is developed, Pressman and Wildavsky note:

We can work neither with a definition of policy that excludes any implementation nor one that includes all implementation. There must be a starting point. If no action is begun, implementation cannot take place (1984: xxi).

At some point therefore policy, in order to become operational rather than provide a theoretical template, must be implemented. There is a wealth of literature covering this issue that attempts to define not only the imperative to change but also the circumstances that may facilitate or undermine change programmes. In spite of our increasing knowledge and experience in this area, success is elusive and there remains a significant failure rate associated with the implementation of policy. Grey (2005: 97) states that ‘The most striking thing about change management is that it almost always fails’ citing, from the world of business, Crosby (1979) who claims that 90% of projects fail and Stewart (1993) who highlights a failure rate of between 50%-70% for change projects. Gilley (2005: 4) in outlining an overview of change in organisations paints a similar picture, noting that less than 40% of ‘change efforts’ produce positive outcomes. Fullan (1991: 29), in distinguishing between first and second order changes in an educational context, proposes
that in the case of change which challenges more fundamental values and beliefs (second order), reforms have largely failed. Clarke and Newman offer an analysis of change in the public sector proposing that experience of change '...tells us that ...change has not been smooth and linear but uneven and contested' (1997: x).

Two areas of concern were mentioned briefly in Chapter 1 (page 5). Firstly, from an economic standpoint, in an age where effectiveness and efficiency are universal imperatives, policy generation and implementation may have significant resource implications. Failed implementation would, on the face of it, appear to be a waste of scarce resources.

Secondly, through a more social lens, policy implementation will inevitably impact on those charged with the responsibility of implementation and also those who are the focus of the change programme. Raised hopes and expectations may lead to eventual disappointment and a corresponding loss of trust. The potential promotion of negative attitudes through failure and disappointment may effectively reinforce the status quo and at the same time be instrumental in breeding new levels of cynicism about change programmes (current and future). This may be a particular concern in the case of vulnerable and excluded communities which, through the TLC pilot, provide a focal point for this thesis.

There is an argument that we have a choice about the process by which change is implemented and part of the research question is linked to the potential for policy distortion at the implementation phase. If, for example, purpose, process and values are significant aspects of the proposed change, are they given an appropriate level of significance during development and implementation and is it possible to prejudice important aspects of policy through inappropriate implementation programmes? One would anticipate that the development of national policy and its subsequent implementation
was both purposeful and worthwhile and furthermore that those responsible for these processes had an interest in success.

In order to illustrate the importance of the implementation process the following section outlines two approaches.

**Contrasting Approaches to Implementation**

**Model 1 Externally Programmed**

Having identified a particular community as 'problematic', the approach exemplified by Model 1 is to parachute the 'learning community solution' into the target community. This would be accompanied by a high profile 'funding defined' initiative. In this case the funding body and its agencies become the source of the initiative. The community, in terms of organisations and agencies working within it, will at some point be invited to participate in the development. The needs led aspect of this approach is defined by the funding agency and is based on the aforementioned 'problem'. The needs of the individuals within the community, rather than being constructed through dialogue, are in reality defined by the perceptions (and targets) of the funding body. Needs become a function of potential funding streams, external and short term. Access to opportunity becomes a function of what is fundable, formulaic and reductive. For example, if the perception is that of high unemployment, then employability skills may be defined as a need, employability skills and the supporting curriculum could become the solution. The focus of the learning community becomes vocational learning, the specifics of which are defined outside the community.

The targets of the funding body are transferred as a deficit into a prescribed model of a learning community and into a community defined as deficient. In this circumstance the solution is one, characterised by Newton and Tarrant...
as, ‘our’ solution for ‘your’ future (1992:6). Once the initiation and pump priming period is completed, ownership of the ‘Learning Community’ may be ‘transferred’ back to the community or the initiative may be allowed to slide into policy memory.

This approach is characteristically ‘top down’ (Hill and Hupe 2002: 41), and programmed, rather than adaptive (Berman 1980). In addition, this strategy illustrates the more market driven models for learning where need purports to relate to the individual and is often championed as such. In reality however need is institutionally located. Definition of need at individual and community level is somewhat illusory taking place within a context defined outside the community. Community consultation suffers a similar fate and the defined solution is offered as palliative to what may be defined as unwelcome circumstance. There is little doubt that, in a world of short term funding and funding driven targets, this approach can (indeed will) be successful. Evidence of the success of learning episodes will be collected; targets for individual learners will be met. Data collected will be defined by the programme’s parameters, the programme will be evaluated and success announced in an appropriate and timely fashion. In one sense the flashes of success achieved by this particular approach to grazing on policy may mask a range of underlying issues that may relate more closely to the deficits originally identified. As Pressman observes:

Policies that treat problems may appear to be successful, although, in fact, they overlook the less visible but more overwhelming growth of the actual cause(s) of the problem (1984: 235).

Model 2: A More Adaptive Approach

A second approach would be to adopt a lower key, ‘bottom up’ process (Hill and Hupe 2002: 51), working with existing community groups in a multi agency setting. This would facilitate building coalitions and relationships from
existing budding points, developing a dialogue over time, building confidence and trust between individuals, groups and agencies within a given community. This approach facilitates consultation with the community.

The processes associated with building cohesion, social capital and facilitating the development of learning opportunities based on emergent need are, by definition, slow. In this sense needs are constructed from the dialogue generated within the community setting. The importance of collaboration and joining up policy initiatives is illustrated by Gilbertson et al. (2005), who point out the virtues of, what they term 'dynamic' rather than 'silo' approaches to assessing innovation. They propose that agencies and organisations (for example the Regional Development Agencies), should not 'be imprisoned by silo targets which measure outcomes within a single domain, for example health. Instead, they should consider 'dynamic targets across the piece' (2005: 56). The authors note that 'investment in social capital has reaped dividends by enhancing levels of human capital [shown by increased] participation in labour markets' (ibid: 56). This affirms the importance of collaboration, partnership and joined up or integrated service delivery.

As stated above this is not a short-term, cyclical imperative, but a longer-term approach based on a more reflexive vision that embraces and encourages inclusion, community participation and which arguably fosters sustainability. Bringing Britain Together, The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (1998), points out that successful regeneration involves working with communities and not parachuting in solutions, not giving 'our' solutions to 'your' future. The strategy states:

For local regeneration to be effective communities need to be involved. Too often the notion of community involvement is given cursory attention whilst the pressures to implement policies quickly have meant that bureaucrats fall back on their own assumptions rather than consulting the community (1998: 40).
Change in this ‘bottom up’ context begins to mirror the learning process. Change is about learning, and in particular being given the opportunity to learn new meanings, and importantly, about understanding of choice and personal responsibility. Marris illustrates the difference between the two positions outlined above when he states:

When those who have the power to manipulate changes act as if they have only to explain, and when their explanations are not at once accepted, shrug off opposition as ignorance or prejudice, they express a profound contempt for the meaning of lives other than their own (1975: 166).

The opportunity to learn is part of the process by which the Learning Community develops. Learning becomes intrinsic to individual and community development. There is a degree of consistency between purpose and the methods by which that purpose is taken forward and implemented. The community itself is part of the reflexive learning experience, and as it learns it changes. As Ranson states:

a learning society [and community] is one, which has to learn to become a different form of society [community] if it is to shape the transformation that it is experiencing (1998: 255).

The implication here is that the community has to be given the opportunity to learn and also an appropriate level of support in order to undertake this process. This viewpoint is reinforced by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, who in a publication entitled The Learning Curve, emphasise that: ‘evidence indicates that most successful interventions tend to be grounded in and respond to local circumstances’ (2003: 6).

The choices outlined above between what I have loosely described as programmed and adaptive approaches to implementation and change are not so clear cut as they may at first appear. In the case of TLCs it is apparent that there is a degree of overlap between issues that are determined and those
that are more flexible. For example, the policy focus for TLCs is effectively
determined by the Skills Strategy (2003). As the Minister Ivan Lewis stated at
interview the process by which this [strategy] was arrived at was consultative.

Nonetheless, despite consultation and apparent flexibility at the point of
implementation, 'government' has determined the framework within which
consultation and implementation processes takes place. This illustrates what
Colebatch describes as the vertical dimension of policy which, he notes:
'...sees policy as rule... the transmission downward of an authorized decision'
(2002: 23). From this dimension, policy is about stressing instrumental action
and rational choice in the transmission of the values that the decision makers
hold dear. The values, in this case, represent those of an elected
government, attaching a degree of priority to a particular issue in the form of a
policy about TLCs. If programmed and adaptive processes are seen as two
ends of the implementation spectrum, the process described under Model 2
tends towards the adaptive end of the spectrum.

In addition to the contents of the Skills Strategy itself, the DfES in the
'Scoping Document' clarified policy further. The Scoping Document gives an
expanded view of policy adding aims and a vision along with objectives and a
set of criteria by which applications could be assessed. The 'policy' was
eventually translated into actions at community level. The flexibility within the
policy and the absence of specific and binding targets opens up the notion of
implementation to a degree of local interpretation and negotiation. Whilst
resonant with the idea of 'bottom up' processes of change, this approach is
not entirely consistent with the idea of solutions emerging from within the
community itself. Yarnit draws attention to the importance of community
involvement in relation to initiatives such as the TLC pilot. He states
unequivocally that 'community involvement is essential to successful area
Fullan, whilst acknowledging the need for 'ownership for fundamental change,' cautions against the idea that you can rely on exclusively on bottom up strategies. He points out that the 'top matters' (those establishing policy) by way of establishing the architecture for 'system change' (2003: 33). However the approach outlined in Model 2 engenders the potential for a balance between the purely hierarchical and the exclusively 'bottom up' approaches to implementing policy. Again as Fullan notes 'mandated change has a poor track record' (ibid: 33).

In the context of a balance between top down and bottom up approaches to policy implementation, Colebach (2002) identifies a horizontal dimension that effectively structures the activity undertaken in the name of policy. This aspect of the process is less about hierarchy and more about the relationships between different participants in the policy process. The hierarchical dimension recognises that policy implementation, and hence the implementation of changes to existing ways of working, takes place 'across organisational boundaries as well as within them' (ibid: 23). Importantly Colebach also notes that the horizontal dimension recognises that hierarchical authority is not enough 'and that there are many participants in the policy process and that negotiation and consensus are important' (ibid: 25). Implementation becomes a process of structured interaction between stakeholders and consumers recognising, what Fullan describes as, the 'phenomenology of change' (1991: 5). Given the complexity of government and the social context of policy this structured interaction will take place over a range of departments. This draws attention to the complexity of what may be termed the imperative for joint action and the potential for competition when agencies both within and outside government have overlapping agendas and responsibilities.

The phenomenology of change is equally applicable to those I have described as the stakeholders and consumers of the change process. Stakeholders in
this arena are part of the vertical dimension of the policy process and are represented by staff working for government and other support agencies in the regions. These individuals inhabit the more formal aspects of the change infrastructure but are closer to active implementation than their colleagues working in more central and senior positions.

Consumers are those at the action end of the policy and would include community residents and potential learners. Each of these groups and individuals is in a position where the implementation process offers a potential challenge to attitudes, values and behaviours. Managers in Government Offices, for example, are in receipt of a ‘policy mandate’, TLC implementation, that becomes an integral part of their workload. This will mean different things to different people. Some will be in agreement with the policy drive and will be energised to work in that direction. Others may feel a different orientation. Another group may find that workload and therefore capacity to add another initiative to a crowded schedule is limited.

Lipsky (1980) argues that the decisions of what he terms ‘street level bureaucrats’ (SLB) effectively become the public policy that they enact. This work provides an important insight into behaviour along the horizontal dimension of policy implementation. Making the assumption that people working in ‘street level bureaucracies’ often enter with ‘at least some commitment to service’ Lipsky proposes that, due to issues such as large caseloads and/or inadequate resources combined with ‘uncertain methods and the unpredictability of clients,’ street level bureaucrats ‘invent benign modes of mass processing’ or give in to ‘favouritism, stereotyping and routinizing’ (1980: xii). Lipsky states that this serves the organisation rather than the client as the SLB effectively ‘mediate[s] between the constitution and the citizenship on matters of policy’ (1980: 4).
This circumstance may reduce the intended effect of policy by focusing resource on, for example, ‘less hard to reach groups’ that remain within the target audience. Hill and Hupe, in discussion about the work of Lipsky, propose that attempts to control the hierarchy (through detailed, mandated policy) will ‘simply increase the tendency to stereotype and disregard the needs of their clients’ (2002: 53). Therefore, as Hill and Hupe suggest, different approaches are needed, ‘...approaches that feed in the expectations of people at local level’ (ibid: 53).

At community and individual level there is an equivalent range of possible responses to policy. In this case I would add that the remit of the TLC pilot is defined as ‘excluded communities’ and that taking part in learning opportunities is but one of a range of possible choices that are made by residents in communities on a daily basis. The act of defining an area as a Testbed Learning Community (in policy terms) does little to address issues of disadvantage and exclusion. These may be long term and systemic, amounting to a cultural predisposition to a particular way of life. At the point of implementation it is the challenge to this predisposition that achieves prominence and it is at this level that policy needs to be at is most reflexive.

Parsons proposes that if we are to ‘ameliorate social and economic problems ‘ we have to realise that it is at the ‘social level that learning can best take place’ (1995: 598). Pressman notes that, rather than thinking in terms of implementation failure, the policy/implementation continuum should be used as a route to exploration. Implementation should therefore be used for its ‘informational yield’ and policies should be evaluated ‘not against prospectively stated objectives alone, but in the light of discoveries made during implementation’ (1984: 255). Parsons supports this view stating that:

if we are to make a better job of ameliorating the human condition [we have to] find ways of improving the capacities and opportunities for
people to learn through public policy rather than just being consumers of the policy product (1995: 599).

Chapter Summary

This Chapter has provided an overview of the key themes that underpin this thesis and an analysis of the Skills Strategy (2003) and within that the Testbed Learning Communities Initiative Pilot. The Skills Strategy defines skills as vital national assets which, in an era of globalisation, are becoming increasingly important to the development of a competitive economy. Whilst globalisation is a contested concept this chapter has argued that it is a concept that exerts an influence on policy. Learning and skills is one 'policy domain' that has been subject to the influence of globalisation as governments seek to enable their workforces and their economies to maintain a competitive advantage in the globalised market place. Competing conceptions of learning and in particular Lifelong Learning are discussed as a potential 'policy' solution to both economic and social ills. Within the Skills Strategy (2003), the emphasis is upon satisfying the needs of business by promoting learning that leads to employability. However, whilst in policy terms social benefits are anticipated as an outcome from the learning process, the section on social capital urges a degree of caution suggesting that integrated and multi dimensional approaches are more likely to bring success. The TLC pilot focuses attention on this issue as it targets disadvantaged communities and seeks to define cultural change as an outcome from the learning process. A section illustrating three recent summaries of work undertaken in the field of Learning Communities can be found on page 35 of this thesis. These three surveys demonstrate a high degree of consonance with the aims and objectives of the TLC pilot. They also serve to illustrate a potential 'policy memory' which was available to the government. Having discussed the policy context two models of policy implementation are used to illustrate the complexities of this process. This notion of complexity is also apparent in the paragraph on page 41 of this thesis which refers to a relative lack of success
in relation to policy implementation. The final section of this chapter has emphasised the necessity to conceptualise policy implementation as a learning process.

**Research Questions**

This discussion in Chapters 1 and 2 leads to the identification of five research questions. The primary research question is: *What are the issues that arise in the relationship between policy generation and policy implementation?* From this question the key proposition is that: *the relationship between policy generation and policy implementation is critical to the achievement of the intended policy outcomes.* The research questions arising from this are:

1. Why was this particular policy important and how was it justified?

2. To what extent was previous work taken into account when implementing the TLC Pilot (2003)?

3. How was policy interpreted and implemented at regional and local level?

4. Did the implementation process facilitate or inhibit the achievement of the policy’s intended outcomes?

5. Are the purposes and values that were underpinned by policy given sufficient priority during the policy process?
Chapter 3 Research Methodology

The previous chapter discussed a number of themes that link together to provide the contextual and theoretical background that underpins the purpose of this research. This chapter explains and justifies the chosen research methodology. The research questions are reprised on page 68 of this chapter.

Research

This thesis explores the relationship between policy intent and policy outcomes and more specifically looks at the potential impact of the implementation process on the stated aims and objectives of policy. In explaining the importance of this research I have previously outlined three issues that need consideration. These are reprised below.

Firstly, in an age where effectiveness and efficiency are universal imperatives, policy generation and implementation have resource implications. Failed implementation would, on the face of it, appear to be a waste of scarce resources.

Secondly policy implementation will have an impact on those charged with the responsibility of implementation and also those who are the focus of the proposals. Implementation of policy is undertaken in order to achieve policy objectives. However this process is rarely predictable and may lead to perverse outcomes. Raised initial expectations may lead to eventual disappointment and a corresponding loss of trust. The potential promotion of negative attitudes may effectively reinforce the status quo and at the same time prove to be instrumental in breeding new levels of cynicism about change programmes (current and future). As previously stated, this is a particular concern in the case of vulnerable and excluded communities, which, through the TLC pilot provides a focal point for this thesis.
Thirdly there is the constancy of the imperative to change. If we consider the example of globalisation, as Scholte notes: ‘Globalisation is used to justify a range of social changes from the emergence of the information age to the demise of the state’ (2005: 14). In this context globalisation is also a pivotal component of the government's argument for both policy and social change.

In tracking the TLC policy pilot from its 'ministerial' genesis through to implementation at community level, this research proposes to develop a more complete understanding of implementation issues in order to inform the policy debate. This analysis includes the contextual parameters within which the policy is legitimated and justified.

Social research is carried out for a purpose and, as Seale suggests, is part of ‘a dynamic reflexive engagement with social and cultural worlds’ (2004: 1). This dynamic and reflexive engagement promotes and supports a process of finding out, of learning and of developing understanding. Easterby Smith et al. propose that research is carried out to ‘accelerate the process of understanding’ (2003: 1). Drew (1980: 4) cited in Bell (1987: 2) introduces an additional element when stating that: ‘Research is a systematic way of asking questions, a systematic method of enquiry. Research is conducted to solve problems and expand knowledge’.

The importance of this particular quote is the focus on the systematic nature of research, a point that Bell emphasises as follows:

'It is the systematic approach that is important in the conduct of your projects, not the title of 'research', investigation, inquiry or study. Where collection of data is involved........ orderly record keeping and thorough planning are essential (1987: 2).
Qualitative and Quantitative Research Outlined

There are a surprising number of ways in which we can undertake this process of 'finding out' and research is classified accordingly. Two of the better-known approaches to classification have direct methodological associations, these being qualitative and quantitative research. These methodologies have come to represent two contrasting views about how research in the social sciences should be conducted. Their associated epistemologies are normally taken to offer differing views about legitimate ways of finding out about and developing an understanding of the social world. See for example Punch (2005: 2) and Flick (2006: 33).

Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is usually associated with approaches to data collection such as large-scale social surveys, experiments, data analysis and structured questionnaires. Quantitative research has traditionally been aligned with a positivist philosophy and what is described as a 'scientific' approach to the collection of information. As Bryman notes, the associated imagery:

"reflects the tendency for quantitative research to be underpinned by a natural sciences model, which means that the logic and procedures of the natural sciences are taken to provide an 'epistemological yardstick' (1988: 12)."

Quantitative research, according to Bryman (ibid: 19), can be conceived of as 'a rational, linear process' and its alleged proximity to 'real science' is regarded as a significant benefit. By association this proximity brings with it all the kudos that science has accumulated through its own 'self evident' successes.

A key proposition arising from this perspective is that the social world exists externally, '... imposing itself from without' Cohen et al. (2000: 5). Its
properties, according to Easterby-Smith et al., ‘...should be measured through objective methods rather than being inferred subjectively through sensation, reflection or intuition’ (2002: 28). Similarly Easterby-Smith et al. (1991: 28), in describing Pugh (1983) as an ‘unreconstructed positivist’, lists the key principles that he (Pugh) applied to his work as:

focusing on hard data rather than opinions; looking for regularities in the data obtained and attempting to produce propositions that can generalise from specific examples to a wider population of organisation.

Cohen et al. concur, noting that ‘the view that knowledge is hard, objective and tangible will demand of researchers an observer’s role’ (2000: 6).

Qualitative Research

By comparison qualitative research links to a different range of methodologies such as participant observation, unstructured in-depth interviews, and a phenomenological epistemology. This, according to Bryman, is an approach to research that ‘seeks to describe and analyse the culture and behaviour of humans and their groups from the point of view of those being studied’ (1988: 46). The essence of this perspective is that reality is not determined by external, objective factors but constructed by people in social circumstances. Easterby-Smith et al. suggest that:

The task of the social scientist should not be to gather facts and measure how often certain patterns occur, but to appreciate the different constructions and meanings that people place upon their experience (2002: 31).

This more phenomenological stance, according to Taylor and Bogdan:

is committed to understanding social phenomena from the actors own perspective. He or she examines the world as it is experienced. The important reality is what people perceive it to be (1984: 2).
Supporters of this tradition tend to argue that there is a significant difference between natural science and social science contexts. Investigating and researching people (social science) is not the same as measuring the speed of light or the rate of descent of an object through a viscous medium (natural sciences). As Hughes notes ‘human life is essentially different’ and consequently ‘...human action is not as predictable, as determined in its course, as the inanimate subject matter of the natural sciences’ (1990: 107). This 'significant' difference between physical and social contexts is used to define, and importantly to justify, the need to address research issues in the social sciences in ways that differ from the approaches adopted in the natural sciences.

Relative Strengths and Weaknesses of Qualitative and Quantitative Research

The approaches outlined have their own relative strengths and weaknesses when it comes to carrying out research, some of which can be inferred from the preceding paragraphs. As a generalisation quantitative approaches:

- can be undertaken with relative speed
- are relatively structured
- are effective and efficient at gathering large amounts of data
- enable analysis to be undertaken with relative ease
- can support policy development
- are associated with a link to scientific process.

On the debit side such approaches may be inflexible and somewhat removed from 'reality', failing to take account of contextual issues and the perceptions of individuals. This point is reinforced by Cohen et al., who state that positivism is:

less successful in its application to the study of human behaviour where the immense complexity of human behaviour and the elusive
and intangible quality of social phenomena contrast strikingly with the order and regularity of the natural world (2000: 9).

Qualitative methodologies are considered to be:

- strong on process and understanding the meaning that individuals bring to the research context (real life situations)
- generally more flexible and therefore more adaptable to context and contextual change
- helpful in generating theories
- able to provide information which is grounded and gathered in ‘realistic’ situations.

Weaknesses include the time and resource intensive nature of data collection, analysis and interpretation. Outcomes may not lend themselves to generalisation, as population sample sizes are by definition smaller. In some quarters the perceived lack of conformance to the rules of scientific investigation remains an issue.

Writers such as Cohen and Manion (1994) and Taylor and Bogdan (1984) emphasise the almost adversarial nature of these ‘contrasting’ approaches to research, others such as Easterby-Smith et al. (2002), Gill and Johnson (2002) and Thomas and Mohan (2007) offer a more pragmatic approach. The former lean towards a more academic, research based tradition, whilst the latter are written from a business/policy development perspective. The former could be said to be facilitating debate at a philosophical level whilst the latter is primarily concerned about the practicalities of organisational research and development.

Qualitative approaches can, from a number of perspectives, be viewed as offering a more exploratory route to social research. Data gathered by associated methodologies is described as rich, deep and dense, offering the
potential for a range of developmental perspectives and insights. Relatively unstructured, this range of methodologies provide a flexibility encourages the notion of surprise. The more structured regimes of quantitative research, for example experiments and large scale structured surveys, offer significant strengths in terms of internal validity and reliability.

Gill and Johnson (2002: 163) note some concerns about what they define as 'ecological validity' in that conclusions from some of the more experimental approaches are not grounded in real situations and, to this extent, may give rise to what they describe as the illusion of validity. Importantly, the outcomes of some quantitative research, for example large social surveys, are often based on the aggregated responses of individual perceptions to distance delivered questionnaires. In this case the development, application and interpretation of the instrument are more often than not regarded as unproblematic.

By contrast qualitative research is grounded in everyday circumstances described by Gill and Johnson as '... natural contexts typical of normal everyday life' (2002: 163). A gain in ecological validity is balanced against a relative decline in reliability as the work becomes that much more difficult to replicate.

The Role of the Researcher

Considering the role of the researcher helps to illustrate another key difference between the two approaches under discussion. Classically the researcher in natural sciences is characterised as the objective outsider, conducting but not contaminating the research. Bryman explains that 'he or she applies a preordained framework on the subjects being investigated and is involved as little as possible in that world' (1988: 96). Furthermore Bryman notes that 'Observations are viewed as being uncontaminated by the
scientists theoretical or personal predilections' (1988: 16). By theoretical predilections we can also include the framework of questions that (may) constitute the research instrument. The imposition of a framework is viewed as a neutral act having no influence on the respondent and not being prejudicial to the outcomes. The observer is independent to that which is being observed and characterised as the outsider looking in. Bryman suggests that even when undertaking before and after research, ‘...contact is fleeting or non existent’ (1988: 95).

This is in sharp contrast to the approach taken by qualitative researchers who will actively seek to view the world from the inside, from the very perspective of the subject. In this context Taylor and Bogdan note:

"Central to the phenomenological perspective and hence qualitative research is experiencing reality as others experience it. Qualitative researchers empathize and identify with the people they study in order to understand how they see things (1984: 6)."

As I have outlined, the two approaches to research discussed above are associated with a range of methodologies and corresponding strengths and weaknesses. At a philosophical/epistemological level it is possible to be clear about what these are and how they relate to particular views of the social world. However, when it comes to undertaking and implementing a research programme, the position is not quite so clear-cut. The next section moves on to clarify the research focus for this thesis before discussing methodological choice in more detail.

**Research Focus**

As outlined in a previous section the focus of this research is the implementation of the Testbed Learning Communities (TLC) pilot. To date there has been no systematic national evaluation of this programme. In order
to develop an understanding of the way in which policy was interpreted and subsequently implemented at local level, this thesis proposes to evaluate policy implementation through the analysis of two TLCs. This will facilitate an evaluation of the efficacy of the implementation process when set alongside the policy and its intended outcomes. The following section provides a more detailed account of the choice of case study as a strategy for integrating the elements of this research as outlined above. However there are five key reasons supporting this decision:

1) The case study is itself boundaried being framed within the parameters of the Skills Strategy (2003) and subsequent guidance issued by the DfES.
2) The two TLCs that form Case Studies 1 and 2 are boundaried and discrete organisations
3) The TLCs are contemporary phenomena.
4) Developing an understanding of policy/implementation requires an in depth and contextual approach to the processes involved
5) A range of sources of information are available to support this analysis

As stated above this research takes the form of a case study and integrates three sources of information. The first of these is the information obtained from semi-structured interviews with key national, regional and community stakeholders. This aspect of the research uses research schedules developed to address the themes determined from an analysis of policy and its supporting rationale. Copies of the research schedules can be found in Appendix 1. The second source consists of two situated (TLC) case studies that will provide a more detailed exposition of local implementation processes. The third element is the analysis of documentary evidence from three sources as follows:
1. policy documents and supporting statements from Government
2. papers issued by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and
   archive material from Government Offices
3. documentation from the two case study TLCs.

A Case Studies approach to Qualitative Research

Silverman emphasises the importance of methodology emerging from an
analysis of purpose stating that ‘... the choice of methodology should not be
predetermined’ but arise from ‘... what you are trying to find out’ (2005: 6).
In support of the choice of ‘case study’ as an approach to this research it is
necessary to restate some of the background to this thesis.

- As outlined in a previous section this thesis explores the relationship
  between policy intent and policy outcomes and more specifically the
  potential impact of the implementation process on the stated aims and
  objectives of the policy.

- The focus of this exploration is the implementation of the TLC pilot.
  The parameters of this initiative are outlined in the Skills Strategy
  (2003).

- The Minister approved twenty-eight TLC proposals. All TLCs are
  geographically boundaried (see Yarnit, 2006). This research proposes
  to study implementation in two of the twenty-eight TLCs.

- The TLC pilot was a time-limited programme the end date for which
  was 31\textsuperscript{st} March 2006 (see Yarnit 2006).
• The Skills Strategy contains a limited amount of guidance about what constitutes a TLC. Skills Strategy (2003:105-107). This encouraged the idea of contextual mediation at regional level and community level. (DfES: Developing Learning Communities: Scoping Document final version 26.11.03)

The research questions as listed on page 52 of this thesis require the development of an in depth understanding of a specific policy/implementation process. This aligns with Punch (2005: 144), who states that a case study is: 'a strategy for building understanding'. In this instance the case is about the real life experience of programme implementation at the level of the individual TLC. Stake notes that 'the case is an integrated system...thus people and programs are clearly prospective cases' (1995: 2). Yin, (1994) quoted in Robson (2002: 178), emphasises three characteristics of a 'case when stating that:

Case study is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence.

The TLC pilot is an example of a 'contemporary phenomenon' and is also boundaried in terms of policy architecture, policy parameters (including programme duration) and geographical location (page 61 outlines multiple sources of evidence). It is also important to emphasise the retrospective nature of this research which adds additional value to the role of individuals and to their perception and recollection of the implementation process.

The thesis itself is a case study about policy implementation. The 'case' is in this context, the policy. In Stake’s (1995: 3) terminology, the 'instrumental' case study is extended to cover several cases in order to learn more about the phenomenon in question. As I have outlined, two situated TLC case studies are proposed. Case Study 2 is based in an area of the North of
England previously associated with coal mining and heavy industry and Case Study 1 is on the outskirts of a city in the East Midlands. High levels of unemployment characterise both areas, which also score highly on national indices of deprivation. In Case Study 1, for example 70%, of the adult population is qualified below level 2 (see Local Area Learning Plan: 2004). In Case Study 2, 30% of the adult population have a basic skills need and the employment rate is 10% below the regional average of 69.6% (TLC Submission, 2003b).

The research process involves interviewing managers of the related Government Offices and also the managers of the Testbed Learning Communities. It aims to develop an understanding of local implementation processes set alongside the policy objectives. In essence this forms a contextual and situated account of implementation from a participant perspective, supported by appropriate records and policy documents e.g. minutes of meetings, quarterly reports, steering group notes and local (TLC specific) targets. The research therefore uses multiple sources of information but relies, to a great extent, on individual semi-structured interviews providing retrospective perceptions of an implementation process.

Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Research

One of the key issues for researchers is whether or not their work will stand up to analysis. Easterby Smith et al. argue that ‘research papers ...are most likely to be attacked on methodological grounds, and one of the key claims of research is that it is somehow more believable than everyday observations’ (2002: 52). Robson draws attention to what he describes as the 'deep-rooted uncertainty about the place and value of studying cases’ (2002: 179). In this respect the issues of validity and reliability are worthy of particular attention. Validity is, according to Silverman, another word for 'truth' (2005: 210). Cohen et al. also note that validity may be addressed through:
the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the observer' (2000: 105).

In addition, Creswell notes that validity is seen as strength of qualitative research, and is used to determine whether or not the findings from research are accurate from '...the point of view of the researcher, the participant or the readers of an account' (2003: 195). Creswell (ibid: 196) offers eight strategies to improve validity and recommends that the researcher uses one or two of them to check the accuracy of findings. Yin (2003: 34), in outlining four tests of validity, also emphasises the need to use multiple sources of evidence and ensure that 'key informants' are able to review drafts of the case study report. This research uses the following to enhance the validity of the case:

- Triangulation
- Member or stakeholder validation
- Ensuring comprehensive data treatment.

Triangulation, according to Bryman, 'entails using more than one method or source of data to study social phenomena' (2001: 275). This would enable a particular finding or statement to be supported or otherwise from a number of sources. For example, a point raised in an interview could be referenced against other interviews and also the contents of related documentary analysis. The researcher therefore collects data from a number of sources in order to corroborate the same fact or phenomena. (Yin 2003: 99).

Member or stakeholder validation is a process by which the researcher provides the interviewee with an account of the interview/findings. The aim, as Bryman notes, is to 'seek corroboration or otherwise of the account that the researcher has arrived at' (2001: 274).
Comprehensive data treatment refers to an appropriate use of all research material rather than the researcher being selective about what is and what is not included in analysis. This has the effect of reducing the potential for researcher bias and minimising the tendency towards anecdotalism. (Silverman 2004: 214)

Reliability is, according to Yin, related to ensuring that:

if a later investigator followed the same procedures as described by an earlier investigator ……the later investigator should arrive at the same findings and conclusions (2003: 37).

The goal of these processes is to minimize error and bias in the study. Clearly this means ensuring an appropriate level of procedural documentation that Yin (2003:106) proposes can be addressed by the development of a case study database and appropriate protocols. The importance of a well-documented evidence trail and clarity in relation to documenting the procedures and the processes of the case study are not to be underestimated. Silverman (2005: 223), quoting Kirk and Miller (1986: 72), notes that:

While the forte of field research will always lie in its capability to sort out the validity of propositions…. For reliability to be calculated, it is incumbent on the scientific investigator to document his or her procedure.

The situated case studies represent distinct sites and offer the possibility of unique interpretation of policy, posing a question about the extent to which the ‘case’ interprets the policy. The two cases however have common ground in that they are part of the same project and in effect interpret the same policy template albeit in two different locations.
The emergent case study narrative and supporting documentation offer scope for analysis against the potential within the policy itself and importantly the unique horizons generated through local implementation processes. Yin offers three strategies for the analysis of case study evidence, the first and ‘…most preferred’ (2003: 111) of which is to relate the analysis to the theoretical propositions that inspired the original case study. Analysis will be ongoing and based on a qualitative interpretation of the interviews, case studies, documentary evidence and an assessment of the relationship to the policy process.

Research protocols

All interviewees were contacted by the researcher, either by telephone or e-mail, and received a copy of the letter of introduction. This letter outlined the broad nature and purpose of the research, along with a short paragraph about confidentiality (See Appendix 6). A research schedule outlining areas for discussion was also provided for interviewees (See appendix 1). Issues about confidentiality were outlined in the initial letter and were also reinforced by the researcher before the start of each interview. Consent forms were obtained from each interviewee and, with the permission of the interviewee, all interviews were recorded and transcribed. All interviewees were provided with a full transcript of the interview and a request for comments. The exception to this was a telephone interview undertaken with a representative from the Scarman Trust, one of two national organisations commissioned to support the initiative. In this case a discussion about the background to and purpose of the research took place before the interview began.

The Research Questions

The primary research question for this thesis is: What are the issues that arise in the relationship between policy generation and policy
**implementation?** This question provides the basis for the key proposition in this thesis namely that: *the relationship between policy generation and policy implementation is critical to the achievement of the intended policy outcomes.*

In order to assess and interrogate this proposition five research questions are proposed. Question 2 was added after consideration of previous work undertaken by the DfEE and the DfES in the field of Learning Communities (see Chapter 2 page 35). The research questions are:

1. Why was this particular policy important and how was it justified?

2. To what extent was previous work taken into account when implementing the TLC Pilot (2003)?

3. How was policy interpreted and implemented at regional and local level?

4. Did the implementation process facilitate or inhibit the achievement of the policy's intended outcomes?

5. Are the purposes and values that were underpinned by policy given sufficient priority during the policy process?

This proposition and the research questions are based on the idea that policy is, in the first instance, an important statement of values. In the case of Testbed Learning Communities, as with any other public policy there is a concern about whether or not 'policy' represents value for money. More importantly, in this case however is the concern that this particular policy is focused on individuals and communities defined as disadvantaged. The policy, defined in this way, carries a degree of moral purpose. By virtue of this moral purpose, successful implementation accrues additional significance.
Research Schedules were developed from this initial proposition. In order to understand whether or not outcomes are negatively affected by implementation it is important to understand the implementation process at both Government Office and community level in the chosen locations. In addition the research will determine whether or not the aims and objectives of the TLC Pilot were achieved in accordance with the policy’s original intent.

Research Schedules were designed and developed for use with managers at National and Regional level and also for the interviews with national representatives of both The National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE) and the Scarman Trust. The format for the interviews was semi-structured, and it was necessary on a number of occasions during the interview process, to be flexible about the sequencing of questions and the pursuit of additional lines of enquiry.

The research schedule used at regional level was piloted with two interviewees during the early phase of the research before the interview cycle began in earnest. As a result of this pilot, two additional questions were proposed. These suggested amendments were subsequently adopted.

**Interviews**

As outlined above semi-structured interviews form an important part of this research. Bryman (2001: 319) states that the interview is probably the most widely employed method in qualitative research, a point echoed by Gubrium and Holstein (2002), cited in Silverman (2004: 140). Seale proposes that ‘interviews are most importantly, a form of communication, a means of extracting different forms of information from individuals and groups’ (2004: 180). From a different perspective the interview process may be viewed as a place where meaning is constructed through the conversation between interviewer and interviewee. Interview data, whilst retaining its contextual
'case located' nature, becomes the outcome of a process of data generation rather than simply data collection or as proposed above 'data extraction'.

As stated previously this thesis is about the process of policy implementation. Implementation inevitably involves individuals at the point at which policy is translated and delivered. This policy was not particularly prescriptive in the sense that it did not, for example, impose rigid structures and a range of targets. Rather it sought to encourage the development of local responses to locally defined issues within the broad conceptual framework embraced by the notion of learning communities as outlined in the Skills Strategy (2003: 105). The analysis of policy implementation therefore concentrates on the role of individuals and individuals within organisations.

Qualitative approaches to interview offer a means to develop an understanding of individual stories and come from an ontological position which, according to Seale, ‘...values people's knowledge, values and experience as meaningful and worthy of exploration’ (2004: 182). Given the retrospective nature of this research, asking interviewees to recount their own 'TLC story' represents the most effective strategy for developing an understanding of that story.

Yin (2003: 86) notes a number of strengths and weaknesses of the interview process. Strengths include a facility to focus directly on the case study topic and a level of 'insightfulness' that may provide what Yin terms 'perceived causal inferences'. Bryman (2001: 332) emphasises the importance of flexibility in terms of the interview process. The qualitative interview offers the researcher the opportunity to vary the order of questions, to follow up leads and to clear up any inconsistencies. Seale also emphasises the importance of the interactive nature of interviews as a means of accessing the attitudes and values of individuals and notes that open ended questions provide ‘...better
access to interviewee's views, interpretations of events, understandings, experiences and opinions' (2004: 182).

From Yin’s (2003: 92) perspective, weaknesses in the interview process may include: a potential for bias due to poorly constructed questions, inaccuracy due to poor recall and the potential for the interviewee to give the answer that he or she feel is desired by the interviewer. I would also add at this point that the skills of the interviewer, the context within which the interview takes place and the climate set by the interviewer/interviewee relationship are additional elements in what Cohen et al. describe as ‘...the transaction that takes place between seeking information on the part of one and supplying information on the part of the other’ (2000: 268).

Whilst there are common features across all proposed interviews, the focus at national/regional level is on understanding policy implementation and the extent to which implementation issues are considered during policy development. At regional/local level the interview emphasis shifts to the means by which policy is operationalised and objectives are achieved.

**Sampling**

The initial research schedule proposed a relatively small number of interviews. However, on reflection, the population size was increased. This was done for two reasons. Firstly the TLC pilot finished in March 2006 and there was a gap of almost a year between this and the first interviews. A larger population sample assists in the verification of the processes and enhances the opportunity for triangulation. Secondly, given the nature and flexibility of the initial policy and the subsequent implementation process at regional and community level, the numbers of 'strategic' managers involved was more than originally envisaged. For example NIACE, the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education, have both national and regional
representatives involved in this programme. Increasing the number of interviewees enabled the researcher to embrace a broader range of perspectives on the implementation process and demonstrates the reflexive nature of the research process. Seventeen individuals were interviewed during the research process each of whom was chosen for their proximity to the policy/implementation process. All interviewees (national, regional and local) were in a position to address the themes of policy development, interpretation and implementation as implicit in the title of this thesis and manifest in the research questions listed on page 52 and 68. Short biographies of the interviewees are provided in Case Studies 1 and 2 (see pages 86 and 141). In order to ensure completion of the schedule and, in some instances, seek clarification, three interviewees were interviewed on more than one occasion resulting in a total of twenty-two interviews. These repeat visits to the sites were also helpful in building levels of confidence between interviewer and interviewee. I would also add that interviewees are invariably busy people.

It is, at the time of writing, five years since the inception of the TLCs and their mention in the Skills Strategy (2003) and more than two years since the official end of the pilot (March 2006). During that period Ivan Lewis MP, the sponsor and political driving force behind the inclusion of TLCs in the Skills Strategy (2003), moved from his post as Minister for Skills and Vocational Education. However the views of Ivan Lewis and his contribution to the original policy remain central to this research. It was not possible to interview Ivan Lewis' successor, Phil Hope M.P. However Phil Hope outlined his views on Learning Communities at the DFES Conference, Raising Aspirations; Sustaining Success, on January 18th 2006. This Conference marked an end to the initiative itself and coincided with the publication of the Review (Yarnit: 2006). This speech forms part of the evidence database for this research. From the more pragmatic perspective of policy implementation there are a number of other stakeholders. The first of these are the Government Offices
who were, at a regional level, charged with the responsibility of implementing the TLC policy and reporting its progress. A second group of stakeholders is associated with the TLCs themselves and the initial intention is to interview key managers in each of the two case study TLCs. Finally, the project was supported at national level by The National Institute of Adult and Community Education (NIACE) and the Scarman Trust. Again interviews with key personnel from these national organisations are part of the research schedule.

Yarnit states that twenty-eight TLCs were set up as part of the pilot (2006: 11). As previously mentioned this research proposes to undertake case studies in two of the TLCs. The choice of TLCs was made on the basis of:

1. access and convenience of location
2. the case studies offered a contrast between a compact, deprived, inner city environment and a sparsely populated rural area which also suffered high levels of deprivation.
3. the case study TLCs were willing participants in the research.
4. all the TLCs were subject to the same policy imperative and were chosen as test beds on the basis of criteria drawn up by the DfES (Scoping Document see Appendix 2).
5. the Minister, Ivan Lewis, approved all the TLCs on the basis of submissions from regional Government Offices.
6. as an individual researcher working alone there are time and resource constraints particularly in relation to arranging and conducting interviews that involve lengthy (and repeated) journeys.
7. the researcher had no previous working relationship with either of the case study areas.
8. both areas featured in the TLC Review (Yarnit 2006) and both TLCs continue to operate within the broad parameters established at the time of the pilot.
Document Analysis

As previously mentioned, the TLC policy itself is detailed in the Skills Strategy (2003) and also in the working documents distributed to Government Offices by the DfES which were developed to assist in the implementation process. Speeches by both Ivan Lewis M.P. and his successor Phil Hope M.P. also provide additional background information. Archival documents are maintained at the Government Offices in the pilot Areas and by the TLCs themselves. These documents will supplement information and understanding that can be gained through interviews undertaken at national, regional and community level and in addition facilitate a degree of triangulation.

Yin (2003: 86) highlights a number of strengths and weaknesses of documentary evidence. Strengths include: stability of information, the idea that documents can be reviewed repeatedly, that documents are not created as a result of the case study, that documents are exact in that they may contain names, references and the details of an event and they may offer broad coverage over time, events or settings. Whilst I would agree with Yin’s analysis, I would add that repeated viewing may not always be possible and it may therefore be appropriate and important to capture the ‘evidence’ at the minimum number of visits/viewings. From Yin’s perspective disadvantages would include the potential for low retrievability; selection and reporting of documents may be biased and access may be deliberately blocked. Again these are important considerations. Given the time lapse between the origination of this project and the completion date for the initiative, irretrievability becomes an increasingly important issue. Further to this is the issue of how information is stored. I had assumed that materials from Government Offices would be filed clearly and systematically, allowing an almost linear chronological perusal. However this was not the case and my
first analysis of the related documents was spent listing files and contents in order to facilitate a subsequent visit.

Creswell offers a similar breakdown of documentary sources of information and notes three additional strengths. Firstly he feels that documents may help the researcher gain access to the language and words of participants. Secondly documentation represents data that are thoughtful in that 'participants have given thought to writing it down' and thirdly that as written evidence it saves the researcher the time and expense of transcription (2003: 187). In this case I would add that the facility for copying documents is not necessarily available and that a degree of transcription was, in this case, inevitable. Creswell's suggested list of weaknesses for documentary evidence includes the notion that the documents may not be authentic or accurate and that material may not be complete. Nonetheless, as Seale states, documents do provide an important source of both original and corroborating information, which may also facilitate a degree of triangulation (2004: 252).

**Ethics**

The research process, according to Bryman (2001: 506), brings us into '... a realm in which the role of values in the research process becomes a topic for discussion'. Seale (op.cit.: 118) proposes that '...research relationships wherever possible should be characterised by trust and integrity'. Clearly, in terms of qualitative interviews, the relationship between the researcher and the interviewee forms a significant aspect of the integrity and validity of the whole research and, as Silverman states, 'when you are studying peoples behaviour or asking them questions, not only the values of the researcher but also the researcher's responsibilities for those studied have to be faced' (2000: 257). Cohen et al. (2000: 279), note that it is crucial to keep in one's mind the fact that the interview is a social and interpersonal encounter, not merely a data collection exercise or, as Seale (2004: 181) states, 'data
generation'. Interviews according to Cohen et al. (2000: 292) '... have an ethical dimension; they concern interpersonal interaction and produce information about the human condition'. Cohen et al. (ibid: 49), note the potential for ethical issues to arise at any stage in the research process.

Additionally, the flexibility offered by the qualitative research interview whereby the interview may depart from the schedule in order to follow up an emergent line of enquiry alerts the researcher to the need for ongoing ethical vigilance (Silverman, 2000: 257).

Bryman (2004: 509) quotes from Dienar and Crandall (1978) who split concerns about ethics into four main areas as follows:
- whether there is harm to participants
- whether there is a lack of informed consent
- whether there is an invasion of privacy
- whether deception is involved.

In this thesis consideration was given to the issue of informed consent during the formative stage of the research. Diener and Crandall (1978), quoted in Cohen et al. (2000: 50), define informed consent as:

> the procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decision.

As I have stated in an earlier section all prospective participants were informed of the nature and purpose of the research and attention drawn to the potential for interviewee withdrawal should they no longer wish to take part in the research. In addition written and verbal assurances were given about confidentiality and transcripts of all interviews provided for comment. To an extent research of this nature involves an invasion of privacy and, linked to that, a potential for interviewee discomfort (harm). Without the initial approach
by the researcher, participants would not be in the position of interviewee and would not therefore need to consider the issues inherent within this role. Even with the assurance of an explanation of purpose and informed consent the interview process will provide an arena for the disclosure of sensitive information or personal insights that may or may not be intended for public consumption. I would also advance the idea that concerns on the part of the interviewee may surface at any time during the research process. This issue however becomes of particular significance when transcripts and manuscripts are returned for consideration.

**Data Analysis**

The previous section outlined the major methodological issues. This section explains the process of data analysis. A detailed list of evidence considered as part of this case study can be found in Appendix 3. The main sources of data for the case study are as follows:

1. Interviews (based on Interview Schedules)
2. Policy Documents
3. Supporting Statements (including related speeches)
4. Documents from Government Office
5. Documents retained by the two Case Study Testbed Learning Communities.

This case study could be regarded as a relatively small-scale piece of research as it involves one researcher working to a limited time scale within specific and delineated boundaries. The case studies that form an integral part of the overall 'case' are a sample from a total of twenty-eight Testbed Learning Communities that were sanctioned as part of this policy initiative. A wide range of supporting materials was obtained from Government Offices in the regions involved. The Testbeds provided a range of information in
written form. In addition, conference speeches and articles by the Government Minister, Ivan Lewis, who was instrumental in initiating the Test bed Learning Communities pilot were also used. In spite of its relatively small scale, the process of ‘gathering’ information has produced a significant volume of both written and spoken (transcribed verbatim) material. Patton states that ‘the data generated by qualitative methods are voluminous’ (2005: 441). This point is given further emphasis by Robson who proposes that ‘even with small scale research qualitative data can be overwhelming’ (2002: 475). Robson also suggests that ‘naïve researchers may be injured by the unforeseen problems with qualitative data... [this can], ‘occur at the collection stage where overload is a constant danger’ (ibid: 456). Data analysis, as Yin states, consists of ‘examining, categorising, tabulating, testing or otherwise recombining... evidence to address the initial proposition of the study’ (2003: 109). Clearly data analysis can be a daunting task and Denscombe emphasises that qualitative data ‘in its raw state is likely to be difficult to interrogate in any systematic and meaningful fashion’ (2007: 289). Miles and Huberman offer a framework intended to assist in the process by which ‘raw data’ can be used to test the proposals outlined in research. This framework consists of three ‘concurrent flows of activity’ these being data reduction, data display and drawing conclusions and verification (1994: 10). Miles and Huberman also emphasise an ‘anticipatory’ phase to the data reduction process which precedes data collection. This occurs as the researcher defines the conceptual framework within which the research takes place. From this perspective action such as defining the research question, selecting the case, choosing an appropriate methodology and selecting the interview sample have an early effect on the potential data sources. The following section applies the framework developed by Miles and Huberman to structure an approach to data analysis. This framework is applicable to qualitative research and consistent with the research process undertaken and offering an appropriate means by which the ‘raw data’ can be structured.
Components of Data Analysis: Flow Model adapted from Miles and Huberman (1994:10):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipatory Phase</th>
<th>Data Reduction*</th>
<th>Post (during)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data Displays*</td>
<td>Post (during)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conclusion Drawing/Verification*</td>
<td>Post (during)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes analysis takes place across all phases

I have previously referred to what Miles and Huberman define as an anticipatory phase of the research process (1994: 10). In one sense this begins with the circumstances that give rise to the generation of the question. In this case this relates to a concern, from my perspective, about the effect of implementation processes on policy outcomes. I would also have to be quite clear that on reading the Skills Strategy (2003) and being invited to initial discussion about Testbed Learning Communities, I experienced some personal disquiet about what appeared to be a laudable policy set within a very compressed time scale. In one sense therefore this marks the beginning of the data collection and analysis process.

This process then moves on to an analysis of policy documentation and related pronouncements in the form of lead articles in the Journal for Adult Learning and notes from conference speeches made by the Minister, Ivan Lewis M.P., in support of the policy. From this analysis a research question is eventually formed. As outlined earlier in this chapter, the initial proposition and research question are used to generate a range of questions. The next process in this anticipatory phase is arriving at a definitive (with the anticipation of adjustment) list of questions that will address the issues raised
in the research question. These questions are then refined and tested in two preliminary interviews after which appropriate adjustments are made.

The analysis inferred from the question requires an exploration of the policy and its implementation in order to ascertain how implementation took place and moves to determine its effect on the policy outcomes. This circumstance assists the determination of the sample of interviewees. Firstly the sample must relate to those who are in a position to provide answers. Secondly the sample must be manageable in terms of that important resource, time. Thirdly the interviewees must be accessible and willing to participate in the research.

The interviews were established and undertaken in accordance with the protocols outlined on page 67 of this Chapter. This process produced twenty-two interviews, in excess of 60,000 words of verbatim transcript, and a range of supporting documentation from the interviewees and from sources discussed at interview and subsequently followed up.

At this point the data analysis process has moved from the anticipatory phase into data collection, reduction, display, conclusion drawing and verification. As part of Miles and Huberman's previously mentioned notion of 'concurrent flows', it is worthwhile noting that the process of analysis permeates all phases of the framework. Miles and Huberman (1994) along with Denscombe (2007) allude to the idea that once started this is an ongoing process 'which continues until the final report is completed' (1994:11). Similarly Denscombe notes the 'need for the researcher to go back and forth between stages particularly in relation to coding, interpreting and verifying data' (2007: 288).

The Data Reduction Process

The research schedule (Appendix 1) developed for use with interviewees at national, regional and local level reflects the researcher's perception of the
information required to illuminate the research question. This schedule, and
the categories defined by the questions within it, is therefore a tool in the
process of data reduction, analysis and display.

In addition, working through the data sources and interview transcripts
highlights other possible and potential categorisations. Each of the interviews
undertaken is transcribed verbatim. Patton notes that transcription ‘offers
another point of transition between data collection and analysis…. and an
opportunity for getting immersed in the data’ (2002: 441). The transcription
process set alongside the reading and re-reading of transcriptions supports
researcher familiarisation and what Cohen et al. describe as, ‘progressive
data focusing (2000: 147) In reality the application of this process involves the
following:

- Reading and re-reading interview transcriptions alongside policy
documents and other evidence,
- Highlighting, extracting and tabulating statements from each
interviewee
- Linking statements to research questions and emergent themes.

Appendices 7 and 8 illustrate this process with reference to public statements
made by Ivan Lewis M.P. Key points from ministerial speeches and articles
are highlighted and transferred into tabular form (Appendix 7). Implications
from the statements are listed in the right hand column. For example
statement [A] illustrates both axiological issues and programme duration. All
interviews and key policy statements were subject to the same process.
Taking the example of membership, highlighted as important in terms of the
policy. Interviewee responses to ‘membership’ were highlighted in the
transcript and then tabulated for each individual interviewee. This provides a
spectrum of views across the sample and facilitates a degree of triangulation.
This list of key themes (see for example Appendix 8 ) and the tabulation of
perspectives assists in building a picture of the implementation process and various elements within it. This reflexive process has the additional effect of reducing the volume of information into what Miles & Huberman describe as: ‘an immediately accessible and compact form’ (1994: 11). There are however dangers in this process not least of which is the potential for the researcher to focus on information that highlights one perspective only (that which is dear to the researcher). For example, I have highlighted above a concern about ‘a laudable policy set in a compressed timescale’. Significant bias would be introduced into the research if, on undertaking analysis of the data, information that supported this statement was given prominence to the detriment of any opposing views. From a different but, equally important perspective, Punch notes that the ‘object of data reduction is to reduce the data without significant loss of information’ and in addition not to ‘strip the data from context’ (2005: 198). This potential tension between data reduction and display and maintaining data integrity is also highlighted by Cohen et al. who emphasise that ‘the great tension in data analysis is between maintaining a sense of the holism of the interview and the tendency for analysis to atomise... thereby losing the synergy of the whole’ (2000: 283).

Data Display

The outcome of the above processes is a series of statements, ideas and contexts in the form of tabulated entries, linked back to the themes that emerged during the interview process. The majority of the ‘themes’ are determined through the initial policy analysis, which is linked through the research question(s) and initial proposition. The interview process itself is also a potential (and valuable) source of other (emergent) insights to which the researcher remains open. In addition to the themes which link directly to questions in the national and regional research schedules a number of axiological issues emerge from analysis of policy statements. These axiological issues are the foundations upon which policy is built and are
manifest in the form of statements that ‘justify’ TLCs as a policy option. Again this is part of the cycle of data analysis and highlights the importance of a range of source material and the facility to cross-reference.

In this research the statements that link to the research themes were tabulated. Each interview therefore produced a table of statements. These statements are then used in the development of the response to the initial research question. In using the individual statements it is important that they are not developed in isolation from the context of the original interview. There are two outcomes from this process. The first of these involves the representation of individual ‘case ‘ findings within Case Studies 1 and 2. At the end of each Case Study key ideas are expressed and collated. As Patton states ‘each case study in a report stands alone, allowing the reader to understand the case as a unique, holistic entity’ (2002: 450). Thus the cases illuminate the research question as individual case studies. Secondly, the final chapters of the thesis, Chapter 6 and 7 are informed by the above, and are used to focus thinking on the outcomes of the research as a whole.

Chapter Summary

This Chapter has outlined and explained the chosen research methodology. Case Studies 1 and 2 illustrate and analyse the policy implementation process in two Testbed Learning Communities. The importance of consistency in the research process has been raised, in particular in relation to the issue of validity (page 64). In this context the Case Studies reproduce the same processes and format as each other an approach that inevitably produces a degree of repetition. For example, the research questions are listed at the beginning of each Case Study. The Case Studies detail a wide range of local circumstances adding a degree of complexity to the narrative. Whilst local detail is important to clarify the texture of each Case Study there is clearly a danger of ‘unnecessary complexity’. This has been addressed by minimising repetition and by the provision of a Glossary of Terms (p256).
Chapter 4: Case Study 1

Section A. Introduction

The aim of the Case Study is to focus the research by providing a context against which the research questions can be tested. As stated in the introduction the thesis proposes to explore the issues that arise in the relationship between policy generation and policy implementation. The focal point of this Case Study is a 'Testbed Learning Community' (TLC).

This Case Study aims to address the following research questions:

1. Why was this particular policy important and what was the justification for this policy?
2. To what extent was previous work taken into account when implementing the TLC Pilot (2003)?
3. How was this policy interpreted and implemented at regional and local level?
4. Did the implementation process facilitate or inhibit the achievement of the policy's intended outcomes?
5. Are the purposes and values that were underpinned by policy given sufficient priority during the policy implementation process?

The research questions are addressed through an analysis of policy development and implementation. This analysis includes:

- a brief description of the area in which the TLC in Case Study 1 is situated (Section B)
- an outline of the role that Government Office played in the policy implementation process (Section C)
• an outline and discussion of the Submission for TLC status: Case Study 1 (Section D)
• an assessment of success in relation to national (and local) aims and objectives of the programme (Section E)
• a summary of purpose as outlined in the Skills Strategy (2003), the Scoping Document and articles and speeches written and given in support of policy (Section F).

Key issues are highlighted at the end of each Section/Sub-section and discussed in the Summary, Section F.

Case Study 1 has been completed using a range of information sources all of which are listed in the Bibliography. It also contains extracts from a number of interviews conducted by the researcher. Interviews were undertaken with senior managers from organisations related to the project and also with a consultant working within the area of the TLC who was instrumental in assisting with the development of the TLC proposal. The final interviewee is Ivan Lewis M.P. who, at the time of the initiative, was Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for Skills and Adult Education at the Department for Education and Skills. Short biographies of the interviewees are provided in the table below. A Glossary of Terms can be found in Appendix 5.
Table 1: Interviewee Biographies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Interview Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LC1:</td>
<td>Area Lifelong Learning Manager, a senior strategic position in the area Adult Learning infrastructure. (see glossary of terms)</td>
<td>05.03.2007 21.12.2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RE1</td>
<td>Head of Area Team at Government Office and ‘Policy Leader’ on the TLC initiative</td>
<td>30.01.2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RE3</td>
<td>Senior Education Business Manager at Government Office</td>
<td>25.06.2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC3</td>
<td>TLC Manager/Area Learning Facilitator. Acting ‘Centre’ management during maternity leave of LC2.</td>
<td>05.02.2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RE4</td>
<td>Director of Voluntary Sector Hub for the County</td>
<td>03.07.2007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section B. Area Description

The area in which the TLC is based is dominated by large council housing estates built during the 1940s and 1950s. The population is mainly white although the numbers of ethnic minorities, dual heritage children and young people are increasing. Until recently the area had relatively stable and skilled working class populations with a significant number of houses purchased under the right to buy scheme. The number of original residents is declining and younger families are moving into the estates. One consequence of this is that the estates are less settled and slowly becoming more disadvantaged.

Information gathered for the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (2003) states that some estates (including the target TLC Area) have a long history of severe disadvantage with ‘generations of unemployment in some families’ (ibid: 34). Most of the city’s social housing for larger families is based in the area of the TLC. Residents from the estate have been severely affected by the decline in traditional industries such as coal mining and cycle manufacture.
The area has some small industrial estates and a small business park with easy access to the M1 motorway. In spite of its proximity to the city large parts of the area have little connection to the city centre.

Consultations with residents, undertaken by the One City Partnership (the name given to the Local Strategic Partnership: the LSP) as part of the planning process for the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (2003), highlighted a range of concerns about Housing, Crime, Health Education and Employment (2003: 34). The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (NRS) notes concerns about intergenerational issues and anti-social behaviour coupled with relative isolation from facilities and resources which leads to a situation in which there is a 'lack of exciting imaginative projects for young people' (ibid: 34). The document also pointed out that, as a result of anti social behaviour and crime, the area also suffers from a lack of esteem and community spirit. Poor education and skills levels underpin these concerns across the area with a reported 75% of the population 'not interested' in gaining new skills through training (ibid: 35).

Data from the Local Area Learning Plan (2004: 31) present a similar picture identifying that 46% of the people in the TLC area have no qualifications at all and that adult participation in learning of any nature is only 3% compared to a citywide average of 11.7%. Projected figures for literacy and numeracy indicate that almost 70% of the residents have a literacy difficulty whilst the figure for numeracy is almost 80%.

In addition to the commentary from the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, data extracted from the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2000) draws attention to the same range of issues across the area from poor educational attainment, high unemployment and high numbers of young offenders to poor housing and relatively high rates of burglary.
This information is reprised in the Submission for Testbed Learning Community status (2003a). The Submission notes that 'this area forms part of a ward ranked as the United Kingdom's most disadvantaged educationally' (2003a: 1), with 70% of the adult population qualified below level 2, and according to the IMD (2000) the 'third worst in terms of unemployment'.

In spite of the above the TLC Submission (2003a) offers an optimistic assessment of some of the assets in the area and a sense of a potential for change. There is, according to the proposal, strong political support for change in the area coupled with a waiting list for local housing. This latter circumstance is cited as a 'sure sign that a decade of regeneration programmes is finally achieving results' TLC Submission (2003a: 1). There is a well-established Partnership Trust offering a focus for volunteer programmes. Surestart is active in the area and local schools are beginning to strengthen their links with the community through family learning programmes. The TLC 'Submission' also notes that 'hundreds of local people are already taking part in courses on and off the estate' (2003a: 1).

**Section C The Role of Government Office (Regional)**

The first point of analysis is the relationship between the policy, as outlined in the Skills Strategy (2003), and the approach taken to policy implementation by Government Offices at regional level. Government offices, of which there are 9 (See Appendix 5), were mandated to implement the TLC Pilot. The Skills Strategy (2003) provided the policy framework for this process. The Skills Strategy was supplemented by guidance issued to Government Offices from the DfES in the form of the previously mentioned Scoping Document (see Appendix 2). The TLC element of the Skills Strategy (2003) was a last minute addition by the Minister for Adult Skills and Vocational Education. The

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1 The Submission for Testbed Learning Community Status in Case Study 1 is cited in the Bibliography as TLC Submission (2003a)
Minister himself, Ivan Lewis, supported this position when interviewed as part of this research (11.04.2006) and also in an article in Adults Learning (June 2004), where it was stated that:

the section on learning communities in last July's Skills Strategy was inserted in the final draft at the insistence of the Minister for Adult Skills and Vocational education (2004: 12).

RE1, the Officer from the Government Office and 'Policy Leader' at regional level for the TLC initiative, stated that the proposal came 'out of the blue' and was regarded at that time as being 'unlike other initiatives for which more preparation would be usual'.

However, in spite of its rather late arrival on the policy scene, Government Offices became the fulcrum of the TLC initiative at regional level. This role included responsibility for submitting TLC nominations for approval by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). As the 'Scoping Document' states:

we will be working with Government Offices on an ongoing basis from now until December (2003) as proposals are being developed to ensure that [the criteria] are met nationally as well as ensuring a good geographical spread of testbed areas' (2003: 4).

In Case Study 1 the process undertaken by Government Office was, in the first instance, to meet as a team in order to assess who the key stakeholders would be. This team included both RE1, as 'Policy Leader', RE3 and other colleagues with the same responsibility in other parts of the region. Having done this, stakeholders were then invited to a meeting convened to discuss the initiative and agree how to get the best out of the policy for the region. This meeting took place on 12th November 2003 taking the form of a workshop '...on proposals for learning communities as set out in the Skills Strategy White Paper' (see letter, Invitation to Workshop, GO File 20/8/1/7, 90
Evidence Item TLC10). The Officer with responsibility for leading this policy at regional level, (RE1), explained that '...the meeting was convened through the Learning and Skills Councils and the Local Learning Partnerships'. The main representatives at the meeting were from these two organisations.

As previously stated, the policy itself was not particularly specific; this was seen as something of a double-edged sword. On the one hand non-specificity gave room for flexibility and, as was pointed out to me at interview by a second manager from Government Office, the senior manager for Education and Business (RE3), 'what fits in Sheffield doesn't necessarily fit in Bolton'. This flexibility also allowed for a degree of local interpretation with the proviso that 'if we were unsure about anything we could go back to the parent department for clarification' (RE3). From another perspective some of the stakeholders had difficulty understanding what the policy was about. Again the officer with 'Policy Lead' for this initiative RE1 observed that 'it was not easy to explain the purpose of the TLC initiative, as the objectives were vague'.

Both RE1 and RE3 felt that there was a 'degree of cynicism' about the initiative as partners were aware that there was similar work already being undertaken in the region. LC1, the Area Lifelong Learning Manager, a senior manager within the area's Lifelong Learning infrastructure, reinforces this perspective when discussing the previously mentioned 12th November (2003) Workshop. LC1 highlighted a degree of scepticism amongst Learning Partnership colleagues from across the region who felt that the initiative looked like 'a lot of work for no money'. From a local perspective, and according to RE1, it seemed as if the feeling was 'its just another initiative, in this case with very little funding'.

This lack of clear objectives and the promise of minimal amounts of funding led to an initial assessment by RE1 that there was not much enthusiasm on
the ground to become a TLC. However, in spite of this sense of a reluctance to participate a number of potential TLCs were identified. This perceived lack of enthusiasm contrasts sharply with the views about the feeling on the ground in what were to become the TLCs. RE3, the Education Business Manager at Government Office noted ‘It’s amazing the amount of goodwill that was around with partners coming on board and helping out. At one level there appears to be a degree of cynicism whilst on the ground the eventual TLC and its partners appeared to meet the initiative with enthusiasm.

The Case Study TLC was identified through a combination of local pressure and the expertise and knowledge of a consultant (NA3), commissioned by the local Learning Partnership to undertake work in the area of Case Study 1. The consultant brought the TLC element of the Skills Strategy to the attention of the Learning Partnership Coordinator and pointed out the synergies with the work that he had been involved with in the area. The Lifelong Learning Manager (LC1) then contacted Government Office. This particular process is confirmed by RE1 who stated that from ‘a regional perspective one TLC was identified through the local Learning and Skills Council whilst the other two proposals came via Learning Partnerships’. I have already mentioned that at the time of this initiative the Learning Partnership infrastructure in the area was proactive and quite robust. The Learning Partnership acted as the ‘accountable body’ for the TLC funding in Case Study 1.

After some discussion and negotiation the Submission for TLC status was then completed and forwarded to the DfES for approval. This Submission TLC (2003a), was developed with the assistance of the previously mentioned consultant NA3, who has also been interviewed as part of this research. Documentation from Government Office titled Assessment and Commentary (file 20/8/1/7/3 pt2 dated 15.12.2003) points out that the proposals meet the minimum requirements for TLC status and reinforces the point about consultant support.
The Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for Skills and Adult Education, Ivan Lewis, approved the TLC Submission as part of the first wave of TLC pilots. Implementation was scheduled to begin in April 2004 (tranche 2 began in September 2004). As previously stated, the TLC in Case Study 1 was already quite well established; in the words of RE3 'they had [already] done a tremendous amount of work'. This includes work undertaken by the consultant about merging the two existing learning centres and some supporting work undertaken by the Local Area Learning Partnership. A number of focus groups were convened in November 2003, and detailed in the Local Area Learning Plan, in order, as the plan states, to 'provide a deeper insight into some of the issues that surround community based learning provision and training for employment in the area' (2003: 32).

The consultant NA3, interviewed as part of this research, stated that the work on the estate began some two years before the TLC proposals. This point is reinforced at interview by the Lifelong Learning Manager (LC1), and by LC3, an Area Learning Facilitator who also acted as temporary Centre Manager for the TLC. LC3 noted that 'we had a consultant working on helping merge the two facilities...not an easy process... the outcome of that process is that we became a testbed'. The consultant states:

*I was asked to carry out a review of locally based provision in the area. I did that and was then asked to reconstruct it...it was during the course of that that the policy was announced ... and I recommended to the local partnership that we bid for TLC status. (NA3)*

The fact that the proposed TLC was already up and running was seen as positive by Government Office as it provided an opportunity to develop and compare different approaches across the region. In addition the experience and expertise from Case Study 1 could be used to assist other colleagues. RE3, from Government Office, notes that 'with a little funding and some links
to the DfES it [TLC status] could help them but equally we thought it would help the region using the information from one TLC to help others’.

The Lifelong Learning Manager (LC1) also notes that the plans that were in place ‘were already new and innovative’ and that the TLC initiative ‘didn’t change what we were going to do...but it accelerated it for sure’. Management from Government Office (RE3) also supports this perspective.

After the identification of the TLCs the main role for Government Office was to oversee the implementation, keeping the initiative on track, and act as a conduit for the exchange of information with the DFES. In addition Government Office had a role in facilitating a link between the TLC work and regional frameworks for learning and skills such as the Regional Economic Strategy and the Framework for Regional Employment and Skills Action (FRESA). The potential of a link with Local Area Agreements was also explored at national level (see Learning Communities and Local Area Agreements, 25.08.2005: GO File 20/8/01/07 pt2 Evidence item TLC8).

The Senior Education Business Manager (RE3), noted the early establishment of a networking system at regional level. The networking system was part of what RE3 saw as the role of Government Offices, that is ‘enabling things to happen by bringing people together’ and then offering follow up support where required. In addition Government Office also facilitated links between the TLCs and the two other support agencies involved in the initiative at national level, these being the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE), and the Scarman Trust. Both of these organisations were commissioned by the DfES to support the initiative at national level. The employment of an external consultant provided additional support for the TLC. RE3 notes that at the time the proposed testbed was doing a tremendous amount of work and because of this ‘they
didn’t have time to put pen to paper’. This circumstance is explained by LC3, who stated that:

we were at the hard end of delivering skills in a tough setting at a time of transition. We had capacity issues and we were constantly managing change in the context of managing 14 funding streams in order to ensure we had a service to offer to local people.

Capacity appears to have been an issue for both the TLC and also Government Office. It was mentioned by both Government Office managers, RE1 and RE3, at interview, and linked to the notion of ‘light touch’ monitoring and the ‘negotiation of the use of anecdotal evidence for quarterly returns’ from the region to the DfES. From the TLC perspective (LC3) highlights this negotiation as a means of addressing capacity issues within the TLC itself and sets it alongside the relative lack of funding.

In terms of evaluation it is also apparent that at Government Office there was an expectation of an end of programme local evaluation. This did not however materialise, and capacity is mentioned by RE3 who notes that: ‘as the agenda was moving on, there was no one looking after the initiative at that point’. LC1 also expresses some disappointment about the lack of an end of programme evaluation but, in this case the emphasis is about the lack of funding at the end of the programme. This viewpoint was expressed in the context of the Interim Evaluation (2005), for which funding was allocated.

**Key Issues from Section C**

As previously outlined Government Offices in the regions were responsible for implementing the TLC initiative. This implementation process took cognisance of the guidance issued by the DfES in the Scoping Document (2003). In discharging this responsibility for the region RE1 and RE3 sought to raise
awareness in the region initially by communicating with stakeholders. As previously mentioned, the initiative was not initially greeted with much enthusiasm and the 'awareness raising workshop' meeting did not elicit a strong positive response. In lieu of this disappointment RE1 and RE3 then worked through the local Lifelong Learning structures. Eventually the region forwarded three proposals to the DfES. Two of these had been developed through the Learning Partnership Networks, Case 1 being one example, and the third through the Learning and Skills Council who were keen to promote the concept in another part of the region.

Coordination involved the Government Office in establishing a regional network in order to develop, exchange, and disseminate good practice. Conscious of the need to link to regional frameworks, RE1 and RE3 also worked to ensure that the TLC was referenced in the strategic plan for the Partnership for Employment Skills and Productivity (2005:15). This reference was subsequently removed as the document was refined and reduced in size prior to its publication. RE3, the Senior Education and Business Manager, noted that updates on the TLC’s progress were subsequently forwarded to the Regional Skills Partnership. However no further progress was made with regard to this aspect of policy.

As highlighted in a previous section there was no national evaluation at the end of the initiative. A review of the national programme was however published by Yarnit (2006). RE3 notes that it was very unusual for there not to be a national evaluation ‘it seemed unusual given all the effort that was put into it’. Managers from Government Office at regional level did not express a view about the reasons behind the cancellation of the national evaluation. At national level however, NA5 offered a perspective, which inferred that cancellations such as this were not particularly unusual. (see page 35 of this thesis for learning from previous work). A manager from Government Office in
Case 2 (RE7) also reinforced the point that, for the DfES, cancellation of an evaluation was not unusual.

An internal e-mail dated 11.10.04 (GO File 4/27/9/8/2 pt2 Evidence item TLC 20) notes that Charles Clarke M.P., the Secretary of State at the DfES, ‘has embargoed further all new research’. There was some optimism in the e-mail about the TLC evaluation being exempt from this embargo. However the Minutes of the TLC Project Board Meeting (26.01.05) confirm its cancellation. In the same context, NA5 regards the move of Ivan Lewis from the DfES to the treasury as significant as ‘it [the TLC Pilot] was Ivan Lewis’s idea’.

However, at regional level, Government Office continued to anticipate an end of programme evaluation. RE3 states that ‘it was agreed that the TLCs would give us an evaluation at the end of the last year …but I moved off and I don’t know if it was done’. The end of programme evaluation was not undertaken, a circumstance reinforced at interview by LC1.

Three key points emerge from this section which link directly to the research questions 2, 3, 4 and 5 reprised on page 84 of this Case Study. Particular concerns are raised about programme duration and the issue of evaluation. It is also apparent that, in relation to question 2, that in implementing this policy little account was taken of previous work. Cancellation of the national evaluation gives an early indication of this. These points are outlined below and will be discussed in detail in Section E:

1. The TLC in Case Study 1 was part of an existing area learning infrastructure. Much of its proposal had been developed as part of the area strategy prior to the TLC pilot. Government Office felt that the region could benefit from the experience and knowledge gained in developing the TLC.
2. There is no apparent recognition of any of the previous work undertaken in this policy area and as outlined in Chapter 2 (page 35). The exception to this is the Scoping Document (2003: 2) which states that the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education produced a review of projects with similar objectives. This review was distributed to all Government Offices. For example, it is apparent that the importance of evaluation, highlighted in previous evaluations and reports (page 35), was not embedded in this policy. It would seem appropriate for learning from this previous work to have informed the original strategy and its parameters as detailed in the Scoping Document (2003) produced by the DfES.

3. The lack of a national evaluation and end of programme local evaluations is significant. For example in a speech to the NIACE Conference (3.12.2003), Ivan Lewis outlined the real challenge as being to: ‘learn what works …and having learned what works [we must] ensure that It is mainstreamed into everything we do in all parts of the country’.

Given the circumstances described above it is difficult to see how the pilot could inform future policy direction without first establishing whether or not the project met its aims and objectives.

**Section D The Submission for Testbed Learning Community Status**

The Submission for TLC status (2003a) provides evidence about the way in which policy was interpreted and implemented at regional level. The following section provides a description of key points.

Firstly it is important to note that the Submission for TLC status was coincidental with other changes taking place in the area and in particular a
move to develop a new delivery agency on the estate by merging two existing learning centres. The two centres were almost adjacent to each other and seen as competing for what in essence was the same pool of learners. The interim TLC evaluation states that:

the two centres ' were facing severe financial difficulties [and] were only streets apart and struggling for the same clients, the same discretionary funding and dealing with the same mainstream providers' (2005: 6).

Another interviewee, the Lifelong Learning Manager, LC1, notes that the process of merging the two sites had already begun when the Skills Strategy came out and remembers the telephone call to Government Offices to express an interest in becoming a TLC. The importance of the consultant (NA3) in this process is highlighted by LC1 who notes that he 'was very clued in to that [Skills Strategy] agenda' and 'I suspect that it was in no small part because he was working with us that we became a Testbed'.

The two centres were, according to the TLC Submission (2003a), 'engaging in a unique partnership to develop employment, education and training centres for this estate...pooling resources to create a new voluntary sector delivery agency' (2003a: 1). This approach, the Submission notes, was premised on a belief that 'local people must be empowered to lead' (ibid: 3).

The long term aim of the merger and the Testbed Learning Community was to:

Create a sustainable culture of Lifelong Learning providing [through the merged centres] employment, education and training services tailored to meet the needs of residents of all ages employers and employees in line with the Local Learning Plan (2003a: 2).

The actions proposed in the TLC Submission to support the achievement of the ‘longer term aim’ are explained under the following five headings. Each
proposed action is followed by a commentary that outlines subsequent activity/progress and a summary that identifies themes linked to the research questions. Three additional elements of the submission are discussed in sections 6, 7 and 8. The stated actions to achieve the longer-term aim are:

1) widening and deepening participation in learning
2) involving residents directly in shaping and managing provision
3) improving links with employers
4) working collaboratively
5) improving access to ICT and the Internet.

1 Widening and deepening participation in learning

1 (a) Introduction to Widening and deepening participation in learning

Widening and deepening participation in learning is one of the stated aims of the project. This includes the idea of involving more people in the learning process but importantly also embraces the notion that these new learners will remain in the system longer and be taken to higher levels of learning (progression). LC2, the current TLC Manager, stated at interview that the idea of engaging the community is very positive:

> of course its good to train people in disadvantaged communities... but there is no sustainability for learning...there is no plan...the funding I have is for one year and I have absolutely no idea where the money will come from after that... It would however be 'good to have some sustainable learning to engage them in.

The implication here is that, whilst encouraging new learners to engage is daunting, funding progression from one learning episode to another is equally difficult and the availability of appropriate progression routes cannot be taken as axiomatic.
The Learning Champions are central to the widening participation strategy proposed by the TLC. The Interim Evaluation (2005) of the TLC supports this stating that ‘...this [the learning champion’s project] is the main strategy for involving local people in learning, in volunteering and community activity’ (2005: 9).

The Learning Champions aspect of the TLC did not begin in earnest until their recruitment in June 2005. Whilst this was a delay of three months from the original scheduled date of appointment it was a full year into the TLC implementation. LC1 Notes that the Learning Champions are a ‘constant source of voice of the learner information’. This helped, according to LC1, to ensure that the curriculum offered by the site was to an extent a reflection of community need. Both LC3 and LC2 support the importance the Learning Champions in widening participation. The TLC manager (LC2) draws particular attention to their influence on learner recruitment when stating that ‘since the Learning Champions came on board we have noticed a rise in the number of new faces coming on training programmes’.

Fostering this success is about providing an appropriate environment, appropriate support and perhaps above all building trust within individuals and the community. The TLC had over time built up both the support infrastructure, including the deployment of the Learning Champions, Student Support Workers and the requisite level of trust which has enabled it to begin this task.

There is evidence based on both anecdote and to an extent on learner numbers that the TLC was very good at widening participation. The Chief Executive of ENABLE, the Voluntary Sector coordinating body for learning and skills, is quoted in the Interim Evaluation of the TLC as stating that ‘in terms of a league table of community learning provision [the TLC and the area in which it is based] are in the premier division’ (2005: 1).
The Learning Champions, a key element in the TLCs success were appointed somewhat later than anticipated but met their targets and energised the widening participation strategy across the area. They supported engagement in the learning process and were a tangible illustration of success, acting beyond their professional role, as ambassadors for learning. In addition they were paid employees and their salaries, along with those of other employees, made an important financial contribution to the community. In this context the TLC Manager (LC2), states:

we are delivering and [we] are employing local people, every penny we spend goes into the local community....so the local bread shop, the paper shop, people paying off catalogue bills, fewer loan sharks at Christmas. Some have started buying homes.

1(b) Commentary: widening and deepening participation in learning

It is difficult to assess how successful the TLC was in ‘widening and deepening participation’. There appears to have been no systematic collection of baseline information from which a picture of development could be built. This circumstance provides a clear link to the lack of an end of programme evaluation. In addition the process included the merger of two previously independent centres and learner details from these centres were not collected at the point of merger. There is however, evidence of existing learning activity and learner volume within the submission itself which states that at the time ‘there are hundreds of local people’ taking part in learning of one form or another (TLC Submission 2003a: 1).

Recent information, available from the Self Assessment Report (SAR) for the TLC, indicates an increase in learner numbers. In this context see Figure 1 (p138) which compares two consecutive SARs, 2005/2006 and 2006/2007.
From a different perspective the Annual Reports and the Interim Evaluation of the TLC provide a wealth of anecdotal evidence of success from learner, employee and partner perspectives. One learner notes that:

the site is one of the most important facilities in the area. It is well used by local people and people from adjoining areas. Staff are friendly and always encouraging. It [the centre] is very important to the area (Annual Report 2006/2007)

An employee notes:

I am 45 and have two grown up children. Having recently separated from my partner, I'm moving into a new flat. Working at the centre has been the first full time job I've ever had ... My team leader is fantastic and its giving me loads of confidence and I am now doing my NVQ assessors award.

Increased learner numbers are not the whole of the ‘widening participation’ story. The Centre Manager (LC2), stressed that there had been a tradition on the estate of providing the same learning programmes from one year to the next and that these had tended to cater for the same client group. In other words the same group of learners was repeating the same set of courses year on year. ‘What we don’t want [LC2 notes] is endless underwater crocheting programmes for the same family of women sitting around the same table’.

LC2 however concedes that in other circumstances this type of learning can provide a social context for ‘first steps’ learning that helps lift levels of confidence and self esteem. LC2 explains that the taster courses are not really about subject matter: ‘it is simply the idea of having a go at a bit of learning’. What the centre finds is:

the entire momentum of learning is about confidence, motivation and self esteem... what you have to do is get the building blocks in place to
get people to a point where they are confident enough to go on learning (LC2).

The overall drive at the site in terms of widening participation is to provide the support and opportunity for people to 'engage' and then, having done so, to work towards an assessment of need through the Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) service that the site provides. This is why, as the centre manager (LC2) states, 'every one of our clients receives IAG and from that we identify where people are and where they are going [and] what their goals are'. This apparently straightforward process is linked to a major cultural shift, a process that does not necessarily fit within a two-year timescale. This can be illustrated through referring to the example of the Job Shop (an area in which clients can get advice on looking for a job and also undertake an online search for jobs).

LC2 observed that, on taking up the post of centre manager, there were no men coming onto the site and the Job Shop was being used to maintain people on benefits rather than move people into work. 'Enormous numbers of people were using the Job Shop ... but not to get a job'. In order to shift attitudes and behaviours LC2 felt it important to ensure that there were lots of examples of local people working 'who were examples of where you want others to get to'. This circumstance links to the employment of 'local' Learning Champions and also the employment and training of local people to other positions at the site (see Annual Reports 2005/06 and 2006/07). Over time, and with some structural changes to the building, which made the Job Shop the first point of contact with the centre, a point has now been reached where 'no one is allowed to go into the Job Shop without considering that their full time job is getting a job'. Having done this the centre now finds that forty percent of its clients are men and that, with support and encouragement that reduces the significant fear of failure, men are moving on to basic skills training and taking the national tests. Men 'expect to pass to the extent that they move on to level two' (LC2). This circumstance is regarded as a major
cultural shift for those making use of the Job Shop. Clients are now seeking work rather than using the job search facility purely to validate benefit claims.

In order to move beyond the historical position a significant shift in the 'culture' of participation is required. This applies to the learner, previously lacking in confidence and disengaged, and also the provider, previously focused on 'classes' rather than individual learners. This 'cultural shift' is central to the Skills Strategy's notion of engaging 'disadvantaged' learners and features in subsequent articles and speeches by the Minister, Ivan Lewis, for example, Adults Learning (June 2004, p.12) and the Speech to NIACE Conference (3.12.2003). Ivan Lewis also reinforced this issue during his interview for this research.

1 (c) Key Issues from Widening and deepening participation in learning

Section D (1a and 1b) has highlighted the following issues which link to the research questions as outlined on page 84 of this Case Study, and which will be discussed in more detail in Section F.

- The importance of the widening participation strategy
- The complexity of the widening participation process
- The challenge that re-engaging with learning represents to the community
- How success is dependent on a range of circumstances such as an appropriate support infrastructure, building confidence and trust.
- How time is a significant factor in this development. For example establishing Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) Services is not something that can be decided upon one day and established the next.

It is perhaps worthwhile noting at this point that the themes illustrated in the bullet points above are closely aligned with the issue of programme duration.
in that they embrace a range of processes that are time consuming and challenging to put in place. Programme duration is in turn linked to the idea of circumventing the start up process by designating an existing organisation as a TLC. This notion is captured in research questions 2 and 3 (page 84) of this Case Study. I would also argue that it is difficult to separate the issue of programme duration from the values that underpin the project and therefore the implications of research questions 1, 3 and 4 (page 84).

2 Involving residents directly in shaping and managing provision

2 (a) Introduction to Involving residents directly in shaping and managing provision

There are four aspects to this element of the proposal, which is essentially about ensuring that the community is engaged in the project at management level and that their views inform the activity of the TLC. Yarnit (2006) states in unequivocal terms that ‘community involvement is essential to successful area regeneration’.

The first of these four aspects is governance. The TLC Submission clearly states that the ‘centre will be managed by local people as a community learning trust and company limited by Guarantee’ (2003a: 2). One of the features of the two original centres was that local people were on the management boards at both learning centres. LC3 states that: ‘in both of the previous organisations there was strong learner representation on the boards’.

A second aspect of encouraging local involvement is integral to the role of the Learning Champions who network across the area contacting learners and potential learners promoting learning to ‘friends, family, neighbours and workmates’ (TLC Submission 2003a: 3). The Learning Champions are
themselves local people and in a position to provide their own input into the TLC.

Thirdly the TLC listens to residents through open days and other visits to the site. Promotional events also provide the opportunity to listen to the community and the Interim TLC Evaluation suggests that these occasions are well thought of noting that ‘events and fun days are part of the promotional campaigns and provide social activities for residents’ (2005: 11).

Fourthly local people are involved in service delivery. As the Centre Manager LC2 states: ‘If you want to know how best to deliver services to local people, the answer is to pay local people to be in control of the services’. The Centre Manager also points out that, with the exception of one post (that of centre manager), ‘everyone else is local and that has been the key to the success of this place’.

2 (b) Commentary: Involving residents directly in shaping and managing provision

The tradition of learner representation on governing bodies was well established in the area and was continued in the period after the integration of the two centres. As LC3 notes the idea ‘was taken forward in the memorandum and articles of the new organisation’. Yarnit (2006) also notes that ‘the centre is managed by a board on which local residents account for one third of the representation’. This ensured that there was the potential for the voice of the community to be heard at board level. LC3 states that having board members from the community is a challenge. They are after all ‘the company… they are delivering local services’, however, setting local issues aside, ‘they put the customers at the heart of their questions and in may ways ask the most pertinent questions of managers’ (LC3). The Chairperson of the
Board is a local resident and a student at the site, a point that is reinforced in the Centre's Annual Reports (2005/06 and 2006/07).

However membership and participation are two separate issues and the Interim TLC Evaluation notes the need to develop the overall skills of the board members stressing that ‘...it is acknowledged that (the) development of the board as a team and individually is required’ (2005: 8). This Evaluation also notes that average attendance of the Board meetings needs to be increased with some emphasis being given to ensuring that key stakeholders such as the City Council are more closely involved (ibid: 8).

Being a member of the board carries with it a degree of responsibility and the development of this capacity within the local community needed support. As LC1, the Area Lifelong Learning Manager, stated ‘...it’s a really big commitment (board membership) especially when you employ a lot of staff’. In this context LC1 highlighted the need to sustain the original (consultant) support for board member development over a longer period. This point is also emphasised in the Interim Evaluation of the TLC. More specifically this evaluation refers to ongoing development for the ‘resident’ board members in order that they can continue to represent the voice of the learner and contribute to the centre’s development (2005: 8). LC1 reinforced the importance of this point at interview when making a point about ensuring that information in papers presented to the Board (the Governing Body of the Learning Centre) is accessible rather than being full of language and acronyms that limit engagement and understanding.

LC2, the Centre Manager is aware of the need to support ‘community’ members and also of the need for broader strategic expertise on the board---‘for people with strategic experience to be involved.’ This relates to the broader theme of ensuring that the TLC is connected into the strategic
networks for learning and skills in order that policy and action in the area are both coherent and seamless (2005: 8).

Residents continue to be involved in the delivery of the services that are available through the TLC. The Annual Report (2006/07) states the TLC is a local employer and as such:

we are dedicated to increasing opportunities for residents in the area. We invest in our staff and we promote internally. We look externally for secondments and placements that will increase the experience and skills of our staff. Our finance, funding, payroll and audit are managed by a team made up of local residents.

The Learning Champions’ role in support of learning and acting as ambassadors and role models continues. Open days and other events such as the Awards Ceremony continue to provide a means of positive engagement with the community.

2 (c) Key Issues from involving residents directly in shaping and managing provision

Sections 2(a) and 2(b) have highlighted a number of issues, the implications of which will be discussed in more detail in the concluding section of this Case Study (Section F). The bullet points below link directly to the key research questions and focus, in particular, on programme duration. The relatively short timescale of this initiative fails to recognise the time required to establish successful working relationships in ‘disadvantaged’ communities. This includes for example:

- Recognising the importance of community involvement
- Highlighting the need for long term support for resident governors
Recognising the important role of local people in service delivery and informing provision.

3 Improving Links with Employers

3 (a) Introduction to Improving Links with Employers

Consistent with the economic imperative expressed within the Skills Strategy one of the central features of the TLC Submission was to improve links with employers. Perhaps the most significant aspects of this were the targeting of employers in order to tailor learning programmes for managers and employees and establishing ‘a series of job guarantee’ programmes which engage employers in designing pre employment schemes. This process has the effect of ensuring that training meets employer need and, because of the nature of the guarantee, raises the aspirations of residents in the area.

At this point it is apposite to illustrate the role of the TLC as an employer, in this case recruiting and training 12 local people (Learning Champions) who then work within the community. (see Interim Evaluation, June 2005). A number of the learning programmes that the Learning Centre facilitates are also industry linked e.g. Door Supervisors Programme, Childcare, Fork Lift Truck Certification. A further manifestation of employer links can be found in the Construction Industry Green Card programme where participants are guaranteed an interview with the sponsoring companies recruitment broker.

3(b) Commentary: Improving links with employers,

The Yarnit Review (2006: 39) cites some success in this area through partnerships with local Surestart and the City Council. The Yarnit Review states that 42 learners were helped into employment (2005/06). The Centre Manager has also focused a great deal of time and energy into this area and
has recently (Sept 2007) secured a very positive arrangement with a national company to provide homeshoring. This concept stems from recognition that local people are a tremendous asset with marketable skills. Local people are trained at the centres ‘call centre training room’ part funded from business and part from the Regional Development Agency. Thus 16 residents from the area are now working in home-based call centres for a national company.

This model generates employment opportunities locally and demonstrates a very tangible degree of success for local people linking back to earlier statements made by LC2 about providing examples of positive role models on the estate. It also provides a private sector income stream for the centre. In addition to this success the centre manager notes that this particular initiative can be ‘rolled out to other organisations’. Links to employability provide a tangible illustration of success for residents and in doing so give some impetus to levels of self esteem and motivation previously mentioned. In addition successful employment may also provide an economic boost to individuals, families and the community. I would add that the infrastructure that facilitates these relationships is built as a result of a great deal of time, energy and commitment on behalf of the TLC and its staff. These issues will be discussed in Section F.

4 Collaboration

4 (a) Introduction to Collaboration

The collaborative and planning aspects of the proposal were important in that they echoed the idea expressed in the Skills Strategy about joining up planning processes at local level (2003: 15) This included aligning activity with the Regional Development Agency and the Learning and Skills Council at regional level. The Local Learning Partnership and the local Voluntary Sector Partnership Trust provide for more community-based collaboration.
4(b) **Commentary: Collaboration**

Collaboration has a number of facets beyond the improvement of employer links. Clearly learning programmes are often delivered in a collaborative manner with the centre working as the delivery point for learning provided on behalf of other organisations. For example the SAR (2005/2006) notes a number of programmes delivered at the site by a College of Further Education.

At another more strategic level collaboration is required in order to ensure a connection to the strategic networks in the area. Section C outlined that Government Office worked, with only limited success, to ensure that the work of the TLC was referenced in regional planning frameworks. This level of collaboration facilitates the development of a more coherent approach to planning learning provision.

In the case of both collaboration and links with employers the Annual Reports from the TLC outline continued success. Under a headline celebrating the success of partnership, a representative from one of the partner companies, Cisco Systems, states that:

> the homeshoring project is hugely significant for Cisco. Very few projects get to the heart of the real challenges of digital inclusion. This is truly groundbreaking stuff and will roll out across the UK (Annual Report 2006/07).

Similarly the Head of Customer Care at Boots states that working with the TLC in order ‘...to skill people to work from home meets a community and a business need head on...I’m really excited at the opportunities that this could present’ (2006/07).
However, in other areas such as the Extended Schools initiative and Surestart, collaborative links appear to be less robust that they were during the genesis of the project (2003/04). LC2 notes this difficulty: 'What we don’t have is a strategic network. Managing up into larger strategic organisations is extremely difficult'. The issue of capacity has been mentioned and clearly there is a need to prioritise in relation to scarce resources. Similar issues were raised in the Interim Evaluation, which noted a ‘need to continue to raise the profile of the TLC ensuring that strategic partners are fully involved,’ and that ‘collaborative planning with other agencies is needed to promote employment with a focused, shared action plan’ (2005: 18).

4(c) Key Issues from Collaboration

This section has highlighted success in relation to collaboration with the business world. This collaboration has direct implications for the potential employment of residents in the area and to this extent links directly to the idea of building a Learning Community. In addition the section highlights the importance of a coherent learning and skills infrastructure in the area. Collaboration and coherence featured in the Skills Strategy (2003) and relate, in particular, to the idea of 'joining up' policy at local level and research questions 3, 4 and 5 (page 84 of this Case Study). Whilst there have clearly been collaborative developments it would however appear that, from the TLC’s perspective, and in some very important areas, there is less opportunity to work collaboratively. Examples of this are difficulties in establishing relationships with Extended Schools, Family Learning and Surestart initiatives. Crucially, links to strategic funding bodies are also tenuous.
5 Improving access to ICT and the Internet

5(a) Introduction to Improving access to ICT and the Internet

There is little information in the TLC Submission (2003a) about the type of improvements to be made. Neither is there any elaboration about purpose. What is however clear is that the TLC intended to ‘provide state of the art learning centres that employers, employees and residents will take pride in using (2003a: 3). In addition the TLC Submission integrates the use of ICT into its proposals to collect, collate and evaluate information to inform practice; we will, the submission notes:

use evaluation as a tool for helping us decide whether we are going in the right direction or whether we need to change our approach... we intend to work systematically, using new technology to identify, target and track the progress of individuals and groups, for example to tackle basic skills problems in a coordinated way (2003a: 4).

5(b) Commentary: Improving access to ICT and the Internet

Information technology is an important aspect of the work at the site. As the centre manager notes ‘we have a good ICT infrastructure and good (capital) funding to help that’ (LC2). There are a number of facets to this. I have mentioned above the growth of ICT activity in relation to the call centre project and the fact that the ICT facilities are up to date and business compatible. This has allowed the training for the call centre work to be undertaken locally and ensured scope for future development.

Secondly the centre is an accredited on line test centre for basic skills and this facility is crucial to learner assessment and sustaining forward momentum. Learners can be tested on line and get their results almost immediately rather than waiting days for a paper based process to provide
outcomes. This also links to the Information and Guidance Service, Job Search and writing Curriculum Vitae facilities that the centre provides.

A third function of the ICT facility is the management of learner information and provision of auditable returns to funding agencies that are required on a regular basis. ICT does not appear to have been used as an evaluation tool as proposed in the submission for TLC status and outlined in the section above. Again this provides a substantive link to the idea of programme evaluation which has emerged as a key theme throughout this research.

It is apparent that the ICT facilities at the TLC have had a positive influence on the learning programme offer, learning style flexibility, and the quality of the learning environment. In addition they have enabled the development of quite innovative relationships with a number of national companies especially in relation to the homeshoring project. The opportunity to develop these relationships and the consequent programmes had a positive impact on the site and offers a range of benefits to residents and learners.

The preceding sub-sections have discussed the five actions listed on page 99 of this Case Study, which the TLC Submission proposed would ‘create a sustainable culture of Lifelong Learning’ (2003a: 2) and support the achievement of the longer term aim. The final part of Section D addresses three further elements from the original Submission, these being: (6) Success Criteria, (7) Membership and (8) The implications of a ‘longer term aim’.

6 Success Criteria

6 (a) Introduction to Success Criteria

At an earlier point I have alluded to the apparent flexibility inherent in this particular policy that allows for the development of locally determined
approaches to implementation. This is also manifest in a relative lack of mandated success criteria for individual TLCs. In this instance the TLC proposes to measure its success by the way the community 'feels'. Impacts such as cleaner and safer streets will, over time, be an outcome of the proposals. In addition the activities within the TLC Submission (2003a) are intended to encourage people to invest more time in their community, strengthening social relationships and networks (ibid: 4). A range of indicators, that the TLC deemed important to assessing progress, are listed in the TLC Submission. These include:

- voter turnout
- attendance at school events
- levels of volunteering
- demand for housing
- progression into further education.

The TLC Submission states that the TLC will undertake baseline measurements for each of its key indicators at the start of the project. These will then be monitored on a regular basis with an annual, report being issued to residents and other stakeholders.

6(b) Commentary: Success Criteria

As mentioned above the original Submission for TLC status contained a section that described how success would be judged. There are two criteria listed. The first describes changes to the feel of the estate and the second changes in attitudes and behaviours on the estate. The proposal also states that progress against these success criteria will be monitored on an ongoing basis through the collection, collation and analysis of data from resident surveys and sample tracking. At interview LC1 notes the difficulty with this type of information, as it was never really discussed in 'hard terms'. LC1 also
states that at the time of the initiative ‘performance management was not as good as it would be now’.

LC3 notes that the TLC negotiated minimal reporting structures with Government Office facilitating any reporting to the DFES. This is supported by LC1, who notes that there was no real pressure for management information. In the same context RE1, the Government Office manager with responsibility for leading this initiative, emphasised that ‘Government Office did not wish to appear like the police for what was a relatively small amount of funding’. Monitoring and evaluation were also regarded as light touch as both Government Office and the TLC itself had capacity issues which diverted their attention towards the delivery of the service rather than the provision of returns to Government Office. RE1 emphasised at interview that the staff were busy with ‘learning and recruitment, rather than completing returns for a small amount of funding’ (RE1).

As previously stated there was no final evaluation of the initiative at local level although an Interim Evaluation was undertaken on behalf of the Local Learning Partnership in June 2005. Paradoxically the Interim Evaluation highlights the importance of monitoring and evaluation noting that the TLC:

is still in its infancy. Evidence is often anecdotal or partial. There is a need to monitor key performance indicators more systematically as indicated in the original project proposal (2005: 18).

Key Issues from Success Criteria

This section has highlighted the proposals for the collection, collation and use of evaluation to inform the project. It has established that to date little work has been undertaken in this area. It may be that the notion of a light touch evaluation promoted by Government Office at the start of the initiative set alongside the cancellation of the National Evaluation exerted some influence
in this area. The theme of evaluation, which has clear links to research questions 2, 3, 4 and 5, will be discussed in detail in Section F of this Case Study.

7 Membership

7(a) Introduction to Membership

There is a proposal within the TLC Submission (2003a) to 'test out incentives', involving people in Area Brain Clubs, and developing learning circles supported by Learning Champions. Days out at Alton Towers are suggested as one example of an incentive (2003a: 3). This echoes the notion of encouraging 'membership' of the TLC as outlined in the original Skills Strategy (2003).

7(b) Commentary: Membership

Membership schemes were a feature of the Skills Strategy and the Minister, Ivan Lewis, was very keen to try out models of Learning Community membership as a means of raising the status of learning. This particular Testbed did not make any progress with the notion of membership and the ideas promoted in the TLC Submission were not operationalised. At one level membership models, whilst potentially positive, are seen as time consuming and resource intensive (LC1). A different view was expressed by LC2 who felt that the notion of membership would be generated through raising aspirations and demonstrating success rather than through financial or other external incentives. As a view from an operational perspective this contrasts sharply with the ideas expressed by Ivan Lewis. The outcomes of this community based, practitioner perspective, of increased intrinsic motivation and self-esteem are congruent with the aims and objectives of the policy:
We try to be a bit normal which is ... do you want a job ... what shall we do to get you one. We don't want to train people to be motivated by a tenner ... we want people to be motivated by their own goals ... that's what we want stick your head in the air and feel good about yourself ... that's membership (LC2).

7(c) Key Issues from Membership

Membership was mentioned in the original Submission for TLC status which expressed an intention to 'test out incentives for involving people in learning [including] membership incentives (2003a: 3). However there was no activity undertaken in relation to this aspect of the Submission, an issue that links to research questions 3, 4 and 5 and which will be discussed in the final section of this Case Study.

8 The Implications of the Longer Term Aim

8(a) Introduction to the implications of the Longer Term Aim

The Submission for TLC (2003a) status mentions the notion of a longer-term aim. This has important implications for the implementation process and the research questions which are discussed below. As previously stated the longer-term aim was to:

Create a sustainable culture of Lifelong Learning providing employment, education and training services tailored to meet the needs of residents of all ages employers and employees in line with the Local Learning Plan (2003a: 2).

8(b) The Longer Term Aim, Programme Duration and Need

This longer-term aim raises an important question about the issue of programme duration. In defining this longer-term aim the TLC Submission effectively acknowledges that some aspects of this initiative will take longer
than others. To put the above in context, it is written against a background of, what Ivan Lewis described as, long-term systemic underachievement and ‘a culture of low aspirations that permeates the community in every sense’ (Adults Learning 2004:12). This has implications for research questions 3, 4 and 5 as listed on page 84 of this Case Study. Generating a sustainable culture of lifelong learning offers a challenge to what are the assumed, existing and embedded local conditions. Creating this culture across all age groups is also a significant undertaking and makes a number of assumptions not least of which is the notion of seamless and ‘joined up’ local provision. Lewis makes this point strongly, arguing that we should be ‘seeing the different stages of education as a whole rather than as separate from one another’ (ibid: 12). Joining up policy at local level was one of the cornerstones of the original Skills Strategy (2003). Concerns have been raised about this aspect of policy in preceding sections and these concerns are linked inextricably to programme duration.

8 (c) Meeting Needs

The final point of discussion about the longer-term aim relates to the notion of need and in particular how that need is defined and met. Meeting needs at some point implies the necessity to allocate resource to meet need. Resources and, in particular resources to meet adult learning need, are subject to national mandate. The main source of funding for post 16 learning and skills is the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The LSC has a range of targets to meet at national level. As an organisation it is under considerable pressure to meet targets. Its budgets are therefore allocated in relation to those targets. It is difficult therefore to define ‘learner/individual’ need in a context that sits outside the imperatives and criteria defined by available funding streams. Funding intercedes with the notion of need. Need therefore becomes a function of available funding and to suggest that it can be defined
within a community without taking cognisance of the issues that I have just mentioned is misleading.

As outlined above, adult learning needs such as basic skills, which are related to the national entitlement, are fundable. There can be little doubt that the community in Case Study 1 will include residents who have needs defined in this way. However, once basic skills qualifications are achieved, progression onto different programmes becomes an imperative. As previously noted progression remains problematic as it may involve moving into mainstream provision, which may or may not be based locally. Collaborative relationships amongst providers and funding bodies retain the potential for success and demonstrate connections to the Skills Strategy and, within that, the idea of policy coherence at local level.

8 (d) Key Issues from the Longer Term Aim

This sub section has raised the issue of project duration, most notably in relation to the policy's stated aim of changing the culture of learning in areas of deprivation, and also in developing more policy coherence at regional and community level. The notion of learner need has been identified. Best practice, as previously mentioned (Chapter 2 pages 35-40), would indicate the need to involve residents in the development of their own learning. The strictures of funding regimes promote a different perspective on needs which confines learning programmes to ‘that which can be funded’ rather than that which meets an identified need.
Section E The National Programme

Sections C and D have outlined the role of Government Office in relation to the implementation of this initiative and discussed the key themes and issues within the Submission for TLC Status (2003a). Issues arising from each section have been summarised and links have been established with the key research questions outlined on page 84 of this Case Study. This section explains the national context and discusses the extent to which Case Study 1 contributed to the national aims and objectives of the initiative.

Programme Objectives

This section addresses the following question: Did the TLC Submission (2003a) meet the criteria as outlined in the Skills Strategy (2003) and as detailed in the previously mentioned DfES Scoping Document (26.11.2003). The Scoping Document lists a number of criteria that the overall programme must meet. The DfES also developed a scoring matrix enabling each proposal to be assessed against the criteria. This process is outlined below. Secondly the document contains a list of five objectives that support the overall vision and aims of the initiative. The vision and aims are reprised below. The five Objectives of the National Programme are also listed in Table 2 (page 124), alongside a short commentary which provides a statement of the progress made by the TLC in Case Study 1 against each objective.

The Scoring Matrix

There are thirteen criteria in the scoring matrix developed by the DfES, the first six of which are regarded as essential requirements. The TLC in Case Study 1 meets all the essential criteria as follows:

1. it is an area of high unemployment and low educational attainment
2. partnership arrangements are regarded as strong
3. the project is primarily for adults
4. the project is focused on skills for communities and businesses
5. there are clear links with the regional economic agenda
6. there are clear performance indicators outlined in the proposal.

Of the remaining seven criteria the TLC Submission meets four. There are two criteria that the Submission does not meet.

1. The local demographic does not include a significant ethnic community.
2. The area is in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding.

In the case of the latter and, as stated in the Scoping Document (2003), the TLC programme as a whole was required to maintain a '...balance between Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF) and non NRF areas included in the pilot' (2003: 4).

Finally criteria thirteen asked whether the funding approach (for the TLC) was innovative. This question was answered with a question mark indicating a lack of information at the time of assessment. An internal paper by Government Office (Government Office File 20/8/1/7/3pt2 evidence items BR2 and BR3) notes that 'funding is based on bringing together existing funding streams'.

At the outset, and as noted in an earlier section, it is apparent that the TLC Submission conforms to the criteria that the DFES defined as essential. However it is the implementation of the activities within the TLC Submission that ultimately makes a contribution to the achievement of the aims and objectives previously described in this Section.
Table 2 summarises the contribution that the TLC, in Case Study 1, makes to national objectives as outlined in the Skills Strategy and refined in the Scoping Document. The five Programme Objectives are taken from the Scoping Document.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) To identify and measure a variety of operational models that link a</td>
<td>Case Study 1 identifies one model that can be used to inform the national programme. (see commentary on case identification in section F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whole range of learning and skills provision, to impact on the local</td>
<td>I would however note at this point that in the absence of any evaluation of the programme as a whole few if any inferences can be drawn about the success or otherwise of a particular model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skills base, improve community capacity and lead to improved economic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fortunes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) To investigate models of club membership that raise the status of</td>
<td>Membership models were not pursued as envisaged in the Scoping Document (2003) and the Submission for Testbed Status (2003). See commentary on membership in Section F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning and encourage self-ownership of skills and learning in areas of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disadvantage/low aspiration as well as higher economic achievement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Objective</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>To identify how Family Learning can be used to widen participation, raise adult skills, and boost individual confidence and aspirations to support the creation of a community wide culture of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>To identify who benefits from different learning communities projects and what particular impact they have upon different groups/segments of society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>To identify how community learning and capacity building can contribute to the achievement of the goals set out in the Frameworks for the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) Previously the FRESA.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 indicates that, in terms of the key programme objectives, Case Study 1 had the potential to make a positive contribution to Objectives 1, 4 and 5. Objectives 2 and 3 were not pursued. The lack of an evaluation precludes analysis of any impact on the broader themes related to cultural and aspirational change. The evidence base for this aspect of policy remains anecdotal. This is not to say that the policy aim is erroneous rather that it remains untested. In terms of Objective (5) above, the end of the project appears to have signalled an end to the involvement of Government Office. This clearly impacts on ongoing development such as ensuring coherence and joining up policy at local level and links to the issues of project duration and sustainability.

The National Vision for Testbed Learning Communities

The National Aims and Vision are provided for information and consistency as they form part of the background to policy and contain statements that illustrate the programme's aspirations. They are not discussed in detail at this point; however it is important to state that the language used provides an insight into the link between policy and the arguments deployed in justification of the need for action. I have termed justifications for policy action axiological issues and they are closely aligned to research questions 1, 4 and 5, as listed in Section A (page 84) of this Case Study. These issues will be discussed in detail in Section F below.

The Scoping Document (2003) contains the following Vision that defines a Learning Community as a place:

Where people are motivated and want to learn and where people and organisations provide mutual support to help each other learn and raise the local employment skills base. Testbed Learning Communities
will encourage and enable increasing numbers of their members to reach level 2 qualifications (2003: 2).

The National Aim of the Testbed Learning Community

The aim of the Testbed Learning Community is to develop sustainable approaches in which:

Learning and skills are used to connect adults together and to promote social cohesion, regeneration and economic development through the active involvement of all parts of the community (ibid: 3).

Section F: Summary and Discussion

This Case Study has been undertaken to explore the issues that arise in the relationship between policy generation and policy implementation. The research questions used to structure the approach to the Case Study are listed below and followed by a summary, in tabular form, of the key issues arising from sections C, D and E.

1. Why was this particular policy important and what was the justification for this policy?
2. To what extent was previous work taken into account when implementing the TLC Pilot (2003).
3. How was policy interpreted and implemented at regional and local level?
4. Did the implementation process facilitate or inhibit the achievement of the policy's intended outcomes?
5. Are the purposes and values that were underpinned by policy given sufficient priority during the implementation process?
### Summary of Key Issues Arising from Sections C, D and E.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section and Emergent Issue</th>
<th>Link to Research Questions</th>
<th>Key Discussion Point</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section C</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The initiative 'colonised' an existing infrastructure and existing practice.</td>
<td>Links to research question 3, 4 and 5</td>
<td>Axiological Issues and Programme Duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There was no National Evaluation of the TLC Pilot initiative</td>
<td>Links to questions 2, 3, 4 and 5</td>
<td>Axiological Issues and Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Minister responsible for the TLC Pilot moved from the DfES to the Treasury in May 2005</td>
<td>Links to questions 1, 4 and 5</td>
<td>Axiological Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of time and capacity to 'join up' policy and budgets at local level</td>
<td>Links to research questions 2, 3, 4 and 5.</td>
<td>Programme duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Little attention was paid to previous work in the same field as outlined in Chapter 2</td>
<td>Links to research Question 2</td>
<td>The Importance of previous learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Section D**              |                             |                      |
| • Programme Duration is raised in a number of contexts linked to stated local and national programme objectives | Links to research questions 2, 3, 4, and 5. | Axiological Issues and Programme Duration |
• A lack of performance management and in particular the cancellation of the national evaluation.

Links to research questions 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Axiological Issues and Evaluation

Section E
- A lack of a national Evaluation is raised
- Axiological issues deployed to support policy

Links to research questions 2, 4 and 5.

Links to research questions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Axiological Issues and Evaluation

Axiological Issues

Key themes for discussion in this section are therefore:

- Project Evaluation
- Project Duration
- Axiological issues that form an integral part of the public conversation by which policy is justified
- Previous Learning.
Project Evaluation

As I have outlined, the National Evaluation of the TLC programme was cancelled. This is recorded in the minutes of a meeting of the Testbed Learning Communities Project Board, which took place in January 2005. A number of interviewees have drawn attention to this cancellation (LC1, LC3 and RE3). The cancellation of the National Evaluation has profound implications for the programme.

Considering, for example, the table of national objectives in Section E (pages 124/125) of this Case Study, National Objective 1 notes that ‘the programme wishes to identify a variety of models’. I have pointed out that the ‘model’ in Case Study 1 was regarded as ‘new and innovative,’ an example of good practice which was felt to be worth disseminating across the region. However, in order for its status as a model of good practice to be confirmed, an assessment of this claim needs to be made. Perhaps the first stage of this assessment would have been to determine whether or not the ‘model’ facilitated the achievement of its own and the programme’s objectives. For example, did the model demonstrate the importance and value of family learning as outlined in National Objective 3? Did the model demonstrate how community learning contributes to the achievement of goals in the Regional Economic Strategy (National Objective 5)?

The answer to these questions is that, in the absence of an evaluation, these questions were not tested. Neither was it possible to assess whether different groups of potential learners responded more positively to one set of learning opportunities than they did to another. Information to support an assessment was neither collected nor collated.

This same circumstance applies to all the objectives established for the programme from membership schemes to the issue of developing more policy
coherence at local level. The lack of an evaluation seems of particular
significance when one considers it in relation to individual learners and, in this
case, individual learners in disadvantaged communities (see Axiological
Issues below).

The programme was, amongst other things, designed to promote economic
and social inclusion through the development of appropriate learning
provision within a learning community. Thus, by getting involved in learning,
individuals would taste success and gain esteem. Eventually this would lead
to a critical mass of positive experiences which would have the effect of lifting
the aspirations of the whole community and, as stated in the Skills Strategy
'breaking the cycle of deprivation, underachievement and worklessness'
(2003: 105). Clearly this is an important and laudable aspect of policy.
However the connection between the learning episode and the proposed
cultural change remains untested through this initiative. I would also propose
that, even had the national evaluation been undertaken, it would have proved
difficult to measure 'cultural change' within such a short timescale. This raises
the issue of programme duration, discussed below.

The cancellation of the National Evaluation of the Testbed Learning
Communities Pilot as reported in January 2005 was a significant event,
effectively changing the original policy framework, and undermining the aims
and objectives of the programme.

Project Duration

The second theme that emerges from the Case Study is that of programme
duration. Previous discussions have proposed that issues such as changing
the culture of a community are not short-term undertakings. Interviews
conducted at national level, in particular with NA2, a national representative
from NIACE and NA3, the consultant associated with Case Study 1, reinforce
the idea that the aims and objectives of this policy required a longer-term view. The Skills Strategy itself notes that 'our strategy is far reaching...not about short term initiatives, but an agenda for the long term' (2003: 119). This Case Study proposes that the time constraints placed on Government Office to achieve policy outcomes within a relatively short time led, almost inevitably, to the selection of 'pre-existing' Testbed Learning Communities.

Programme duration has implications across the whole spectrum of the TLC policy. Its impact is perhaps best illustrated by considering widening participation. Part of the challenge of regenerative learning is providing the circumstances whereby adults who have not had a particularly successful exposure to learning are encouraged to re-engage with that process. This is an arena fraught with difficulty as it offers a challenge to an existing way of living. The barriers to re-engagement are complex and will involve addressing social issues as well as the more practical problems of available childcare and the provision of an ambient and encouraging environment. As LC3 observes:

\[
\textit{in my experience people have multiple disadvantage...people having a lot of illness, people are poor and therefore statistically more likely to be ill...more likely to have crime in their lives, be victims of discrimination and have all the issues that go with poverty. Not only are they trying to get new skills they are trying to cope with life.}
\]

Success is dependent on a range of circumstances such as an appropriate support infrastructure and the building of confidence and trust. Even at the very pragmatic level of encouraging engagement with learning, time is a factor; trust, as evidenced at interview in both Case Studies 1 and 2, is not built overnight. From the initial contact to the point at which the 'learner' engages with learning and ultimately achieves is not necessarily a linear short-term process. The TLC Manager (LC2) asserts that 'you need to recognise that people need the opportunity to make mistakes...not go down the cute route that the funders define'. In addition, I would ask the question,
how would policy makers define the length of time required for the initial learning episode to influence the circumstances that facilitate the 'cultural change' that the policy envisages?

Similar arguments can be deployed into other aspects of the programme for example resident engagement, support for resident governors and the move to make policy more coherent or 'joined up' at local level. In relation to this last point, there appears to have been no substantive and long-term progress made with respect to this aspect of policy. For example, as stated in an earlier section of this Case Study, there are fewer opportunities to work with Extended Schools, Family Learning and Surestart initiatives. In addition it also proved difficult to get the TLCs acknowledged within the early versions of the Regional Economic Strategy. This suggests a continuing lack of planning coherence at local level, a concern that the Skills Strategy (2003) and, within that, the TLC initiative were designed to address. The Skills Strategy (2003) states that the objective is to show how we can link activities and budgets that currently:

support the role of the Regional Development Agency in helping all communities in their region gain access to economic opportunities, the Learning and Skills Council in widening participation in learning and the role of the Local Strategic Partnership in tackling the root causes of community disadvantage. We expect plans to promote learning communities to be included in the work of regional skills partnerships as set out above (2003: 107).

Evidence would appear to demonstrate that the implementation of the initiative did not allow sufficient time to embed these new principles in practice. Thus, critical questions posed by the project remain unanswered. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, as I have emphasised, the duration of the project does not facilitate this level of analysis. As a guide the government's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy wrestles with problems such as those outlined in the Skills Strategy (2003) proposing a ten to twenty year
programme in order to address community disadvantage Social Exclusion Unit (2001: 8). Secondly, and as previously discussed, there was no evaluation of the project and therefore no means by which success or failure could be assessed. From the perspective of programme duration I would propose that the policy itself undermined the implementation process as the proposed outcomes were unrealistic from the outset.

A Civil Servant operating at national level (NA5) stated at interview that once a policy is underway Ministers receive feedback about progress. Some evidence for this has already been provided as I have noted that the Minister received feedback from the Project Board on a regular basis. Ministers would also be alerted if it became apparent that the process was not going to ‘give the results that Ministers wanted or that the outcomes could be perverse’ (NA5). In this case it would perhaps have been expedient to alert the Minister to concerns before the policy was instituted.

**Axiological Issues**

Policy, as stated in Chapter 1 can be viewed as a means of allocating ‘value’ to a particular issue. Designating a theme as being worthy of a policy statement sets it apart from all those other themes that the ‘policy makers’ choose to ignore. The policy itself is the outcome of the thinking that brought policy makers to that point whereby a statement was felt to be required. In the case of the TLC pilot the policy statement is outlined in the Skills Strategy (2003) and the additional information provided by the DfES in the ‘Scoping Document’ (2003). Policy is, in this case, justified by a range of contextual statements setting out the reasons why this particular ‘issue’ was chosen above others. These statements are to be found in speeches made by the minister and articles and interviews published in the journal Adults Learning. In this Case Study I have defined concerns arising from such statements as ‘axiological issues’, first mentioned in Chapter 1 of this thesis.
Firstly the Skills Strategy highlights disadvantaged communities (2003: 105). In doing so it deploys the language of excluded individuals within communities with low aspirations and describes problems which are 'deep rooted and pervasive' (ibid: 20). This language creates a context within which action 'must' be taken. The vision and aims of the TLC Pilot also speak of promoting social cohesion within the context of community regeneration. To put this simply the policy describes groups of individuals living in disadvantaged communities that are, for want of a better expression, in need of help and support in order to change their circumstances. Ivan Lewis in particular emphasises the importance of this policy to the government's overall social inclusion agenda. In an article in Adults Learning (2003), he states that 'when we talk about social justice, it is about ensuring that every individual throughout the course of their life has the opportunity to fulfil their potential' (2003: 10).

What seems clear is that the problems identified by Ivan Lewis from a national perspective about long-term disadvantage, cultures of low aspiration and social exclusion have not been solved. Excluded communities not only remain a national issue they are also a 'community' issue. Levels of literacy and numeracy, within such communities are still challenging, the numbers of people without qualifications remains high. High levels of disadvantage and exclusion continue to exist. The problem of policy coherence and 'joined up initiatives' is not resolved. In other words the issues that were highlighted and addressed through the TLC pilot and its supporting logic remain.

In this context the work of the TLC, after the policy is gone, is still central to social and economic inclusion in the area. Perhaps, more importantly the moral imperatives that drive the social inclusion agenda and that were deployed so eloquently in justification of the importance of this policy are as relevant now as they were in 2003. Given the contemporary nature of these
issues it seems difficult to understand the action taken by government after, in the first instance, making such a persuasive and compelling case for action.

The arguments for sustaining the project would appear to be compelling. However it may be that the TLC pilot was a victim of the political cycle. The initial project was undertaken with a minimal amount of funding, perhaps due to its late inclusion in the Skills Strategy (2003). Ivan Lewis, the Minister acknowledged as being a key driver behind the inclusion of TLCs within the Skills Strategy, moved to the Treasury in May 2005. The Secretary of State at the DfES changed in December 2004 when Charles Clarke moved from the DfES to the Home Office. It was during this period that the decision was taken to cancel the national evaluation in favour of ‘capturing success’. It may be that at this point the initiative lost its political momentum.

I would however recall the value-laden arguments deployed to justify this policy. Even though at one level the Minister may indeed have left the building, it is important to state that the government remained in power. The policy was that of a government and not a designated minister acting unilaterally. As a government policy, it is therefore a government responsibility that it was abandoned in such an untidy fashion, rather than used as a platform for future policy development, as was originally intended.

**Previous Learning**

Much was made in both the Skills Strategy (2003) itself and the guidance issued by the DfES in the form of the Scoping Document (2003) about the extent of previous and existing work in the area of Learning Communities. It is apparent however that little attention was paid to previous evaluations in this field during the development and deployment of this initiative. I have cited the lack of evaluation and performance information, seen as fundamental to success in previous work as one example in support of this position. It is clear
that previous good practice, as outlined in Chapter 2 (page 35-40), was not included in the programmes assessment criteria (see Appendix 2). This would also suggest that little attention was paid to previous learning. I would also propose that the opportunity to integrate previous learning into this project was at its optimum during the development stage. Commissioning a report from NIACE that is then distributed at a point when policy parameters have been established is not conducive to integrating prior learning into the TLC pilot programme. These issues will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis.
### Figure 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAR 2005/2006 Programme</th>
<th>Student Numbers</th>
<th>SAR 2006/2007 Programme</th>
<th>Student Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic Skills: Literacy and Numeracy</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>Basic Skills: Literacy and Numeracy</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Courses</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Computer Courses</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Safety</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Health and Safety</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door Supervisor</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Door Supervisor</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fork Lift Truck</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Fork Lift Truck</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Office Administration</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Academy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Flower Arranging</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair and Beauty Nail Art Manicure</td>
<td>25 30 10</td>
<td>Beauty Therapy</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Enrolments</td>
<td>270 unique students 189 new students 474 places on all courses</td>
<td>Total Enrolments</td>
<td>294 unique students 218 new students 536 places on all courses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Figure 2 TLC Funding Proposal 2005/2006 (Item BR 29)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management information</td>
<td>£5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and Partnership</td>
<td>£2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>£2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing good Practice</td>
<td>£5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>£3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Costs</td>
<td>£3,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


During this financial Year expenditure totalled £525,230
Chapter 5: Case Study 2

Section A: Introduction

The aim of this Case Study is to focus the research by providing a context against which the research questions can be tested. As stated in Chapter 1 this thesis proposes to explore the issues that arise in the relationship between policy generation and policy implementation. The focal point of this Case Study is a 'Testbed Learning Community' (TLC).

This Case Study aims to address the research questions reprised below:

1. Why was this particular policy important and what was the justification for this policy?
2. To what extent was previous work taken into account when implementing the TLC Pilot (2003)?
3. How was policy interpreted and implemented at regional and local level?
4. Did the implementation process facilitate or inhibit the achievement of the policy's intended outcomes?
5. Are the purposes and values that were underpinned by policy given sufficient priority during the policy implementation process?

The research questions are addressed through an analysis of policy development and implementation which includes:

- Section B: A brief description of the area in which the Case Study TLC is situated
- Section C: Background information about the TLC in Case Study 2 (The Aim High Network)
• Section D: An outline of the role that Government Office played in the policy implementation process
• Section E: An outline and discussion of the Submission for TLC Status
• Section F: An analysis of the national (and local) aims and objectives of the programme (Section F)
• Section F: Summary and discussion (Section G).

Key issues from the above and which link to the research questions are highlighted at the end of each section. Case Study 2 has been completed using a range of information sources all of which are listed in the Bibliography. It also contains extracts from interviews conducted as part of this research. Interviews were undertaken with a range of senior managers involved with the project. Short biographies of the interviewees are provided in the table below.

Table 1 Interviewee Biographies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RE2:</td>
<td>Area Lifelong Learning Manager. A Senior position within the Local Authority. Instrumental in establishing the Aim High Network (see Glossary of Terms)</td>
<td>21/06/2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RE5:</td>
<td>Regional Coordinator of TLCs. Appointed by Government Office and working directly to RE7. Moved to strategic post in the Regional Development Agency (post TLC)</td>
<td>03/04/2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RE7:</td>
<td>Head of Division at Government Office. Responsible for implementation/policy lead on TLCs. Worked at National level on TLCs</td>
<td>14/09/2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RE6</td>
<td>Regional Support Officer for NIACE. Also sits on LSC group for Basic Skills</td>
<td>30/07/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC4</td>
<td>TLC Manager: Chief Executive of the ACUMEN Trust (see Glossary of Terms) and instrumental in establishing the Aim High Network. Represents the Community and Voluntary Sector on strategic groups. Prior to becoming the manager of the TLC, LC4 managed the Action Team for Jobs in the area</td>
<td>08/02/2007, 19/09/2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA5</td>
<td>Senior Civil Servant working at National Level and Chairperson of the Project Board</td>
<td>23/07/2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA2</td>
<td>National Director NIACE</td>
<td>12/06/2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA3</td>
<td>National consultant employed in the area of Case Study 1 and author in the area of regeneration, learning and skills.</td>
<td>12.09.2007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section (B) Area Description

The area of the TLC is situated on the North East Coast of the United Kingdom. It comprises two urban centres and eighteen dispersed village communities. The economy of the area had been based upon coal mining and heavy industry such as shipbuilding. The industrial decline of the 1980s and 1990s has had a major impact on social, environmental and economic well being within the area and its surroundings. The closure of the coal mining industry for example saw the loss of some 75,000 jobs in mining and related industries in the region. The TLC Submission (2003b), evidence item AH3, states that this industrial decline has been accompanied by a significant population decline in the area.

The TLC Submission (2003b) also notes that the area faces some major problems. It is the fourth most deprived district in the country (the worst outside London). Twenty two percent of the population are aged over sixty with more than sixteen percent permanently sick (national average 5.5%). In addition the numbers of people receiving incapacity benefit is three times the national average. Approximately thirty percent of the adult population has a basic skills need in literacy or numeracy. GCSE attainment is thirty-six percent compared to a national average at the time of fifty-four percent (2003: 7). An interim evaluation of the TLC pilot, Mapping the Northeast Test-bed Learning Communities (June 2005), hereafter called the ‘Evaluation’, outlines a similar picture noting that the area is characterised by:

- Low levels of employment/high levels of unemployment
- A reliance on low skills occupations
- High levels of deprivation and social exclusion

\[1\] The TLC Submission for Case Study 2 is cited in the Bibliography as TLC Submission (2003b)
- A high proportion of the population registered sick or disabled with poor levels of health
- Poor performance on basic skills
- A significant proportion of the population with no qualifications or without a level 2 qualification.

An audit conducted for the Area Lifelong Learning Strategy (2003) reinforces the perspective of an area still coming to terms with the decline in its historical industrial base, when stating that with:

the demise of the coal industry and the loss of jobs in textiles and other manufacturing industries, many people are having to reinvent themselves through building on or acquiring new skills to enable them to gain employment in new ...unfamiliar areas of work (2003: 3).

This particular publication also highlights that people in the area feel unable to meet the demands of new technology or feel underqualified or too old. This leads to a loss of self-confidence and self esteem which then manifests itself ‘...in low aspirations, little motivation and ultimately apathy' (ibid: 3).

The Evaluation states that the area has been in receipt of support for the impact of job losses since the 1980s. During this period the document acknowledges that there has been 'only limited success in addressing the issue of social deprivation' (2005: 6).

Section (C) Background to the Aim High Network (The Testbed Learning Community)

The TLC in Case Study 1 was, in essence, a learning centre based within a large housing estate at the edge of a city in the East Midlands. As emphasised in the Case Study the learning infrastructure in the area predated the submission for and confirmation of TLC status. In Case Study 2 the
proposed TLC covered a much larger geographical area. The status of Testbed Learning Community was attached to an infrastructure that predated the initiative. The existing network in Case Study 2 was known as the Aim High Network (on occasion abbreviated to Aim High). This section provides background information on the Aim High Network and its confirmation as a Testbed Learning Community in April 2004.

The work of Aim High can be traced back to its beginnings with the Action Team for Jobs (AtfJ). This project began work in the area in October 2000 and was established by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), funded through the Employment Services. In effect the role of the AtfJ was to provide an outreach team to encourage and enable people in the area to get back into work. It was soon realised that, in order for people to return to the learning process, it was necessary to provide something more than just the 'learning opportunity.' As LC4, the TLC Manager, noted at interview, 'we needed to develop an infrastructure for learner support'. RE5, the regional Coordinator for the TLC programme, reinforced this perspective noting that the area got the AtfJ because of its level of deprivation which, according to the Index Multiple Deprivation (2000), places it in the top 10% of deprived areas nationally.

In 2002 the Lifelong Learning Coordinator for the area (RE2), a post funded through the local authority, was intrigued by a chance conversation about a 'Learning Shop' that had just been started in another part of the district (in this instance the Learning Shop is effectively a drop in learning centre providing additional services related to seeking employment). After visiting the Learning Shop RE2 became convinced that something similar was needed in the area of Case Study 2. RE2 recollected that instead of 'buying just bread or a CD [people] could buy in learning or at least find out about training or writing a CV or getting support for skills for life'.
The Area Lifelong Learning Coordinator (RE2) and the TLC Manager (LC4) already knew each other through their work. After visiting the Learning Shop RE2 began to develop the view that something similar was required in every village across the district. However the idea was not just about learning and it embraced other issues such as support and guidance for alcohol and drug abuse or issues related to debt. This circumstance is also mentioned in the Regional Economic Strategy (2006: 105). As RE2, The Lifelong Learning Coordinator, states:

you have loads of social problems that you need help with before you can engage with learning. The idea at this time was to bring everyone together in one community and bring in the services to the community so they could engage.

RE2 outlined the vision of a Learning Shop in every community where people can just walk in, buy learning and access services such as ATfJ, Connexions (effectively adult careers guidance) and the Citizens Advice Bureau. LC4 supported the vision but suggested that, rather than go for new premises, difficult to sustain financially, there should be a focus on the existing infrastructure of Community Centres. Some of the Community Centres, which had been hubs for community activity in earlier times, had begun to decline as a result of the changes to employment patterns and the subsequent effect on communities. This decline had led to 'a lack of usage by local people'. The centres were being managed and sustained by unpaid volunteers and there was a lack of funding available for sustaining this (previously vibrant) infrastructure (RE2).

At the same time, and as part of the work emerging from Action Team for Jobs (AtfJ), LC4 had brought together a Basic Skills Strategy Group (convened to develop a coherent 'strategy' for adult literacy and numeracy across the District). This group was at the start of a process of developing a more embracing perspective on learning in the area. Importantly, this more
embracing perspective included the idea of learner support, a Service that LC4 had perceived was lacking. At interview LC4 suggested that these developments were about a unique congruence of circumstances with 'community groups struggling, changes to Adult Education making provision more difficult [and] recognition that individuals lacking in confidence needed support'. From LC4's perspective it therefore made sense to try and bring all these things together.

After a lot of discussion and consultation the idea for Aim High emerged. Aim High as a 'brand' was seen to represent what the stakeholders wanted. This was an idea that not only brought people together but also, through its 'brand' name, suggested something aspirational. LC4 offered the view that:

*Aim High means ...you can be what you want, it's very much aimed at the individual and we are able to use the brand with partners for example Aim High with Connexions or Aim High with the College or Aim High through Family Learning.*

RE2 stated that the idea of Aim High was also presented (by RE2 and LC4) to the Community Network, which is part of the Local Strategic Partnership (see glossary of terms). This process and that of 'getting a degree of community buy in [to the concept of Aim High] against a background of local cynicism' took, according to RE2, about eighteen months.

The first meeting of the Aim High Steering Group took place in October 2002, (TLC, 2003b: 8). The Aim High Network was established to bring a range of agencies together to support learning and skills development. As stated in the Aim High Strategic Plan (June, 2006):

*Aim High is a network of all agencies working in the field of learning, enterprise and employment together with the community venues where these services are accessed by local residents (2006: 2).*
Yarnit, in his review of Testbed Learning Communities, notes that Aim high is: "the brand that connects community learning centres across the area [and is] the basis for the Testbed" (2006: 29).

The Aim High Network is best described as a voluntary affiliation of groups and organisations that, under the 'brand name' of aim High come together to offer a range of learning opportunities and other services. However, in order to bid for funding to sustain and expand the range of provision offered through the Aim High Network, both LC4 and RE2 felt it was necessary to establish a more formal organisation that would enable funding bids to be made on behalf of the Aim High Network and its members.

To this end The Acumen Trust\(^2\) was established in May 2003, a date highlighted in a Case Study in the Regional Economic Strategy, Leading the Way (2006:104). Yarnit notes 'A new community development trust, the Acumen Trust, has been set up to propel this [the Aim High Network] and local regeneration programmes in general' (2006: 29). Thus at the beginning of the TLC pilot initiative the Aim High Network had been operational for eighteen months and the Acumen Trust had been established to facilitate funding applications.

This brief outline makes it clear that the Aim High Network (AHN) was already well developed with a strong collaborative presence in communities prior to the implementation of the TLC initiative. In addition early developments had been undertaken against a background of local cynicism. These circumstances serve to illustrate the time required to develop the initial infrastructure, raising levels of confidence and trust in order to facilitate engagement in 'disadvantaged communities'.

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\(^2\) The Acumen Community Enterprise Development Trust is a Company Limited by Guarantee and a Registered Charity
The AHN fulfilled a range of functions by providing access to services in a dispersed and disadvantaged community. In addition the network coordinated and provided access to learning, information and guidance and supported access to employment. In all some thirty-five different budgets, many of which are short term, were used to support the network and its services (LC4). This number of budgets gives some idea of the work required to develop an infrastructure that supports the development of learning provision. A similar circumstance exists in the area of Case Study 1. These developments and the submission for TLC status are discussed in more detail in Section D.

**Key Issues from Section C**

- Aim High was well developed as a learning community prior to the TLC (2003) initiative. The lead-in period for this process was in the region of eighteen months and included the time taken to establish the Aim High Network and also the development of the Acumen Trust, which was to become the ‘accountable body’ for the TLC initiative.
- Gaining the confidence of communities in order to be in a position to work in the ways described is a long-term and time-consuming process. This draws attention to theme of project duration.

**Section (D) The Role of Government Office**

The first point of analysis between the policy, as outlined in the Skills Strategy (2003), and the approach taken to the implementation of that policy, is the role of Government Office in this process. As previously noted the Skills Strategy (2003) does not provide much detail about what the government expected from the Learning Communities pilot. However, what I have referred to as the Scoping Document (2003) produced by the DfES (26.11.2003) adds substance to government expectations and provides a framework for policy implementation. This document states that the Minister for Young People and
Adult Skills (Ivan Lewis) wrote to the Regional Directors of all Government Offices '…formally commissioning them to start working with partners to explore 1 or 2 possible Testbed Learning Communities in each region' (2003:1). Government Offices in the regions were therefore at the forefront of the implementation process. This section outlines the role of the Government Office in the area of Case Study 2.

The TLC element of the Skills Strategy (2003) was somewhat unusual as RE7, Head of Division at Government Office and the manager with responsibility for the TLC initiative, notes: 'it wasn’t the usual way to hand out policy as it [the DFES] normally relied upon a dictat or relied upon its own field force to do this type of work'. However this particular approach was more flexible given that it was inserted at the last minute (RE7) and was premised on 'the Ministers direct knowledge of renewal based activity in his own constituency'. RE6, the Regional Support Officer for the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE), also recollects that 'there were no real policy prescriptions from Whitehall or Westminster as to how it would work in the regions'. RE2, the Area Lifelong Learning Manager, a senior strategic position within the Local Authority also reinforced this point at interview.

After the publication of the Skills Strategy (2003) and following its ‘Regional Launch’, RE7 wrote to the Chairperson of every single Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) in the region. At the time this amounted to 13 LSPs. The letter (from RE7) explained the TLC part of the Skills Strategy emphasising the opportunities that this ‘new direction of adult policy’ presented. It also invited people to think about whether they wanted to become involved in the initiative. The letter, sent out in June 2003, elicited little response from the LSPs. RE7 felt that this illustrated that they were more focused on other aspects of their work such as community safety and at that time had not
begun to focus on the 'worklessness strand of their activity as it was almost too hard to deal with'.

Having obtained little response through this initial approach RE7 turned to a group of regional Learning Partnership Coordinators that he met with on a regular basis. This group was then charged with the idea of thinking about localities in which the TLC proposals could be taken forward. The idea at this time was to identify and involve parts of the area where structures were already in place, where partnerships were particularly strong or where there was innovative practice that could be encouraged and shared.

After some deliberation a half-day event was set up in partnership with the Regional Development Team Leader from Government Office. This involved all the local authority Lifelong Learning Coordinators and explained, from a DfES perspective, what TLCs were about. In addition it was also explained that there was very little funding attached to the initiative. However, as RE7 stated at interview, Government Office was willing to support the development of broader partnerships across the region in order to promote the collaborative approach to working that was implicit in the TLC pilot. The Area Lifelong Learning Manager (RE2) remembers this half-day seminar and the opportunity that it represented to discuss the development of what was to become the TLC in Case Study 2. Perhaps the strongest memory of this occasion relates to the lack of funding. RE2 emphasised that there was no funding attached to the initiative stating: 'oh yes we want you to do it all for us and then tell us what it was like. There was a little bit of funding for advertising but it didn't change anyone's life'. RE6 also recollects the meeting at which they were given the 'usual presentation about policy and how important it was to Government and then asked ....how will you do it here'.

Eventually, and in consultation with the four regional Lifelong Learning Partnership Coordinators, a number of potential TLCs that met both national
and regional criteria were selected. Agreement to develop four TLCs in the region was obtained from the DFES whose original request to the regions had been for one or two nominations. One of the agreed areas was Case Study 2.

The Government Office manager with responsibility for the initiative (RE7) felt it appropriate to look at practice across the whole region in order to gain what was determined as 'transferable knowledge' that would help to take practice forward locally. In terms of 'transferable knowledge' it is perhaps appropriate to state that the guidance received by Government Office from the DfES (the Scoping Document) acknowledged the existence of existing practice in the field of Learning Communities (2003: 2) and also pointed out that NIACE had produced a baseline review of practice which would be distributed to all Government Offices. The Scoping Document (2003) acknowledges the need to build on and learn from what is already there (ibid: 2). There is little evidence of any recourse to previous practice within the documentation associated with Case Study 2. The criteria established for the project do not appear to take account of good practice. One example of this would be the failure to include the NIACE proposal that TLC Submissions should contain a statement about how the TLCs proposed to engage with their communities. Previous practice also indicates the importance of engaging the learners in the development of the programme. (see Yarnit quoted on page 38 of this thesis).

The area covered by Case Study 2, in the view of RE7, was always a 'front runner' for inclusion in the initiative because of 'the high levels of worklessness and benefit dependency ...and the massive nature of historical restructuring' that had taken place in the area. From the perspective of Government Office it was viewed as positive that Case Study 2 was effectively established as a TLC (the Aim High Network) before the Testbed Learning Communities initiative began in April 2004. RE2, one of the two local managers who was instrumental in promoting the development of Aim High
and who was also at the forefront in pushing Aim High as a potential TLC, also emphasises this point at interview, noting that:

\[
\text{at the time we had the Aim High Network actually functional \ldots when it was explained what the TLCs were set up to do, I thought we've got that now without being known as a TLC.}
\]

In addition some of the development work that was beginning to happen in the area of Case Study 2 involved the District Council. The link to the District Council, according to RE7, gave the submission for TLC status a more ‘robust strategic presence’, as it was integral to work already being undertaken in the District. In addition the District Council also employed the Lifelong Learning Coordinator (RE2).

This strategic emphasis had, from the perspective of RE7, Head of Division at Government Office, grown out of the recognition of the need to support economic growth from a community base and through direct engagement with employers. As the area was in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF) some of the strategic thinking was developed with the background and reassurance of more robust (longer-term) funding streams (RE7). This perspective was reinforced through an active Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) network also mentioned by both the Lifelong Learning Manager (RE2) and the Manager of the TLC itself (LC4).

Government Office outlined a strategic role for the TLCs in the introduction to the Submission for Testbed Learning Community status. TLC (2003b: 1) This document states that Government Office regard the TLCs as ‘organic and iterative’ and moves on to state that Government Office ‘will support the TLCs through work with the Learning Partnerships’ and also through an ‘internal project group comprising representatives from a number of Government Office teams’ for example Business and Skills, Education,
Surestart, Neighbourhood Initiatives and Community Development. In addition there is a proposal for a stakeholder-networking group to ‘share good practice and policy development’ and provide a direct link to the Regional Skills Partnership (2003b: 3).

In the early days of the initiative RE7 provided strategic support. However, Government Office used the available funding to appoint a Regional TLC Coordinator (RE5) for the initiative. This post had both coordinating and enabling aspects ‘…working to support their (the TLCs) development and also ensuring that they stayed on track and picked up on developing policy issues’. The coordinator notes that the role was developed to ‘ensure things happened’ linking the Testbeds across the region together to develop the exchange of good practice across a range of issues. We had, as RE5 notes, ‘a network of people that got together’ and ‘went to regional and national events … to promote the region’. This appointment was also situated in the same building as Regional Skills Partnership, a circumstance that, according to RE7 and RE5, ensured a more robust strategic link for the TLC initiative. RE7 worked to ensure that Submissions for each of the Testbeds were ‘cogent and weren’t too ambitious.... and were going to take forward practice rather than leave us doing exactly what we have always done’.

As previously mentioned, Government Office commissioned an ‘Evaluation’ of the TLC midway through the initiative. According to both RE7 and RE5, this document was very valuable when representing the TLC at regional level and contained a comprehensive overview of progress across the region. There was no final programme review undertaken at regional level and as highlighted later in Case Study 2, the National Evaluation was cancelled in favour of an end of programme Review (Yarnit: 2006). As noted in Case Study 1 the cancellation of the National Evaluation was confirmed at a meeting of the TLC Project Board (26.01.2005). In May of the same year Ivan Lewis, the Minister credited with originating the Testbed Learning
Communities Pilot, moved from the DfES to the Treasury. NA5, a Civil Servant working at national level and who had also acted as the chairperson of the Project Board, regarded this as a significant change. The TLC Pilot, according to NA5, 'was Ivan Lewis's idea' and, as a relatively small programme, could have suffered from the loss of the Minister's personal involvement. RE7 also felt that the initiative lost some of its momentum after the Minister's move stating that: 'it probably didn't have the profile once the Minister moved on, that said it didn't go away and the DfES continued its support until the end of March 2006'. It is also worthwhile noting that the Secretary of State at the Department for Education and Skills changed on 15th December 2004 when Charles Clarke M.P. moved to the Home Office. This was one month prior to the cancellation of the National Evaluation.

To summarise, the TLC in Case Study 2 was approved by the Minster (Ivan Lewis) as part of the first wave of TLC pilots and implementation was scheduled to begin in April 2004. RE7 circulated a letter to this effect in late March 2004. However the Submission for TLC status was built on the concept of the Aim High Network, which had been in existence since 2002 (RE2). A paragraph within the TLC Submission (2003b) marks the first meeting of Aim High as October 2002. Section B has given some background on the Aim High Network. However suffice to say that the Aim High Network effectively became the TLC for this part of the Northeast Region.

**Key Issues from Section D**

As outlined above Government Offices in the regions were charged with implementing the TLC initiative. In discharging this responsibility Government Office sought to raise awareness in the region by communicating with stakeholders. As this did not elicit an appropriate response Government Office then worked through the local Lifelong Learning structures. Eventually
four proposals were developed and submitted to the DfES on behalf of the region.
This regional approach is consistent with the views expressed in the TLC Proposal. In order to facilitate more strategic links with the Regional Economic Strategy, one year into the initiative a regional coordinator was appointed. In addition to maintaining an overview of the initiative, the coordinating role involved establishing a regional network to exchange, develop and disseminate good practice. The TLC was referenced in the Regional Economic Strategy 2005/2006. Support from Government Office ceased when the programme ended in March 2006. There are four issues arising from this section and which link to the research questions listed in Section A of this Case Study. These are:

- The TLC in Case Study 2 was superimposed on an existing area infrastructure known as the Aim High Network (sometimes abbreviated to Aim High). This network helped to bring a range of existing services, including learning, into local communities. The accountable body for the Aim High Network is the Acumen Trust.

- There was no evaluation either at regional or national level at the end of the initiative. This would appear to undermine the aims and objectives of the programme. As noted in Case Study 1, Ivan Lewis at NIACE Conference (3.12.2003), in describing the opportunity that this initiative presented, stated: '...and having learned what works [we must] ensure that it is mainstreamed into everything we do in all parts of the country'. It is difficult to understand how the outcomes of this pilot could be used to inform the future direction of policy in the way outlined without first establishing whether or not the project met its aims and objectives.
• It would appear that there was little recourse to previous evaluations or projects in the field of Learning Communities. The criteria in the Scoping Document (2003) do not reflect key aspects of best practice from other projects as discussed in Chapter 2 (pages 35-40). The cancellation of the National Evaluation provides a further illustration of this 'lack of learning' from previous practice.

• The Secretary of State with responsibility for the DfES, Charles Clarke, moved to the Home Office from Dec 15\textsuperscript{th} 2004. The Minister responsible for the initiative moved from the DfES to the Treasury in May 2005. The potential consequences of this will be discussed in the concluding section of this Case Study.

Section (E) The Submission for TLC Status: Case Study 2

The Submission for Testbed Learning Community Status (2003b) provides evidence about the way in which policy was interpreted and implemented at regional and community level. It states that:

Aim High is a network of community and outreach services that brings together existing outreach services in [the District] so that access to learning and employment is made more welcoming and effective for people in the area TLC (2003b: 7).

The aim of the Submission which integrates all four of the TLC programmes from the region, is to stimulate demand for skills for life ‘... through ‘enhanced guidance, the development of a learner entitlement and coordinated engagement with employers’ (2003b: 2).

The document begins by painting a ‘pen picture’ of the area and defining some of the characteristics of the community that are outlined in Section (B) of this case study. A second document ‘Testbed Overview’ states that ‘a strong community skills base has an important part to play in helping to tackle
the issues faced by the country’s most disadvantaged communities’ (2003b: 1). In this context the Submission highlights the effects of industrial decline on the ‘social, environmental and economic well-being of the district’ and moves on to state that ‘these circumstances have a knock on effect on the attitudes of people to learning and their ability to provide the skills which employers need in a modern economy’ (2003b: 2).

Aim High (the TLC), the Submission states: ‘will ensure that everyone in the district has access to the highest quality information, advice and guidance, learning opportunities and job search’ (ibid: 8). The document moves on to state that this will be achieved by:

1. Encouraging more individual use of community venues and the services they offer
2. Identifying opportunities for agencies to extend and expand their existing outreach provision
3. Helping people overcome the barriers which prevent them from accessing learning and employment
4. Engaging members of the community who are not currently being reached and help them to become less socially excluded
5. Providing one to one basic skills support to give individuals the confidence to progress (ibid: 8).

The Submission also emphasises that before the advent of Aim High there was some activity in most communities in the area but there was also poor delivery and some duplication of provision. Aim High has helped to draw agencies together and work with communities to help meet the ‘specific needs of each village, area or town’ (ibid: 9).

The next section of the Submission highlights four key elements of the overall proposal namely:
1. membership
2. employer engagement and partnership
3. strategic coherence

Each of the four key elements above is described in turn below. Each description is followed by commentary describing progress related to that particular element.

1 Membership

1(a) Introduction to Membership

The Skills Strategy (2003) proposed that one approach to addressing some of the issues raised about community disadvantage would be:

> to encourage individuals, families and employers to see themselves as members of the learning community with membership bringing some of the status and value associated with being a member of a leisure or sports club (2003: 106).

In accordance with this the TLC Submission proposed that the TLC would develop a membership/entitlement framework building upon existing work on, what the Submission termed, an Area Learning Passport. In addition there is a suggestion that the TLC will promote the use of individual USB memory sticks to enable the monitoring of progression.
1(b) Commentary on Membership:

RE5, the Regional TLC Coordinator, recollects that although membership was ‘...in the original documentation from the DfES ...we never pushed it and never asked what are you doing about it’. LC4, the TLC Manager, also outlined a degree of ambivalence towards the idea of membership schemes as outlined in the policy stating that although ‘club membership was big in policy terms ... I’m not convinced’. Furthermore the proposal, outlined above, to build on an existing ‘Passport’ framework was not taken forward.

However, from a different perspective, the Aim High Network pursued its own version of membership. The TLC Submission (2003b) noted that Aim High was operating in twenty-two community settings in 2003. By 2006 this figure was fifty-five. Similarly ‘The Aim High Update’ (2004), evidence item AH30, states that there were twenty-one Partner Agencies and, by 2006, according to the Regional Economic Strategy (2006: 104), this figure had grown to forty.

The Interim Evaluation commissioned by Government Office (2005: 11) states that membership of the Aim High Network through Service Level Agreements with partner organisations was successful and ultimately linked to Quality Assurance for the Network as a whole. In addition, and in order to reinforce the idea of a network, individual members of the organisation along with learners are given ‘Aim High’ pin badges signifying ‘their membership status’ (ibid: 11). Yarnit reinforces this development in his review of TLCs when stating that ‘Individuals as well as centres are encouraged to wear the membership badge’ (2006: 30).

1(c) Key Issues from Membership

The key point emerging from this section is that membership schemes, of the type envisaged in the Skills Strategy (2003), were not tested out in this
proposal. It may be that learners and members of the community felt an affiliation to the Aim High Network. However to date there has been no evaluation undertaken in relation to this. Equally the idea that membership could raise the status of learning, an important objective of the TLC pilot, remains untested. The implementation process failed to address this fundamental policy objective. This issue will be discussed in more detail in the final section of this Case Study.

2 Employer Engagement and Partnership

2 (a) Introduction to Employer Engagement and Partnership

As previously stated the Aim High programme was already up and running at the time of the Skills Strategy (2003). The TLC proposed to build on their existing work with employers developing community based programmes and mentoring schemes. Further collaborative work is also proposed in relation to items 1-5 above. For example the TLC anticipate that the best way to engage with members of the community who are not being reached is through collaboration and partnership facilitated through the Aim High Network. This is particularly relevant in relation to what the Skills Strategy (2003: 105) determines as disadvantaged communities with low aspirations and expectations where there may be a range of issues preventing individuals engaging in learning. Addressing these ‘barriers to learning’ is often a multi agency and therefore collaborative/partnership task. This notion of collaboration is also developed in a more strategic context by a proposal to develop links with county and regional funding bodies in order to facilitate a broader based roll out of the philosophy of Aim High.
2 (b) Commentary on Employer Engagement and Partnership

The Skills Strategy, within which the idea of TLCs was embedded, was premised on the imperative to ensure a dynamic high skills economy for the 21st Century and, within that, the development of the national skills base was seen as fundamental (2003: 7). Ensuring that learning linked to skills and employability via regional planning processes was encouraged. The Evaluation (2005: 8), reported that the DfES was keen to see employers involved in the Testbeds in order to:

- Promote the value of learning within the existing workforce
- Provide learning facilities for the workforce within the wider community
- Create job opportunities for suitably skilled individuals

Aim High (the TLC) sought to build on its previous successes and extend links with employers. Yarnit notes that Aim High had taken a lead in workplace learning as part of a programme called EQ8 which was designed to provide support for basic skills in the workplace (2006: 30). In addition the TLC worked closely with a major employer in the area to establish an award winning work based learning centre where both employees and members of the community can learn and take tests on line. The Evaluation highlights this success noting that:

in the Aim High affiliated Company Learning Centre the TLC has one of the most celebrated examples of successful employer engagement in basic skills and community education in the country, having won the Business in the Community Skills for Life Award for Excellence in 2004 (2005: 25).

The Lifelong Learning Manager (RE2), who was instrumental in establishing the centre, notes a visit to the area and the Learning Centre by Ivan Lewis M.P.:
We took him and showed him around the Learning Centre...its still there, brilliant ...200 employees through each week doing NVQs and Skills for Life and there’s an adult special needs centre. Its there for the community as well as the employees.

The company is part of the Aim High Network. RE2 also gives the rationale for employer engagement as ‘if we are training people and raising their aspirations and skills we needed employers involved’. This was to ensure employer awareness and also to encourage the idea of progression into work.

In addition, for individuals who had been out of work, the TLCs link to employers and employability were also felt to have the potential to motivate.

In the context of employer engagement, the TLC Manager (LC4), felt that one of the strengths of Aim High was that ‘we had started down the employability road... there is a strong understanding that the focus is on learning that leads to employment...work certainly fitted the policy’.

The TLC, in the form of Aim High, continued to develop its employer engagement and partnership working. As outlined in the Evaluation (2005) the network is collaborative and has done much to reduce competition between providers in the area and at the same time foster a strong outreach (for example Skills for Life) and support infrastructure for learners (for example Information and Guidance, Job Search).

The Aim High Network has, over a period of years, grown to embrace a range of services and learning provision including 1:1 support for skills for life and independent (accredited) information and advice services. Aim High (The TLC) therefore brings together a wide range of organisations under an umbrella network. According to the Evaluation this network ensures a more effective and efficient range of services for local residents by placing ‘their needs at the centre of a collaborative and essentially non-competitive system’ (2005: 23). This collaboration and partnership has, in the case of Case Study
2, been extended to a range of partners some of which are providers. By encouraging collaboration, duplication of provision is being reduced and it becomes possible to provide learning experiences at a local level in places where there is a critical mass of learners. On occasion this means assisting learners to get to classes. The Evaluation states that local stakeholders perceived that by working collaboratively through the Aim High Network to run initiatives and events they ‘can increase the numbers of actively engaged learners’. As a result most providers perceive that through participating in the network ‘... they gain enrolments that they would not otherwise have secured’ (2005: 23).

RE2, the Area Lifelong Learning Coordinator, reinforces the success of this collaboration noting: ‘at the time it was brilliant we were sharing resources, we were sharing tutors, we were sharing learners’. The TLC manager (LC4) shares this view of the benefits that collaboration brings, noting that what the AHN does is have a ‘catalytic effect...more learners in the college, more in Adult and Community Learning... making things better for everyone’.

As I have previously outlined Aim High was premised on a collaborative network of learning provision and other services designed to meet the needs of its community. Throughout the time of the TLC initiative, Aim High continued to build its networks, including links with the business community, in support of its original aims and objectives. A new Aim High Strategic Plan 2006 –2009 (June 2006) reinforces this direction of travel. In addition community venues, affiliated to the Aim High Network, help to bring a range of other services into communities in an area where transport and travel constitute barriers to service access and where individuals are often reluctant to travel beyond the immediate and familiar locale. The Aim High Network also addresses the issue of institutional barriers to participation. For example those who have not experienced success in the education system are often reluctant to return to more formal institutional settings as a first step back into
learning. Aim High ensures that the first step can be taken within a familiar community setting.

2 (c) Key Issues from Employer Engagement and Partnership

This section has highlighted the work undertaken by Aim High with members of the business community. It has drawn attention to the fact that the work was well developed at the time the TLC initiative commenced, a circumstance which links to the previously mentioned issue of programme duration. It has also noted that the work with the business community was part of a strategy to link worklessness to employment opportunities. As LC4 states ‘the focus was always on economic outcomes...we started with employability as an end aim...look at the funding and the policy...employability is up there’.

3 Strategic Coherence

3(a) Introduction to Strategic Coherence

The TLC Submission (2003b) from this region contains a generic introductory section that outlines how the initiative aligns with the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) and the Framework for Regional Employment Skills Action (FRESA). The Regional Skills Partnership has now superseded the FRESA. In addition the document explains how proposals have been developed through consultation and a reliance on the brokerage skills of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and the Area Learning Partnership Network.

The section covering ‘Strategic Coherence’ states that the TLC Submission seeks to address the priorities for the region as outlined in both the FRESA and the RES. It proposes to do this by building on existing practice and through stimulating demand for skills for life, enhancing guidance provision and ensuring coordinated engagement with employers (2003b: 1).
3 (b) Commentary on Strategic Coherence

Building on the idea of collaboration at community level, the Skills Strategy (2003: 15) also aimed to bring coherence to the way regional planning processes developed. TLCs were, at one level, advanced to pull together community approaches for raising aspirations, learning and improving skills levels within deprived communities. How would the information and experience gained from this work inform the planning at regional level? The proposal above suggests that this would be achieved by ensuring synergy between local planning process (in communities) and the plans being written at regional level by the Regional Development Agency, responsible for setting the Regional Economic Strategy (RES), and the Regional Skills Partnership (RSP), responsible for agreeing the skills priorities for the region (see Appendix 5, Glossary of Terms).

The very fact that the TLC Submission contains a section about regional coherence is noteworthy (2003b: 1). RE7 also pointed out that the first draft of the 2005/2006 Regional Skills Action Plan mentioned Testbed Learning Communities practice, noting that: ‘We were the only region that got that according to the DfES’. In addition RE7 highlights that the current Regional Skills Action Plan does not contain direct reference to the TLCs although ‘the work is still coherent with the Regional Economic Strategy’ (2006-2009). The Evaluation (2005: 34) regarded links with these strategic bodies as important for future development of the TLC.

RE5, The Regional TLC Coordinator, stated at interview that it was ‘disappointing to see that TLCs featured in the Skills Strategy (2003) but not in the subsequent Skills Strategy’ (2005). For the region this level of collaboration, which in essence facilitated more coherent regional planning, was felt to be important. RE5 also notes: ‘we had set off the Regional Skills
Partnership and the TLCs were one of our regional strands and objectives... we put it [TLCs] into the first skills strategy for the region. The closure of the initiative in March 2006 and the loss of the coordinating post are set alongside the disappearance of TLCs from the policy agenda and consequently the Government Office work programme. Notwithstanding the energy and enthusiasm of local stakeholders such as RE2 and LC4, this set of circumstances would appear to undermine the quest for coherence in terms of locals planning processes, one of the key objectives of the Skills Strategy (2003).

The necessity for coherence as expressed in the TLC submission remains a significant issue in terms of policy implementation. The Evaluation document noted the importance of the link to the Regional Skills Partnership through the Testbed Learning Communities Coordinator stating that:

it is important that any thoughts towards a continuation strategy should not be left until the end of the initiative but rather embedded in the work over the next year (2005: 35).

As previously outlined The Regional Economic Strategy (2006-2016) does not contain any specific reference to the work of TLCs in the region. However the document uses the Acumen Trust as an exemplar Case Study (ibid: 104) and the supporting text celebrates the success of the TLC as an example of national good practice. Government Office sponsorship of the TLC initiative ceased when the programme ended in March 2006 and, as RE7 noted at interview, the emphasis at Government Office shifted from the Regional Skills Partnerships although ‘engagement around employability issues and engagement on Neighbourhood Renewal remains...[however] the locus has shifted to Local Area Agreements’.

Coordination of the TLCs also ceased and the TLC Coordinator moved on to another post in the region. The four regional TLCs no longer meet as a group
to exchange information and offer mutual support. This put the onus for making the strategic connections firmly within the remit of the TLC itself.

In this context the TLC Manager (LC4), sits on a number of strategic bodies in the region for example the Learning and Skills Council Area Advisory Group and the newly formed Social Capital Forum. In addition LC4 is the voluntary sector representative on the Regional Skills Partnership, a group which involves a number of influential organisations such as Job Centre Plus, The Learning and Skills Council, Government Office and the Trade Unions. As previously noted LC4 is regarded as being particularly proactive and recognises the importance of being part of the discussion when strategic decisions are being made.

3 (c) Key Issues from Strategic Coherence

This section has discussed what was one of the key elements of the Skills Strategy (2003), that of bringing policy coherence at local level. The Skills Strategy itself promotes this at regional level and the TLC element of that attempts to bring coherence to community provision. The commentary highlights the actions that Government Office took to join local planning and action with the more strategic roles of the Regional Development Agency.

Whilst there were some notable achievements, not least of which was ensuring that the TLCs were represented in the Regional Skills Action Plan, the opportunity for ‘sustaining coherence’ appears to have been significantly diluted at the end of the programme. At this point the regional coordinator post was terminated and the regional meetings ceased. New arrangements therefore, were not embedded in the culture of local planning processes and, to that extent must be regarded as fragile. Once the policy imperative changed and the profile of the TLC programme slipped from the headlines there is a tendency towards previous practice re-establishing itself. However,
as has been noted, Case Study 2 continues to be represented at strategic groups through its own energy and agency (by the representation of LC4 and the advocacy of RE2).

4 Performance Measures

4(a) Introduction to Performance Measures

The TLC Submission (2003b) outlines a range of both qualitative and quantitative performance indicators but states clearly that ‘given the short timescale it has not been possible to fully develop new activities and performance indicators’. Performance indicators such as attainment, participation and pooling of funding are proposed as quantitative measures alongside more qualitative measures such as decision making processes and stakeholder views on TLC visibility and impact (2003b: 3). The Submission does not elaborate on the performance indicators. The use of a consultant is suggested as a means by which this issue can be addressed.

4 (b) Commentary on Performance Measures

The Evaluation comments on the issue of performance indicators as follows. ‘For effective evaluation to take place it is important that agreed activity identifies monitoring arrangements that seek to identify impact’ (2005: 34). The Evaluation goes on to state that:

The collaborative provider framework established [by Case Study 2] is worth examining as a possible solution, but any achievements will need to be backed up by robust management information if it is to make a maximum impact on decision making (2005: 36).

Management information is clearly collected in relation to a range of funding streams that support the Aim High Network for example the Steering Group
Meeting (13.09.2004: item AH19) discussed a report on the number of learners receiving Information and Guidance, learners receiving basic skills support and those signposted into further learning. The previously mentioned company based learning provision provides another example of learner information being tabled and discussed. Learner information from this centre was reported at the Aim High Steering Group meeting (20.04.2004 item AH20).

With regard to performance indicators we have established that there was little work undertaken between the success of Submission for TLC status (April 2004) and the end of the programme in March 2006. In one sense this mirrors national circumstances in that a decision was taken not to undertake a national evaluation of the TLC initiative. The National Evaluation of the programme was cancelled with the emphasis being placed on a review highlighting best practice (see Yarnit: 2006). The minutes of a meeting of the Project Board (File 20/8/1/7: item TLC 6 26.01.2005) note that:

There will be no formal evaluation of the TLCs. Instead the DfES will be aiming to capture success on an ongoing basis rather than produce formal evaluation reports at fixed dates.

In relation to performance management Government Office speaks of light touch quarterly reports and RE7, Head of Division with responsibility for the TLC initiative, also emphasises that reporting back was also light touch and that 'it was more important for us to understand what was needed in terms of the strategic link to the Regional Skills Partnership'.

The apparent flexibility in the programme which, at local level, was seen in a positive light, gave rise to a wide range of approaches and activities. This variety meant that there was little national consistency between one region and another and therefore little scope for comparisons either between
different programmes in the same region or nationally across the twenty-eight Testbed Learning Communities established (Yarnit 2006: 11).

Interestingly one year into the programme Government Office in Case Study 2 commissioned an interim evaluation but, as RE5, the Regional TLC Coordinator notes, it had insufficient funding to repeat this exercise at the end of the programme. The interim evaluation was valued as a document by both RE7 and RE5 and used to emphasise strategic aspects of the initiative to the Regional Skills Partnership. RE5 also expressed some disappointment at the lack of a National Evaluation noting that: ‘we always anticipated an evaluation but in the end it didn’t happen...our policy colleagues in Sheffield were disappointed as it was felt that an evaluation would have come out positively’.

The absence of an end of programme evaluation both local and national has implications for the strategic context as outlined in the TLC Submission and the coherence of the learning and skills infrastructure at regional and local level. The Interim Evaluation (2005: 35) makes a similar point stating that without robust information it can be difficult to make the case for informing policy development both regional and national. This is increasingly important in relation to embedding the initiative within the local 'learning and skills architecture' and also maintaining the potential to join up a range of policies at local level. It is also apparent that some of the intentions of policy in relation to the effect of this 'initiative' on the culture of communities, their expectations and aspirations remain untested.

4 (c) Key Issues from Performance Measures

This section has highlighted the importance of performance measures and evaluation. The key theme point emerging from this discussion is that: in the absence of both local and National Evaluations policy outcomes could not be adequately assessed. In addition, even had the National Evaluation not been
cancelled, I would argue that some of the ambitious aims and objectives of the programme would have been difficult to explore in the timeframe envisaged. Programme evaluation will be discussed in more detail in the final section of this Case Study.

Section (F) The National Programme

Section D outlined the role of Government Office in the implementation of this initiative. Section E has discussed the key themes and issues within the local Submission for TLC status. Issues that link to the research questions have been summarised and will be discussed in the final Section, Section G, of this case study. This Section (F) outlines the national context and discusses the extent to which Case Study 2 contributed to the national aims and objectives of the initiative.

Programme Objectives (national)

This section addresses the following question: Did the proposal meet the criteria as outlined in Skills Strategy (2003) and as detailed in the previously mentioned DfES Scoping Document? This question is answered in two parts. Firstly the Scoping Document lists a number of criteria that the overall programme must meet. The DfES also developed a Scoring Matrix matching proposals to criteria and enabling each proposal to be assessed against the criteria. This process is outlined below. Secondly the Scoping Document contains a list of five objectives that support the overall vision and aims of the initiative. The vision and aims are reprised below. The five objectives are also listed in Table 2 (page 175) alongside a short commentary on each objective. The commentary provides a statement of progress against each objective.
The Scoring Matrix

There are thirteen criteria in the matrix, the first six of which are regarded as essential. The proposal for Case 2 meets all the essential TLC criteria as follows:

1. it is an area of high unemployment and low educational attainment
2. partnership arrangements are regarded as strong
3. the project is primarily for adults
4. the project is focused on skills for communities and businesses
5. there are clear links with the regional economic agenda
6. there are clear performance indicators outlined in the proposal.

Of the remaining seven criteria Case 2 meets one that relates to the development of a ‘membership’ approach and a question relating to basic skills is left unanswered. At the time of assessment the Submission for Case Study 2 did not address any of the following:

1. The proposal does not mention the development of family learning programmes
2. There is no significant ethnic population in the TLC area
3. The area is in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal funding (NRF)
4. The proposal does not mention capacity building
5. The proposal does not mention innovation in terms of funding.

It is apparent that the proposal conformed to the criteria that the DfES established as essential. It is perhaps necessary to state that, although the assessment outlined above omitted comment on the development of basic skills, the TLC Submission (2003b: 8) mentioned basic skills as a key element
of the current provision which it wishes to 'embed and enhance' (ibid: 9).
Similarly although Family Learning is not mentioned as an action in the proposal there is evidence to suggest that Family Learning in the area is strong. The evidence for this is:

- The proposal notes that the County Councils Family Learning Team are one of the partners in the Aim High Network (ibid: 7)
- One of the exemplars of current activity in the proposal is based around intergenerational (family) learning (ibid: 8)
- Family Learning is frequently reported in minutes of both the Steering (13.09.2004, item: AH19) and Operational groups (06.04.2006, item: AH13). Finally Aim High, through Family Learning, is mentioned at interview by both LC4 and RE2. RE2 states that: ‘The County Council do a lot through libraries --- we built on what was there. We had Aim High through Family Learning’. LC4 adds further emphasis when stating that ‘family learning is a major part of it (the TLC) ... everything you do is about raising confidence’.

The National Vision for Testbed Learning Communities

The vision and aims form an integral part of the national policy context. As such they are noted here for consistency and information. They are discussed in Section G in the context of issues such as programme duration and values. The Scoping Document contains the following Vision that defines a Learning Community as a place:

Where people are motivated and want to learn and where people and organisations provide mutual support to help each other learn and raise the local employment skills base. Testbed Learning Communities will encourage and enable increasing numbers of their members to reach level 2 qualifications (2003: 2).
The National Aim of the Testbed Learning Community

The aim of the Testbed Learning Community is to develop sustainable approaches in which:

Learning and skills are used to connect adult together and to promote social cohesion, regeneration and economic development through the active involvement of all parts of the community (ibid: 3).

Table 2 National Programme objectives taken from Scoping Document (2003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) To identify and measure a variety of operational models that link a whole range of learning and skills provision, to impact on the local skills base, improve community capacity and lead to improved economic fortunes.</td>
<td>Case Study 2 outlines one model that has the potential to inform this process. See Yarnit (2006) for an assessment of the impact of the programme on the ‘range of models’.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) To investigate models of club membership that raise the status of learning and encourage self-ownership of skills and learning in areas of disadvantage/low aspiration as well as higher economic achievement.</td>
<td>Membership models were not pursued as envisaged in the Scoping Document. Membership of the Aim High Network. A local idea, was however encouraged. Badges were also issued to employees and members as a means of reinforcing the network. Centres have Aim High Network signage (LC4 and RE2).</td>
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To identify how Family Learning (FL) can be used to widen participation, raise adult skills, and boost individual confidence and aspirations to support the creation of a community wide culture of learning.

A wide range of Family Learning programmes has been developed in the area. Anecdotal evidence of success exists. The minutes of meetings and the interviews with LC4 support this position. The extent to which FL supports a community wide culture of learning has not been pursued through any formal evaluation (Yarnit: 2006: 43).

To identify who benefits from different learning community's projects and what particular impact they have upon different groups/segments of society.

As Case Study 2 notes the project is established in a disadvantaged community and by definition engages excluded learners. However in the absence of a National Evaluation it is difficult to provide a robust statement about impact on different groups within the community.

To identify how community learning and capacity building can contribute to the achievement of the goals set out in the Frameworks for the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) previously the FRESA.

Strategic connections between Aim High and Regional Organisations were established at the outset and facilitated through regional Government Office and also through the appointment of a TLC Regional Coordinator. This post was discontinued at the end of March 2006. However strategic connections remain crucial to the process of providing coherence at local level. Currently these are pursued through LC4 and RE2.

Table 2 indicates that in terms of the key programme objectives Case Study 2 had the potential to make a positive contribution to Objectives 1 to 5.
However the lack of an evaluation, both national and local, precludes analysis of any potential impact on the broader themes of cultural and aspirational change. The end of the project marked the end of the involvement of Government Office, the removal of the coordinating post and the demise of the network meetings. This has an impact in particular on the achievement of Objective 5, which relates to joining up policy, arguably an ongoing issue for government. Section G discusses these circumstances in more detail.

Section (G) Summary and Discussion

This case study has been undertaken to explore the issues that arise in the relationship between policy generation and policy implementation. The research questions used to structure the approach to the Case Study are listed below. They are followed by a summary, in tabular form, of the key issues arising from previous sections.

1. Why was this particular policy important and what was the justification for this policy?

2. To what extent was previous work taken into account when implementing the TLC Pilot (2003)?

3. How was policy interpreted and implemented at regional and local level?

4. Did the implementation process facilitate or inhibit the achievement of the policy’s intended outcomes?

5. Are the purposes and values that were underpinned by policy given sufficient priority during the policy implementation process?
## Summary of Key Issues from Sections C, D, E and F

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Section and Emergent Issue</th>
<th>Link to Research Question</th>
<th>Key Discussion Point</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Section C</strong></td>
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<td>• Provides contextual</td>
<td>The AHN was already in</td>
<td>Programme Duration</td>
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<td>Aim High Network (AHN)</td>
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<td>which in this case is</td>
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<td>the TLC</td>
<td>questions in particular 2 and 3.</td>
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<td><strong>Section D The Role of GO</strong></td>
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<td>• The TLC was part of</td>
<td>This impacts on research</td>
<td>Programme Duration</td>
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<td>an established</td>
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<td>infrastructure</td>
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<td>Programme Evaluation</td>
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<td>• There was no national</td>
<td>This impacts on research</td>
<td>Programme Duration</td>
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<td>evaluation of the TLC</td>
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<td>• Initial progress was</td>
<td>This impacts on research</td>
<td>Axiological Issues</td>
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<td>made about 'joining up'</td>
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<td>policy. Duration</td>
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<td>Strategy (2003)</td>
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<td>• The minister responsible</td>
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<td>for the initiative</td>
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<td>Treasury in May 2005.</td>
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Little attention was paid to previous work undertaken in the same field as discussed in Chapter 2 (pages 35-40). This impacts on research question 2. The importance of previous learning.

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<th>Section E The TLC Submission</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Aspects of the programme omitted</td>
<td>• No Evaluation undertaken</td>
<td>• Lack of coherence at local level in terms of 'joined up' policy</td>
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In the main impacts on research questions 2 and 3 however the absence of an evaluation draws in questions 4 and 5. Programme Evaluation. Programme Duration. Axiological Issues.

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<th>Section F The National Aims and Objectives</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Lack of a National Evaluation</td>
<td>• Axiological issues in relation to the justification of policy</td>
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Links to questions 2, 3, 4 and 5. Clear link to questions 1, 4 and 5. Programme Evaluation. Axiological Issues.

The key themes arising for discussion in this Section are: Project Evaluation, Programme Duration, the extent to which Previous Learning was used to inform the programme and Axiological Issues. These themes are discussed in more detail below.
Project Evaluation

As outlined in Case Study 1 the National Evaluation of the TLC programme was cancelled. This circumstance is recorded in the minutes of a meeting of the Testbed Learning Communities project Board January 5th 2005. I have argued in Case Study 1 (for example page 130) that the cancellation of the National Evaluation has significant implications for the TLC programme as it effectively prevents any assessment of the extent to which the project met its intended aims and objectives.

Using the example of National Objective 1 as detailed in Table 2 (pages 175 and 176) of this Case Study, which seeks to identify a range of 'models' that may help take the issue of skills development in disadvantaged communities forward. As previously stated the model in Case Study 2 may indeed be new and innovative. However, in order to confirm this, it would seem clear that steps needed to be taken to determine whether or not the model was successful in practice. An assessment about the degree to which the model enabled the project to meet its stated objectives is therefore required. In the absence of an evaluation the extent to which the 'model' facilitated the achievement of programme aims and objectives was not tested.

In terms of the evaluation of programme impact, a number of the proposals in the Scoping Document (2003) and the TLC Submission for Case Study 2, link to quite ambitious outcomes. Membership schemes can be used to illustrate this point (See National Objective 2, page 175). The initial purpose of membership schemes as stated in the Skills Strategy (2003: 106), was to use membership as a means of lifting aspirations and developing a culture whereby learning became valued. From the TLC’s perspective instigating and embedding a membership scheme and then tracking that scheme in order to determine its effect on individual and community predisposition to learning is a complex, long-term and resource intensive project. As a minimum this
would have required a consistent definition of ‘membership’ set alongside the systematic collection of baseline information, establishing measures and subsequent tracking and evaluation. As I have outlined these circumstances did not pertain. This is not to state that membership schemes would not have a positive impact or that they would not make a contribution to cultural changes. Rather that the project was never in a position to establish whether or not this was the case.

A similar argument can be deployed in relation to tracking the effect of successful individual learning episodes on community aspirations or the ‘culture of learning’ within a community (See National Objective 3, page 176). This again is a time consuming task and requires systematic evaluation.

The decision taken to cancel the National Evaluation of the TLC programme had a significant impact on how policy was interpreted at regional and local level (Research Question 2). Without an evaluation the project’s aims and objectives cannot be tested (Research Question 3). The cancellation of the evaluation is a very clear message about the diminishing profile of this particular policy area. I would argue that cancellation suggests that the values that underpin policy were not given sufficient attention during the implementation process (Research Question 4). Additionally the fact that these values were not considered at an early stage in effect prejudices the outcomes of policy from the outset (Research Question 5). The absence of an evaluation makes it very difficult to validate any of the activity undertaken and therefore there is little transferable learning from this programme. Readers will be aware that one of the original intentions of the TLC pilot was to learn lessons which could be used to inform future policy.
Programme Duration

One of the most important implementation themes that emerge from analysis of interviews and documentation is that of the duration of the TLC initiative. This is not to suggest that stakeholders were not aware of the time-limited nature of the project from the outset. There are however a number of concerns with regard to initiating a programme of this type with such a short project life. For strategic reasons, previously outlined, Government Office selected an established network as its TLC. It is arguable that had it not been for the fact that the Aim High Network was already established the achievements and successes outlined in this Case Study and the review (Yarnit: 2006) would not have been possible. This circumstance highlights the importance of project duration. Interviews undertaken at national level in particular with NA2 (A national representative of NIACE) and NA3 (Consultant: Case Study 1) reinforced the idea that the aims and objectives described by this policy required a longer term view. The Skills Strategy (2003) also notes that the agenda ‘...is not about short term initiatives, but an agenda for the long term’ (2003: 119), and that the government envisage ‘trialling the concept initially in areas of long term systemic low aspirations’ (ibid: 106). In addition the national vision and aims for the project, previously outlined, (pages 174 and 175), speak of improving levels of motivation and social cohesion in communities. The Minister (Ivan Lewis) stated, on a number of occasions, that this agenda was based in areas where the concerns identified were long term and endemic (See for example Adults Learning, 2004: 10). This position itself suggests that what was being proposed required a longer-term perspective and the language of the Skills Strategy (2003) gives an impression of an initial, time limited trial, which is suggestive of a longer term drive after a period of learning. There is, I would argue, an ambiguity in the language associated with this initiative that speaks of a two-year time limited programme in the context of an initial trial and an imperative to roll out the learning across the whole country.
This theme of programme duration has implications across the whole range of activities associated with this initiative. From the perspective of community engagement, RE2 for example notes that the Aim High project had been running since 2002 and it had been a difficult process getting ‘buy in from communities’ who had grown used to being ‘used as outcomes’. They had, as RE2 notes: ‘become pretty cynical because they had seen projects come and go … like a firework that burns bright for a while and then just fades’. The build up to Aim High began in 2000 with the formation of the ATfJ. At the conclusion of TLC funding in March 2006 the programme was six years old. As LC4 stated at interview ‘this has been a six year journey for me’, set against a 2-year project for the DfES. If the TLC initiative was, as Ivan Lewis stated in a speech to NIACE Conference (3.12.2003), essentially about ‘learning’ from a pilot with a view to disseminating that learning at national level, one of the key elements of learning from the pilot must surely relate to the time it takes to establish the TLC. This crucial learning opportunity is absent in the circumstances described.

In the context of programme duration and sustainability I would note the following. Evidence would indicate that the TLC initiative was not generously resourced (NA3, RE2 and RE7). In terms of Case Study 2 the majority of the funding was used to support the post of Regional Coordinator. That being so, both RE2 and LC4 state at interview that other issues were more important (to the TLC) and that recognition and the kudos of being regarded by policy makers as an example of good practice was more significant than the small amount of funding which was available. As LC4 noted at interview ‘that small amount of funding took us to national prominence’. I have in an earlier section noted that the Regional Economic Strategy uses Aim High as an exemplar case study.
It seems evident that in terms of taking part in the pilot, financial resources were not a significant issue. The question then becomes what would the cost of maintaining the political profile of the TLCs have been? Ivan Lewis spoke of Learning Communities as: ‘...an idea whose time had come’ (Adults Learning, 2004: 12). Given this level of importance should it not have been possible and appropriate to maintain its profile on the policy agenda without further significant expenditure.

The Aim High Network offers an example of success. It works in an area of recognised deprivation with people who have a range of needs. Learning needs are addressed as an integral part of the support offered to communities in the network. There is a clear imperative to collaborate to the benefit of both individuals and the community. The network continues to work collaboratively and uses a range of ‘non traditional’ approaches to encourage engagement. This would include events such as ‘Bloomin Marvellous’ or ‘Raw Talent’, (Yarnit, 2006: 31), where the fact of people gathering to do something interesting and enjoyable within their community provides an opportunity for the outreach infrastructure to begin the engagement process. Although it is clear that the network gained from the regional and national profile that accrued through TLC membership, readers will however note that the work of Aim High was part of an existing plan.

As demonstrated above, programme duration is an issue that impinges upon the whole programme. The initial statements in the Skills Strategy (2003) imply a degree of continuity after a period of initial learning from the pilot. However the outcome was a two-year programme with no apparent policy continuity. The two-year timescale would have prevented any realistic assessment of the more ambitious aspects of the initiative. I have argued that the short project duration made the selection of existing ‘TLCs’ almost inevitable. If the programme was to achieve any outcomes at all it needed to colonise existing practice. Even at a very basic level establishing a support
infrastructure for learning and gaining the confidence of communities is time consuming. Thus the timeframe allowed a set of circumstances that affected implementation at local level. This is not necessarily a negative aspect of the programme and may have facilitated the achievement of policy objectives until one factors in the lack of evaluation previously discussed. Clearly, given the commentary on programme duration in earlier sections of this Case Study, programme duration links to the values that underpin the policy and therefore to research questions 2 to 5. Values and purpose were not given due consideration when the idea of a short timescale was mooted and confirmed. The short timescale would have undermined any evaluation undertaken within that period. The short timescale therefore prejudiced important aspects of this policy. Given the nature of the policy and taking account of the complexities of working in communities such as those described, the lack of continuity is also prejudicial to the integrity of the project.

Previous Learning

As stated on page 152 of this Case Study, the Scoping Document (2003) acknowledged existing work in the field of learning communities and the need therefore to build on and learn from what was already there. In addition RE7 stated that the TLC Submission (2003b) was designed to develop transferable knowledge that could be used to take regional practice forward. There is little evidence to suggest that previous practice informed the implementation process and it is apparent that at the end off the programme the demise of the regional network made the development of transferable knowledge at regional level more difficult. This circumstance mirrors that previously highlighted in Case Study 1 and will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis.
Axiological Issues.

In the preceding sections I have drawn attention to what I have termed 'axiological issues'. In the context of this thesis I have used this term to denote the arguments deployed by government that support a particular policy direction. Policy, as I have stated in Case Study 1, can be viewed as a means of allocating value to a particular issue. Policy becomes a statement of value, which effectively asserts that the issue under discussion is important to the extent that 'policy' action is required.

The Skills Strategy (2003) locates the argument about Testbed Learning Communities in disadvantaged communities with long term, endemic low aspirations. It describes problems that are 'deep rooted and pervasive' (2003: 20). These sentiments are used on a number of occasions to justify the TLC Pilot as a legitimate course of action. As stated in Case Study 1 the policy describes groups of individuals living in disadvantaged communities that are, for want of a better expression, in need of help and support in order to change their circumstances. The economic argument emphasises a skills deficit whilst the social argument draws attention to the importance of learning as a prerequisite for a more inclusive society. The TLC policy is an intervention designed to test out approaches to the issues generated through exclusion.

What seems clear is that the concerns expressed by Ivan Lewis, at the point of policy generation and advocacy, about long-term disadvantage, cultures of low aspiration and exclusion remain current. The concerns about excluded communities remain. As stated in the Skills Action Plan (2006-2007) for the region in Case Study 2, Levels of literacy and numeracy, within these communities are still challenging, the numbers of people without qualifications remains high. The issue of policy coherence and 'joined up initiatives' is current. In other words the problems that were to be addressed through the Testbed Learning Communities pilot remain. In this context the work of TLCs,
after the policy is gone, remains central to social and economic inclusion in the area. The implementation process effectively undermined the policy and its aims and objectives. The moral imperative however persists.

As stated in Case Study 1, it may be that the initiative was the victim of the political cycle. The inclusion of the TLCs in the Skills Strategy appears to have been a last minute idea; it appears to have been ‘owned’ by a particular Minister. Minimal levels of funding may, in part be due to this set of circumstances. The fact that Ivan Lewis moved to the Treasury in May 2005 may have been influential alongside the arrival of a new Minister of State at the DfES from December 2005. These circumstances however pale into insignificance when set alongside the moral imperatives for action deployed in support of the original policy. Whilst it may indeed be true that the Testbed Learning Communities Pilot was an idea generated by the enthusiasm of one Minister, it was not the policy of this Minister. It was however, the policy of a government that remains in office and which presumably continues to maintain an interest in the notion of social and economic inclusion espoused in support of this policy. Disadvantaged communities and the individuals within them should not be dependent on the whimsy of ministerial reshuffles. Policy generated under the banner of moral purpose should be seen to discharge that purpose.

By way of a contrast with policy, the work of the Aim High Network continues. Learners are engaged and move on. The community within which this takes place continues to derive benefit from increased collaboration and service integration. However, as LC4 stated at interview, the infrastructure is ‘...as fragile as the next round of funding’ and the things that are difficult to fund are the foundations upon which the work is based such as: ‘on the ground outreach...community engagement and the joining up of networks’. It is this infrastructure that allows the notion of a learning community to become operational.
Axiological issues, as outlined above, demonstrate a direct connection to research questions 1 to 5 (page 140). The deployment of moral arguments in support of a particular policy imperative illustrate why this particular policy was deemed necessary. The use of moral arguments engenders a degree of responsibility. The responsibility is, in this case, to address the concerns and circumstances that necessitate policy. These responsibilities, which the policy seeks out and claims as its own, cannot then be discharged through abrogation and the ephemeral nature of politics and political cycles. Changes in personnel at ministerial level neither divert nor dilute moral purpose.

This Case Study has highlighted the importance of purpose and values in the policy process. It has also been proposed that policy outcomes can be prejudiced if these issues are not addressed during policy development and implementation. Within this initiative the connections between learning and skills and the promotion of cultural change and social cohesion through raised aspirations whether at the level of the individual or the community remain untested. The issues raised in Case Studies 1 and 2 are discussed in more detail in Chapters 6 and 7.
Chapter 6: Analysis

This thesis has analysed the relationship between policy generation and policy implementation with specific reference to the Testbed Learning Communities Pilot as outlined in the Skills Strategy (2003). Chapter 1 proposed that the successful implementation of public policy is neither simple nor straightforward but is, as Lindblom and Woodhouse (1993: 3) emphasise, 'a formidable task'. The concept of policy is, as Colebatch (2002: 7) states, 'central in our understanding of the way we are governed'. It has been argued in this thesis that, by defining an issue as worthy of the attention of policy makers, value is ascribed to that particular issue. This ascription of value promotes the subject of 'policy' as more important than issues outside the scope of that policy. In the Skills Strategy policy 'value' may be viewed from both economic and social dimensions. However, as stated in this thesis (see page 13), the economic element tends to be dominant. Economic inclusion initiated through the acquisition and development of skills is seen as a means to a more 'socially' inclusive society.

The analysis in this thesis is predicated upon the proposition that: the relationship between policy generation and policy implementation is critical to the achievement of the intended policy outcome. This proposition arose from a consideration of the literature, as outlined in Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis, and a corresponding sense of disquiet that successful policy implementation may be a somewhat fragile concept (see page 1). In the context of a learning and skills agenda that sets out to establish 'more inclusive' circumstances for people living in the most disadvantaged communities, policy failure has heightened significance in that it impacts on the lives of those already defined as disadvantaged.

Case Studies 1 and 2 have contextualised the policy process and provided a detailed illustration of how this particular policy was implemented at regional
and community level. They have also drawn attention to four themes that are common to both Case Studies. These are evaluation, project duration, the values deployed to justify policy (axiological issues) and the extent to which previous learning was utilised in policy development. This Chapter uses the research questions, reprised below, as a basis for an analysis of the TLC Pilot, as described in the Case Studies, and incorporates comment on these four themes.

Research Questions

1. Why was this particular policy important and what was the justification for this policy?
2. To what extent was previous work taken into account when implementing the TLC Pilot (2003)?
3. How was policy interpreted and implemented at regional and local level?
4. Did the implementation process facilitate or inhibit the achievement of the policy’s intended outcomes?
5. Are the purposes and values that were underpinned by policy given sufficient priority during the policy implementation process?

Where appropriate, the research questions are broken down into specific areas. In the sections that follow these areas are highlighted by the use of sub headings.
Question 1: Why was this particular policy important and what was the justification for this policy?

Why was this policy important?

This thesis has proposed that the Skills Strategy (2003) was important as it was seen as a means of bringing a degree of coherence to the learning and skills sector identified as a key element in the drive towards a dynamic economy able to compete in the global market place. Whilst the Skills Strategy acknowledged some successes in terms of current learning and skills provision, there was an emphasis on a deficit in terms of 'productivity and output differentials' when the United Kingdom's economy was compared to competitor economies such as those of the USA, France and Germany (see page 10 of this thesis). The Skills Strategy asserted that, in order to improve the prospects for the economy of the United Kingdom, skills levels needed to be raised. This course of action was confirmed in a subsequent strategy, Skills (2005). More recently the Leitch Review (2006) and the Government's response, World Class Skills (2007) have continued to emphasise the importance of skills to national economic success (see page 11 of this thesis).

How was this policy justified?

Whilst economic arguments in support of the Skills Strategy (2003) were pre-eminent, a link between economic and social issues was also established (see for example pages 8 and 12 of this thesis). This idea supported the view that economic inclusion would lead to improved levels of social inclusion. Ivan Lewis M.P., The Minister for Young People and Adult Skills, credited with inserting the TLC Pilot into the Skills Strategy (see page 89), drew attention to what he termed 'the cycle of deprivation, underachievement and
worklessness' (see pages 4 and 12) which, from a policy perspective, was described as endemic in some more disadvantaged communities. The relationship between economic and social imperatives was particularly apparent in the promotion of Learning Communities. The concept of Learning Communities offered the opportunity to test the link between economic and social aspects of policy. In essence this approach promoted the notion that disadvantaged and excluded individuals could be persuaded to engage with the learning process. Having engaged in learning and achieved success, levels of confidence and self-esteem would be raised in the individual and, over time, throughout the community (see page 131). This 'critical mass' of learners could lead to a cultural change within the communities themselves.

In summary economic arguments were pre-eminent, policy advocacy in the speeches and articles cited in this thesis (see pages 2, 33, 34 and 182) brought some emphasis to the 'social imperative' and the need to reduce exclusion en route to achieving a fairer and more inclusive society. The promotion of Learning Communities provided a potential bridge between the economic and social imperatives.

Question 2: To what extent was previous work taken into account when implementing the TLC pilot.

The Scoping Document (2003:3) made reference to the fact that the theme of Learning Communities was not a new policy area. It is also apparent, from a review of recent literature, that some of this previous work had been undertaken within and on behalf of the DfES and its predecessor, the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). The DfES was the parent department for the TLC (2003) Pilot. The Scoping Document acknowledged that, in the field of learning communities, a number of initiatives were already in existence, stating that: 'there are a large number of initiatives already working on the ground including ... innovative learning community models'
The document highlighted the importance of building on and learning from existing practice.

Ivan Lewis M.P., in a speech to NIACE Conference (03.12.2003), stated that the idea of Learning Communities was not something that was 'plucked from thin air' but was about 'building on a lot of existing work'. However one of the concerns raised at interview by NA5, a senior Civil Servant, and NA2, a leading figure at NIACE, was that of a lack of 'policy memory'. In the light of such conversations it became important to consider the synergies between the TLC programme and previous summaries/evaluations of work in the area of Learning Communities.

Page 40 illustrates, in tabular form, the similarity of the TLC Pilot to previous work. In spite of reference in policy documents, it seems to be clear from interviews, documentary evidence and Case Study research that there was little reference to previous work in the development of guidance (The Scoping Document 2003) or in the implementation phases of the TLC pilot. There is one exception to this. The Scoping Document mentioned that NIACE was commissioned to produce a baseline review of other projects with similar objectives (2003:2). The NIACE review, completed in September 2003, was then 'made available' to Government Offices.

One example from the NIACE review serves to illustrate the extent to which the contents of the review informed practice. In the review NIACE highlight the importance of putting the learners in management or influential roles within community based projects citing that in their experience 'involvement in the control of learning...makes increased and continuing participation more likely' (2003: 32). In this context the review emphasised that NIACE believed that the TLC pilot projects should be asked to describe their 'community engagement strategies'. The criteria, as set out in the Scoping Document, for assessing submissions for TLC status made no mention of this guidance. In
addition Case Study 1 alludes to the difficulty of communicating just what a Learning Community was; the NIACE document provides a wide range of context and content that would have assisted in this process. I would suggest that the NIACE document would have been most useful during the period when Ministers and Civil Servants at the DfES established policy parameters. As I have mentioned, the NIACE Review was made available to Government offices. However distributing this document is clearly not the same as taking steps to ensure that this prior learning is embedded in policy and its lessons embodied in action.

In summary it is clear that, although policy documents such as the Skills Strategy (2003) and the Scoping Document (2003) made reference to building on previous practice, in reality the programme did not take sufficient account of this existing body of knowledge.

**Question 3: How was the policy interpreted and implemented at local level?**

**Implementation by Government Office**

As explained in the Scoping Document (2003: 1) the responsibility for the implementation of the TLC Pilot was given to Government Offices in the English Regions. The Skills Strategy (2003) itself provided little detail about what a Testbed Learning Community was (see page 3 of this thesis). However the DfES produced guidance in the form of the Scoping Document (2003). This was provided to Government Offices in the regions and clarified the aims and vision of the pilot and also listed five programme objectives. The Scoping Document became the template for implementing the TLC Pilot. In addition it provided a list of assessment criteria by which Submissions could be assessed (see pages 4, 122 and 173). The Scoping Document (2003) also noted that, as far as implementation was concerned, the DfES did not wish to be too prescriptive. This provided what the DfES promoted as a degree of
'scope for regional and local discretion to enable the approaches selected to meet local needs and priorities' (2003: 1).

In Case Studies 1 and 2 the Government Offices in the TLC implemented the pilot through their area teams with responsibility for work in the Learning and Skills sector. It is apparent that initial attempts to generate Submissions for TLCs met with a lack of enthusiasm (see pages 91, 150 and 151). In Case Study 1 this was attributed to relatively small amounts of funding and difficulties in communicating what policy was about (see page 91). In Case Study 2 (see page 149/150) it would appear that, at the time of the initiative, regional bodies were preoccupied with other responsibilities. However, and again in both Case Studies, TLCs were selected through processes that involved existing Local Learning Partnership infrastructures. In Case Study 1 a consultant developed the TLC Submission. This consultant was already working on behalf of the Learning Partnership in the area (see page 92). In Case Study 2 the Government Office manager responsible for TLC implementation worked collaboratively (through the Learning Partnerships) to develop a response that attempted to integrate the four sub-regional Submissions into a coherent regional proposal (see page 152).

In summary, Government Office in the TLC areas which were analysed followed the policy implementation template as outlined in the Scoping Document. Submissions from both Case Studies met the criteria established by the DfES and were sanctioned by the Minister, Ivan Lewis M.P. as part of the first phase of TLCs in April 2004. Phase 2 began in September 2004 (see pages 92 and 155). There was, in both Case Studies, some initial difficulty encountered in relation to generating momentum for the TLC programme. However the use of existing learning infrastructures helped to ameliorate these difficulties. It has also been argued that the use of existing infrastructures may have assisted the project in testing its aims and objectives.
Implementation: The Choice of Testbed Learning Communities

One of the most important features of the implementation process is that the TLCs in question existed prior to the implementation of the TLC Pilot. I have drawn attention in the paragraphs above to the notion of programme flexibility and it is apparent that there was scope within the programme for local choices to be made. Equally there were programme aims and objectives to be met and the selection of what were in effect pre-existing TLCs could be seen as one way of ensuring some of the programme aims and objectives were achieved. This colonisation of existing practice effectively circumvented the need for a start up process. The TLC in Case Study 2 for example had begun operation almost two years before the TLC Pilot (see page 147). There is a strong argument to suggest that, in order to achieve the stated aims and objectives of the programme within its two year life, the selection of pre-existing TLCs was inevitable. This circumstance however reduced the scope for flexibility as outlined in the Scoping Document (2003: 1) and restricted choice in relation to developing new and innovative practice.

Implementation and Capacity

In both Case Study TLCs human resource capacity appears to have been an issue (see pages 94 and 154). Perhaps the most important reason for this was that the project itself had the potential to generate workload for the organisations involved, an issue that appears to have been given little consideration from the outset. In Case Study 1, LC3 noted that the TLC did not have time to ‘put pen to paper’ (see pages 94/95). There was no obvious response to this beyond the recognition that those working in the TLC were already fully committed to engaging learners without the additional responsibility of responding to Government Office. This circumstance was illustrated in Case Study 1 by reference to the collection of performance
information. A lack of capacity (time and human resources) was, in this case, used as a reason to defer the collection of performance information (see page 95) and introduce 'light touch' monitoring. In Case Study 2 this concern about workload was, to an extent, addressed by the appointment of a Regional Coordinator although workforce capacity was used at interview (by RE7) to explain a lack of initial progress regarding the identification and collection of performance information (see pages 169-171).

Capacity issues at Government Office level and also within the TLCs themselves are an important consideration in relation to the policy implementation phase of the TLC Pilot. In the circumstances outlined above it is also apparent that, even had the programme proceeded as outlined in the Scoping Document, the introduction of what was termed 'light touch' monitoring exemplifies an action that was prejudicial to data collection.

**Implementation and Evaluation**

In both Case Studies interim evaluations were completed after the first year of the initiative. In neither case was an end of programme evaluation, as detailed in the Scoping Document (2003: 6), completed. The National Evaluation was cancelled in January 2005. This cancellation was coincidental with a change in the Minister of State at the DfES as Charles Clarke M.P. moved to the Home Office to, be replaced in December 2004 by Ruth Kelly M.P. In May 2005 Ivan Lewis M.P. moved to the treasury (see for example pages 136 and 155). This movement of politicians was felt to be significant and is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 of this thesis. It has been argued that the cancellation of the national evaluation sent a clear message to those involved in the pilot about the diminishing importance of this policy area (see pages 130, 131 and 181).
In addition evaluation is also key to testing whether or not the project achieved its aims and objectives. The Scoping Document lists a number of ‘Performance Indicators’ and states that: ‘In all cases Government Offices and their partners should consider, and state in their proposals [TLC Submissions], what performance indicators will be used to assess impact and track progress’ (2003:6).

In summary, it is apparent from this research that there was no systematic collection of performance information on behalf of this initiative. Performance information would appear to have been a relatively low priority from the outset. RE7 noted at interview that: ‘reporting was not strong and the centre lost interest...you got that feeling’. This research has proposed that, in the absence of the national evaluation, none of the aims and objectives of the programme were effectively tested. It would also appear that key actions, as outlined in the respective Submissions, were not pursued. I have previously highlighted performance information as one example of this; a second example would be that of membership schemes (see pages 118 and 159-161), one of the five objectives listed in the Scoping Document (2003), and an idea that Ivan Lewis M.P. was particularly keen to test. The omission of key actions from the respective TLC Submissions would clearly have had an impact on the end of programme evaluation had that been undertaken.

**Implementation and Policy Coherence**

The Skills Strategy (2003) highlighted the importance of joining up policy in order to bring more coherence to learning and skills strategy at local level. The Testbed Learning Communities Pilot was charged with identifying how the Testbeds could demonstrate a link to regional planning frameworks for learning and skills. Regional Government Offices in both Case Study areas made some inroads into this. However, in both cases, initial progress was fragile. In Case study 1 and, in spite of the efforts of the managers involved,
the inclusion of the TLC in the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) did not proceed (page 96). Case Study 2 presented a more robust approach as it was based on a regional submission and had the benefit of a Coordinator who was tasked with making the type of connection outlined above. The initial mention of the work of the TLC in the RES 2005/2006 was not continued in subsequent years (see page 167). As far as the implementation process is concerned, at the end of the programme in March 2006 Government Office involvement in Testbed Learning Communities ceased. Managers moved on to other projects (see pages 97 and 167). The Coordinating post established in Case Study 2 was terminated. The issue of policy coherence, central to the Skills Strategy itself, was left unresolved.

This section has discussed policy implementation at local level. In summary it is apparent that the TLC Submissions for Case Studies 1 and 2 were developed and agreed within the parameters established in the Scoping Document. Evidence from the Case Studies and related documentation would suggest that, in order to achieve the aims and objectives of the programme, it was necessary for Government Offices to consider using existing learning community infrastructures. This draws attention to the issue of programme duration which, it has been argued, was also a factor in the lack of success of efforts to ‘join up’ policy at local level. It is clear that crucial aspects of the Submissions in both areas were effectively set aside. This may have been the result of programme duration or a lack of human resource capacity which appears to have been a concern in both Case Studies. This lack of capacity was the precursor to what was, in Case Study 1, described as light touch approach to the collection of performance information. This, in effect, gave rise to a circumstance where no performance information was collected. The lack of performance information and the failure to operationalise important aspects of the local TLC Submissions clearly undermine the opportunity to test the programme’s aims and objectives within the two TLCs that provide the focus for this research. The cancellation of the National Evaluation meant
that there was no systematic collection of information about the extent to which the programme met the aims and objectives established nationally.

**Question 4: Did the implementation process facilitate or inhibit the achievement of the policy's intended outcomes?**

The answer to this question can be approached from a number of perspectives. For example, it would be possible to make a case that embraced the apparent flexibility in the policy and which celebrated the notion of tailoring the initiative to meet local needs. It would also be possible to consider the use of pre-existing TLCs as a means of facilitating the achievement of programme objectives by reducing development time.

This research has however made a strong assertion that the aims and objectives of the initiative were not achieved. For example, because of the lack of a national evaluation, Membership Schemes were not tested and new and innovative models were not assessed against their stated aims and objectives. It is also the case, as outlined above, that the collection of performance information was from the outset given little attention (see pages 117 and 170).

This thesis has proposed that, even if the National Evaluation had remained in place, there would have been some difficulty in measuring what were complex outcomes within a programme of such limited duration (see for example pages 131, 132, 171 and 172). One illustration of this is that of the 'learner journey'. At its simplest one needs to ask the question: how long does it take to engage a reluctant learner, move that learner on to a qualifications bearing programme and then assess the impact that the learning episode had on the learner’s family and the culture of the community within which that individual resides? Clearly this is a long-term, complex and resource intensive undertaking, a phrase which does not describe the circumstances of this
particular initiative. It is apparent that working in disadvantaged communities presents challenges that are time dependent. For example establishing the confidence of the client group cannot be taken for granted. Case Study 2 outlines a number of community issues such as drug abuse or debt that impinge on the motivation to learn. Case Study 1 demonstrates that there is often a significant time lag from adopting an idea and seeing it operationalised. The appointment of ‘Learning Champions’ was, for example, protracted and led to a delay in their deployment and subsequent impact in the community. Problems such as these are highlighted in both Case Studies.

In summary, and in spite of the efforts of those involved, the programme did not meet its aims and objectives. The implementation process, which includes the policy and its parameters, was instrumental in this failure.

**Question 5: Were the purposes and values that underpin policy given sufficient priority during the policy process?**

There is a significant amount of evidence to support the idea that values were an integral part of policy advocacy for the TLC Pilot. The Skills Strategy along with the Scoping Document illustrates some aspects of this (see pages 9, 11 and 12). The Minister Ivan Lewis M.P., in speeches and articles, deployed a range of eloquent arguments to support the TLC pilot. These arguments have been referred to in earlier sections, in particular the concluding sections of the Case Studies (see for example pages 134-136 and 186-187). In terms of the framework developed to implement the TLC initiative little attention appears to have been paid by the Minister and the DfES to the statements of value that underpinned the initiative. This thesis has argued that these statements of value are a fundamental aspect of policy.

Managers in Government Offices with the responsibility to implement are constrained by the parameters that policy establishes. In this instance
particular attention is drawn to the constraints imposed by the short project duration, the lack of policy continuity and low levels of resource. I have proposed that the project’s duration was wholly inadequate to address the aims and objectives of the policy and as Ivan Lewis had stated at interview: ‘we can’t afford to abandon whole swathes of people and communities…it is morally wrong and economically stupid’. Cancelling the evaluation and not ensuring any policy continuity would appear to provide a clear message: that, regardless of the rhetoric of policy justification, we can abandon whole swathes of people and communities.

From this one piece of evidence it seems apparent that, in spite of the deployment of ‘values’ in policy advocacy, the policy implementation process did not embrace such values. It would appear therefore that the values that underpin policy were given insufficient priority from the outset. The Skills Strategy is targeted in areas that are defined as disadvantaged, the TLC pilot aims to ‘break the cycle of deprivation, underachievement and worklessness …perpetuated from one generation to the next’ (2003: 105). The implication of language in policy advocacy (Parsons 1995: 55) is profound and in the case of the TLC policy creates a compelling, eloquent and moral imperative for change. In essence this argument is based on the notion that in some of our most deprived communities there are conditions, both social and economic, that cannot be allowed to continue.

Ivan Lewis M.P. stated that ‘we need a sustained attack which is coherent, strategic and which genuinely seeks to change culture’ (Speech to NIACE Conference, 03.12.2003). Similarly the Skills Strategy (2003: 21) asserts that ‘isolated individual initiatives will not be enough, as such endeavours have not had sufficient impact in the past’. However contrary to such assertions, the TLC programme did not produce a sustained, coherent, strategic attack and ultimately became an isolated individual initiative.
This thesis argues that the axiological issues discussed above should be an integral part of policy and that they are, in effect, the foundations upon which policy is built. Without consideration of such issues during policy generation, development and implementation, policy is effectively compromised from the outset. In the case of the TLC Pilot, due consideration of values and purpose from the outset (alongside taking cognisance of previous work in the field), would have offered the opportunity for a different set of policy parameters (if not a different policy). Project duration for example, when considered against a background generated by a 'moral' imperative to alleviate disadvantage, increases in significance. In addition, awareness of a moral imperative would also have ensured an appropriate commitment to programme evaluation, providing information that could be used, as originally intended, to inform subsequent policy.

This analysis must then conclude that in the case of the Testbed Learning Communities Pilot the relationship between policy generation and policy implementation was problematic and that the implementation process failed to facilitate the achievement of the intended policy outcomes.
Chapter 7: Recommendations and Conclusions

The previous chapter used the Research Questions as a framework for drawing together the outcomes from Case Studies 1 and 2 in order to analyse the relationship between policy generation and policy implementation. Four key themes emerged from the Case Studies and have been confirmed through the analysis in Chapter 6. These are evaluation, project duration, the values deployed to justify policy (axiological issues) and the extent to which previous learning was utilised in policy development.

Whilst these themes emerge consistently throughout the Case Studies 1 and 2, I would argue that the most important theme is that of the policy's implicit and espoused values as illustrated in sections describing axiological issues (see pages 134 and 186). This theme is used to integrate the discussion in this Chapter. The argument being presented here is that if 'values' are considered to be important in the justification of policy then other aspects of policy, such as evaluation, programme duration and resource allocation can be considered in the context of the programme's values. Policy values, given an appropriate level of priority, become the framework within which the policy process is enacted. Important aspects of the programme could then be considered from a different perspective. For example, in this context, it may be that:

- previous learning could have been considered before policy formulation
- policy parameters could then be set in the context of previous learning which would assist in aligning aims and objectives with programme duration and resource allocation
- evaluation would be an integral part of the (learning) programme
- concerns about joining up policy (policy coherence) would be integral to the initial discussion
The recommendations in the following section are highlighted in bold type and reflect the notion of attaching priority to axiological issues.

**Recommendations**

*The government should aspire to be and act as a role model in relation to discharging its responsibilities for policy.* The Skills Strategy (2003: 15) stated that 'we recognise that the Government must lead by example, showing that we and our delivery agencies can work more effectively together at national, regional and local level'. This proposal would appear to suggest something of a culture change for government. Coffield (2007), in a critique of the government's approach to learning and skills, develops a perspective on what he terms 'the learning Government'. It would seem clear, he believes, that, from the point of view of maintaining policy integrity, the government should not only support the learning that leads to policy development, it should also act as a model for learning. We need, according to Coffield, a change in the culture of government at the highest level because: 'those who demand change in others are exactly those who need most changing in their own practice' (2007: 13).

*In the context of developing policy, government should ensure that previous learning is an integral element in the policy process.* Using the most basic economic argument, ignoring learning from earlier experience is an inefficient use of scarce public resources. The failure to learn from previous practice was also highlighted by NA2, a senior figure within NIACE, who noted at interview that there is a 'huge amount of work in community outreach...it's never built on just endlessly reinvented'. This circumstance is reinforced by comments made by NA5, a senior Civil Servant involved with the TLC programme, who observed that, compared to the world of business, there was a lack of what he termed, 'folk memory' and continuity in
government policy. The loss of valuable insights as a result of a failure to consider prior learning may lead to a distortion of policy parameters, a repeat of a previously unsuccessful innovation and the eventual recycling of the status quo. In the case of learning communities there are many examples of previous and existing practice which could have proved invaluable to policy makers (see for example Chapter 2 page 35). It may be that a desktop exercise undertaken prior to policy confirmation, would have acted as a precursor to a completely different range of insights about how the issue identified in the Skills Strategy should (could) be addressed. It is difficult to single out one particular aspect of policy implementation in isolation. However in the Testbed Learning Communities pilot, taking account of previous learning was left to chance. In consequence valuable insights were lost.

**Values should be placed at the heart of policy, providing the foundation and framework against which policy is developed.** This thesis has proposed that the arguments deployed in justification for this (TLC) policy are particularly emotive and framed in the language of alleviating the serious problems of exclusion, disadvantage and social injustice. The values that underpinned policy are evident in a number of documents, speeches delivered by the Minister and articles written in support of the programme. The arguments deployed in support of policy and as outlined in the Case Studies are value laden. For example, the Skills Strategy (2003), states that the TLC Pilot is focused in areas where 'low community expectations and aspirations are a significant factor holding back the prospects for economic and social development' (2003: 105). The target areas to which the TLC policy is applied are defined as disadvantaged and the TLC pilot aims to 'break the cycle of deprivation, underachievement and worklessness...perpetuated from one generation to the next' (ibid: 105). Parsons describes the justification of policy as 'policy advocacy', a process that involves 'arguments ...intended to influence the policy agenda inside or outside government' (1995: 55). In addition Parsons states that the way we
describe policy 'will frame and mould the reality to which we seek to apply a policy solution' (1995: 88). I would suggest that the language used by policy makers, in the case of the TLC Pilot, creates a compelling, eloquent and moral case for change. In essence the argument is that in some of our most deprived communities there are conditions, both economic and social, that cannot be allowed to continue.

This research has reinforced the importance of axiological issues and in this context highlighted a contradiction between expressed values and subsequent action. For example, in a previously quoted speech to the NIACE Conference (03.12.2003) about Testbed Learning Communities, Ivan Lewis M.P. states that 'we need a sustained attack which is coherent, strategic and which genuinely seeks to change culture'. The Skills Strategy (2003: 21) also notes that 'isolated individual initiatives will not be enough, as such endeavours have not had sufficient impact in the past'. As stated on page 202 of this thesis, the TLC programme did not produce a 'sustained attack' and it ultimately became 'an isolated individual initiative'.

**Government should ensure policy continuity until the issues and concerns that gave rise to policy have been addressed.** Amongst the moral imperatives outlined in this policy, continuity is at the centre of the debate about the importance of values. It seems to be clear that the circumstances that generated policy, and which then energised the agenda designed to address those circumstances, remain current. It would also appear that this circumstance gives rise to a moral imperative that sits above the apparently ephemeral nature of policy and the equally transient tenure of ministerial responsibility. If an issue is important enough to become policy, its importance should not be 'minister' dependent. Government, having identified such a concern and expressed this in the form of policy should ensure that its importance is sustained until that policy issue is resolved. At interview NA2, a senior representative from NIACE, stated that this movement from one policy
to another was ‘just fallout...its awful if you are involved in these things but difficult to explain to people that they are not just victims...its just collateral damage’. The implication here is that we should perhaps accept the idea that government moves from one initiative to another paying little attention to issue resolution. RE7 also stated at interview that the government ‘had a great track record of not standing still long enough to evaluate their activity...they were poor at it’. In the interest of policy success and with particular reference to the individuals and communities concerned this position is clearly not tenable. In this case resolution would have meant lessons being learned and embedded in future programmes. For those defined as excluded and at the receiving end of policy, the gloss of advocacy and the carousel of activity that defines a policy as important and then consigns it to history without resolution, would appear to trivialise their circumstances. It seems clear therefore that the values deployed in support of policy remain an integral and integrating factor throughout the process.

The government should demonstrate that it can bring coherence to the policy arena. It is evident from this research that concerns about policy coherence at local level where policy impacts on community remain current. At the very least one government department’s policy drives should support, not impede, those of another. This refers back to an earlier recommendation (see page 205), reinforcing the idea that the government must indeed lead by example. Policy fragmentation at local level can clearly be addressed by ensuring coherence in Whitehall and at Regional Offices. Using the TLC as an example, it is clear that proposals to join learning and skills provision with regional planning strategies were not sustained. This was in part due to the short project timescale. It is also apparent that the Skills Strategy (2003) does not overtly and consistently support the idea of coherence. For example the lead body for Post 16 Learning and Skills (The Learning and Skills Council) is not identified as having any responsibility for the TLC Pilot. The table of milestones for the Skills Strategy (2003: 121), which apportions responsibility
for various aspects of the strategy, makes no mention of the Testbed Learning Communities Pilot. This lack of cohesion is found within the Skills Strategy (2003), a policy document designed to bring about cohesion to the learning and skills sector. It is also significant that the TLCs were drawing together a large number of funding streams in order to attempt to meet community need. One TLC manager (LC4) noted that ‘there weren’t any targets for joining up … and it’s that which brings transformational change in terms of the way things work’.

The same manager also pointed out the difficulties of funding outreach provision. This requires a multi agency (joined up) approach if it is to achieve success, a circumstance which again highlights the necessity for policy coherence.

Consideration should be given to undertaking a retrospective review of the TLC Pilot and all previous recent and related work. The lack of an end of programme evaluation has been mentioned as a key issue within this research and one which effectively undermined the initiative. As stated within the thesis the issues that were raised by the government when advocating this policy remain contemporary. Disadvantaged communities of the type described by the policy continue to exist. A review of the TLC Pilot could generate new insights into a sustainable future for the notion of Learning Communities. It is clearly not too late to consider a retrospective review of summaries and evaluations of activity undertaken in this field. In addition, and as has been pointed out by a number of interviewees (NA2, NA3 and NA5), the Testbeds continue to operate. Bearing in mind the proposal made by Ivan Lewis at the NIACE Conference (03.12.2003) that ‘having learned the lessons, [we must] apply them in all communities’. It may be that the examples of good and innovative practice required to inform future policy were already there to apply. Perhaps the required learning had already taken place and moreover had been commissioned by the DfEE (1998) and the DFES (2000). The report published by Cara and Aldridge (2003), and commissioned by the DfES to inform the Testbed initiative, also contained a
wide range of existing examples of tried and tested practice. In the two Case Studies described the 'Testbeds' existed prior to the programme and it is therefore not unreasonable to expect a post programme continuation. It is however difficult to detect any tangible difference between the TLCs in Case Studies 1 and 2 and the examples of Learning Communities outlined in Cara and Aldridge (2003), Yarnit (2000) and the DFEE (1998). It is now four years since the project began and it would seem appropriate to take a further look at developing practice.

Interestingly, Phil Swann, in a recent article in the Guardian entitled: Ministers Consistently Ignore the Lessons of Policy (Wednesday 19th September, 2007 p.4), suggests that: 'as a result of multimillion pound expenditure on the evaluation of assorted public polices the government has a vast pool of knowledge. Swann states that what ministers should be concerned about is 'how that knowledge is used or not'. Swann goes on to propose that, in order to deliver [future targets], the Chancellor should commission a review of lessons learned from evaluations. He and his officials would, so Swann suggests, 'be surprised by how much they know'. Evidence from this research would support this view. This idea also provides a link to the concerns, expressed on page 6 of this thesis, about the effective and efficient use of limited resources within the domain of public policy.

Conclusions

The findings from this research support the proposition that the relationship between policy generation and policy implementation is critical to the achievement of the intended policy outcomes. In the case of the Testbed Learning Communities Pilot the policy process did not achieve its objectives. It is also proposed that the values deployed in support of policy are (or should be) a fundamental part of the policy process, providing the framework within which policy can be defined and deployed.
As outlined in Chapter 2, the development and implementation of policy is an important aspect of government and one means by which government demonstrates its intent and leadership. During a period when policy makers are constantly referring to the pressures of globalisation and the imperative therefore for continuous change and development (see page 6 of this thesis), there is a degree of irony in the consistency of the circumstances in this particular policy domain. I would propose that, in the case of this policy, the issue is not one of globalisation suddenly producing a set of circumstances that require the palliative of a policy fix; it is about longer-term problems of exclusion and social injustice and the apparent determination of this government to graze on particular policy themes rather than to address fundamental social problems in a systematic, coherent and consistent way.

As outlined above, the issues raised in justification of the TLC pilot are clearly long term and not therefore amenable to what is in essence a ‘sound bite’ policy solution. The national representative from NIACE (NA2), interviewed as part of this research, alluded to the fact that the problems in communities identified in this (TLC) programme were not new and that initiatives to address them have been around since the late 1960s. This would suggest that approaches to policy and its implementation may be part of the problem rather than offering a means by which important social issues can be resolved. As one TLC Manager (LC2) asserted at interview: ‘what is the point of asking a local community to get their hopes up and to employ a local community in something, tell them they have done a fantastic job ...It's not ok to say to a community...blimey you've just moved mountains, now put them back [the project is finished]’. 

The Testbed Learning Communities Pilot is but one aspect of policy and, whilst this analysis has concentrated on one particular policy area, the web of related activity permeates a number of government departments. The Skills
Strategy (2003) was, for example, signed by The Prime Minister, The Secretaries of State for Education and Skills, Trade and Industry, Work and Pensions and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The TLC Pilot did not impact on one single government department and the inference may be that this particular approach to policy is replicated across government. If we accept that this approach is typical of the way that government works, evidence from this research, would suggest that policy development and implementation may continue to be relatively ineffective. The clear message for government would appear to be that change is indeed required and that that change should begin with the political culture and embrace a reconceptualisation of the policy process. This proposition also aligns with Coffield’s notion that what is required is a ‘learning government’, about which he states that:

The first requisite of a learning system is a government that shows itself capable of learning and which acts as a role model for all the organisations, professionals and students within the system (2007: 13).

Both Case Studies illustrate that there is both determination and expertise within communities to promote positive change. In this context I would concur with Ivan Lewis statement(s) made in a speech to NIACE Conference 2003, entitled Making the Learning Community a Reality, when he said that:

this agenda has the power to create both a fairer society and a more successful society...this agenda brings together social justice, economic success and public service reform...the real challenge will be to learn what works for once, before we rush head long into implementing and delivering policy. And having learned what works, ensure that it is mainstreamed into everything we do in every part of the country.

It may be that the learning communities agenda holds the potential to create a fairer and more inclusive society. However, the power, in terms of the political will to create the conditions whereby this ‘laudable idea’ moves from ‘potential’ to ‘actual’, currently resides with policy makers rather than with the
learners and the communities within which they reside. There is a clear danger that whilst the government venerates the potential of learning for others, without the government itself demonstrating a genuine capacity to learn, policy makers remain in danger of recycling the same problems and at the same time presiding over the continuing fragmentation of confidence in public institutions.

Limitations and Possibilities for Further Research

The methodology deployed during the research phase of this thesis places some limitations upon the use of the findings outlined above. Importantly the research is essentially based on two Case Studies from a potential sample of 28 TLCs, it is contextual and specific to these two ‘cases’. I would propose that the findings summarised in Chapters 6 and 7, make a potential contribution to what we could term the general knowledge about the policy/implementation process. Given the methodological limitations outlined (see also Chapter 3 page 58) the findings are not regarded as generalisable beyond the two Case Studies used to illustrate the processes involved. Chapter 7 however alludes to the idea that it is possible that the processes outlined in the implementation of the TLC Pilot may be replicated in other Government departments. It may be therefore that future research in the area of policy implementation provides the evidence and the opportunity to reflect on the extent to which findings from this research can be generalised across a broader field.

There are a number of possibilities for future research that arise from the findings outlined in this thesis. Firstly this research has drawn attention to the issue of the values deployed in support of policy. It has proposed that values should be an integral part of policy from the outset. Some analysis of the extent to which this issue of values underpins other policy areas would therefore seem appropriate.
Secondly, and from a number of perspectives, evidence would suggest that 'joined up' policy is an important issue. Given the complexity of community regeneration one could argue that it is fundamental to success. An analysis of the extent to which government itself attempts to bring coherence is therefore required. This analysis should move beyond the stage at which a range of departments 'sign up' to policy embracing an evaluation of coherence at the point of delivery. Finally I would also propose further research into the extent to which 'learning interventions' of the type proposed in the Skills Strategy (2003) impact on cultural change in communities.
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*Submission for Testbed Learning Communities Status* (2003 a), Government Office East Midlands, Case Study 1

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Case Study 1. Government Office File 20/8/1/7/3pt 2, Proposal Assessment and Commentary Evidence Database Items BR2 and BR3


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Appendix 1

Initial Questions for interview with the Minister

**Key Point:** How is policy generated and to what extent is implementation considered during this process?

1. How would the Learning Communities policy be developed to the point where it formed part of the Skills Strategy (2003). Is implementation given consideration during this process? How did you envisage this taking place?

2. From a policy perspective—what is a learning community—its purpose and (from your perspective--) its key features? NB there appears to be no definition in the Context Statement (Guidance from Gov Office) or the Skills Strategy (2003).

3. It seems from the policy documents that local ownership was important. Local ownership, (bottom up) ‘...Develop the capacity of communities to create better futures for themselves’. Do you feel that this was the experience on the ground? Were TLCs representative of the community (or was the role of the providers stronger – did this vary established to new TLCs)?

4. The objectives of the programme as outlined in the Skills Strategy are ambitious—and you acknowledged in your speech at NIACE on 3.12.2003 that ‘you don’t change cultures of low aspiration with one initiative, one decision, one whit paper’. Do you feel that the TLC pilot allowed sufficient time for the development of bottom up/local ownership processes that you felt were important?

5. There appears to be a significant amount of experience from other ‘community learning’ programmes. (NB NIACE Sept 2003 paper and the mention in ILs speech) You mentioned in your speech (Dec 3, 2003) that -- It wasn’t and idea plucked from thin air—but building on previous work)—so: To what extent was the previous learning factored in to the TLCs and given the extent of the previous work – how important was it to establish the TLCs.
Would it have been possible to use the previous experience to support your longer term policy aims?

6. One of the key statements from Ivan L related to joining policy up—how does this join up with learning from NRA and other regeneration programmes (NB NIACE Sept 2003 paper) and to what extent did this work influence the way that the TLC pilots were developed. How does/will this work it link to other policies such as Extended Schools (short/long term)

7. Clearly there was a great deal of freedom at local level – to what extent was it possible to compare one TLC with another. Do you think it would have been helpful to establish targets that could have been evaluated across the whole—for example how would one assess raised aspirations? Or an increase in community capacity.

8. From the work to date – how will government ensure that the learning is not lost? Are the networks being sustained? How is the TLC work written in to the longer term agenda – e.g. LSPs and LAA. How does government learn from this process?

9. If you could do it again???
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Potential Outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To identify and measure a variety of operational models that link a whole range of learning and skills provision, to impact upon the local level skills base, improve community capacity and lead to improved economic fortunes;</td>
<td>Evidence of a range of operational models that link learning and skills provision</td>
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<td>Evidence of integrated provision</td>
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<td>Evidence of impact on local skills base</td>
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<td>Improved community capacity and economic fortune</td>
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<td>To investigate models of 'club' membership that raise the status of learning and encourage self-ownership of skills and learning in areas of disadvantage and low aspiration as well as of higher economic achievement;</td>
<td>Evidence of club membership</td>
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<td>Evidence of raised status of learning and self ownership of skills</td>
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<td>Evidence of higher economic achievement</td>
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<td>To identify how family learning can be used to widen participation, raise adult skills and boost individuals confidence and aspirations to support the creation of a community wide culture of learning;</td>
<td>Evidence to show how family learning can be used to widen participation, raise adult skills and boost confidence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Evidence of raised aspirations and creation of a community wide culture of learning</td>
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<td>Link to Para 7.21 Skills Strategy (2003)</td>
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<td>To identify who benefits from different learning communities projects and what particular impact they have upon different groups/segments of society</td>
<td>Who are the key beneficiaries of TLCs? What are the impacts for the beneficiaries? Can the numbers of new beneficiaries be quantified?</td>
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<td>Link to Para 7.22 Skills Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>To identify how community learning and capacity building can contribute to the achievement of the goals as set out in the frameworks for regional employment and skills action</td>
<td>How do the benefits outlined above support the frameworks for regional employment and skills action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link to Para 7.25 Skills Strategy</td>
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</table>
Initial Questions for regional and local interviews

Case Studies: Areas for Analysis.
What processes were undertaken at local level to establish the TLCs (and who was involved) Were these processes consistent with the proposed outcomes as expressed in the Skills Strategy (2003) What happened at local (implementation) level.

1. Establishing the local context
2. What levels of support were available from NIACE, SCARMAN, GOEM etc
3. What were the key issues in establishing the TLCs. Did the work start from scratch or was there an existing ‘community’.
4. How was the TLC developed and promoted—(and by whom) Who were its founding members? Are they of the community? How does it define its community—including membership/governance? Did the community change/grow. Did you consider membership schemes?
5. To what extent was TLC built on current practice—if the TLC built on existing structures/ways of working how long had the previous arrangements been in place—what’s new—what was there before?? If the work was different—how different? Are levels of activity different?
6. How does it communicate and engage with its ‘community’. What was developed and promoted locally and why?
7. What were the local aims/objectives/targets Did the TLC meet its targets—local and national (link to broader policy aims)
8. Key beneficiaries—who are they. Are they different from before
9. Sustainability. Can you build on the positive outcomes—how? Now funding withdrawn—(link to LSPs/LAA) Is this happening? Is this the result of the TLC
10. Key successes - increased involvement in learning/family learning/skills/aspirations
11. Structure of the TLC will be required at some point re the potential for further interviews and conversations

12. Is there any evidence that the NIACE document influenced policy at National/Local Level

Research Schedule National NIACE: 12 June 2007-08-09

- Niace role in policy development (usual/unusual)
- Process, mechanisms, consultation
- Niace role in supporting TLCs at local level
- Strategy driven by the minister -- in the strategy but not funded (usual/unusual)
- Are there issues about the nature of the community engagement being promoted and the timescales NB (2003 paper Cara)
- Have the outcomes -- the pilot being built on
- Is there any follow up work being undertaken
- In terms of the models was there anything new or innovative
- IL championed the idea of joining things up at local level -- linking into regional agenda and LAAs
- Was IL leaving post significant
Supplementary: Community (interview 2)

- How is SfL funded?
- Strategic Plan?
- Hope Centre
- Crèche/nursery and café
- Constitution/Governance/Attendance
- How does the job Shop Work
- How do you fund the first rung— or open days
- Sure start relationship— tying into voluntary programmes
- How does BEST fit in with the Broxtowe Partnership Trust
- Are the centres at (A) and (B) still part of the learning community (p33 Yarnit 2006)
- Joint planning with B?
- OCP Independent business broker (Yarnit, 34 and the evaluation doc)
- Skills Coaching Pilot – what is this
- NHS Academy
- Has there been any work on the progression routes
- Role of Job Centre Plus
- Are there any more Annual Reports I have 05/06
- Does anyone collect/collate info on voter turnout, attendance at school events, volunteering, housing demand etc etc— Is there any regular evaluation e.g. employer surveys
### Interview Schedule

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17.5 Attendance Aim Higher Conference
18.7 Attendance Certificate Presentation Evening

L = Letter sent
CF = Consent Form Returned
** = Interview distorted and unused
T = Telephone Interview (unused)
Appendix 2

The Scoping Document: DEVELOPING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Introduction

1. This note scopes activity which the DfES aims to develop as Testbed Learning Communities. The initiative was announced in the Government’s Skills Strategy White Paper, published on 9 July. The relevant paragraphs from the White Paper are attached at Annex A.

2. The Minister for Young People and Adult Skills, Ivan Lewis, wrote to the Regional Directors of Government Offices shortly after publication of the White Paper formally commissioning them to start working with partners to explore 1 or 2 possible Testbed Learning Community approaches in each region. This paper provides a fuller scope for the activity. It sets out the rationale, objectives and approaches which Ministers see as underpinning the activity to support GOs and partners in developing their ideas. The Department does not wish to be too prescriptive, leaving scope for local and regional discretion to enable the approaches selected to meet local needs and priorities.

3. It is a commonly accepted fact that education is the most effective route out of poverty. Through developing learning communities we want to bring about a step change in tackling community disadvantage, raising aspirations and enabling individuals to reach their full potential. Testbed Learning Communities will encompass the whole of the learning population – particularly adults and families, through parents into schools and expanding links into business, their workforce and community development activities.

4. We would like to explore how a range of ‘membership’ approaches to bringing people together under the banner of learning and membership status with associated learning ‘rewards’ can drive forward the culture of change. By developing and exploring effective practice across a range of different approaches we aim to establish what works in different settings to stimulate change and, in the longer term support economic progression.

5. This document sets out the main objectives and principles for this work and invites proposals on how the trials will be designed and run. We have asked the Government Offices to coordinate activity working with Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) as these establish, Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), local LSCs, Local Authorities and other key local partners, including voluntary and community groups, Job Centre Plus and Business Links.
Background

6. In many disadvantaged areas, low community expectations and aspirations are a significant factor holding back an area from maximising its prospects for economic and social development. The importance of skills in tackling community disadvantage has long been recognised. By raising skills and creating an encouraging learning environment, parents, grandparents, carers and wider family are better placed to help their children succeed at school; the role and capacity of community leaders can be strengthened; more people can gain sustainable, rewarding jobs or move into self-employment; and more people can get the confidence and know-how to set up and run social enterprises, or take part in voluntary activity.

7. The case for targeted intervention to break the cycle of economic deprivation, low basic skills and social exclusion has been clearly made over the years. The English Local Labour Force Survey 2001/02 shows that urban and NRF areas have the highest proportions of adults with no qualifications (16.9% and 19.5%) compared to the England average (16.0%) and that only 60.4% of adults in NRF areas have achieved level 2+ compared to the English average of 63.7%. The more recent cross Departmental project looking at the links between social class and achievement1 found that although international evidence shows that UK education is doing well overall, the gap in attainment by social class is still large. The gap can be seen as early as 22 months and stems from economic, social, cultural and environmental factors; widening at each key stage throughout the educational system. More targeted and sustained education interventions linked to community policies are seen as needed to make real inroads into this socio-economic failure.

8. A number of initiatives already exist to raise skills and break the cycle of deprivation such as Extended Schools, Sure Start and the Family Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. There are a large number of initiatives already working on the ground including a number of innovative learning community models and it is important that the trials build on, and learn from what is already there. The National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education has produced a baseline review of other projects which have had similar objectives, to ensure that we can learn from past experience in developing this initiative. This has been made available to all GOs.

9. The Learning Communities initiative aims to support the capability of communities to develop their collective base of adult skills and learning and linking this to local opportunities including employment. By encouraging that

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1 Strategy and Innovation Unit (September 2003). "Changing the odds – links between social class & achievement".
connectivity of learning, linking schools, colleges, businesses (including social enterprises) and the wide range of skills development and informal learning. Different members within a community can both contribute to, and be helped by, the learning and skills of others. That is a powerful way of tackling inequality, and helping disadvantaged communities to help themselves. Testbed Learning Communities will need to address a range of barriers on the ground including issues around clarity of role among partners and conflict of focus. Funding may also be an obstacle in some places, although there are a range of initiatives under way to tackle this.

10. Testbed Learning Communities will also be taken forward in the context of wider cross government activity in the social inclusion and community regeneration arena. The Home Office has recently published for consultation its Infrastructure Strategy for the Voluntary and Community Sector. The LSC published their Widening Participation Strategy in July following extensive consultation. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is consulting Departments with a view to updating the Neighbourhood Renewal National Strategy.

Vision

11. A Testbed Learning Community will be an aspiring and ambitious community where people are motivated and want to learn and where people and organisations provide mutual support to help each other learn and raise the local employment skills base. Testbed Learning communities will encourage and enable increasing numbers of their members to reach Level 2 qualifications.

Aim and Objectives

12. The aim of the testbed learning community work is:

‘To develop sustainable approaches which use learning and skills development to connect adults together and to promote social cohesion, regeneration and economic development through the active involvement of all parts of the community’.

The overall objectives in support of this aim are:

a. To identify and measure a variety of operational models that link a whole range of learning and skills provision, to impact upon the local level skill base, improve community capacity and lead to improved economic fortunes;

b. To investigate models of ‘club membership’ that raise the status of
learning and encourage ‘self ownership’ of skills and learning in areas of disadvantaged/low aspiration as well as of higher economic achievement;

c. To identify how family learning can be used to widen participation, raise adults’ skills and boost individuals confidence and aspirations to support the creation of a community wide culture of learning;

d. To identify who benefits most from different learning communities projects and what particular impact they have upon different groups/segments of society;

e. To identify how community learning and capacity building can contribute to the achievement of the goals set out in the frameworks for regional employment and skills action (FRESAs).

13. We recognise that there are many current and previous initiatives which have included the aim of promoting learning and skills within defined communities as one major means of tackling disadvantage. The specific focus of this initiative is to make a strong connection between the development of a community’s skills base and the contribution that can make to meeting the regional skills needs and priorities expressed by the Regional Development Agency. Thus, the goal is not only social improvement, vital though that is. It is to make a direct connection with achieving regional economic priorities, because raising regional prosperity and productivity through raising skills is in itself a powerful way of addressing social disadvantage. We envisage that testbed learning communities will support the achievement of the PSA targets for Basic Skills and Level 2 achievement.

What do we want to trial?

14. We have asked GOs to identify areas and approaches that might be suitable. We expect the approaches taken to vary and, during the trial period this variation will provide insights into what works best in different types of communities. We are keen to see how such partnerships can work most effectively with the new Regional Skills Partnerships to address local labour market issues and encourage pooled resources to support the work.

15. The key criteria that the testbed areas will need to meet are:

a. They should include one area per region with very low educational attainment (based on school floor targets) and high unemployment. If regions opt for a second testbed area this should be an area of slightly higher achievement but where there is potential for improvement (for example economically coasting, or an isolated community within a prosperous area with low educational achievement);
b. The area covered by a testbed learning community should be the size of a local authority area or a number of wards. Testbed areas could include existing NRF areas but we would want to maintain an overall balance between the numbers of NRF and non NRF areas included in the pilots;

c. A sizeable number of the testbed learning communities should have a significant ethnic population (for example a recently established ethnic community of which some parts of England have seen a large growth in over the last ten years or so);

d. Partnership and working arrangements should include strong links to local learning and skills institutions and could include, for example, improved collaboration between suppliers (colleges and providers) and between suppliers and their communities;

e. A significant number of the models should have a membership aspect to encourage loyalty and learning progression. We would like to see some form of card based membership scheme piloted in a number of areas;

f. A number of the testbed learning communities should start in April 2004 with all fully operational by September 2004.

16. We will be working with GOs on an ongoing basis from now until December as proposals are being developed to ensure (c) and (e) are met nationally as well as ensuring a good geographical spread of testbed areas.

17. The broad principles that the trials should operate within are:

a. They should have a particular focus on adults and family learning and tackle learning and skills needs for local communities and businesses;

b. They should focus on building capacity and capability within communities to support wider regeneration aims;

c. There should be demonstrable links between the skills addressed by the trials and the skill needs identified by the Regional Skills Partnership. The approach should build on the LSC/RDA partnerships approaches to pooling budgets to use funds flexibly.

18. We have been working closely with GOs to develop these proposals and understand the importance of keeping the scope of this work as wide as possible at this stage so we can explore the wealth of ideas out in communities. One example of the sort of project we are looking for is a former coalfield area with significant unemployment/adult attainment issues and in danger of missing education floor
targets. Another could be a small unitary (non NRF) with a combination of economic challenges (mixing rural towns with a significant ethnic population), rising trend of school attainment but challenges on adult engagement and aspiration, innovatory practices and strong local authority leadership.

19. We are keen that projects consider innovative ways of drawing in additional funding through a variety of routes at a local level and are particularly interested in projects that consider opportunities for corporate sponsorship. We would want to see a number of the testbeds exploring how businesses or possibly charitable trusts might support a whole learning community. Other testbed areas might want to look at how technology (e-learning) could be utilised. We are keen to see creative approaches taken to reengaging adults and motivating people to learn, for example through the arts/culture and sports route.

What do we mean by community?

20. For the purposes of the trials the word community should be seen as communities covering geographic areas rather than communities of shared interest, culture or faith communities.

What funds are available for the trials?

21. One of the core aims of this work is to investigate how existing funding streams and resources can be used to better meet the learning communities approach and fill gaps where support is unavailable. We are currently considering whether any additional funding can be made available for these trials. Should any additional funds be found these will be to support the development of key innovative aspects of the trials, (for example a card based membership approach), and it will still be critical that the use of existing resources are maximised to ensure sustainability of approaches. Evaluation costs will be supported by DfES as set out in para 24 below.

Management

22. The Testbed Learning Communities project will be managed as part of the overall programme that will deliver the Skills Strategy. A Project Board will be established to oversee the trials and development of the Learning Communities concept. This Board will report to the DfES Individuals Sub Programme Board which reports to the Skills Strategy Programme Board.

23. DfES will work closely with pilot projects to set in place some form of knowledge sharing mechanisms (probably web based) for Learning Communities to encourage the Communities themselves to share knowledge and experience. This will also help the Skills Alliance learn from the projects and inform decisions about future developments.

24. We will develop an evaluation process in consultation with GOs. It is
likely that this will be an action research approach but with some common
data collection to enable a national evaluation to draw out core messages.
The core national element will be worked up by March 04.

Performance Indicators

25 In all cases, Government Offices and their partners should consider, and state in their proposals, what performance indicators they will use to assess impact and track progress. Those indicators will vary from area to area depending on local circumstances and priorities. But they should in all cases include:

a. Measures of participation by the people involve in the testbed learning communities.

b. Measures to show whether the initiative is succeeding in widening participation in learning by disadvantaged groups, those with few or no qualifications, and those without jobs.

c. Assessment of the contribution of the initiative to meeting skills gaps and skills priorities identified by the RDA and set out in the FRESA.

Invitation to Respond

26. We are looking for innovative proposals from GOs, which show how they will meet the aims, objectives and key criteria for the trials set out above. Responses are invited by the end of December 2003 which set out:

a. The nature of the approach and proposals for design, set up and running;

b. How the activities in the trial will be responding to local needs/issues and sub regional priorities;

c. The specific objectives, performance indicators and measures of success against which the trials intend to deliver;

d. Identification of any barriers that might impede delivery and planned steps to overcome them; and

e. The partners involved in the trials, funds they intend to utilise, and local evaluation and management structures.

Timing and Next Steps

27. The Skills Strategy White Paper states that the trials should start in 2004. The main elements of the timeline are:
1. **October 2003:** Project Team to clear approach with Ministers and send scoping paper to GOs with invitation to run 1 or 2 testbed learning communities in each region.

2. **October 2003:** Project team to establish Project Board.

3. **October to December 2003:** Project team to work with GOs to support development of possible proposals/approaches.

4. **By end December 2003** GOs to produce detailed proposals worked up in line with the final specification and their initial thoughts for what they want to do in their regions.

5. **October 2003/March 2004:** Evaluation programme designed.

6. **January 2004:** Small panel made up of key members of Project Board to consider proposals. Submission to Minister seeking his final approval to run trials.

7. **April 2004:** Significant number of trials commence (timescale allows for project system, process and infrastructure set up).

8. **September 2004:** All testbed trials operational.

9. **April/May 2005:** Mid programme evaluation produced.

10. **May 2006:** Final evaluation published

28. The assumption is that the trials will run for 18 months to 2 years from April 2004 onwards depending on the start date.
ANNEX A

Skills White Paper proposals for Learning Communities

Building Learning Communities

7.4 We are keen to develop the concept of learning communities. The regional skills partnerships described above would focus on linking skills, business support and economic development in a concerted drive to raise regional and local productivity and growth. But there is a different form of local partnership which we also need to promote - the capability of communities to develop their collective base of skills and learning as learning communities.

7.5 In many disadvantaged areas, low community expectations and aspirations are a significant factor holding back the prospects for economic and social development. That is reinforced by low skills, low achievement and early dropout by young people from education, and an assumption that learning and skills are not relevant to people's lives once they have left school. Several RDAs and their partners have identified the need to build community aspirations as a major factor in achieving their goals for economic regeneration and development, and have reflected this in their Frameworks for Regional Employment and Skills Action (FRESA).

7.6 The importance of skills in tackling community disadvantage has long been recognised. Skills and learning are a major element of the Government's neighbourhood renewal programme, because they can help break the cycle of deprivation, underachievement and worklessness. In some communities, that cycle is being perpetuated from one generation to the next. By raising skills and encouraging learning, parents, grandparents, carers and wider family are better placed to help their children succeed at school; the role and capacity of community leaders can be strengthened; more people can gain sustainable, rewarding jobs or move into self-employment; and more people can get the confidence and know-how to set up and run social enterprises, or take part in voluntary activity.

7.7 One approach would be to encourage individuals, families and employers to see themselves as members of the learning community, with membership bringing locally determined benefits. Those might include regular information about local learning opportunities, taster courses and invitations to family learning events. The aim would be to give membership some of the status and value associated with being a member of a leisure or sports club.

7.8 By encouraging that connectivity of learning, linking schools, colleges and the wide range of skills development and informal learning, different
members within a community can both contribute to, and be helped by, the learning and skills of others. That could be a powerful way of tackling inequality, and helping disadvantaged communities to help themselves.

7.9 Local Strategic Partnerships have been formed in all parts of the country as a way of linking up all those activities and services which can in combination help to tackle the range of problems in a community. In the 88 most deprived parts of the country, the partnerships are the route for funding neighbourhood renewal activities. Within Local Strategic Partnership areas there are local learning partnerships specifically focused on bringing together the parties who can promote learning and skills to support community development. In order to narrow the gap between our poorest neighbourhoods and the rest, we must invest in supporting those involved in delivery. ‘The Learning Curve’ - the learning and development strategy for neighbourhood renewal launched in October 2002 - sets out how this can be done. Union Learning Representatives may have a role, building on their work to help the low skilled gain access to training.

7.10 Within the framework now set by this Skills Strategy, we want to work with the existing Local Strategic Partnerships to renew the drive to build learning communities, and form a much stronger link to the regional economic agenda led by the RDAs. This should cover those activities supported by European Structural Funds.

7.11 We envisage trialling the concept initially in areas of long term systemic low aspirations. We will ask the Government Office in each region to support RDAs, local LSCs and Local Strategic Partnerships in their region to define and nominate suitable areas. By building learning communities, we can develop the capacity of disadvantaged areas to create a better future for themselves. The objective is to show how we can link up the activities and budgets which currently support the RDA role in helping all communities in their region gain access to economic opportunities, the LSC role in widening participation in learning, and the Local Strategic Partnership role in tackling the connected root causes of community disadvantage. We expect plans to promote learning communities to be included in the work of the regional skills partnerships set out above.
## INDIVIDUAL PROJECT SCORING SHEET – PROPOSED PHASE 1 PROJECTS

### PROJECT NAME:

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<th>Seoping Paper para ref.</th>
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Signed:  
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## Appendix 3: Evidence Database

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## Appendix 4: The Skills Strategy: Analysis of Common Purpose

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Appendix 5

Glossary of Terms

Action Team for Jobs (AtfJ)

A project originally funded through the Department for Work and Pensions to assist individuals into employment. AtfJ teams were deployed in geographical areas that were in the top 10% on the Index of Multiple Deprivation. In the Area of Case Study 2, Action Team for Jobs has been helping local unemployed people into work since October 2000. AtfJ offer individual advice and support through personal advisers who, work at a variety of venues including libraries and community centres. We also use our mobile office as a venue to bring our services to the heart of the community.

Aim High Network

Aim High is a local voluntary network of all the agencies working in the field of learning, enterprise and employment together with the community venues where these services are accessed by local residents. The 'accountable body' for the Aim High Network is the Acumen Community Development Trust. (known as the Acumen Trust)

Broxtowe Partnership Trust

The Broxtowe Partnership Trust is a Company Limited by Guarantee and was registered in October 1998. It replaced the Broxtowe Forum, which had been the main partnership co-ordination body on the Broxtowe Estate for over 10 years.

The purpose of the Partnership Trust is to promote and facilitate the social and economic regeneration of the Broxtowe Estate through multi-agency, partnership working.
The membership of the Partnership Trust is made up of organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors as well as individual residents living on the estate. This representation is reflected in the Management Board of the Trust, which consists of 14 directors.

**Employment Skills and Productivity Plan**

This, locally named plan, was originally linked to the FRESA. However, this area of work is now part of the Regional Economic Strategy (produced by the Regional Development Agency).

**Family Learning**

Family Learning is defined as learning within or as a family. They cover family literacy, language and numeracy and wider family. Family Learning has been shown to improve the skills of children and their parents but also to assist in widening participation in learning by addressing many of the barriers adults face in access and progression. NIACE (2003) *Evaluation of LSC Funded Family Learning Programmes*, OFSTED (2000) *Family Learning: a survey of current practice*.

**FRESA**

Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs). RSPs are forums where businesses and skills organisations work together to meet the skills needs of regional economies. They set out how the delivery of adult skills, workforce development, business support and labour market services can provide the best support for Regional Economic Strategies. The core members of RSPs are the Regional Development Agencies, the Skills for Business Network, the Learning and Skills Council, the Small Business Service and Jobcentre Plus. (There may also be other members, decided on a regional basis)

**Government Office (GO)**

The Government Office Network covers the nine English Regions. Government Offices are part of central government but are located in each region, performing functions on behalf of eleven government departments. The Government Office states that: 'based on local knowledge and evidence, through partnerships with regional and local players and steered by regional ministers, GO identify what will be effective in their areas' The Government Office: Partnering With Whitehall (2007: 1) In the same document The Government Office state their ‘offer’ as being to:

- Strengthen National Policies,
- Integrate Regional Strategies
- Drive Local Delivery

**Job Centre Plus**

Jobcentre Plus is a government agency supporting people of working age from welfare into work, and helping employers to fill their vacancies. JCP are part of the Department for Work and Pensions.
The Learning and Skills Council (LSC)

The Learning and Skills council is a Non Departmental Public Body established by the Learning and Skills Act 2000. It began work in 2001 taking over from the former Further Education Funding Council and the Training and Enterprise Councils. The LSCs website (www.lsc.gov.uk) notes that they have a single goal 'to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to ensure we have a workforce of world class standard'.

Learning Shop

Generally used to refer to a learning centre. Learning Shops will also provide other services such as information and guidance and job search facilities. Much of the learning at these facilities is ICT based and may include Learndirect.

Local Area Agreements set out the priorities for a local area agreed between central government and the local area (the local authority, LSP and other key partners) LAAs simplify some central funding help join up public services more effectively and allow greater flexibility for local solutions to local circumstances. www.communities.gov.uk

Local Area Learning Plan

The City within which the TLC is situated is divided into areas. Of the nine areas across the city 6, of them have a Local Learning Partnership that prepares its own Learning Plan. The Greater Nottingham Learning Partnership (GNLP) assisted with and coordinated this activity. GNLP were designated as the 'accountable body' for the Testbed Learning Community Pilot in the area of Case Study 1.
Local Strategic Partnerships

Local Strategic Partnerships are non-statutory, multi agency partnerships that match local authority boundaries. LSPs bring together a range of local partners so that they can work together more effectively. LSPs are necessary because a lack of joint working at local level has been one of the key reasons why there has been little progress in delivering sustainable economic, social and physical regeneration or improved public services that meet the needs of local communities..(www.neighbourhood.gov.uk) From 2007/08 LSPs will operate in the context of Local Area Agreements

Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (One City Partnership)

The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal is a major initiative from the Government’s Social Exclusion Unit. It was the result of recognition that despite increasing national wealth, poverty over the last 20 years has become increasingly concentrated in individual neighbourhoods which have become socially excluded from mainstream society. It suggests that the main driver of neighbourhood decay is economic, but that the outcomes are multi-faceted and complex. It concludes that the resulting problems require coordinated, long term action which is developed and managed locally and invests in people and communities. The aim of the national strategy is “to arrest the wholesale decline of deprived neighbourhoods, to reverse it, and to prevent it from recurring.” Success will be measured on the basis of narrowing the gap between deprived areas and the rest of the country in terms of jobs, educational attainment, crime, health and social housing.

NIACE

NIACE (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education) exists to encourage more and different adults to engage in learning of all kinds. The organisation
campaigns for – and celebrates the achievements of – adult learners, young and old, and in all their diversity. NIACE is the largest organisation working to promote the interests of learners and potential learners in England and Wales. NIACE is a non-governmental organisation working for more and different adult learners and was commissioned by the DfES to support the TLC initiative. (www.niace.org.uk)

Regional Development Agencies (RDA)

Regional Development Agencies were established in 1999 to act as strategic leaders of economic development within each region. H.M. Treasury (2006:5)

The RDA website (www.englandsrdas.com) notes:

The RDA mission is to spread economic prosperity and opportunity to everyone in the nine regions of England. When establishing the RDAs, the Prime Minister said he wanted to ‘bring fresh vitality to the task of economic development and social and physical regeneration in the regions’ through a business-led approach. The RDAs do this through providing strategic direction for economic development, ensuring the needs and opportunities for every region are taken into account. They work to make lasting improvements in the economic performance of all regions and to reduce the gap in growth rates between the regions.

Regional Economic Strategy (RES)

Produced by the Regional Development Agencies in each region and established to ‘improve economic performance and enhance regional competitiveness’. The RES sets the framework for ‘ensuring long term sustainable economic growth in the region(s)’ (2006:12)
**Scarman Trust**

A national charity committed to helping citizens bring about changes in their community in a way that they want to. ([www.thescarmantrust.org](http://www.thescarmantrust.org)). The Scarman Trust was commissioned by the DfES to support the TLC Pilot initiative.

**Surestart**

Sure Start is the Government’s programme to deliver the best start in life for every child by bringing together early education, childcare, health and family support. The Early Years, Extended Schools and Special Needs Group, within the Department for Children, Schools and Families, is responsible for delivering Sure Start. Sure Start covers a wide range of programmes both universal and those targeted on particular local areas or disadvantaged groups within England.

**The Acumen Trust**

The Acumen Community Enterprise Development Trust (or Acumen Trust) is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. The Acumen Trust acted as the accountable body for funding made available through the TLC pilot in Case Study 2. The Acumen Trust’s mission statement is: ‘to support social and economic regeneration through learning, employment and enterprise’. (see [www.acumentrust.org.uk](http://www.acumentrust.org.uk))
The Project Board

Is part of the reporting/management structure for the Skills Strategy and provides an overview of TLC progress and strategic direction. The Skills Strategy Programme Board had within it a series of projects one of which was the TLC project. Ivan Lewis received reports from the TLC Project Board on a regular basis as noted in Project Board Minutes 14.07.2004. (GO file 20/8/1/7/3 pt2) The Project Board’s members include Senior Civil Servants from the DfES, Representatives from NIACE, the Scarman Trust, the ODPM and representatives from the nine Government Offices in the regions.
Appendix 6

Sample Letter

Thank you for your positive response to my initial enquiry about the possibility of you being interviewed as part of my doctoral research.

The research project aims to develop an understanding of the relationship between policy development and policy implementation within the context of the Testbed Learning Communities pilots (TLCs) as outlined in the Skills Strategy (2003).

My intention is to undertake a number of interviews at national and regional level with the eventual aim of completing two case studies based on specific TLCs. I have attached a schedule of questions that address the broad themes that I would like to cover at interview. If it proves difficult to cover the questions in detail during the allotted time I would request that consideration be given to a written response for any remaining questions.

All interview notes and or recordings will be treated in confidence and references in the text of the research will be anonymous unless otherwise agreed I will also undertake to refer any direct outcomes from the interviews back to the interviewee in order to check accuracy of content. On completion of the research all original data will be stored at the Institute of Learning, Hull University.

I would also point out that the interviewee is free to withdraw from the process at any time. Any information gathered to that point will be destroyed.

A copy of the final outcomes from the research will be made available to all interviewees.

Yours Sincerely
The IFL Ethics Committee
Consent form for Research

I ____________________________ hereby agree to be a participant in the research to be undertaken by Mr. R Shore and I understand that the purpose of the research is to explore and evaluate link(s) between policy generation and policy implementation with reference to the Testbed Learning Communities pilot.

I understand the aims, methods and anticipated benefits of the research.

I freely give my consent to my participation in this research.

I understand that the outcomes of the research may be reported in appropriate academic journals.

I am aware that individual comments and records of interviews will not be released to any person except at my request and on my authorisation.

I am aware that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study, in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from me will not be used.

Signature ____________________________ Date ____________________________

The contact details of the researcher are:

Mr. R Shore c/o The University of Hull, Centre for Educational Studies, The Loten Building, Cottingham Road, Hull HU6 7RX

The contact details of the Ethics Committee are: Mrs. J Lison University of Hull, Centre for Educational Studies, The Loten Building, Cottingham Road, Hull HU6 7RX

Should you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project please contact The Secretary, Institute for Learning Ethics Committee, University of Hull, Cottingham Rd, Hull HU6 7RX
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NA1</th>
<th>Initial Implications (researcher)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appendix 7</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Statement LEWIS 3.12.2003 Speech to NIACE re LCs</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Central to this is creating a culture of lifelong learning and high aspirations in communities and families where education has been historically for someone else</strong></td>
<td>Long term cultural—</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The cycle of deprivation, underachievement and worthlessness is not confined to individuals—it blights whole communities and transfers from one generation to the next</strong></td>
<td>Long term cultural— intergenerational and endemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Politicians are often criticised on the one hand and pressured on the other for quick fix solutions—you do not change a culture of low aspirations with one initiative, one decision one white paper one speech we have to have a sustained attack which is coherent strategic and which genuinely seeks to change culture—so this is not a short term quick fix</strong></td>
<td>That this would be a sustained and coherent strategy which will change culture --- not a quick fix --Joined up?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>If we cant raise aspirations then we wont achieve the changes that are necessary</strong></td>
<td>Long term cultural—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LCs have to be about raising the status of learning and communities and about promoting the benefits of communities and learning</strong></td>
<td>Long term cultural—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In LCs we want to develop new ways of working and community capacity building establishing links between local community activity and regional economic direction—in order to accelerate activity which raises aspirations attainment and widens participation in learning</strong></td>
<td>Capacity building is a long term issue alongside the previously discussed issue of raising aspirations NB this too with groups that have been labelled as hard to reach--- long term systemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I want TLCs to bring everyone in the community together—to develop new ways f working</strong></td>
<td>Again this is about partnership and collaborative work which on the face of it is eminently sensible --- partnership working is however very difficult to take forward when territory is being defended and there is (perhaps) a lack of trust and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement Adults Learning June 2004 LEWIS</td>
<td>Implication</td>
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<td>Lewis thinks this is pivotal in breaking the cycle of low aspirations and low attainment that blights may communities across generations</td>
<td>Long term cultural—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a need to raise the status of learning in these communities People need to feel they are members of a learning community – down to having a membership card</td>
<td>Long term cultural—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ultimate goal is to ingrain LL into the psyche of every individual, every family, every community and every workplace</td>
<td>Long term cultural—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think its predominantly about attitude and culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To use relationships of trust to introduce lifelong learning – we have an opportunity to make lifelong learning a much greater priority—It’s the most powerful tool we have to smash intergenerational deprivation

We have to bring LL to the centre of the shared objectives

<table>
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<th>Long term cultural—</th>
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NB CRUCIAL statement on p 7 of this speech re making the case for LL in a broader policy sense

Some difficulty with this re the lack of stability in terms of policy and ministerial turnover which seems to indicate a loss of interest in whatever pet projects were being dealt with.
Appendix 8


Models*
Membership to support culture change*
Connectivity* (positive role models)
Joined up and collaborative ways of working* (policy coherence)
Raising Skills and encouraging Learning (contribution to FRESA)²
Beneficiaries*
Development of Family learning to support culture change*
Mainstreaming, Sustainability/Funding
Policy duration
Flexibility (regional)
Role of local people

* Denotes policy objective

Additional Themes Emerging from Interview and Document Analysis.

Policy Memory
Policy Context and Justification (Axiological)
Policy Evaluation
Policy Continuity at both national and regional level

² The FRESA changed to become the Regional Skills Partnership. However the contribution that the TLCs make to regional skills remains important
Policy Genesis and Implementation

Ministers Role— Civil Servants (DfES) — Government Offices (regional)
Policy Memory (NIACE) Folk Memory (Civil Servants)