ESTABLISHING AN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT IN A UNITARY AUTHORITY

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A thesis submitted in part fulfilment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctorate in Education

2002

School of Education – University of Leicester

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Abstract

Establishing an education department in a unitary authority

David Over

This was a case study that looked at the way a new education department was set up in the new Peterborough unitary authority between 1996 and 1998. The aim was to investigate the way in which a new LEA was set up and identify the national and local influences that may have been influential in the decision making process.

The research design was constructed to take into account that the case study involved an institution which was being set up over a period of two years. It would be chronologically based and a historical methodology would be the basis of research work. Within this framework, participant observation, interviews and documentary research would be the research tools used. This would also have the advantage that this approach made good use of the experience and skills of the researcher.

A number of theoretical models were used in this case study. These included the rational actor model, bounded rationality, disjointed incrementalism, organisational process, bureaucratic politics model, Sabatier's political change model and Bachrach and Baratz's pluralist model. This range of models was adopted in the expectation that each had its own particular focus within the decision making process but taken together they could provide an over-lapping view.

The new education department was set up at a time when there were concerns over the future economic situation of the UK. There was a national debate concerning what public services were needed and how best to provide them.

The previous Conservative Government had reduced the powers of the local authorities and the new Labour government was to encourage local authorities to find the best way of providing services.

For the new unitary authority, the challenge was to set up a new LEA which met local needs. However, this was a period of national political change and a new central government was formed in the middle of the setting up process. This was to cause the new LEA to re-plan to take into account expected strategic changes.

The education department faced a number of challenges. There was local opposition to the setting up of a unitary authority. The city administration favoured policies which were to run counter to central government expectations. Few experienced education officers were available to the new LEA

The main findings of the case study were:

> Central government was the single greatest influence in the setting up of the education department. Government legislation changed the role, responsibilities and structure of the new department. These changes over-stretched the new LEA, especially as central government did not provide a sufficient level of funding to the LEA.

The DfEE was an important influence on the early development of the department. At first, the DfEE did not intervene and there was no guidance available to the new LEA.

The city council and education department spent a year preparing to set up a new LEA and then found that it had to make significant changes on the election of a new government 12 months before the unitary authority was to be established.

Local social and economic issues were ignored by the DfEE's focus on national targets. These local problems had a significant affect on student achievement so the LEA never met government targets.

The institutional culture of the city council was not supportive of the new LEA. This helped to create a shortage of able and experienced senior education officers.

The education department received limited support from the local schools. Many schools had opposed unitary authority status and half of all secondary schools were grant maintained by 1996.

In 1998 the education department was facing an overspend of nearly £1million. Senior education officers resigned their posts and within a year the education department had to be re-organised.

Key words

Unitary authority

Education department

Peterborough City Council

Local government review

Local government reorganisation

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank the many people who gave generously of their time, energy and experience to this work. He acknowledges special debt to his tutors Professor T Bush, Dr J Ouston and Dr Lofthouse.

Particular thanks must be given to Cllr J Horrell, Cllr H Lakhanpaul, Cllr M Rainey, Cllr G Ridgeway, Cllr C Weaver, Cllr R Pobgee MBE, Cllr J Holdich OBE, Mr B Samuel, Mr Paul Martin, Mr B Goodwin, Mrs P Jones and the members and officers of the education department. The author is especially grateful for the support and encouragement from Mr G Hainsworth, consultant to Peterborough City Council, and Mrs P Robinson of the Local Government Information Service.

The author would also like to thank local MPs, members and officers of Cambridgeshire County Council, Leicester City Council and Milton Keynes City Council and Her Majesty's Prison Service for their assistance.

Lastly, the author wishes to register a special thanks to his wife and family for their patience, helpfulness and support during six years of research and writing.

Peterborough 2002

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the establishment of an education department in a new unitary authority. The aim was to discover how decisions were made that set up the new department. This would include attempts to discover the extent of central government influence over the setting up of the new local education authority (LEA). It also would look at the influence that government departments such as the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) had on the setting up of a new local education department. It was a responsibility of local government to have a role in providing an education service that was responsive to local needs. In this situation it would appear likely that the new education department would be set up to respond to local needs and this would include a local council involvement.

Also, this case study examined the influence of other education bodies and non-educational influences on the new authority. These groups would include the churches and a number of community groups.

This case study sought to answer the following questions:

1. Did central government have an important and controlling role to play?
    - (i) How did government legislation affect the organisation of a new education department?

(ii) How influential was the DfEE on the setting up of a new education department?

2. How much freedom had local government to set up its own administrative organisation?

   (i) Were local issues the main priority for local government in setting up an education department?

   (ii) What were the methods employed to set up a completely new education department?

3. Were other educational agencies brought into the decision making process to establish a new education department?

   (i) What role was given to the city's schools to contribute to the decision making process?

   (ii) Were the churches consulted in the setting-up procedure?

   (iii) Were parents, voluntary bodies or other statutory authorities consulted?

4. What influence did non-education factors have?

   (i) What effects did the fact that Peterborough was a new unitary authority have on the setting up of an education department?

   (ii) Did local cultural, economic and geographical influences have a substantial affect on setting up a new education department?

The focus of the study was the setting up of the education department at Peterborough City Council. There was no opportunity to conduct a survey of a number of new education

departments and the resources were unavailable. However, this case study was able to explore, in depth, the decision making processes in significant detail to be able to indicate the affects of government pressure, financial support and local influences to a level which would be unlikely in a broader survey.

The case study was also important in that the researcher was a part of the decision making body. This was a good opportunity to look at an activity from the position of one person who was actually involved. The researcher had access to a range of documents, individuals and other sources of evidence that would be unavailable to other researchers.

To answer the research questions there would be a number of steps to be taken. Firstly, it was important to have a review of the context in which these decisions were to be taken. Local government was undergoing continual change. The range of public services, and the way that they were being delivered, were being questioned.

The role of the LEA had significantly changed with many powers being transferred to central government and the schools. It was to become particularly important that the setting up of the new LEA was at a time when a new national government came to power with a determination to deliver high quality services but it was also willing to consider a wide range of ways to achieve this, not just relying on traditional local government provision.

At first, it was very difficult to collect a satisfactory range of secondary sources. The most important and available sources of information were the Audit Committee reports. Other sources of evidence tended to be articles from professional journals. Only after 1998 did a

number of published works become available and a significant part of the second chapter of this work was to review the later secondary sources.

There were a large number of primary sources. The researcher had the right to all formal documentation in the city council and a large range of Full Council (monthly meeting of the city council), committee, shadow committee and working party sources were available. As part of these written sources there were also tape recordings of every meeting and all relevant central government publications were attached to the appropriate agenda or minute book. During the course of the research work other primary sources became available, such as group records and officer produced information.

The case study would use a triangulation methodology which would bring together interviews, documentary research and research tools. The interview process would be very important because so much of the decision making process was dependent on an individual member or officer initiating a particular idea or policy. Many decisions were discussed at committees and so individuals and groups could be directly observed. Also, the work of the education committees and other working parties were well recorded.

The findings were then tested against formal academic decision-making models. This enabled the analysis of the findings. By adopting a number of academic models it was possible to look at the decision making process and test ideas about the way decisions were arrived at, who actually made the decisions and to gain some understanding about why some decisions were successful and other decisions were less effective.

In this way it was possible to recognise the dynamics of decision-making. In particular the 'culture' of the city council was shown to be very influential. By a simple description of events it was possible to see members and officers of the city council making a succession of decisions to set up an administrative department. By applying a number of models of decision making to the findings very different dynamics were seen to be at work. Many of the decisions which concerned education were made by a distinct group of inter-related individuals who were involved in the public and business life of the city and seemed to share similar beliefs and values.

These concerns were to provide the broad direction of the thesis and form the basis of its structure. Chapter One would be an introduction to the research work. It would also include a review of national policy on local government re-organisation.

Chapter Two would consist of a detailed investigation of the literature available in the research area. This included a number of central government publications on the likely development of local government and other publications that suggested likely changes in the Peterborough area.

Chapter Three would present a review of organisational change models. These would include Bachrach and Baratz's 'pluralist' approach and Sabatier's political change model. In this way a number of different models could be considered as possible tests to help explain how decisions were taken in order to bring about a re-organisation of a local council.

Chapter Four would explain the research approach to be taken and justify their adoption. The use of triangulation methods would be introduced as a consideration of research ethics as they applied to this work.

In Chapter Five the findings from the research work would be presented. This would be achieved by explaining the organisation of the research work and then, by using the findings of the research tools, answering the research questions.

Chapter Six would subject the findings of the previous chapter to a structured testing by academic models. This would be a rigorous procedure which could search the findings to indicate relationships and trends between individuals and groups within the institution that is under-going re-organisation.

Chapter Seven would provide the conclusions to the thesis. Here the measured influences of a variety of national and local institutions, such as central government, the DfEE and the needs and demands of the local area, would be identified. Also, the significance of the work would be explained and the lessons for the future considered.

Background

A popular view of changes in government and business organisation was put forward by Handy (1995). He saw that organisations created a strong core business that involved essential people doing essential jobs. Outside the core the space was filled or emptied as necessary. There flexible workers, flexible supply contracts and temporary responsibilities were to be found. The strategic issues for any organisation would be to

decide who and what roles should be in the core of 'obligations' and who and what roles should be on the outside with the flexible responsibilities (p.65).

During the 1990s, governments were concerned over this strategic balance. There was a belief that the supply of full time employment for unskilled and semi-skilled people would be diminished. The consequences of such a change was to be felt in the urban areas. There was therefore a need to increase educational standards (Brighouse, 1996, p.1).

Within this context the Government attempted to question the role of the civil service and local government. Computer systems were provided by a private company. Agencies, such as the Highways Agency, were set up to carry out government contracts and a variety of roles were increasingly carried out by private companies (KPMG, 1994, p.53).

Changes in the provision of public services

During the 1980s and 1990s there was a change from government being the 'provider' of services to the government being the 'setter' of standards of services. In this situation the government set the standards for the service, contracts were awarded, the performance monitored and the outcomes were measured. The problems of the past could be replaced by a new, flexible and visionary process of change.

At the same time the process of change was not detailed. Although what was to change was set out, how the process of change was going to take place was not discussed. There was little mention of the variety of different dimensions and elements that are involved in the process of change and the personal dilemmas that can be generated (Clarke and Newman, 1997, pp.49-50).

National policy leading to local government reorganisation

There was a continuing debate about the role of LEAs. Jennings stated: 'The local authority context of the 80s will not tolerate the closed system of educational policies and policy-making which existed before reorganisation'. (Jennings, 1984, p.ix) There was also a frustration that some town halls were proving a barrier to change. In 1986 the electoral turn out for local elections was between 30% and 40%. This would seem to indicate that LEAs were being run by political groups that had been elected by a small percentage of the electorate. (Hunter, 1998, p.69) In this case it could be argued that local government did not reflect the views of the communities that they claimed to represent.

At the same time there were a number of alternative views about how education should be organised and resourced at a local level. A number of commentators were saying that the core role of the LEAs should not change too much. In 1995, the Chief Education Officer for Northumberland saw that the only way forward was to go back '... to the golden years which existed prior to the Education Reform Act of 1988' (Woodhead, 1995, p.3). 'The fundamental role of the LEA is to enable and facilitate the provision of education to those it serves, appropriate to their needs, interests, and entitlements'. (Hunter, 1998, p.4)

Arguments in support of LEAs pointed to their local connections that allowed for local understanding. It was also argued that local democracy allowed for effectiveness and did not hinder the performance of community services (Brighouse, 1996, p. 6).

An alternative view was based on a reaction against the centralisation of educational decision-making and the lack of democratic involvement. There were '... the rumbling discontent and unease concerning an ever larger "democratic deficit"' (Hunter, 1998, p.60). Many LEA responsibilities had been devolved to quangos and schools (Farrell and Law, 1999, p.296). In fact by 1997 '...twice as many people responsible for local administration had been appointed by central government as had been elected by local voters' (Hunter, 1998, p.60).

In practice, government policies were limiting the LEA's role and central government was seen to be concentrating on the main themes of:

- Prescription, with the introduction of the National Curriculum and testing and assessment.
- Devolution, which included the development of Local Management of Schools (LMS) and the extension of school governors' powers.
- Competition, involving open enrolment and grant maintained schools.
- Privatisation, with competitive tendering being an essential element (Hunter, 1998, p.4).

The Audit Commission accepted that the LEAs had to adapt in order to survive. It recognised that the Education Act (1988) aimed to make the LEAs revise their strategy and organisation within a 'pluralist environment'. Powers and responsibilities were to be shared with the Secretary of State, advised by the National Curriculum Council, the School Examinations and Assessment Council and with individual schools and their governors and outwards with parents and other interested groups from the community (Audit Commission, 1989, p.1).

To respond to this situation the Audit Commission believed that there needed to be an accountable body between government and the community. This body would reflect the aspirations and expectations of all interested parties and, at the same time, be self-motivated, rigorously self-critical and unequivocal about improving standards and pursuing strategies needed to achieve this (Hunter, 1998, pp.4-5). This was where the LEA, acting with local knowledge, would supervise the publication of information about education, become an ombudsman for hearing and redressing complaints and act as educators of the last resort whereby it would ensure that there would be sufficient school places and a reasonable variety of types of schools (Lister, 1991, p.27).

Also, the Audit Commission accepted that the LEAs should remain responsible for determining LMS within their areas. With the uncertainty about where parents would choose to send their children to school, increasing opportunities for direct access to headteachers and governors and the need to ensure the availability of contingency funding, it was considered that the LEAs could provide an overall local policy and define the context within which the schools operated (Audit Commission, 1989, p.10).

The role of the LEA was to be flexible. Different LEAs would be able to emphasise different balances for their own local situations. Some LEAs would see themselves as a provider of resources and services in combination with other suppliers. A number of LEAs would see their relationship with the schools as a type of 'club' with a number of different types of member who would both contribute and also receive

from the collective resources, and other LEAs which would try to continue as normal (Audit Commission, 1989, pp.5-10).

The Education Reform Act (1988) reduced the powers of the LEA, allowed central government to take many of the core obligations and left the LEAs with fringe responsibilities. These changes included:

- The National Curriculum which was to stay in central government control.
- Local Management of Schools (LMS) gave responsibility for resource management to the school governors.
- Open enrolment removed LEA controls from school recruitment and linked school income with student numbers.
- Grant maintained schools were outside LEA control.
- School inspection was given to Ofsted which was nationally controlled (Bush, 1995, p.4).

Even in the resourcing of education the government took an ever-increasing control. For example, in 1986 50% of the county council's budget came from central government. The local authorities were to be subjected to rate capping and the standard spending assessment (SSA) (Hunter, 1998, p.69). These two devices limited the amount of money a local authority could raise and direct what money they had into specific areas. By 1997 only 16% of local authority revenue was raised by the council tax and local charges (Hunter, 1998, p.69).

Education between 1995 and 1998

A number of choices became available for the future direction of local education provision. The choices consisted of: '... to take education away from the LEAs or to unlock their creativity ' (Barber, 1997, p.30). The argument for the former was that a national funding formula would be fairer, with schools going it alone and supported by the DfEE based at regional government offices. An alternative was that the LEAs with their local legitimacy could sometimes promote innovations, encourage school improvement and bolster equality and plan the future (Barber, 1997, p.30).

By 1995, the groundwork for the direction of education was being laid. Barber (1997, recognised that political control over education had significantly increased over the last 10 years and that there was an increasing awareness that raising educational standards was crucial to economic success (p.30). 'These factors explain the series of educational and moral crises in this country over recent years...but the issues at stake are cultural, social capital, morality and economic growth. If this is so, it has major implications for the policy-making process in education' (Barber, 1997, p.1).

However, there appeared to be some uncertainty over what standards were to be raised and how it was going to be achieved. Brighouse (1996) asked similar questions. 'Few deny that higher standards are desirable, yet there are sharp disagreements not only about how to raise standards, but even about what educational standards are' (p.1).

In 1995, some politicians saw that increasing financial resources was the key to raising standards. A number of Conservative politicians were to call on the

government to lift restrictions on education spending. For example, Spink, the parliamentary private secretary to Ann Widdecombe, publicly stated: 'I have been advising the government to get rid of capping for ages' (Burstall and Dean, 1995, p.4). David Acton, a Labour councillor in Trafford, said that:

> 'We support a fully resourced comprehensive education system, but we feel that at the present time it would be pointless putting that forward. If there was a Labour Government, that situation would be different. We would put it forward immediately'. (Burstall and Dean, 1995, p.4)

Extra finance for schools could have been part of the way forward but previous education developments were beginning to lose their momentum. For example, there was a belief in Conservative circles that it was now impossible to continue any major changes in schools. Many councillors believed that to force through any more schools to go grant maintained would be disastrous now that the Conservatives had lost control over the local authorities. John Patten, the former education secretary, thought that the opting out process had lost 'its head of steam' (Burstall and Dean, 1995, p.4).

By 1996, support for the LEAs appeared to increase. Brighouse stated that the LEAs had three possible choices:

> 'What is the way forward? Should there be more government, with greater uniformity under a revitalised local government system? Or should the policy be towards less state intervention, so that schools (and parents) are set free of government and its bureaucracies and funded by vouchers, with a rigorous examination system? Or is it best to take the middle way, implied by the

present direction of policy, where greater responsibility for schools is balanced by regular information to parents, regular inspection and an extensive National Curriculum'. (Brighouse, 1996, p. 1-2)

Brighouse proposed that there should be new local education councils. These would promote school improvement guarantees for primary and secondary schools based on targets for inputs and specified experiences a child could expect to have. They would have the responsibility for securing the provision of a variety of services, mainly educational in purpose, to schools and individuals. Also, they would act as a 'honest broker' (answerable to local democracy) for securing equity (Brighouse, 1996, pp.7-8). Also, Barber (1997) stated that 'LEAs should be given a clear school improvement and innovation role and should be inspected by a joint Ofsted /Audit Commission team in order to spread best practice more effectively' (p.2).

The Education Act (1997) marked a substantial change in the relationship between central government, the LEAs and the school. There was to be local discretion to reflect the needs of local areas. It appeared that the LEAs would work in a partnership with a variety of stakeholders, for example, the churches, and the schools, to develop an overall context, general direction and then to oversee their implementation. LEAs were to have a role where they were to lay down challenges to help improve school standards and to offer support at the same time. The government saw a need for:

'... a range of administrative, regulatory and cultural levers to create what it calls " ...a combination of pressure and support for schools" It appears that

the Government envisages a central role for local education authorities in the "crusade" to raise standards'. (Audit Commission, 1998, p.9)

However, the government was not returning to the 'golden years' of the past as Tipple had advised (Woodhead, 1995, p.3). The Audit Commission recognised that the future of the LEAs were by no means certain. The government's policy proposals were based on encouraging school self-management and that the LEAs should demonstrate to schools and parents and the local electorate and to the DfEE that they are doing a good job in improving schools (Audit Commission, 1998, p.2).

The Audit Commission stated that the arguments against LEAs were:

- LEAs were too small to operate effectively.
- Given the history of the LEAs' relationships with schools they cannot operate in the new way that educational reforms demanded.
- Elected representatives prevent the LEAs from being professionally managed.

The case for supporting LEAs was:

- LEAs are democratically elected and multi-purpose authorities.
- Local councillors ensure they are responsive to local needs.
- If new education bodies were set up they would need LEA support in the short-term.
- A range of local authorities work merge to support education provision. (Audit Commission, 1998, p.7)

If the LEAs were going to succeed there would have to be a new approach to their work. The LEA might decide to become a 'director' of education development in its area. It would acknowledge that the schools were at the centre of the drive to raise standards and the LEA would persuade, support and guide the schools. Another approach would be a 'corporate' or 'federalist' position. There would be autonomous local units where the schools remained accountable for their performance and the LEA would be held accountable for the targets and undertakings that the education development plans contain. The third position would be a recognition that the LEAs' powers and responsibilities had changed. That, in fact, their role was no longer a command and control function but one where they were in a partnership which looked to develop a shared and evolving culture and creditability (Audit Commission, 1998, pp.49-50).

Local Peterborough Context

In 1992 the population of the city was 156,200. About 138,000 people live in the city itself and there is a significant ethnic minority group that makes up 7.4% of the population (The Review of Local Government in Cambridgeshire, 1994, pp 5-7).

Statistical information

Population Ethnic Group	Cambridgeshire		Peterborough	
	No.	%	No.	%
White	622,246	96.5	141,803	92.5
Black Caribbean	2,206	0.3	1,208	1.0
Black African	886	0.1	204	0.1
Black Other	2,203	0.3	597	0.4
Black Total	5,295	0.8	2,009	1.0
Indian	4,521	0.7	2,662	1.8
Pakistani	5,412	0.8	4,752	3.0
Bangladeshi	614	0.1	54	0.1
Chinese	1,837	0.3	358	0.2
Other Asian	2,131	0.3	734	0.5
Other Non-Asian	3,069	0.5	794	0.5
NonWhite Groups	22,879	3.5	11,363	7.5
Total Population	**645,125**	**100**	**153,166**	**100**

These figures do not take into account the make-up of the white community. Peterborough is home to significant numbers of people from Poland, Germany, Holland, Ireland and Italy. The only sub division of the white group is the reference to persons who were 'Born in Ireland', who numbered 2,500 at the time in 1990. The City Council estimated total ethnic population was 22,590 in 1990.

Peterborough LEA is responsible for 78 teaching establishments that can be broken down into the following categories:

	No of Schools	No of Pupils
Nursery	1	160
Primary (Infant & Junior)	58	15,917
Secondary	13	12,961
Special	4	320
PRU (Pupil Referral Unit)	2	53
TOTAL	**78**	**29,411**

	City	Statistical Neighbours	National Average
Percentage of Pupils eligible for Free School Meals – Primary	23.5%	14.3%	19.7%
Percentage of Pupils eligible for Free School Meals – Secondary	20.7%	12.8%	17.6%
Percentage of Pupils with statements of SEN - of Primary School Age	2.5%	3.0%	2.7%
Percentage of Pupils with statements of SEN - of Secondary School Age	4.5%	3.8%	4.0%
Percentage of Pupils for whom English is a 2nd language (EAL)	11.4%	-	7.8%

Key Stage Three Results

The table below summarises the percentage of pupils attaining Level 5+ at Key Stage 3.

	English			Maths			Science		
	1998	1999	2000	1998	1999	2000	1998	1999	2000
Peterborough	59.1	56.0	58.1	56.2	59.5	62.0	51.6	49.6	54.6
Statistical Neighbours	66.7	65.9	66.0	63.9	66.8	68.8	60.9	60.4	64.3
National Average	65.2	64.0	64.1	59.9	62.8	65.5	56.5	55.5	60.1

GCSE Results

	% 5 or more A*-C		
	1998	**1999**	**2000**
Peterborough	42.2	41.8	42.3
Statistical Neighbours	48.4	50.8	50.9
National Average	44.7	46.6	47.4

Unemployment (January 2001)

The total number of claimants for Peterborough district was 2,233 in January 2001 compared to 2,870 for January 2000

	January 2001 (%)	**January 2000**
Peterborough	***2.6***	***2.9***
East of England	***2.2***	***2.7***
East Midlands	***3.3***	***3.6***
UK	***3.5***	***4.0***

(Peterborough Fact Sheets, Peterborough City Council, 2001)

The Local Government Commission for England was established in July 1992 under the Local Government Act 1992. Its function was to review the structure of local government in areas of England as specified by the government (The Review of Local Government in Cambridgeshire, 1994, p.1).

In judging whether an area should gain unitary authority status the Commission looked at three main areas:

- Identity. The Commission looked for evidence that the area had a distinctive sense of identity which could be ascertained by both inhabitants and outsiders.
- Stability. The area should be free from inner tensions and settled within existing boundaries.
- Viability. The size, resources and population were all measures that were used to see if the area could sustain itself in light of the problems it confronted. (The Review of Local Government in Cambridgeshire, 1994, p.1)

The Commission gave approval for unitary status for Peterborough in 1995. It accepted that the city had a specific identity. Indeed it pointed out the tradition of the Soke of Peterborough (Peterborough City Council, 1997, p.1). The Cambridgeshire connection had been a relatively recent relationship from 1974 and the new town development of the 1970s and 1980s had been controlled from Peterborough by the Development Corporation (The Review of Local Government in Cambridgeshire, 1994, p. 81).

There was an acceptance of the stability of the city with people in favour of unitary status. While some observers noted that the city's growth had caused an expansion of its boundary to take in all of the newly planned southern township it was the size and dynamic energy of the 'new city' which was most convincing (The Review of Local Government in Cambridgeshire, 1994, p. 81).

Local authorities had reviewed existing patterns of expenditure and organisation in a search for value for money. The Audit Commission in particular had highlighted this

work and argued the case for clear objectives, informative performance indicators, reliable costings, inter-departmental working and inter-authority comparisons (The Review of Local Government in Cambridgeshire. 1994, p. 86).

At one time there had been a broad consensus between the political parties over education. The tradition of professional administration had been built on the assumption of consensual politics that would accept the established professional judgement (The Review of Local Government in Cambridgeshire, 1994, p.88).

However, this consensus had come under strain with changes in society being reflected in education. There were demands for:

- Vocational education which emphasised not skills or knowledge but a capacity to change.
- Parental choice and involvement.
- An integrated curriculum where the subjects and skills were linked for common purpose.
- Education for life which highlighted that learning should be continuous.
- Education had to respond to a multi-cultural society.
- Equal opportunities in education would change traditionally practices. (The Review of Local Government in Cambridgeshire, 1994, p.88)

Public demands on education appeared to have created an uncertainty. The need for and the value of education still remained but there appeared to be a doubt over the capability of the education service to deliver it. For officers there is now a climate where uncertainty

has displaced confidence and consensus (The Review of Local Government in Cambridgeshire, 1994, p.88).

Summary of the thesis

This thesis was to examine the setting up of an education department in a new unitary authority. It was to try to discover how decisions were made that set up the new department. It was hoped to discover the roles of central government and the DfEE in the setting up of a new local education department. It was also to be an attempt to identify how a local unitary authority to could provide an education service that was responsive to local needs. Also, this case study was to examine the influence of other education bodies and non-educational influences on the new authority.

This case study sought to answer the following questions:

Did central government have an important and controlling role to play?

How much freedom had local government to set up its own administrative organisation?

Were other educational agencies brought into the decision making process to establish a new education department?

What influence did non-education factors have?

By using these questions as a basis it was expected a detailed case study could be developed to explore the decision-making processes that were involved in the establishment of a new education department.

Chapter 2

Local Government Reform and Re-organisation

The focus of the research reported here was the establishment of a new local education authority in Peterborough. The legislative and policy context of this new LEA is presented. This is to provide a detailed and broad appreciation of the context of local government change. It is also to be able to understand some of the experiences and pressures that confronted other unitary authorities. It would be then possible to identify important pressures on Peterborough City Council.

The context of local government reform: concepts of re-organisation and re-structuring

A crucial feature of this thesis was the limited availability of appropriate literature. It quickly became clear that there had been a modest amount of work published concerning the re-organisation of local education administration. Earlier work tended to concentrate on educational organisational practice rather than theoretical foundations of good practice (Bush, 1986, p.vii). Ham and Hill (1994) suggested that there was a developing interest in policy analysis (p.3).

An important area that was available was the interest in the management of organisations within a global context. Many of the beliefs and experiences from this area were to be transferred in a broad nature to the re-organisation of local government and education departments.

Another important source for the reform of local government tended to be the Audit Commission. However, two significant aspects of these sources created a number of problems. Many of the Audit Commissions reports were published during and after the setting up of the new LEA in Peterborough. Also, early reports were published as 'advice' documents and aimed to develop debate. There was no evidence of the Audit Commission reports on local government, unitary authority status and LEAs reorganisation being available to Peterborough City Council members during the period 1995 to 1999. Therefore the impact of the work of the Audit Commission on the local decision making process may well be limited.

The documentary sources concerning the reasons for local unitary authorities and the Peterborough bids for unitary authority status were often detailed and readily available. These proved to offer insights into both national policies and the aims and aspirations of the local councils within Cambridgeshire.

The development of the 'global economy' created one of the main changes of government and the management of organisations (Clarke and Newman, 1997, p.46). At the level of the state there was a belief that the country could be compared to a company which was competing with other countries within a global market (Newman and Clarke, 1997, p.46). This market was hostile and aggressive. New entrants from the 'Pacific Rim', for example, had undermined traditional status and roles of other countries (Clarke and Newman, 1997, p.46).

This change in the view of organisations and the way they worked was particularly important for local authorities. In this globalised environment, countries, companies and

individuals all shared the need to compete for resources and success. Therefore countries, organisations and individuals all shared common enterprising impulses and drives which should not be blocked or diverted. Instead change was seen as not only an economic necessity but also as a social and a psychological benefit (Clarke and Newman, 1997, p.48). In this way, a unity of objectives between country, organisation and individual could be accepted. Global changes could be used to support organisational change and these could be justified by emphasising individual opportunities and success.

For example, it was argued that the decline in the success of many leading companies was due to top heavy management, bureaucracy and the inability to adapt to changes in the market place quickly (Clarke and Newman, 1997, p.46). If the globalisation model above was to be followed it would follow that the failure of local government to provide efficient and effective services would be due to heavy management, bureaucracy and the inability to adapt to change.

Within this situation both countries and companies would become faster at responding to new areas of competition. The government that wished to encourage companies to become more competitive by reducing regulation and taxation also had to reform itself. To achieve this the public sector was expected to be reduced in terms of cost and size. Commercial techniques were to be used to make it more 'business like' in order for it to be responsive to economic and social changes. There was also the change in expectations of central government, from 'rowing' to 'steering' and the belief that services were best delivered locally to nationally established standards.

The pressures of globalisation did not offer many choices or alternatives. Instead, sets of dualities or oppositions were used to show the unwanted past and the new and desired future. For example:

From provider dominated-to-user dominated.

From monopolistic-to-market driven.

Jobs: from simple-to-multi-dimensional.

Roles: from controlled-to-empowered (Clarke and Newman, 1997, p.49).

However, there were a number of difficulties to this simplistic view. Little concern had been expressed concerning process. Instead the main emphasis had been on outcome. The actual process of change was shown as simplistic and undifferentiated rather than the complex reality that it was with different dimensions and elements. There was little appreciation of the ambiguity, uneven development and often incomplete closure (Clarke and Newman, 1997, p.50).

Within this context the Conservative government, during the 1980s, believed that its role to save the country from national economic decline would be supported by reforming the work of government and reducing public expenditure (Grocott, 1989, p.119). The White Paper 'Competing for Quality' was introduced by Michael Heseltine, Secretary of State for the Environment, in 1991. Its task was to make recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment on the future structure, boundaries and electoral arrangements for Local Government in England (Bruckshaw, 1996, p.1).

The election of a Conservative government in 1979 also marked the point where many previous beliefs of social change through education were replaced by a policy that saw

education as intrinsically individual and inequality of achievement as inescapable (Ranson, 1994, p.69).

These new concepts and philosophies had a significant affect on the traditional education departments. The 1980 and 1981 Education Acts made important changes on behalf of parents and children with special needs and the Education Act 1986(2) increased parental and community involvement. The government's strategy was to put the needs of parents and community first and reject the traditional balance of power between central government, the LEAs and the teachers.

The LEAs recognised that the 1988 Education Reform Act devolved education control and would radically alter the way in which the LEAs would work in the future. (Farrell and Law, 1999, p.293). In fact the LEAs lost much of their power:

- Parental choice of schools.
- New procedures for children with special education needs.
- Increased financial control for governors and headteachers.
- Open enrolment and schools admissions.
- Appeal procedures.
- Competition between grant maintained and LEA schools.
- Competitive tendering for services.
- Central government's direct role.
- National Curriculum and national testing.
- Assessment of teachers.
- Central government's control over local government borrowings and financial

accountability (Dawkins, 1990, pp2-3).

The role of the LEAs was left in some doubt. On one hand, the LEAs appeared to have been written off by the government. Yet, they retained many statutory roles (Dawkins, 1990, p.5). For example, the Department for Education and Science (DES) in Circular 7/88 saw that the LEAs would have:

> 'Under schemes of local management, LEAs will take on a more strategic role. They will be free from the need to exercise direct, detailed control over the bulk of spending in schools with delegated budgets, but will have a vital overall responsibility for ensuring that local management is effective in delivering better education'. (DES Circular 7/88, Sept 1988, p.6)

In 1989 the Audit Commission Occasional Papers No 10 outlined the changes that the LEAs were to undergo if they were to respond to the changes brought about by the 1988 Education Act. The 1988 Act had increased the responsibilities of schools and reduced those of the LEA. There was a switch of resources from the LEA to the individual institutions and, in order to increase competition and give parents a greater choice, there was to be a greater diversity of provision in education (Audit Commission, 1989, p.2).

However, it is important to realise that the Audit Commission was writing a discussion paper on the implications of the 1988 Education Act. Later, it may have been used as a guide to help a unitary authority set up an education department but it was always seen as a guide rather than a prescription of what should happen. What it can be used for is to present an informal test model to compare a new education department against and give a

view as to whether the new LEA has been established under pre-1997 nationally accepted standards.

This publication helped to understand the way the roles of the LEAs were viewed. They would have to adapt in a pluralistic environment - powers and responsibilities became shared with the Secretary of State, National Curriculum Council, the School Examinations and Assessment Council and other bodies such as schools, parents and other interest groups. Rather than control local education, the government wished them to offer support and leadership to schools (Audit Commission, 1989, p.2). If they didn't accept this new role, then the LEAs would find themselves marginalised (Audit Commission, 1989, p.2). The LEAs' new role was to be fully explained and cost-effective. Successful strategies would include elements of 6 approaches. The LEA might be:

1. A leader - producing a vision of what the education service is trying to achieve.
2. A partner - supporting schools in fulfilling the vision.
3. A planner - of future facilities.
4. A provider - of information to the education market.
5. A regulator - of quality in schools.
6. A banker - channelling funds to local institutions (Audit Commission,1989, p1).

The implementation of the Act would take time and it would involve three shifts away from the LEA:

1. Upwards to national bodies: Funds would be based on tight criteria and restrict the LEAs' ability to direct funding.

2. Downwards to schools: Delegation would increase in scale. The LEA would make decisions over the aggregate budget then individual institutions would determine their own expenditure and resource decisions.
3. Outwards to parents: Parents and business representation will be increased with governors' reports, parental choice of schools and the right to apply for Grant Maintained status.

The LEA would be left with:

1. Responsibility for the total education budget for the area.
2. Policy statements on the curriculum.
3. National Curriculum advice and INSET.
4. Enrolment targets for schools.
5. Withdraw delegated budgets from school.
6. Inspect and monitor schools.
7. Local needs had to be recognised and governors would need training and support to help with their new powers and responsibilities.

As well the LEA would need to produce a strategy consisting of a statement of intent and a range of objectives. These, based on local needs, would be based on 6 distinct elements:

1. **Leader/Visionary**. Here the LEA would set the overall policy objectives and define the context in which the schools operate under 5's policy, Careers Service, Youth Service, ethnic minorities and the function of the inspectorate (Audit Commission, 1989, p.5). It would oversee the arrangements to organise the cooperation between schools in the use of specialised facilities and primary-secondary transfers. It would also be responsible for links between schools and businesses and voluntary bodies and other links

such as those between other LEAs in share specialist staff, and championing the education service in the local area (Audit Commission, 1989, pp.5-6).

2. **Partner**. Schools would need help to deliver the curriculum. The LEA was to allocate and control financial resources, the best use of human resources e.g. give advice on appointments, development and planning (Audit Commission, 1989, p.6). 'LEA officers will find that they are helping institutional managers to make decisions rather than taking these decisions themselves' (Kenneth Baker p.6). Increased levels of advice would go to heads and governors on how to manage issues from within the institution's own resources (Audit Commission, 1989, p7). Some schools might not share the LEA's ideas and objectives so a type of 'club' could result with schools and the LEA working closely together but with other schools having a more distant relationship (Audit Commission, 1989, p7).

3. **Planner**. 'The LEA's primary duties under the 1944 Act to secure that there shall be available for the area sufficient schools for providing primary and secondary education and to secure the provision of adequate facilities for further education have not been changed by the new legislation' (Audit Commission,1989,p.8). However, the environment in which these decisions were to be made had changed. Schools could become Grant Maintained and students may move school more often. A more consensual and sensitive approach was needed. Schools, parents and governors had to be taken into account by an open planning procedure (Audit Commission, 1989, p.8). 'What is important above all is that the LEA's decisions and proposals should be seen to [be] well founded in an assessment of educational need through an open process of discussion and consultation and one whose

priorities are understood and accepted broadly in the authority and its institutions' (Audit Commission, 1989, p.8).

4. **Information Provider.** The Education Reform Act, 1988, (ERA) did not promote a completely free market in educational provision. 'Choices are heavily constrained by the availability of different sorts of provision, by physical capacity limitations, by the cost of transportation which parents must bear and by admission policies set by individual institutions' (Audit Commission, 1989, p8). LEAs needed to be able to provide information on the schools in their areas in order for parents to be able to make a reasoned and informed choice. There also need to be available information concerning the performance of individual school (Audit Commission, 1989, p8).

5. **Regulator/Buyer.** The LEA could be seen as an agent that 'buys' education on behalf of its clients. Parents and the community pay for the schools through its taxes and should look to the LEA to ensure the provision and quality of an education service. To do this the LEA must be able to inspect the schools in its area (Audit Commission, 1989, p.9).

6. **Bank Manager.** 'It is important for the LEAs to recognise that they do remain ultimately responsible for determining the quantum of resources to be devoted to education in their area' (Audit Commission, 1989, p.9). However, extra local funds were to come from the local community charge while government grants and business rates were to remain stable. The concept here was that the LEA 'would act as banker' i.e. provide banking services, not 'be a bank manager'.

7. **Mix of roles.** Each LEA would adopt a mix of these roles to suit its own circumstances. Some LEAs chose a 'club' approach. Another might attempt to provide services to the widest range of providers possible. Another could be more directive and prescriptive (Audit Commission, 1989, p.9).

There was also a major responsibility placed on LEAs: they remain the formal employer of teachers in county schools although this responsibility is usually delegated to schools and governing bodies.

The Audit Commission in 1989 suggested that each LEA should have:

- A clear statement of educational objectives.
- Provide support for schools to reach an agreed level of autonomy.
- Incorporate efficient monitoring information systems (p.10).

In delivering the strategy there would be immediate affects on the LEAs. There would be an increased need for inspection and monitoring. Financial and organisational issues would become more important and organisation and staffing would be reconsidered and additional staff appointed if needed.

In fact, the LEA had been left with a number of responsibilities. These included:

- Determine the total resources to schools.
- Decide the scope of delegation within the framework of the Act.
- Establish the basis for allocating resources to individual schools.
- Set out the requirements and conditions within which the governing bodies must operate.

- Monitor the performance of schools, give advice or take corrective action.
- Manage the expenditure on schools without delegated budgets.
- Operate sanctions, including the withdrawal of delegation.
- Oversee provision for students with special educational needs.
- Have responsibilities for school transport – important in rural areas and can have an impact on admissions. (Dawkins, 1990, pp.5-6)

By 1991 the LEAs had undergone a series of changes. Education organisation was increasingly seen as a system of independent institutions supported by a LEA 'service agency'. The introduction of the Funding Agency for Schools in areas of large numbers of grant maintained schools was a means of financial control and it appeared to offer an alternative to the LEA.

LEAs had moved away from being 'directive' bodies to 'consulting' partnerships with the headteachers and governors. Monitoring and evaluation was closely linked to advice and support. Inspection was often seen as quality assurance or quality control. No longer did LEAs have a monopoly of service provision. Cleaning, school meals, caretaking and grounds maintenance were often provided by companies outside the local authority. A recognised key role for LEAs was increasingly seen as strategic planning and organisation. Inspection and quality assurance provided the evidence to develop strategic and policy development (Brown and Baker, 1991, p.26.). But there was a tension when schools 'fail', Ofsted sees the LEA as having responsibilities and the LEA is expected to become quite 'directive' in these circumstances.

A major reason for the creation of unitary authorities was that the Local Government Commission wanted to see a structure of local government which reflected local loyalties and community interests, offered clear democratic accountability and delivered effective management over a period of time (The Future of Local Government Draft Recommendations, 1994, p.2). Initially, the main concern was to develop a number of different models of corporate structure that could be adopted by the new unitary authorities. KPMG/Association of District Councils (1994) published a number of unitary authority corporate structures to act as examples. A year later, the Society of Education Officers commissioned Coopers and Lybrand to investigate the likely changes that would occur following the setting up of unitary authorities (Coopers and Lybrand/Society of Education Officers, 1995, p.1).

It was recognised that for every LEA there was a set of decisions to be made. Although each LEA had a number of statutory duties there were different ways in which those duties could be carried out. There was a further choice concerning how much involvement the LEA could have in the extent and provision of the education service, which will be seen in the discussions about the type of local authority that would be right for Peterborough. In this situation, the unitary authority would have to determine the character of the education department at the very beginning (KPMG/Association of District Councils, 1996, p.1).

There would be three basic questions to be asked:

- What level of involvement did the LEA wish to have?
- Where did the LEA fit into the unitary authority's corporate structure?
- On what basis should support be available from the LEA?

(Coopers and Lybrand/Society of Education Officers, 1995, p.7)

This report made out a strong case for the new local authorities to adopt a high level of involvement in the provision of services. This was because the effectiveness of an LEA was often measured by the success of its schools, by its arrangements for special needs students and how it addresses problems of service quality and delivery (Coopers and Lybrand/Society of Education Officers, 1995, p.8). Also, government legislation still laid a large number of duties on LEAs and these would be difficult to carry out if the LEA was not in a position to intervene. However, the LEA provision of services could not be imposed on schools. Schools could either buy in, through service level agreements, or not, as they chose.

There was, as Becket (2000) termed '...a nostalgia for control' (p.13). Whitbourn (2000) recognised that LEAs were to have a significant new role to overcome the limitations of a school driven model of education and they were expected to provide services which schools could not carry out for themselves (p.1). For example, the LEA would be the institution to support the interests of the disadvantaged and excluded children and it could offer administrative functions such as pay roll and finance control (p.12). This role might also be developed by creating partnerships with other service providers. Schools and the education service might be able to have a significant impact on the local community if they worked in collaboration with other council departments and private organisations (Becket, 2000, p.13).

A high level of involvement could see a LEA tendering for Ofsted inspection contracts of the schools in its own area. With this information available the LEA would be able to offer curriculum advice and run in-service courses (KPMG/Association of District Councils,

1996, p.1). (Although this was not allowed after the first two years of Ofsted. They could inspect other LEAs, but not their own).

Alternatively, the LEA could be an 'enabler' rather than a 'provider' of services. This could mean, for example, that a LEA only monitored Ofsted reports and fulfilled the minimum statutory requirements. In some cases, these services could be contracted out to private providers or other neighbouring LEAs (Coopers and Lybrand/Society of Education Officers, 1995, p.8).

The organisation of the education service had traditionally been from within an education department where officers tended to be cautious and often resistant to change (Waterhouse, 2000, p.21). Formulating and implementing initiatives were recognised as the responsibility of the LEA (Wallace and Pocklington, 1998, p.229). In fact, the educational process was seen as so complex that only professionals could manage it (Farrell and Law, 1999, p.293).

However, this understanding was becoming out of date. A number of education departments had delegated areas of education responsibility to other local government departments. For example, some LEAs had given the responsibility of the school welfare service to social services. There was also an increasing belief that different council departments could benefit by working more closely together in certain areas. For example, in pre-school provision, education, social services and leisure departments might be able to co-operate beneficially (Coopers and Lybrand/Society of Education Officers, 1995, p.9).

In 1996 the Audit Commission also commented on the progress made on the management of the introduction of unitary authorities. It recognised that this was a time of change and that there were a number of opportunities for councils facing reorganisation. Unitary authorities and the affected county councils were to use the periods of transition in 1995 and 1996 to ensure a smooth and managed transition.

It was seen that the unitary authorities and the county councils they left should:

- View themselves as new bodies.
- Form a long term vision of what they wanted to achieve in order to influence short term decision.
- Develop organisational structures to fit their main aims.
- Learn from the experience of other authorities.
- Decide their main priorities.
- Have access to up-to-date financial information.
- Take time to define new roles and responsibilities.
- Work with other councils.
- Explain their work to the public.
- Take no risks with new technology.
- Have suitable office space. (Audit Commission, 1996, p.1)

There had been earlier difficulties with the first unitary authorities. For example, two weeks in the transition period had been lost to local elections which meant no shadow committees were in operation to continue the setting up process. During the whole transition many shadow officers only saw themselves as 'caretakers'. Candidates for officer posts were often reluctant to get involved and the whole appointments procedure

was confused and disjointed. There were delays in the appointment of middle managers and some appointments were seen first in local newspapers or heard from officers in other authorities. Also, some county councils had not fully supported the process and delays and confusion had been expensive.

In Phase 1 unitary authorities, there had been an expectation that there would be a number of joint services with existing county councils. In fact this rarely happened. They had been most common in the advisory service, special needs, education awards, school transport and in specialist areas such as music, outdoor centres, travellers' education and bilingual support. (p.34). Otherwise, the unitary authorities appeared to attempt to 'go it alone' and reject the advantages of economies of scale.

In 1997 the Audit Commission commented on the experiences of the new unitary authorities.

In planning the delivery of services local authorities should:

- Balance competing service demands.
- Link closely with the council's financial planning and performance management systems.
- Reflect the needs of users.
- Involve the community and other stakeholders (Audit Commission, 1997, p.1).

The Audit Commission's report stated that: 'All councils need to develop an overall vision or ethos for delivering services, and link it to corporate objectives and detailed methods of delivery and performance management' (Audit Commission, 1997, p.7). From this

situation clear aims could underpin the transitional period. This then would be a smooth transfer because everybody involved would be clear of the intended outcomes. 'The success in achieving that "seamless transfer" was heavily influenced by the progress made by the new shadow authorities in determining a vision for the future of each service and linking it to its corporate objectives and standards' (Audit Commission, 1997, pp.7-8).

However, a difficulty was recognised in that the educational strategy of the new authorities was only set out in general terms. This led to confusion and lack of progress. '...SDPs (Service Delivery Plans) often described objectives and strategy statements for each service in general terms, but they did not state specifically what actual service would be provided' (p.9). 'Failure to spell out the more detailed delivery proposals inevitably compromised the success of the consultation process, and makes subsequent performance management more difficult' (Audit Commission, 1997, p.9).

Instead, the Audit Commission favoured detailed planning which was securely 'attached' to secure budgeting. 'Where service planning started early and was carried out in conjunction with a robust budget forecast, a quicker and more realistic, integrated approach to overall planning was evident' (Audit Commission, 1997, p13).

In 1997, the Audit Commission discussed the overall role of unitary authorities, while in 1998 it looked at the role of the LEAs. It identified four key questions:

1. What is the role of the LEA?
2. What are the features of an effective LEA?
3. How can the performance of a LEA be assessed?
4. How can inspection, audit and review add value? (Audit Commission, 1998, p.10)

There were also considerations for a local involvement:

- What, in relation to life long learning needs to be undertaken locally?
- What, in relation to school education needs to be undertaken locally?
- What cannot be undertaken by schools?
- What could be done by schools but they prefer to 'buy in'? (Audit Commission, 1998, p.11).

1. What is the role of the LEA?

It was suggested that the LEAs roles might include articulating a vision with a supporting strategy for education in an area, acting as a vehicle for improvement, ensuring quality and managing trade-offs.

The then current consensus on the style of relationships with schools was recognised and divided into three types:

- Traditionalists-where there is an attempt to minimise the impact of LMS.
- Minimalists-where only the bare statutory minimum is accepted.
- Enablers-who remain active to deal with the wishes and aspirations of the schools.

However, the 'Partnership' approach was becoming popular. Here there was a combination of empowered schools and a co-ordinating LEA. The LEA would establish a local focus and then would be flexible over its intervention in school operations (Audit Commission, 1998, p.15). This was seen as a demanding approach because schools could see their autonomy threatened and the LEAs had limited powers to intervene in

complacent schools or in schools identified by Ofsted as being in danger of failing to provide a satisfactory education for its students.

The Audit Commission recognised the availability of a 'LEA toolkit'. This was made up of three important elements:

- Resources

The LEA would decide LMS budget and have the power to shift resources between council departments. With its powers of finance the LEA could chose to provide a variety of mandatory and discretionary services to support schools, children and their families. It also could provide extra resources from other bodies. For example, LEAs were able to bid to other bodies e.g. European Union funds (Audit Commission, 1998, p.16).

- Culture

The LEA would be responsible for providing strategic leadership that would be based on an overview of local needs. That would be a mix of professional leadership and democratic legitimacy. It would also be able to extort and champion overall changes such as behavioural and attitudinal change (Audit Commission, 1998, p17).

- Powers

The LEA had the responsibility to plan for future school places and admissions. To do this it would have to be able to monitor school success, needs and performance. It had the responsibility to intervene in schools, e.g. in identified failing schools. The LEA could also rescind delegation in community and voluntary schools in extreme circumstances and take direct control (Audit Commission, 1998, p.17).

2. What are the features of the effective LEA?

The Audit Commission recognised three important aspects of an effective LEA.

- Strategic

There should be an understanding of the composition and needs of the local population, based on 'hard' evidence, such as groups with special needs, e.g. special education, minority ethnic community and deprivation (Audit Commission, 1998, p.19).

- Organisational processes

The organisational processes were based on the ideas in the Audit Commissions' publication 'Losing an empire. Finding a role'. This included aspects such as target setting, resource allocation and service delivery. It also involved monitoring, review and intervention, inter-authority and inter-agency working (Audit Commission, 1998, p.21).

- Culture

The culture of the LEA and its schools was bound up in the character of the relationships between the LEA, schools and local community. The leadership offered by the LEA and especially by the director was considered to be of critical importance. All the partners in education would share the same values and language. There would be a significant degree of trust between LEA and schools and the acceptance and support of a large capacity of self-management within schools.

3. How can LEAs be assessed?

The Audit Commission saw that there was a strong interrelationship between local and national interests. However, it recognised that LEAs would no longer have a strong control over schools and that there was a need for separate local and national responsibilities

The LEA was to define and measure the work of the schools. To do this it would indicate:

Benchmarks - absolute, time bounded and relative (Audit Commission, 1998, p.39).

Performance indicators - bringing about improvement, ensuring equity and managing trade offs (Audit Commission, 1998, p.35).

Local Government Review in Cambridgeshire

In one of the few publications that looked at the question of unitary authority status in Peterborough, Cambridgeshire District Councils (1994) service provision was reviewed. Peterborough had been part of Cambridgeshire since the 1974 local government reorganisation. However, the city council believed that unitary authority status would offer a number of advantages.

This was a key document. This was the opportunity for Peterborough City Council to put forward its ideas to meet the demands of the local community and 'tie' its proposals in with national policy on local government.

From the start the proposals on education in the Local Government Review, 1994, adopts government policy from the 1988 Education Acts and links it to the need to reflect local needs and priorities.

The main issues for the new education service were seen to be:

- Planning and ensuring access to a high quality service for children.
- Ensuring the requirements of children with special needs were met and resourced.
- Ensuring the provision of effective support for schools and governors and responding to broader community interests.

- There is also a strong view that the needs and circumstances of the city were different from Cambridgeshire County Council and that these could only be met by separation from the county council. (Cambridgeshire District Councils, 1994, p.24).

The unitary authority was to be self sufficient in the function of education provision. It would be able to agree and manage a Local Management of Schools (LMS) scheme, monitor the quality of the service and provide a range of services. In areas such as grounds maintenance, school meals and school cleaning there would be compulsory competitive tendering and later 'Best Value'.

It was intended there would be shared arrangements with other LEAs in specialist services just as the Audit Commission had suggested in 1989 (1989, pp.5-6). At first there would be 'lead authorities' where one LEA would concentrate on providing a particular service and other LEAs could 'buy-in' its expertise. In some specialist areas, such as special schools and staff training, it would be likely that there would be some sort of 'pooled' agreement.

There was support for the integration of some of the specialist work of the council departments and to focus on local needs. There would be strong links between Youth Services, Education, Social Services and Leisure (Peterborough City Council, 1994, p.21).

There was a realisation that standards in schools, as emphasised by the Audit Commission (1989, pp5-6), would be an important priority for the future:

'... whatever the LEAs responsibilities in the future, they will be expected to sustain and improve standards of education wherever possible' (Peterborough City Council, 1994, p.23).

Here was an attempt to use the work of central government and the Audit Commission to put forward a general view of how education would operate in a new unitary authority. However, it has to be noted that the plans for a large department were limited to a few pages. The emphasis was on the unitary authority being able to provide satisfactory funded arrangements with some acceptance that a small authority might have to share services with other unitary authority departments and councils. There is little about the Audit Commission's six approaches for LEAs (1989, p1). Also, there was no mention of increasing autonomy for headteachers and governors. Instead the proposals published by the Association of District Councils 1994 appear to be far more influential.

Research on Local Government Reorganisation

It was important to recognise the experience of other authorities in local government reorganisation. The 1977 local government reorganisation was probably too long ago and very different in aims and objectives to offer a comparison. However, it may well offer some long term affects and highlight aspects of reorganisation that may be shared on a general basis. A similar situation applies to the splitting up of ILEA except there was a case of a larger authority being split into small borough councils. This was a similar process as the creation of Peterborough unitary authority from Cambridgeshire County Council.

Also, other local government reorganisation had recently occurred in Scotland and a number of English and Welsh unitary authorities had been created. It should be possible to review the organisational change process of these authorities and, in a later chapter, compare Peterborough's experiences and outcomes.

The 1974 experience

The 1972 Local Government Act abolished county borough councils and established a two-tier system of district and county councils throughout England and Wales. In the large conurbations metropolitan county councils were set up but most of the major services, such as education, were provided by the second tier metropolitan district councils. In the rest of England and Wales, except in London, education was provided by the county councils (Bush and Kogan, 1982, p.16).

In 1972, many education officers lost their jobs, were demoted, found other posts or were forced to re-apply for their jobs with no guarantee of being appointed (Bush, Kogan and Lenney, 1989, p.13). This underlines the tensions there have been between economies of scale and understanding and meeting the needs of local communities. It also served as a warning to those involved in reorganisation in Peterborough.

The reorganisation also tended to make the new LEAs more political, that is more responsive to the views and expectations of their local communities. According to Bush and Kogan (1982, p.16) this was:

> '...especially true of formerly "non-political" county authorities. There were a number of issues concerning councillors. In some areas, councillors remained

loyal to their local areas. The majority had been councillors in their previous authorities and had emotional attachments to the old councils' (1982, p.16).

This was expected to be an important issue with the creation of unitary authorities. They were intended to be more responsive to the needs and views of the local community. Also, the new councils would be made up of members who were from the old county council, the district council or were completely new to the role of member.

The Maud Report (1970) suggested a minimum total population size for a LEA to be around 250,000 in order to fund schools adequately. However, such large LEAs made centralised decision making remote from schools (Bush and Kogan, 1982, p.17). It was often believed, after reorganisation, that it had not been to the advantage of education (Bush and Kogan, 1982, pp.16-17).

ILEA

The abolition of the Inner London Education Authority was, again, some time ago. However, the early experiences of the inner London Boroughs highlighted two particular difficulties that were to be often serious concerns for unitary authorities elsewhere. Firstly, the London boroughs found that it was difficult to co-operate – their councils and their communities were often very different from their neighbours. 'Civic pride' led them to try to provide all services individually. Secondly, the London LEAs also found that their budgets soon came under serious pressure with ever-increasing demands (Baker, 1993, p.227).

When ILEA was split up into 13 separate authorities it was found that: '...the new authorities found co-operation quite tricky. In the event, a lot of co-operation arrangements did not last very long: authorities decided to provide services themselves with all the dis-economies which that involved' (Fletcher, 1996, p.45). This lack of co-operation was a warning for future unitary authorities that, as small LEAs, were likely to be faced with limited budgets and pressure to show themselves as an improvement on the old county LEAs.

Wales

In 1995 many of the large Welsh counties were being divided up into local unitary authorities. The Welsh experience mirrored important issues that were to confront Peterborough.

The original sense of partnership between the schools and the LEA was often a shadow of what it had been. Even in 1991, LEAs had seen their work change from looking at every activity in some detail to concentrating on general issues of policy and strategic planning (Brown and Baker, 1991, p.31). However, some schools continued to fear that the new Welsh unitary authorities might replace their previous semi-autonomy with a centralist approach by the LEA (Fletcher, 1996, p.3).

Funding was also a concern. The schools were unsure about how a new LEA would allocate the LMS budget. Schools had been used to the LEA top-slicing the education budget by 10%. They had little certainty about how the unitary authority was going to behave and whether the small authorities had the economies of scale to be able to operate on 10% of the budget (Fletcher, 1996, p.3).

The new unitary authority based on Aberconwy and Colwyn indicated some of the decisions that had to be made in setting up a new education department. Initially, there was a feeling of freedom and independence from control by a larger authority. Yet at the same time there was a fear of 'unknown territory' ahead (Fletcher, 1996, p.46).

Concerns were expressed on all sides that there should be adequate funding which would at least match previous county levels. The worry was over the LMS formula, particularly because the Gwynedd and Clwyd LMS schemes were different and reflected the individual authority's priorities. The schools, which previously had been either in Gwynedd or Clwyd but were to be in the new unitary authority, did not know how the new formula was going to affect local priorities and plans.

There was an anxiety that a unitary authority would wish to provide all the services and largely reject any cross-border joint agreements. Headteachers were concerned that the LEA would not be able to provide all the services, would top-slice too much money from school budgets and, in order to protect their finances, the schools would begin to opt for grant maintained status (Humphries, 1995, p.12).

Headteachers would support the re-organisation provided the LEA would acknowledge the following conditions:

- Services would be delivered by experts.
- A wide range of services would be provided.
- The services provided must be flexible and quick to respond to new challenges.

- There should be some stability in the staffing of the service providers (Fletcher, 1996, p.3)

Fletcher found that this situation gave the secondary schools the freedom to: '... bring in the best educational advice and support for their teaching staff from anywhere in the United Kingdom' (Fletcher, 1996, p.47). Yet at the same time, it allowed the secondary schools to continue cost effective service level agreements with the LEA in areas such as school transport and insurance (Fletcher, 1996, p.50).

Scotland

The re-organisation of Scottish local government was implemented in 1996 (Black, 1996, p5). The new structure of Scottish local government was one where the number of councils had been reduced from 9 regions, 53 districts and 3 island councils to 32 councils. The new mainland councils ranged in size from Clackmannanshire with a population of 48,820 and a budget of £15.502 million to Glasgow, with a population of 618,430 and a budget of £839.023 million in 1996/7 (Black, 1996, p.44).

The new councils were criticised in two ways. Although some councils were similar in size to the old regional councils, others were much smaller. For example, seven had populations under 100,000 and these were expected not to be able to provide the same level of service as the larger councils (Black, 1996, p.8). In order to overcome this problem 'joint boards' were created for the police, fire service, valuation, bridges and passenger transport (Black, 1996, p.46). However, these 'joint boards' were seen to re-introduce a second tier back into local government. As a result future joint developments in areas such as education were unlikely (Black, 1996, p.47). This was to be a serious concern in

Peterborough. The population of the city was 150,000 and the relatively small size gave rise to concern over the economies of scale. Some commentators suggested joint services which would be shared with other authorities but, as in Scotland, few detailed proposals were being suggested.

Also, there was evidence that the creation of the new councils did not bring about significant change. Many suspected that the new councils were the product of party politics and other vested interests (Black, 1995, p16). In the re-organisation, local government reform was to focus on reforming structures. In practice, structural change was limited (Leach, 1994, p.71). Certainly, there was no central government advice to guide the new councils towards new internal organisational arrangements (Black, 1996, p.8).

The LEAs were to increase their power and influence (MacKenzie, 1995, p.9). For example:

> 'Alexander, Professor at the University of Strathclyde, at the Glasgow University Education Colloquium clearly expressed views that in the new authorities political muscle was re-asserting itself. After all, the new Local Government reforms, in spite of some geographical changes, essentially were a return to the physical "square one" of the 1960s where power lay with the cities and the counties' (MacKenzie, 1995, p.9).

MacKenzie commented that '...the old political culture did not disappear with regionalisation and now the political bosses are in the mood to reclaim their inheritance.

This may be no bad thing in a democracy but it may make "a culture of aggregation" a pipe dream and a perceived nuisance' (MacKenzie, 1995, p.9).

York

York was in a position that was similar to that of Peterborough and problems over the share of the old county budget was common to both new unitary authorities. York moved from the control of a large county council to city government. A serious concern was that the division of the budget between county and city should be fair and realistic. In the event the eventual decision had to be referred to the Department of the Environment for a final ruling. This was one of the few documented times when central government directly intervened in a local government review (Fletcher, 1996, p.9).

The old county LEA, North Yorkshire County Council, had made much of the fact that it funded education by 6% over the SSA. If that had been the case across the county then York should have received £52.6 million in 1995/6, according to the City Council (York City Council, 1996, p.5).

In York's view the provisional budget should have been £52.4 million. North Yorkshire's view was that it should be £49.9million. There was no agreement on this point and the issue was referred to the Department of the Environment for a decision.

The Department of the Environment had several criteria on which to base its decision:

- By agreement.
- By reference to evidence.
- By formula.

As there was no agreement between the county and the city the Department of the Environment looked to the evidence that was available. In this case all the evidence was in North Yorkshire's hands and the DoE had no other recourse but to accept their argument and agreed to a budget of £49.9 million (York City Council, 1996, p.5).

The mission statement, aims and objectives of the new LEA had to be decided. This process raised a fundamental issue: was the LEA to be an 'enabling' or a 'providing' authority? An enabling authority would follow policies which would encourage other bodies, private, public and voluntary to provide services which were once provided by local authorities. By the mid-1990s it was becoming clear that central government favoured this approach. Legislation supported it and local income generation was restricted. A providing authority would seek to provide as many services as possible to its area. However, such councils were finding that it was increasingly difficult to fund such an approach. Despite expectations of the new Labour government funds were not made available to support providing authorities.

For York, the starting point was in the council mission statement:

> 'In creating a future for York that respects and builds upon its unique traditions and heritage, the Council will work with and for the people of York to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to lead a full, healthy and satisfying life' (York City Council, 1996, p3).

There was a clear sense of direction and one that included values which encouraged the delegation of decision making. The education department produced a 'reflective' mission statement for their own work:

> 'We believe that people are our most valuable resource. Everybody is entitled to an education of the highest possible standard; one which promotes life-long learning, enhances the quality of life and contributes to the social, economic and cultural growth of our community' (York City Council, 1996, p.3).

This mission statement led to the setting up of an education department, the appointment of key personnel and the development of a structure to fit the proposed budget. It also set the culture of the department. The education department was to be different from other local government departments in that it had a very wide range of responsibilities that affected a large percentage of the area's population, a devolved pattern of management and a dedicated legislative framework.

It was likely that the new LEA would come under pressure from central government to raise standards in the schools. York LEA responded by giving their advisors responsibility for elements of the education development plan. However, school based initiatives, such as the Primary Planner Record of Achievement, were organised by teachers and consultants. With such developments York was one of the few LEAs found by Ofsted to have had a marked effect on school improvement (Bucket, 2000, p12).

Cleveland 1995-1996

This was a different process to that applied to Peterborough. In Cleveland the whole county was to be divided up into unitary authorities. An important aspect of this

reorganisation was that the county council managed a well-organised transfer of power. Members, officers and schools were made part of a coherent process of transferring power and responsibilities. This was very different to that which occurred in Peterborough. Also, this was the only recorded case when officials of the DfEE played any sort of advisory role in the setting up of a new unitary authority education department (Worthy, 1996, p.10). There is no record why DfEE officials were involved but it was noteworthy because this was the only time they appear to have been involved.

The Chief Education Officer of Cleveland tried to implement the change in local educational administration in five stages. The old county and the proposed LEAs were free to negotiate the transfer of responsibilities. At first, Cleveland set up an 'Awareness and Information' stage where there was an audit of all policies, practices and statutory procedures (Worthy, 1996, p.10).

There was only limited outside support. The CEO of Cleveland remarked that:

> 'Over the months we have received advice and guidance and on occasion visits from the DfEE officials. We have of course been grateful for such interest, although in reality many of the issues and problems upon which guidance and advice has been offered had already been discussed and in most instances possible solutions identified if not agreed... ' (Worthy, 1996, p.10).

At this point 'shadow' LEAs were established and began to make decisions in principle (Worthy, 1996, p.10). By 1996, the shadow unitary borough councils had agreed to continue many existing policies, set up new LMS schemes and appointed CEOs (Worthy,

1996 p.11). The final stage was to involve discussions over accommodation, training and the final handover procedures (Worthy, 1996, p.10).

'First Phase' unitary authorities

Perhaps the best comparisons between Peterborough's process of setting up a new LEA was with the other new unitary authorities. In the early, or 'First Phase' unitary authorities, early plans and reports were published which looked at the initial issues for the new unitary authorities (Graveson, 1996, p1). These were important because, although they looked at different structures, there was a similarity of purpose. In practice, there was little else to guide or support the unitary authorities in the first year or so of their existence. Dawkins (1990) was able to show that LEAs rejected a minimalist role and shared a considerable degree of commonality in their administrative structures. They tended to agree on the main aims and objectives for future development. With the setting up of the new authorities, a recognised development was that councils were seen to support a wider corporate structure. One affect of this was a general encouragement of merged council departments (p.5).

Two publications were able to define the broad areas within which local councils took account of the demands of government legislation. These would be influential for the setting up process because they were published and available at the beginning of the decision-making. Following the work of the Local Government Management Board (1993), the consultants KPMG found that there were four basic parameters for local government reorganisation:

1. The Functional Approach, where service provision was paramount.

2. A Commercial Approach, where competition and value for money for the provision of services were pre-eminent.
3. A Community Governance Approach, in which overall strategic objectives for the council area were realised through co-ordination of services and local representation.
4. An Area or Neighbourhood Approach, in which the importance of local participation was signified by budgets devolved to neighbourhoods (KPMG, 1994, p.10).

This is a very difficult area with significant tensions between them. The Functional and Commercial approaches appear most common in the structures of the new uniformity. In practice there appeared to be little debate involved. Political parties did tend to have a preference but this was too general to make a statement. Time was too short to debate overall parameters. Central government funding directed decisions and previous experience also tended to support a pragmatic and cautious approach. Few councils concentrated on just one of these approaches and Hendy (1999) found that most unitary councils opted for an inclusive approach (p.5).

A basic organisational structure which would include all four parameters would perhaps be made up of:

- Personal and Welfare, which could comprise Education, Housing, Community Services and Social Services
- Environment Services, comprising of Contract Services and Environmental Services
- Corporate Services, to be made up of Legal and Administration, Financial, Central Services and Personnel (Peterborough City Council, 1998, p.6).

Within this type of structure each council could have a variety of departments. The number of departments varied and there tended to be no relation to the size of the council (Hendy, 1999, pp.8-9). Variations tended to be due to councillors' and officers' perceptions of local demands (Graveson, 1996, p.5). It would be interesting to note that despite discussion this did not occur in Peterborough and the decision making process involved will be discussed later in another chapter.

The new unitary councils had little time to prepare before they became fully operational. There was limited guidance available. For example, Wallace (1999) found that implementation of reorganisation was considered to be a LEA responsibility monitored by central government only through the LEA's applications for capital borrowings (p.9).

Later, Wallace and Pocklington (1998) were able to recognise a programme of three stages:

- Drafting the LEAs formative proposals
- Consultation with interested groups
- Implementation (p.230).

The structure and organisation of the new unitary authorities were to become important issues. In particular they were to reflect contemporary ideas and priorities. Certainly, Milton Keynes was moving towards 'themed' discussions where the public could take part to replace the traditional full council meeting (Peterborough City Council, 8th January, 1998). Unitary authorities had the opportunity to develop a wider corporate structure and many merged traditional council departments such as education with larger departments such as environment and welfare (Whitbourn, 2000, p.5). In this situation there was an

emphasis on the provision of a wide range of services, which were to be co-ordinated and guided by increased local representation (KPMG, 1994, p.10).

As part of this structural approach the resources of the council were to be dedicated to the point of delivery. A flat organisational structure was proposed to ensure that the providers provided services directly to the client. There was also to be a strong emphasis on strategic planning and quality control. New technology was to be used to monitor and analyse services and they were to be supported by central government initiatives such as national curriculum tests and Ofsted inspections (KPMG, 1994, p.10).

It was expected that there were to be a relatively large number of elements around which the education service would be organised. These elements would include:

- The core duties and responsibilities as laid down in legislation.
- The provision or organisation of services.
- Ensuring the quality of planning provision and resourcing.
- Providing services through agents and employees away from the immediate control of the council (Graveson, 1996, p.9).

Organisational structure can be of several different kinds: strategic, implementation, task and role focused which reflect the importance of various elements within a department. For example, at one level there are terms such as strategic, policy, quality and operations. At another level there are more precise terms which describe an identifiable function such as finance, SEN and personnel. A third level tends to include specific posts such as chief inspector and principal educational psychologist (Graveson, 1996, p.10).

In local government departments there has been a dramatic reduction in staff numbers (Lee and Scanlon, 1999, p.6). This was seen clearly in education where some departments swept away whole sections such as the advisory team in Cambridgeshire (Hendy, 1997, p.10). One reason for this trend was to reposition a higher proportion of resources to the point of delivery. A reduction in the layers of management and the number of posts within each layer were aspects of this process.

A further aspect was the identification of client and provider and the development of a culture of responsibility and accountability. In a flat organisational structure many more post holders had the final responsibility for a particular service delivery to specific clients. They also tended to report directly to the director of education rather than to intermediate level officers (Graveson, 1996, p.10).

By 1996 it was also clear that central government was making a growing commitment to 'raising standards' in the schools (Ainscow, 2000, p.1). Previous legislation during the 1980s, such as the Education Reform Act, 1988, had significantly changed the role of the LEA from that of 'rowing' to 'steering'. The legislation had become increasingly:

- Prescriptive, such as the introduction of the National Curriculum and national testing.
- Decentralising, where developments such as LMS gave increasing powers to school governors.
- Competition, generated by grant maintained schools and school 'league tables' of examination results.
- Privatisation, where services to schools such as catering and cleaning were open to competitive tendering.

A year later, the government white paper 'Excellence in Schools' stated,

> 'The role of the LEA is not to control schools but to challenge all schools to improve and support those which need help to raise standards' (1997, p.67).

These notions of 'challenge', 'support' and 'need' created a tension for the schools and the LEA between autonomy and intervention. LEAs could be accused of meddling with schools yet when the schools got into trouble they would be criticised for not becoming involved enough (Bucket, 2000, p.12). Schools were responsible for raising standards and LEAs for 'failing' schools. Local problems could be solved by collaboration between schools and the LEA but central government still controlled the national agenda.

The new Labour government wanted to improve standards in schools. Four major policy documents were published which provided the overall context within which LEAs operate. Educational development plans were to include the LEA's proposals for approval by the Secretary of State. They had to set out their performance targets, a school improvement programme and supporting information. The 'Code of Practice on LEA-School Relations' set out in detail the powers and responsibilities of the LEA in relation to schools. It stated that a LEA had to intervene when a school was found to have serious weaknesses or placed in special measures by Ofsted. 'Fair Funding' required funding to schools to be 'transparent' and in line with the accepted duties of schools. LEAs were allowed to retain some funding to encourage school improvement. The 'Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities' defined the basis on which the LEA was to be assessed.

In this way central government determined what LEAs were to address, how they were to operate, how the process was to be funded and how it was to be monitored and assessed.

What was becoming clear was that national policy was an increasingly important factor in the operation of LEAs and the competing needs and demands between the local area and national priorities might develop into a significant area of tension (Farrell and Law, 1999, p.296).

At this point a wide and detailed collection of data from secondary sources has been collected. This has been able to locate the case study within its general context. There has been an appreciation of historical events, especially from the 1980s and 1990s that emphasise the changes in organisational practice. It will be possible to see the experience of Peterborough in a clearer way when the historical context is used as a comparison. It is unlikely that the experience of the city would be very different from the experience of the majority of local authorities. Secondly, there has also been a full review of the experiences of change to unitary authority status. There was a significant lack of sources at the beginning of the case study but recent work has filled some of the gaps. From this basis it was possible to locate areas of interest to focus on and discover the situation in Peterborough.

The review of local government reform and re-organisation provided a broad context to the development of the case study. Despite some difficulties concerning the availability of secondary sources it was possible to focus specifically on education departments and the general experience of local government where relevant to an education department. The experiences of London, Wales and Scotland together with 'First Phase' unitary authorities presented an often detailed account of what influences might affect the new education department. From this data it would be possible to find events and trends which might be experienced by Peterborough LEA. This would 'ground' Peterborough's experience into a

general context but would also provide comparisons to the decisions made by Peterborough City Council.

Chapter 3

Models of Organisational Change

To come to an understanding of the process of change in educational organisation there is a need to identify a number of organisational theories. The interpretation of the research findings will draw on a number of conceptual models of decision-making. These are reviewed and appropriate model or models will then be used to test the decision-making process, or processes and explain how LEA re-organisation in Peterborough came about.

This section will review general theories that explain how decisions are taken in organisations. Greenaway (1992) stated that theories help make sense of the empirical data that is available. They also present a variety of different perspectives of the same story (p.15). However, it should be remembered that all theories are abstractions and they are often unsatisfactory when they are set against the complexity of events. Also, empirical examples are not sufficient to provide a base for a theory. They can only point out problems or necessary modifications.

Implementation, non-decisions and power

In this case study there is not one defined group of policy makers. Instead policy is made by national government, local government collectively and local government officers. In all cases implementation of the policy is a crucial point.

Ham and Hill (1994) emphasised that research has concentrated on policy formation and had left policy implementation largely alone (p.97). However, when a decision was not controversial it did not necessarily follow that it would be fully implemented. The implication of that was that it was not sufficient to review how decisions were made but it was necessary also to look at how the decision was implemented.

However, there was a danger of stressing the differences between policy making and implementation. There could have been a tendency to see policy making as a 'clear cut' process where implementation might have been studied separately. This could have caused problems when implementation may have included an element of the views of the policy maker. This then led from a 'top-down' implementation view to an alternative 'bottom-up' approach (Ham and Hill, 1994, pp. 97-98).

Another key consideration that related to the link between politics and society was the issue of power (Lawton and Rose, 1994, p.129). Accounts of decision making concentrated on observable conflict and debate. Ham and Hill (1994) identified large companies, government and political parties as powerful institutional bodies (p.32).

However, this focus may have only been partial. Dahl (1961) looked at political activity rather than concentrating on power reputations. This interpretation can be applied much more successfully in local government. Here powerful individuals and their actions were often very visible. Dahl argued that it was possible to identify powerful people by recognising who had won the decision-making debates. This was a simplistic view because it failed to take into account the way the agenda was set, the objectives of the competing individuals and the resources available (Greenaway, 1992, pp.37-38).

Equally useful in studying decision making in local government were Bachrach and Baratz (1963) who saw that concentrating on whom won the debate ignored who actually set the agenda. In local government officers are often able to develop policy and put forward a monthly agenda. Members are often not available for activities except strategic policy. In this way individuals are able to manipulate agendum and meetings.

Bachrach and Baratz argued that power could be used to control the political agenda and channel debate into the desired areas. Failure to take up an issue could have been just as important as an issue that would be debated (p.642). Therefore, if a researcher limited their attention to decision making they would only get a partial understanding of events. Only when the areas which were not debated are reviewed can a full picture be constructed. Lukes (1974) developed this conceptual framework and stated that political activity was not only limited to experiences of observable conflict or non-decision making. He maintained that power should be studied in three dimensions. His first dimension was the pluralist approach, where conflict over an issue between individuals was visible. The second was the exercise of power which occurred in conflicts over an issue. However, Lukes recognised a third aspect of power, a latent conflict, whereby the nature of society created a 'climate' that prevented a particular issue from being debated (1974, p.26-27).

This was so important in local government where the needs of a city had to be balanced with the policies of national government. In a number of areas, services came under a great pressure. However, the question was always asked: 'Why are services not being provided?'. Rarely was the question asked about why those services were needed. This model would identify problems within the local area and how they were to be solved.

In collecting the data for this case study it became clear that there were aspects of the setting up of the decision making process which appeared to be difficult to discover. The appointment of senior officers appeared to be sudden and without member discussion. Few decisions were subject to a committee or a Full Council vote. It became clear that some form of decision-making progress was in action but it was hidden. In this situation it becomes important to look at the work of Bachrach and Baratz in some detail. Their work in particular may well be able to supply a model with which to test the decision making process in the education department.

Bachrach and Baratz

Bachrach and Baratz recognised the lack of a general universal theory. 'We have no general theory, no broad-gauge model in terms of which widely different case studies can be systematically compared and contrasted' (1963, p.632). Between 1962 and 1963 they were able to put forward a general model of decision-making which looked at the nature of power, how decisions and non-decisions were part of the overall process. This model could then be used to test specific case studies and discover how decisions are made.

There has been some considerable debate concerning where power lies in a particular community. Some sociologists suggested that power was often highly centralised. Other political commentators see power as being diffused throughout the community (1962 p.947).

Bachrach and Baratz rejected the 'elitist' approach which equated expected power with real power (1962, p.947). Instead they supported the 'pluralist' approach which stated that

power is the 'participation in decision-making' and can be analysed only after careful examination of a series of concrete decisions'. (1962, p.948)

The pluralist approach was concerned not with the reputedly powerful but:

a. Select for study a number of key as opposed to routine political decisions.
b. Identify the people who took an active part in the decision-making process.
c. Obtain a full account of their actual behavior while the policy conflict was being resolved.
d. Determine and analyse the specific outcomes of the conflict (1962, p.948).

However, the disadvantages of a pluralist approach were significant:

1. The model took no account of the fact that power may be, and often was, exercised by confining the scope of decision-making to relatively safe issues.
2. The model provided no objective criteria for distinguishing between important and unimportant issues that arose in the political arena (1962, p.948).

Bachrach and Baratz stated that no one could be certain, in any given situation, that the unmeasurable elements were inconsequential and were not of decisive importance. If that was the case, then power could not be actually embodied in concrete and necessarily have identifiable outcomes (Bachrach and Baratz, p.948). For example, 'A person or group - consciously or unconsciously – created or reinforced barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts, that person or group had power' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962, p.949).

They saw that power was exercised when one decision made by one person affected another person. However, the decision maker might also have influenced social and political views and organisational practices. That would have limited the scope of issues to safe areas and that would safeguard the decision maker's position (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962, p.948).

It was also difficult to decide on which decisions were significant and could be tested. There may have well been no agreement as to what the important issues were or even whether there were any (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962, p.949). Bachrach and Baratz said that it was not enough to define a critical issue until there were likely to be at least two preferences over the possible outcome (1962 p.950). There needed to be the mobilisation of bias-to recognise the dominant values and political myths of the institutions, the vested interests. Armed with that knowledge it might be possible to define significant issues (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962, p.950).

Bachrach and Baratz called for the study of power to recognise the 'two faces of power'. The researcher will not ask the elitist question 'Who rules?' or the pluralist question 'Does anyone have power?' The researcher should investigate the mobilisation of bias in the organisations under study. By analysing the dominant values, myths, procedures and rules, the researcher would make a careful inquiry into the individuals and groups who might have gained from the existing bias and those individuals and groups that would have suffered from it.

Next, there would be an examination of non-decision making; whereby individuals and groups seek to limit the scope of decision making to safe issues.

Finally, with the knowledge concerning the restrictive face of power as a foundation for analysis and as a standard for distinguishing between routine and key decision making, the researcher could begin to analyse participation in decision making of concrete issues (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962, p.952).

However, the significant problem remained in that such an approach went beyond that which was immediately objectively measurable. Bachrach and Baratz accepted the criticism but they still believed that unmeasurable aspects could be as 'real' as a measurable element (1962, p.952). This model emphasised the need to recognise the unmeasurable. This would be a valuable approach in a later chapter. However, there were real misgivings about adopting a model with serious weaknesses.

In 1963 Bachrach and Baratz stated that decision-making was brought about by the combination of:

1. Power-relational, conflict of values, threat of sanctions.
2. Authority- relational, possible conflict of values, no severe sanctions.
3. Influence-relational, demand rationally perceived, conflict of values, no severe sanctions.
4. Manipulation- non-relational, non-rational, no conflict of vales, no sanctions.
5. Force-relational to non-relational, application of severe sanctions (1963, p.640).

In stating these five factors, they recognised that there were few accepted definitions. For example, Bachrach and Baratz stated that there was little agreement over terms such as

power and are confused with other concepts. Power and influence were used interchangeably and force and authority ignored (1963, p.632).

They recognised that researchers had often assumed that power was observable in decision making processes but that they had over looked non-decision making (1963, p.632). Decision makers were also subjected to a variety of often unmeasurable influences. 'A variety of complex factors affect decision-making - the social, cultural, economic and political backgrounds of the individuals' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1963, p.632).

In this complex situation, Bachrach and Baratz said that to say one person has power is unacceptable for three reasons:

1. It failed to distinguish between power over people and power over matter.
2. The view that a person's power was measured by the total number of desires that he achieved is erroneous. One cannot have power in a vacuum-but only in relation to someone else.
3. The possession of the tools of power did not mean that person is in possession of power (1963, p.633).

They also saw that 'force' was an important factor of power, for example, 'Force is manifest power' (1963, p.635). That the availability of sanctions - reward or penalty - was a necessary condition of power. By itself force was not sufficient to have power (1963, p.634).

Instead, Bachrach and Baratz suggested that power was:

1. There is a conflict over values or courses of action between A and B.
2. B complies with A's wishes.
3. He does so because he is fearful that A will deprive him of a value or values which he, B, regards more highly than those which would have been achieved by non-compliance (1963, p.635).

However, for Bachrach and Baratz the 'rule of anticipated reactions' meant that though B accedes to A's demands, A tailored their demands in the light of B's likely reactions (1963, p.635).

In that way Bachrach and Baratz were able to distinguish between power and force:

> '....the difference between power and force is simply that in a power relationship one party obtains another's compliance, while in a situation involving force one's objectives must be achieved, if at all, in the face of non-compliance'(1963, p.636).

In other words: 'Where power is being exercised, the individual still retains this choice' (1963, p.636). However, force may not be relational. Here the compliance maybe forthcoming in the absence of recognition on the compiler's part, either of the source or the exact nature of the demand upon him (1963, p.636).

Force and manipulation, like power, involved a conflict of values, but unlike power, they are non-rational and tended to be non-relational (Bachrach and Baratz, 1963, p.636). 'One person has influence over another within a given scope to the extent that the first, without resorting to either a tacit or an overt threat of severe deprivations, causes the second to change his course of action. Thus, power and influence are alike in that each has both

rational and relational attributes. But they are different in that the exercise of power depends upon potential sanctions' (1963, p.637).

In a humane society authority could perform a valuable function of limiting the behaviour of people in official positions to legitimate acts for their actions must be justified by reasoned explanation.

Bachrach and Baratz believed that decisions were not just brought about by the exercise of power. They were brought about partly by force, influence and /or authority. Every social decision involves interaction between individuals and at least one person's compliance must be obtained. For example, '... a decision is a set of actions related to and including the choice of one alternative rather than another' (1963, p.639).

In this way Bachrach and Baratz presented a broader, conceptual frame within which it may be easier to compare the factors underlying different decisions in different circumstances (1963 p.641).

However, developing their earlier work Bachrach and Baratz were also able to look at the area of non-decision making. 'When the dominant values, the accepted rules of the game, the existing power relations among groups, and the instruments of force, singly or in combination, effectively prevent certain grievances from developing into full-fledged issues which call for decisions, it can be said that a non-decision making situation exists' (1963, p.641).

Although, Bachrach and Baratz believed that it was true that a nondecision was not visible to the naked eye, a latent issue was discernible and so it is the mobilisation of bias. Thus it can be said that the nondecision-making process (the impact of the mobilisation of bias upon a latent issue), in distinction to a nondecision, is indeed subject to observation and analysis' (1963, p.641).

In those instances when a latent issue, usually kept submerged, was successfully pushed forward and emerges as a public issue, it was likely that the mobilisation of bias would be directly and consciously employed against those who demanded a redress of grievances by the decision-making organ (1963, p.642).

Sabatier's political change model

Theoretical models were not necessarily in competition with each other. In many cases they aim to explain different aspects of an issue (Ham and Hill, 1994, pp.110-111). Sabatier's model was an empirical model that concentrated on political change. Here, he attempted to integrate theories and create a comprehensive model that linked explanations of policy making involving values and beliefs, with those that were based in bureaucratic or institutional models (Greenaway, 1992, p.39).

This model appeared to be ideal in looking at the whole decision making process in Peterborough as a whole. Whereas other models specialised in certain areas such as objective and rational decision making and others accepted the increased influence of beliefs, values and emotional likes and dislikes, Sabatier attempted a generalised model which would take into account the overall decision making structure within an organisation of a council. Here, there would be members, officers and other vested

interests involved. Many would accept a rational decision making process but this would be affected by numerous claims, views, pressures and needs.

Sabatier (1987) developed the idea of the 'policy subsystem'. These subsystems not only included committees, pressure groups and administrative agencies but they also included journalists, researchers and policy analysts who disseminated and evaluated policy decisions. The fluidity of these subsystems was seen to have reflected realistically the political world (pp.681-2). This is critical to the analysis within the case study and will show how the 'climate' of the local authority was critical in the way the LEA was set up.

Within each subsystem Sabatier identified a variety of competing groups. These people may have been distributed throughout an organisation but they shared common ideas and beliefs. Also, there may have been a number of 'policy brokers' who wished to minimise conflict for administrative convenience (Greenaway, 1992, p.40).

The concept of advocacy coalitions had a number of strengths. It accepted that individuals move between organisations and that there were variations of an individual's behaviour in different areas of the same organisation. Also, it provided a framework to analyse the dynamics of change in policy over a period of time.

However, advocacy coalitions operated within the confines of a common ideological framework. Individuals involved would have tried to encourage others to adopt this framework. Sabatier suggested that there are three levels of belief:

1. Deep core beliefs, e.g. religion. These would be very resistant to change.
2. Basic political values and strategies relating to policy.

3. Application of policy in specific areas. These would be much easier to change (Greenaway, 1992, p.41).

Within the dynamics of policy change the individuals involved might be constrained by two forces. The first force included aspects such as the availability of natural resources, the nature of the problem area and cultural values. These forces would usually only change slowly. The second force were more dynamic factors which would change quickly and often. These included economic, social and technological changes.

To explain the dynamics of policy change and the role of decision makers Sabatier saw that individuals and small groups of specialists would have learnt from a complex interaction between themselves within one policy area. Here policy makers evaluated social research through their own frameworks of reality and fitted the evidence to their beliefs.

Drawing all these threads together Sabatier stated that:

- In a policy subsystem there would be a limited number of competing advocacy coalitions. In major debates, involving core beliefs, the competing groups would be largely stable.
- Policy brokers would attempt to mediate between the advocacy coalitions and to implement detailed decisions. However, at any one time, there was likely to be one dominant advocacy coalition. Core attributes to the policy were unlikely to be changed. Usually, it would be external forces that would weaken core beliefs or undermine the advocacy coalition.

- Those coalitions advocating minority positions had a significant influence on the non-core levels of policy. Such minority groups often had the opportunity to 'out learn' their rivals and allowed them to make substantial changes to all levels of policy (Greenaway, 1992, p.42).

There were a number of qualifications to be made by other writers to Sabatier's model. The idea of concept-learning was most appropriate in scientific fields where performance indicators were quantitative and where competing advocacy coalitions might have found common ground for debate. In the social sciences there might be difficulties. The argument would be about areas where intentions are clear and outcomes being clearly measured. Controlled experiments could be difficult to set up and areas of study would be broader and subject to sudden change caused by outside events. The fluidity of advocacy coalitions could have been a problem (Lawton and Rose, 1994, p.43).

No general theory of decision making was seen to be so accurate as to be able to explain behaviour in all political contexts. General theories might have to be intertwined with more specialised theories relating to specific contexts. However, the choice of approach would depend on the issue, the policy process and a value choice.

Applying organisational models to new local government structure

Change may have appeared to be an ad hoc process with decisions being influenced by practical necessities and the pressure for a successful outcome. Management was seen as a pragmatic activity involving the deciding of aims, allocation of resources and the evaluation of success and failures (Graveson, 1996, p.5).

Dearden (1984) suggested that few managers in education purposefully adopt organisational theories as part of their management style with any great enthusiasm (pp.3-4). Lawton and Rose (1994) recognised that public sector organisations took decisions in turbulent environments and decision makers did not often have the opportunity to reflect on organisational theories (p.133).

However, few writers suggested that one model was sufficient. Baldridge commented: '...no one model can delineate the intricacies of decision processes in complex organisations...' (Baldridge, 1978, p.28). Wallace (1999) said that, 'Any quest for one best theory to explain the social world is probably futile' (p.129). Each model can provide important insights into the process of change but they will not provide a complete picture. If they are taken together they may well provide a reasonable and comprehensive view of the nature of change.

The setting up of a new education authority was a developmental process rather than an innovatory reform. Indeed, this situation became part of the problem in Peterborough. Everyone 'knew' what an LEA was. There were many LEAs already and most of the staff came from LEAs. There was a full body of legislative requirements and in-depth experience from officers and members.

At the same time, the traditions of local government and its expectation, expertise and experience pointed to a broad direction of development. It would have been an exceptional local authority that would try to set up new forms of organisational structure. It would be likely that its development and structure would broadly follow professional norms.

These aspects could be distilled into an appreciation of the culture of an organisation. Schein (1987) stated that organisational culture is concerned with:

> ' ...basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organisation, that operate unconsciously, and that define in a basic "taken-for-granted" fashion an organization's view of itself and its environment. These assumptions and beliefs are learned responses to a group's problems of survival in its external environment and its problems of internal integration' (p6).

Lawton and Rose (1994) stated that the culture of an organisation may:

- Specify the goals and objectives of the organisation.
- Specify the relations that exist in the organisation.
- Specify the qualities are valued in the organisation (p.68).

Public service organisations can be seen to be based on a role culture, where there was a stress on formal rules and roles or on a task culture, which was job orientated and concerned about utilising resources to meet a required objective. One of the problems later in the case study was that there this role culture was still supported in Peterborough City Council and the concept of a task culture largely rejected.

However, in local government, it was also possible to see cultural organisational types such as:

- Political, involving power relationships between members and officers, members and members and officers and officers.
- Administrative, with a concern for rules and roles.
- Legal, where work is governed by statute.

- Market, where public services are exposed to market forces through devices such as internal markets, compulsory competitive tendering or 'best value' (Lawton and Rose, 1994, p.71).

Local government had a number of traditions and practices that made change difficult. This had been shown when local government officers, who are used to working with statutes, had to suddenly deal with market forces. Also, there can be difficulties when cultures clash. At times, it has been difficult when local government officers have had to work with people from business. The tight operating and financial practices of the public sector can seem restrictive when compared to commercial business operations.

However, bargaining indicated that priorities can alter if change was agreed upon. In this political model it might have been difficult to ensure that the process of change produced the desired results. There was nothing permanent about the outcome and events and personalities could had overturned any decision. Also, because the different groups held different ideas and views of the institution as a whole, there could have been varying degrees of instability. This was seen when the local voters elect one particular political party and policies can be changed quickly.

Baldridge's (1971) 'legislative stage' begins where interests and ideas are turned into practical policies. This will involve a process of claims, proposals and negotiations and compromises. This can be a complex and often far from transparent process. The initial proposal may well be presented by officers, members or external bodies. The proposal itself will have gone through a process of negotiations to get to the initiation stage itself. For example, officers may compete to get their particular interest rated as a high priority.

External bodies can be prepared to offer a variety of support and encouragement for their ideas to be considered. Members will have a number of priorities that they will have decided to support (p.24).

The rational actor model

The central aspect of this normative theory are the actions of the policy maker who assesses the means available to achieve a desired objective. This is 'rational' in that the policy maker seeks to link the 'ends' and the 'means'. Downs (1957) stated that a rational person should be able to:

- Make a decision when faced with a range of alternatives;
- Rank order those alternatives in order of preference;
- Final choices are from the highest ranking alternatives; and
- The same decision should be made every time if the alternatives are the same (p.6).

However, Downs (1957) did suggest that rationality referred to the process and not to the ends or even to their success at reaching the desired ends (p.6).

Drucker (1974) listed four steps in rational decision making:

1. Define the problem.
2. Analyze the problem.
3. Develop alternative solutions.
4. Convert decisions into effective actions (pp119-120).

Drucker's four steps show clear stages in the decision making process. Bennett (1992) stated that in an organisation, 'Goals are set and policies decided by senior staff...'(p.9).

Ranson (1994) stated that, 'Rational agency implies that an actor is able to calculate the means necessary to realize defined purposes' (p.92). Owen (1998) suggested that it '...helped the administrator to organize decision making, make it more systematic, as an alternative to intuitive, perhaps haphazard "knee-jerk responses" to the flow of events in the busy environment of organizational life' (p.256). Such a theory fitted in well with a hierarchical structure with a leader at the top (Richman and Farmer, 1974, p.28).

Bolman and Deal (1984) argued that such a hierarchical system included elements such as goal orientation, rationality in decision-making and the exercise of authority (pp.31-32). Politicians can be attracted to a theory which provides clear objectives and journalists see identifiable responsibilities and can make quick judgements. An education department is an organisation which is usually built up in a hierarchical manner, with officers holding delegated authority to pursue agreed objectives but responsible to elected members (Cox and Beck, 1984, p.47). In this situation, the rational actor model would tend to be normative as much as explanatory.

This theory was concerned with maximising utility. Hoy and Miskel (1996) stated that formal models could be utilised for organisations which '...seek to achieve their goals if they are to survive and prosper' (p.26). It also assumed that the utility is good and that all outcomes can be measured by the amount that is produced.

The rational actor approach made assumptions about the organisational process. It assumed that hierarchies were the normal way of organisation. There were chains of command and a free flow of information to all levels. Weber (1947) described the

bureaucratic structure as having a vertical relationship between the staff where each lower office was under the control and supervision of another one (p.303). The expert would be held in high esteem and the professional would be more influential than the lay person. For example, education officers have detailed knowledge of legislation and regulations that can be used to influence decision-making (Noble and Pym, 1970, p.43). The rational actor model was open to criticism on a number of grounds. Generally, such a normative approach looked at ideas and how people in organisations behaved. In this way it was 'selective' because it looked at bureaucratic and structural aspects of the organisation. Greenaway (1992) suggested three main criticisms. Firstly, the model had difficulties coping with changing ideological values. The identification of a problem was difficult because they tended to be fluid. The appreciation of these problems changed with time and as policies were implemented to deal with them (pp.20-21).

This model simplified the work of large institutions and underrated the pluralist and divided nature of the decision making process. Organisations have a number of objectives that had to be managed. Owen (1998) saw that people in organisations did not search endlessly for solutions to problems (p.257). Lawton and Rose (1994) suggested that some decision makers would not be able to assess all the possible alternatives (p.127). Another problem with this theory was that decision-making was undertaken by groups such as a committee. Bennett (1992) suggested that the organisation's goals were set by senior managers whose precise role was overall decision making (p.9). In such a situation it could not be certain that all the members of the organisation shared the same objectives, and conflicts could have broken out.

Greenaway (1992) also stated that the rational actor model could be criticised for underrating the problems over collecting and assessing relevant data (pp.20-21). The costs of data collection could be large and it is difficult to process it. Yet, this model assumed that the decision maker examined all the possible alternatives to reach the objective. In practice, information was missed out or remained unprocessed. Decisions might have been made which were based on partial information and routine or past practice.

Bounded rationality

To overcome criticisms of the rational actor model it was considered impossible for a decision maker to have all the facts at their disposal (Greenaway, 1992, p.21). It was too much to ask a decision maker to analyse all the possible consequences of every possible decision.

Individuals in a large organisation were not necessarily free to analyse ends and means. As a member of that organisation the decision maker would be influenced by that organisation's structure and goals. Hoy and Miskel (1997) saw that the individual agreed to an authority relationship with all the attached rules and regulations that were involved. (p.70) Yet, at the same time, the individual might be bounded by constraints such as personal values (Simon, 1992, p.241).

Theories of bounded rationality were different from the rational actor model in that they recognised that there was a connection between ends and means. Richman and Farmer (1974) saw human needs, emotional and psychological as influences on the individual (p.29). Simon (1992) developed this view and emphasised that decision makers were influenced by values as well as by objective analysis. It is within the centre of bounded

rationality where the decision maker had to choose between alternatives, each of which had an individual outcome. The task was to select an acceptable outcome in the face of competing demands. Therefore rationality was 'bounded' so that decisions were concerned with keeping each of the alternatives at an acceptable level. Here the notion of 'sacrificing' could be seen where decisions are accepted as adequate but not perfect. In this situation there was no interest in finding maximum outcomes, only finding acceptable ones.

Disjointed incrementalism

Simon (1976) argued that although decision makers needed to act in a rational manner the circumstances that they operated in meant that they had to be content with being 'satisficers' (Lawton and Rose, 1994, p.130). Decision makers were cautious and only small adjustments were carried out. Braybrooke and Lindblom (1963) argued that this type of decision-making was '... made day to day in ordinary political circumstances by congressmen, executives, administrators and party leaders' (p.71).

Ham and Hill (1994) saw that incremental decision-making was not based on specifying objectives and then assessing what policies would meet the set objectives. Instead, it was where a decision maker reached decisions by comparing specific policies and the extent to which these policies would help in moving towards the attainment of the goals (p.85).

The model of disjointed incrementalism began with the idea that policy making was an endless process and essentially exploratory in nature. Ham and Hill (1994) saw that this was a way of 'muddling through' and so avoiding serious mistakes (p.85). Here, policies which differed from each other incrementally were examined. The decision making process did not consist of well defined stages where problems were identified, solutions

considered and then implemented. Instead, decision-making was a serial and continuous process that led to a pattern or trend. Decision-making could therefore be seen as solving problems one at a time and modifying the solutions in the light of evidence about the results of previous policies (Greenaway, 1992, p.25).

Decision-making could be seen as fragmented and evolutionary. Decision makers might adopt one policy, evaluate the results and then turn to adopt another policy. At the same time, the incremental model recognised the large number of contributors to the decision making process. Whereas the rationalist assumes a hierarchy of decision making the incrementalist emphasises the plurality of decision-making.

However, the incrementalist theories remained normative because the models move from the descriptive to the prescriptive position. Here was the abandonment of the 'authoritarian' rationalism and the move towards accommodating a variety of interests and the acceptance that society and organisations need not have one single 'ultimate goal'. Lindblom described this interplay of forces as a 'partisan mutual adjustment'. This situation of fragmentation and disjointed adjustments would guarantee a measure of stability from the chosen policy (Greenaway,1992, p.27).

This model concentrated on style and process rather than substance. It did not address 'fairness' and minority groups were often 'filtered out'. Also, incremental theories and the rationality model, linked decisions with intended outcome. The theory did not take into account the ways in which the process of decision-making could have an affect on the eventual decision.

Critics claimed that the model ignored the strategic planning and prioritisation that decision makers undertake. Lindblom recognised that major and wide ranging decisions are made but that they are rare (Greenaway, 1992, p.28). The incrementalist theory 'played down' ideology in favour of pragmatism and, as Dror stated, '...justifies a policy of "no effort"' (Greenaway, 1992, p.28). Ham and Hill (1994) saw that this strategy could only be fully acceptable if the policies that were already in place were broadly acceptable. This was most likely to be the case when there was a degree of social stability, a continuity in the nature of the problem and the means available to deal with the problem (p.88).

Organisational process model

Allison (1999) attempted to include the decision making process in the explanation of how an event came about. He explored the extent to which the concurrent use of apparently conflicting theories may provide complementary insights into the decision making process (Ham and Hill, 1994, p.78). However, he found it difficult in his research to match behaviour and goals when using a rational actor model.

Instead, Allison based his ideas on the view of the interdependence between groups and individuals. He believed that policy emerged from a variety of linked organisations and the interrelationships between them (Owen, 1991, p.41).

Another feature of the organisational process model was that it accepted that each organisation had its own 'culture' (Ham and Hill, 1994, p.17). People in an organisation would have their own views on the world (Lawton and Rose, 1994, p.68). Changes in 'culture' would often be conservative because it would be easier and safer to continue to follow existing patterns of behaviour. (Lawton and Rose, 1994, p.71).

Allison's organisational model also placed an emphasis on the implementation stage of policy making. Senior managers may have made the policy but it would be left to more junior staff to carry it out. This was supported by Bennett (1992) who stated that, 'Goals are set and policies are decided by senior staff, and carried out faithfully by subordinates' (p.9). However, Lawton and Rose (1994) suggested that this process was rarely fully carried through (p.127). Large and complex organisations were often very vulnerable to incomplete implementation because they depended on large and complicated administrative structures that were difficult to control.

Therefore, the organisational process model tended to emphasise the multifarious nature of the decision making process. Instead of there being the central driving force, an organisation would be seen to be a collection of different organisations. Each would have its own set of formal and informal procedures. Although there might be a hierarchical relationship among the organisations, they would all tend to have their own unique patterns of operation (Lawton and Rose, 1994, p.137).

Bureaucratic politics model

Allison's model of the decision making process, the bureaucratic politics model, was similar to the organisational process model, except that there was a shift in emphasis. Here policy was the result of bargaining between the key personnel in an organisation. These individuals represented different bureaucracies within the organisation and proposed or objected to policies depending on their bureaucracy's interests or their own career interests (Lawton and Rose, 1994, p.149). In this situation an organisation could be seen as a collection of competing groups (Greenaway, 1992,p.32). Policies might then have

emerged which reflected the ambitions of one or more groups within the organisation or were the result of compromises between a number of groups (Bush, 1995, p.54).

Both of Allison's models have been criticised: they depend on an organisation having a bureaucratic structure and that the role of organisational procedures in altering policy was a function of the leader's attention to the impact of that policy. There was also criticism of the relatively high level of attention given to detail or to the specifics of particular decisions. In that way, overall policy considerations were lost by concentrating on how specific decisions were reached. Also, this model tended to ignore the lessons to be learned from the decisions made at a more junior level.

Richman and Farmer (1974) recognised that bureaucratic models that did not allow for human needs, emotional, social and psychological, were not sufficiently fulfilled within formal structures (p.29). Jenkins and Gray (1983) suggested that the bureaucratic politics model was too simplistic in that actor's behaviour was determined by the position that they held. They stated that the common values and interests held in any bureaucratic organisation would be controlled by the differences of value, interest and perspective which developed from the different backgrounds and experiences of individuals and groups. Such external differences would then travel in parallel with the intrinsic differences that were generated within the organisation by factors such as the division of labour, hierarchical patterns and organisational rules (pp.177-93).

Ideology and perception in the decision making process

Organisational and bureaucratic models concentrated on actual decision making. Rational and incrementalist models tended to leave this out. However, this concentration on policy

processes missed key elements such as the beliefs and perceptions of individual members of the organisation.

Boulding (1956) suggested that individuals needed some sort of intellectual mechanism to filter the data that they have to work with. Some of this 'filtering' would be bureaucratic and cultural in nature (Greenaway, 1992, p.35). However, the most important part would be that the 'filtering' would be carried out by the individual who would use their own ideas and experiences of the world (Lawton and Rose, 1994, p.11). Information that supported the individual's mental frameworks would be more likely to be accepted. Therefore, organisational decision-making could be made based largely on the social and political beliefs and perceptions of an individual rather than on all of the objective evidence that was available.

This situation undermined rational decision making theories in that they saw policy being the outcome of the decision maker weighing up all the available evidence. However, it was equally subversive of bureaucratic theories that were based on incrementalist ideas. These could have under valued or ignored the values of decision makers that are external to the bureaucratic organisation.

Jervis (1968) showed how the values and beliefs of the individuals, and the groups of people that he worked with, made a significant impact on decision-making (p.455). Richman and Farmer (1974) stated that '...formal authority is often limited by the political pressure and bargaining that groups can engage in' (p.30). Policy makers might have misinterpreted an event because of the ideas and beliefs they held.

Janis (1972) supported this view. He developed the term 'groupthink' whereby an individual would unconsciously conform to a group view in order to maintain an *esprit de corps* and amiability in the group of policy makers. In this case, individuals would be reluctant to express doubts or concerns if the policy was seen to be endorsed by the rest of the group. Strong pressure for conformity would be exerted because individuals would want to belong to the group and those in the group would ascribe to it strong moral and ethical superiority (p.198).

A descriptive account of the setting up of a new education department would offer little opportunity to compare its outcomes with the analysis done in other case studies. There is a need to test the findings and analysis with other case studies. A significant difficulty is that there have been few generalised models to use to test the findings of an individual case study. Two important models, put forward by Bachrach and Baratz and later Sabatier were to be the basis for analysis together with a number of other more specialised models. In this way not only could a wide range of outcomes be discovered but they would be in a generalised and understandable manner so as to be able to be compared with the results of other case studies.

Chapter 4

Research Methodology

This chapter is to focus on the research questions to be answered and address the advantages and disadvantages of a number of different research methods and approaches. There will be an assessment of the relative strengths and weaknesses of specific research approaches and a justification of the choice of the methodology used in the thesis. There is also an explanation of the choice of samples and how research instruments have been developed for this work.

In particular there is the choice of three research methods which will review the available data in three distinct ways. In this way both the normative and interpretative interpretations of decision-making can be included and a well rounded case study presented.

One major aspect of this case study is the fact that the researcher was actually part of the decision making process. This situation brought with it many strengths but there are also important ethical questions to be answered.

In reviewing the various research methods available to help answer the questions it was important to recognise the positivist and anti-positivist viewpoints. The two terms used to describe these viewpoints were 'normative' and 'interpretative'. The normative approach treated the social world as if it was part of the world of natural phenomena as being real, hard and external to the individual. The interpretative approach, would view the world as a softer, humanly created and personal world.

Normative /Interpretative

The two terms that had been used to identify and describe the two perspectives were 'normative' and 'interpretative' (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p.36).

The normative model included two major ideas:

1. That human behaviour was essentially rule-governed.
2. It should be investigated by the methods of natural science (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p.36).

Generally, normative studies were 'positivist'. A key concept within this model was that behaviour referred to responses to either external environmental influences or to internal influences. In all cases the responses were to past events (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p.36).

Normative research was based on general theories of human behaviour and the desire to find an 'ideal' (Hoy, 1996, p. 267). Richman and Farmer (1974) described normative models as 'what ought to be.' (p.29). Research methods were devised and implemented in an attempt to validate them and information processing, rationality and knowledge would be sequentially used (Hoy, 1996, p.267). This model had a 'collective' reality, whereby the subject was in the external environment and in society's institutions and organisations. The researcher should aim to reach a comprehensive theory that would account for all human behaviour.

The interpretative model as characterised by a concern for the individual and was 'anti-positivist' (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p.36). As the characteristic of this model was to

understand the subjective world of human experience, in order to retain the integrity of the study, effort should have been made to understand the person involved and the context within which they operated. The influence of external pressures tended to be resisted because this reflected the concerns of the observer rather than the person being studied (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p.36). Becher and Kogan (1992) saw these models as referring to what people actually do, or are institutionally required to do (p.10).

The interpretative model focused on action with individuals carrying out meaningful tasks or 'behaviour-with-meaning' (Becher and Kogan, 1992, p.10). Richman and Farmer saw such models as 'what the situation really is or what can be effective' (1974, p.29). This was intentional action and it was future orientated. Actions, being meaningful in that they have some understandable intention, and will relate to the future (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p.36).

Interpretative research begins with individuals and attempts to understand their interpretations of the world around them. Theory is developed from particular situations. All theories should be based on data from the research and theory will not precede research but only follow it (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p.37).

Interpretative researchers work directly with experience and understanding and then begin to construct their theories. All research results would be set in a meaningful and purposeful context based on the individuals who are being studied.

For the researcher, the scientific investigation is to discover reality at one point and at one time and then compare it to what occurs elsewhere and at different times. In this way the

theories become sets of meanings which should present insights and understanding into people's behaviour. These theories are likely to be as varied as the people who are being studied. However, they will then be drawn together by creating higher order concepts or ideas.

This is a very attractive position for this case study. In particular, it has four significant aspects:

- This model emphasises the 'human experience' and recognises the people involved and the context where the events take place.
- This model accepts the idea of studying individuals with meaningful tasks.
- The researcher works directly from experience and any theory grows from particular situations.
- A single case study is concerned with one experience. This can be seen as the meaningful reality of one point in time.

Case study

A case study is a research tool that is used to construct a well-rounded view. In many cases they tend to be limited to quite specific issues (Nisbet and Watt, 1978, p.75). It can provide an understanding of how all the influences and pressures interact. From that basis, it is possible to discover what principles and trends are involved. 'The case study analyses a case or body of cases for what can be said about an underlying or emergent theory or social process (Strauss and Glaser, 1970, p.183). Yin stated that, 'A case study is an empirical inquiry that:

- Investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when

- the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which
- multiple sources of evidence are used' (Yin, 1989, p.23).

The researcher gathers data in a systematic or scientific way, often by using structured and unstructured participant observation and non-participant observation methods, interviews and documentary research. (Nisbet and Watt, 1978, p.80).

To put this definition into practice there are two main areas to look at:

1. How the selection of evidence is made
2. What is objective evidence?

There are subjective influences on the selection of techniques and in the gathering of information. Initially, the techniques chosen for data gathering may be based on what is appropriate for the research topic. However, these decisions may be heavily influenced by the personal interest of the researcher, the type of equipment that is available and how the equipment actually records information and allows it to be studied. Also, during the data gathering and in the subsequent interpretative work, the researcher may bring subjective editing into the decisions about what information is to be used and what it actually means (Adelman, 1987, p.50).

To try to solve these problems of subjectivity, it is necessary to cross check the findings from one source with another or to set up different types of triangulation tests. Here two or more methods would be used to collect data; in this case participant observation, interviewing and interviews, concerning the study in question (Cohen and Manion, 1984, p.233).

The strengths of the case study approach fall into five broad areas:

- Complexity: A single case study can provide a description of an event, define meanings and examine past events and show how they can help explain the present. Several different case studies can look at the same area but from a variety of perspectives and use a wide variety of research tools in the appropriate areas.
- Case studies are particularly valuable for generating hypotheses, rather than testing them.
- Non-technical Findings: A case study will use a number of different research tools and sources of evidence. In this situation a picture 'in the round' emerges.
- Relatability: Sweeping generalisations are not possible from case studies. However, because of their more 'rounded' nature it may be possible to claim that the findings of one case study may have some degree of relevance to other similar situations (Johnson, 1994, p.22).
- The case study is flexible and it can pick up unanticipated effects and give the researcher a new insight into the inquiry (Adelman, 1987, pp.59-60).

However, these strengths are countered by two broad weaknesses.

- Scientific Rigour: The main criticism of case studies is that there is no accepted way of working with a case study. Instead, each one follows a course, which is largely directed, by the area under study.
- When the case study looks into a unique situation it may be a 'one-off' research topic with little connection to any other issue. In some cases the results from a case study are not easily generalised (Johnson, 1994, pp.22-23).

The author's research approach

The author had the opportunity to conduct the research because he was involved in the decision-making process as a member of the unitary authority 'shadow' council and as a member of the new unitary authority.

A case study was a good approach to use to look at the setting up of an education department. This approah recognised that the subject was complex, continually changing and it was not a formal and controlled experiment.

One purpose of this case study was to research the way a new education department was set up. However, this is only one aspect of the case study. It must also be able to contribute towards identifying a general principle. A rounded description is not sufficient. There has to be an extra dimension involving analysis made from the findings. Then the analysis is used to create a grounded theory, related to other bodies of knowledge and suggest areas for further research (Johnson, 1994, p.23).

A case study is a complex research method. It can be used to describe a complicated event in some detail. It is able to define meanings and examine past events in an attempt to explain the present. It is able to 'paint a picture in the round'. By using a variety of different sources of evidence and a selection of different types of research tools it is possible to present a view of an event which is accessible to a wide readership.

In a case study, the original boundaries of concern are often changed. Indeed one of the main advantages of the case study is that it can monitor the dynamics of institutional processes and individual relationships.

This case study consisted of three approaches; interviews, documentary research and observational research:

- Using interviews with some of the participants involved in setting up the new education department.
- Using observation tools to look at the process of decision-making.
- Documentary research which allowed the use of primary and secondary sources.

However, a number of problems were encountered in the pilot interviews. There was not a broad breadth of coverage. There were a limited number of people who were actually involved in setting up the department and they were often brought in for a limited time. Nisbet and Watt (1978) stated that a survey tended to be a macro approach and case studies could attempt to test out conclusions or, as was more applicable in this thesis, a case study is a micro technique that attempts to open up a new area of research where it is difficult to form a hypothesis and attempts to identify key issues (p.77).

Specific Research Methods

Interviews

Interviews are research tools which can be used in many different types of enquiry. Maccoby and Maccoby saw interviews as 'a face to face interchange in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinions or belief from another person or persons' (Maccoby and Maccoby, 1954, p.499).

An important point is that an interview is a social encounter between two people, but any social encounter is not an interview. Kuhn (1962) distinguished the interview from the encounter by referring to it as an 'interactional situation' (p.194). Later, Moser and Kalton (1971) stated that an interview was, 'A conversation between interviewer and respondent with the purpose of eliciting certain information from the respondent' (p.271).

As a research technique the interview can serve three main purposes:

- It provides a way of gathering information which has a direct bearing on the research objectives. As Tuckman stated 'By providing access to what is "inside a person's head", [it] makes it possible to measure what a person knows (knowledge or information), what a person likes or dislikes (values and preferences), and what a person thinks (attitudes and beliefs)' (Tuckman, 1972, p.213).
- It may test a hypothesis or suggest new ones or help to identify variables and relationships.
- It may be used to support other methods of research. For example, Kerlinger (1977) suggests that it could be used to follow up unexpected results or to support and validate other research tools or to add depth and search into the motives and reasons held by interviewees (p.5).

The questions that are asked in the interview are the vital data gathering device of any interview. To develop this device the interview attempts to serve to broad purposes:

1. It must turn research objectives into specific questions and so provide the data that is necessary for testing the hypothesis; and

2. The question should help the interviewee give the necessary information (Denzin, 1970, p.107).

Wragg further developed this point. He stated that there were three basic types of interviews:

- The structured interview.
- The semi-structured interview.
- The unstructured interview (Wragg, 1980, p.183).

The Structured Interview

Structured interviews are based on closely worded questions that often demand short answers. This type of interview usually involves a standardised form of questioning so as to achieve a uniformity of stimulus to each interviewee (Johnson, 1994, p.44). Kidder (1991) describes such a process: 'Interviewers must understand that even a slight rewording of the question can so change the stimulus as to provoke answers in a different frame of reference or bias the response'(p.180).

The Semi-Structured Interview

Semi-structured interviews are used when a well-worded schedule is drawn up but more freedom is allowed for the interviewer and interviewee. Often an initial question is followed up by questions which probe the first answer or help refine the research questions at the start of the project. For many researchers this is a technique which allows the interviewee to express themselves and allows the interviewer to follow up points but at the same time keep the security and guidance of a pre-planned structure (Wragg, 1980, p.183).

The Unstructured Interview or Non-directive Interview

The unstructured interview gathers information from a number of sources but it does not follow the strict guidelines of the structured interview. Instead it has a more flexible style which allows the interview to be adapted to the circumstances and personality of the interviewee (Johnson, 1994, p.45).

The unstructured interview is a method that needs a skilled professional with extensive training. The great advantage of this type of interview is that, conducted over a longer length of time, it is likely that important and deep-seated attitudes and ideas will be discovered. Kidder (1991) suggests that: 'The flexibility of the unstructured interview, if properly used, helps to bring out the effective and value-laden aspects of the respondent's responses and to determine the personal significance of their attitudes (p.187).

Merton and Kendal (1946) would add another form of interview technique. The 'Focused Interview' developed from the 'non-directive' or unstructured interview in order to increase the amount of interviewer control. The important aspect of this research tool is that it focuses on an interviewee's subjective responses to a known situation and the results can be studied before the main subject interview. Then the information from the previous interview can be used as prompts and the interviewer plays a more active role to direct the interviewee along a structure or interview pattern (p.541).

Strengths and Weaknesses of Interviews

A major strength of interviewing is that it is interventionist:

- In almost all cases the interviewer is not necessarily in control of the interview as such but is able to make sure that it is actually done (Kuhn, 1962, pp.193). Kidder (1991) remarked that: 'The foremost advantage of the face-to-face interview....is that the interview approach almost always yields a better sample of the population being studied' (p.150).
- The interviewee is conscious that someone else has an important interest in the outcome and there is less likelihood that the interviewee gives short and general answers or actually lies (Kuhn, 1962, pp.193). Kidder (1991) claims that the interview has a greater capacity for correcting misunderstandings by the respondents (p.152).

A criticism of interviews is that there can be significant problems over bias and that in particular they are often prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer. Kidder (1991) suggested that a verbal report might not be valid because the response may not be accurate (p.146). Kuhn was able to underline the fact that the interview is not just a simple report. 'The interview, far from being a kind of snapshot or tape-recording-a simple report either of fact or of emotional response-in which the interviewer is a neutral agent who simply trips the shutter or triggers the response, is instead inevitably an interactional situation' (Kuhn, 1962, p.193).

Author's use of interviews

An important method of information gathering was the personal interview. As a member of the decision making bodies from 1996 the author had direct access to most of the members and officers who were party to those decisions.

Interviewees

In 1996/7 there were only a limited number of people to interview. There were only four senior officers in post at the time of the research. The Labour party had formed the administration and the leader of the council was to chair the education committee. Two opposition members were also influential to some degree. There had been no headteachers' representative for 1998 and only the city council education consultant had attended committee meetings during 1997-8.

The interviewees were chosen as they were the political and executive decision makers in the city council with regard to education or they were important advisers or contributors to strategic or political policies.

The individuals who were interviewed were:

Senior political members of Peterborough City Council

Other political members of the education bodies set up to establish the LEA

Education consultant

Headteachers' representative

Senior education officers

Local members of parliament

Principal of a tertiary college.

Senior political leaders were keen to emphasise their support for a new LEA. Member A emphasised the importance that she attached to education by choosing to become the chair of the committee rather than the policy committee which was the more usual position for the leader of the council to take. Member I was a senior local politician with considerable experience in education. Member K was an experienced councillor and a member of the important policy committee. He had been a member of the old Peterborough and Huntingdon education committee during the 1960s and 1970s.

The headteachers' representative held a key position in that the views of headteachers across the city could be directly channelled into the education department and committee.

Senior education officers A, B, and C, were appointed during 1997. Two were appointed directly from Cambridgeshire County Council and the third was appointed from a neighbouring authority after a competitive application procedure.

To further add to the research process a number of other interested parties, such as the local MPs and a principal of the local college of further education were also interviewed.

Interview Structure

Initially, a structured interview approach was to be considered. The structured interview meant that the same questions would be asked of each interviewee so that any differences between the answers would be due to a difference in viewpoint rather than to the different interview questions. It also would be likely that the interviewees would understand the

questions because they all come from a variety of education backgrounds and would be working in the same general context.

There were two pilot interviews to test out the interviewing schedule. In 1996 a seconded teacher and an education officer were interviewed. The two interviewees were chosen because they had some expert knowledge of early administrative events in setting up the education department and they were willing to take part. The first interview was in practice an attempt to make sure that the questions were effective in producing answers in the detail needed. The second interview was more a 'dress rehearsal' and the planned schedule of questions was used.

It was clear from the two pilot interviews that a structured approach was not applicable for this thesis. Although each interviewee was from an educational background and worked for the city council, it was very difficult for the interviewees to understand a variety of meanings in the same way. Legislative and financial terms were often not familiar to the seconded teacher and the education officer saw the curriculum as the national curriculum with little understanding of other aspects of the work of a school.

After the pilot study there was a move towards a semi-structured interview. There was to be a structure from the beginning to extract data and to establish credibility with the interviewees. All the interviewees knew who would be interviewed and they all worked together and had, in the majority of cases, known each other for a number of years. It was inevitable that there was to be some conversation about the nature of the study. It was also unlikely that some interviewees would not check with members of the political

administration or more senior officers about what was to be discussed. If different questions were being asked then a degree of suspicion about the study might develop.

The research questions were used as the interview questions. This consisted of four main questions and each was then sub-divided into sub-questions or prompts. However, at the same time, care was taken to ensure that the questions were open-ended and each interviewee had a reasonable amount of time to expand their answers.

Interviews were an effective way to follow up issues that emerged from the documentary evidence. The interview gave each interviewee a chance to put their views and ideas forward. The response gave the author a 'feel' about how the interviewees saw their role and how they went about reaching decisions. It was also important to discover the way in which the various personalities interacted and how informal views and off-the-record agreements worked.

An advantage to these interviews was that the author knew each interviewee and had a working relationship with each one. Each interviewee would realise that much of what they said was connected with issues that the author understood or had ready access to other sources to check any facts.

However, this situation brought its own dangers. Politicians from other parties might have been unwilling to be interviewed or to go into any great detail in case the information was used in a political way at another time. The author reassured the interviewees of the ethics involved in the academic study but many would be cautious.

The researcher suspected it would be the officers who would have been difficult to interview. The relationship between officer and member was often cautious and a senior officer in a council where one political party had a small majority could risk a number of difficulties by becoming involved in such interviews. Another factor was that for much of the time span of this study there were no permanent officials in place. Only later in the process was a director of education appointed.

Interviewing procedure

The timing of the interviews was important. In this case study the main concern was to interview the political members and officers before they left the council. Political members were always subject to elections which were on a continuous cycle of three years. This meant that politicians might not be re-elected or might have a change in responsibilities about every 12 months. Many officers were only acting as temporary advisers or were about to retire as the council changed from a district council to a unitary authority.

In each case, it was expected that the interview would be conducted in the office of the interviewee. It was essential that each interviewee felt comfortable if useful answers were to be obtained. In such an environment there was more likelihood that the interviewee would become more 'open' in their answers. In an unthreatening situation and with guarantees of confidentiality, it was more likely that the interviewee would be forthcoming. It was not expected that some of the interviewees, in a one-to-one situation, would insist on a witness present, an official note taker and even a group interview.

The whole interviewing procedure was dominated by two main concerns. The political members and officers agreed to be interviewed because they knew the interviewer and had

their own reasons to want to be interviewed. Political members may have wanted to emphasise the advantages of their policies and officers may have wanted to create a good working relationship with a newly elected member. The second concern was that the researcher had to ensure that the members' own political ideas did not interfere with the data gathering process.

Recording

In all cases the interview findings were recorded as written notes. Each interviewee gave permission for notes to be taken. Immediately after the interview the notes were written up and a copy sent to each interviewee. No responses or corrections were received from the interviewees. Tape recording was considered but the researcher, with advice from officers in the town hall and city councillors, decided that some potential interviewees would object to the use of tape recorders and would refuse to be interviewed.

Ethical safeguards had to be strictly applied in this situation. Written guarantees were given to state that the researcher would not use any information gained in the course of the case study in the political arena.

Documentary evidence

Documentary research is based upon the printed information which is available to the researcher and it can '...provide a rich source of data' (Kidder, 1991,p.286). Johnson (1994) recognised that a document is '...any artefact which has as its central feature an inscribed text' (p.25).

It is possible to see that documentary research is the systematic and objective location, evaluation and synthesis of evidence in an attempt to discover facts and draw conclusions

about past events (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p.45). It is a process of reconstruction but without the certainty of having access to all the information.

Kidder (1991, p.284) suggested four main requirements for the use of documentary sources:

- The researcher should be familiar with the known sources of data.
- The researcher should be skilled in discovering other possible sources of documentary evidence.
- The researcher should be able to understand what has been recorded in the documents.
- Such sources can be interpreted in a number of different ways.

Documentary work also recognises both normative and interpretative approaches to research. It attempts to look at an issue objectively and to reduce the influence of bias. It also tries to look at the whole issue within its context and discover certain truths. The use of documentary research is valid because, although the researcher cannot always depend on direct observation or experiment, it generally meets acceptable levels of scholarship and looks to discover truths in an objective manner (Kogan, Johnson, et al, 1984, p.23).

Documentary evidence can be divided into two groups, primary evidence and secondary evidence, although the division is not clear-cut because the definitions are open to some interpretation based on the particular context. Primary evidence is obtained from sources that are original to the issue under study. These sources have a direct relationship with the issues being studied and they will include a wide range of written documents such as reports, minutes of meetings and contracts. The value of primary sources is that there is

less likelihood of mistakes and inaccuracies affecting the final results (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p.50).

Secondary sources of evidence are generally made up of information that is not original to the event (Denzin, 1984, p.190). They are usually dependent on primary sources but they are not part of the original physical relationship. Examples of secondary sources are reports and textbooks. Secondary sources are often seen as inferior to primary sources. However, they can develop the available sources of information (Yin, 1989, p.80). Here the researcher may well be able to bring together previously unrelated material that illuminates the topic being researched.

Access to a variety of detailed sources is essential. In many cases the sources are deposited in libraries or record offices and it can be a relatively straightforward task to review all the sources. They then can be used to supplement information that has been discovered by other methods and to support or test previously held interpretations. Documentary research can also be very effective when there is limited or no access to the participants who were involved in the event under study (Johnson, 1994, pp.26-27).

However, documentary evidence is not always available or it may have been edited. Sources of evidence may not be in a form that is convenient for the researcher and it can be a difficult and time-consuming process reviewing and cataloguing a wide variety of sources. There is also a problem over reliability and validity. The legitimacy and accuracy of a document cannot necessarily be taken for granted. There may be limited ways of establishing the validity of the document and there is no guarantee that the information is free from bias and editing (Johnson, 1994, p.27).

According to Denzin, there were four levels of access to written documents. 'Closed access' are those documents that are only available to a limited circle of people. 'Restricted access' documents were usually available to a wider group of people but with the express permission of the 'closed access' group. 'Archival' documents were lodged in a storage area and then made available on demand or after an agreed amount of time. 'Published' documents were the most easily available source in that they were intended for general circulation (Denzin, 1970, pp.112-113).

The author's use of documentary analysis

A research strength was the accessibility of official and 'working' documentation. Virtually all preparation, background and briefing papers, central and local government publications and all agendas, circulars and minutes would be readily available to the researcher.

Four types of documents were made available to the author:

- Closed Access: briefing papers only available to group leaders.
- Restricted Access: agenda documents available to members of the Local Government Review: Education.
- Archival: committee and sub-committee agenda, minutes and appendix.
- Published documents: education development plan and a variety of formally published documents.

An advantage for the researcher was that as a city councillor he had access to council produced documents. 'Closed' types of documents generally consisted of three types. The first was the informal and private sources. These included notes taken in informal or private meetings. The researcher was involved in planning meetings and discussions and he had total access, as of right, to a number of these types of sources.

Personal papers were rarely available because these tended to be released some time after the event in question, if at all, and many were destroyed very soon after the event.

The second types of 'restricted' document were private papers. These would include members' plans and policies which were intended for the use of a small group of people or officers' papers such as briefing papers. Most of these were probably not kept but the author had access to some sources and a number of officers and members from other political groups made certain documents available.

Another type of 'restricted' source were confidential documents, such as the committee papers called 'exempt information'. These tended to be financial details that, if published at the time, may have given sensitive tendering to unauthorised people. While the researcher had complete access to those papers they could not be used except in isolated occasions some time after the event.

'Archival' documents were lodged in a storage area and were made available on demand or after an agreed amount of time. There are few restrictions on the availability of council documents. All the education minutes were readily available on demand.

The documentary evidence that was to be used included:

- Central government proposals for local government re-organisation.
- Local government documents. These will include a variety of general publications that were issued by national government agencies, such as the Audit Commission.
- Local county and district councils' responses to unitary authority reorganisation between 1995-1997.
- Peterborough City Council's Local Government Review: education, leisure, libraries and heritage reports 1996 and shadow education committee minutes from 1997.
- Peterborough City Council newsletters and circulars on education matters.
- A collection of letters received by members concerning education matters.

The researcher had no access to certain documents that may or may not have existed. Examples of these sources would be education department documents that were intended only for officers. Rough outlines and notes did not usually survive for any length of time.

Also, there was no guarantee that the final documents were reliable sources of evidence. Minutes were reviewed and could be edited a number of times before they were published. Secondary sources, such as news sheets and handbooks, were often vague and generally showed only positive news.

Another issue was that the researcher was too close to the subject and problems might arise over a reluctance to give certain types of information to a member who might make political use of it. In particular, political party publications might well have been 'closed' sources and so unavailable and officers may well have retained some of their own papers.

Observation

At the centre of most case studies there is likely to be some form of observation. This technique:

> '...becomes a major tool for scientific inquiry to the degree that it specifically explains the relationships proposed between major variables, is organized around adequate measures of those variables, is recorded systematically within a format consistent with an exploration of certain propositions, and is measured for reliability and validity'(Bladock, 1982, p.94).

Dearden (1984) claimed that, 'observation follows specific interest and knowledge, without which we do not see the bond in the brick wall...' (p.81). Johnson (1994) stated that:

> 'In social research, observation is generally used to record behaviour. It may be employed as a primary method of data collection to provide an accurate description of a situation; to gather supplementary data which may qualify or help interpret other sources of data; or it may be used in an exploratory way, to gain insights which can be tested by other techniques' (p.52).

Kane (1985) stated that observation enabled the researcher to be free and '...the observer simply writes what happens; or it can be "structured"; a specific list of activities is looked for and checked off when they occur, while everything else is ignored' (p.53).

There are a number of different types of observation. Examples would include paying particular attention to a particular person or event and scanning an event to view generally

what was happening (Nisbet and Watt, 1978, p.84). However, observation moves from being an everyday activity to being a research tool when it:

- Serves a formulated purpose.
- Is planned systematically.
- Is recorded systematically and related to more general propositions rather than being presented as an interesting description.
- Is subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability (Johnson, 1994, p.52).

There have been two broad forms of observation developed as research tools: structured observation and unstructured observation. Structured observation in particular has been used for classroom observation and for meetings (Johnson, 1994, p.52).

Structured Observation.

Structured observation is where the researcher sets out to observe the presence, absence and/or intensity of specified types of behaviour (Johnson, 1994, p.53). In order to undertake this type of structured observation the researcher should be able to be in a good position to identify the focus of their observation target. Bladock (1982) suggests that the goal of the researcher is '...to develop a specific format for observing and recording observations prior to data collection' (p.97).

There are a number of difficulties involved with structured observation. The main problem is that the types of behaviour that are being targeted are not properly defined. Often the researcher is overloaded with too much to look for or over-tight schedules to keep to. Bladock (1982) suggests that: '...there are few if any explicit guidelines, apart from the

very general admonition to pay attention to as many details as possible initially, and then gradually narrow one's focus once the broader picture becomes clearer' (p.105). The observer may well bring their own values to the research and could corrupt the collected data. Also, the presence of an observer may inhibit the other participants' behaviour.

Unstructured Observation.

Unstructured observation is a systematic and planned research activity but it adds a wider dimension than structured observation. Johnson saw it as being '... generally used to record the behaviour of a collectivity or group, whether this be in a meeting or a series of less formal activities, even to record a 'way of life' (Johnson, 1994, p.54). In many cases it has tended to be used to record group behaviour. It appears to be very suitable for less formal activities and other groupings when the same people are usually brought together.

Unstructured observation has the main advantage that it records behaviour immediately when it occurs. It can be more accurate than records that are completed after the event or reports that may be obtained from interview. It can identify 'taken-for-granted' features which otherwise would be missed and it can be used to record the behaviour of people who are unavailable or unwilling to take part in an interview. Another important consideration is that unstructured observation is generally less demanding on the people who are the subject of the study. These subjects may well allow an observer into a variety of meetings but they might refuse the opportunity of an interview because they would not have the available time or would be unwilling to give individual answers or views (Johnson, 1994, p.55).

There are a number of important criticisms of unstructured observation. The opportunities for observation are also limited. The events may just be private and inaccessible or the event may be so short or long that it is very difficult to record. This situation also emphasises the fact that in any situation the observer may well make a number and variety of mistakes that will distort the results of the investigation. It would seem to be unsuitable for unpredictable situations or a crisis. The observer may simply miss an event due to absence or that an infrequent event the observer hopes to see will not happen when they are present. This technique is costly in terms of time. An interview can be scheduled and usually completed in a relatively short period of time. In the same vein, the researcher may record a large amount of information but which may actually have little real worth for the research being done.

Participant Observation

Participant observation is a popular method of educational research because it involves looking at people and their actions and trying to see those events as meaningful and with purpose. Nisbet and Watt (1978) emphasised Cronbach's 'observing effects in context' when they say that; 'It is the context which is often the key to understanding effects in education' (p.78).

Bladock (1982) saw it as:

> '...a rather wide range of activities varying from actually becoming a bona fide member of a group under study to informally observing and interviewing group members from outside'(p.95).

Kidder (1991) added that a person may be a fully participating member of the group under observation, or primarily an observer, participating only vicariously (p.108). Southworth (1987) in particular, sees this participatory aspect as one which gave researchers a good idea of the 'emotional context' of the school and further informed them about the nature of the organisation (p.86). Essentially, the task of the participant observer is to discover and explain the means by which an orderly structure is created and maintained. Bladock (1982) claims that; 'the basic prerequisite of all participant observation, however, is that the researcher must gain the confidence of the persons being studied' (p.55). In particular, it is a way by which the researcher can attempt to fully understand an event, by taking an active part in the whole process (Yin, 1989, p.85). Bladock (1982) also stated that 'The researcher's presence must not disrupt or in any way interfere with the natural course of the group's activities...'(p.95).

There are four main advantages in this approach:

- Observational studies are better than experiments and surveys when the data to be collected is based on non-verbal behaviour.
- Participant observers are able to recognise ongoing behaviour as it occurs and can record it immediately.
- Participant observation can take place over extended periods of time. Therefore it is possible for the observer to form more intimate and informal relationships with the subject in more natural environments.
- Participant observers do not have to depend on verbal responses that may include a bias that is hard to recognise or filter out (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p.110).

A criticism of participant observation is that it can be subjective and lacking in systematic and quantifiable measures. Bladock (1982) saw the situation as: 'One of the fundamental difficulties with participant observation is the lack of standardization of data. To some extent, each social scientist is like a journalist writing his or her own story' (p.97). There is a difficulty that the researcher will come to identify closely with the unit under study and may lose their perspective on the subject (Yin, 1989, p.86).

There are two types of validity regarding participant observation. Firstly, the criticism regarding its idiosyncratic and subjective nature involves external validity (Bladock, 1982, p.105). It is difficult to transfer the results from one situation and apply it to a similar but different situation.

Fears concerning bias and judgement involve internal validity. In this case it is difficult to know if the results of the research are correct or whether they are clouded by too close identification to the subject (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p111).

In this work the decision to use participant observation was very clear. The author was actively involved in setting up the new education department and took part in all formal decision-making and other working parties. This was an opportunity to have a researcher with good knowledge of the process of setting up a new LEA.

Non-Participant Observation

The term non-participant observation can be used to describe a type of research technique where the researcher attempts to reduce their influence on the group under study and to see them in as normal circumstances as possible. McNeill (1989) saw non-participant

observation as 'The researcher acts as observer...physically present at the event which he observes, but does not really participate in it' (p.82). Robson (1993) suggested that non-participation observation is where the researcher takes no part in the process being studied.

An advantage of non-participant observation is that it can be seen as relatively unobtrusive. The great danger for any researcher is that their very presence can change the way the group works on a practical basis (Yin, 1989, p.87). However, non-participant observation is a method which recognises that, while any observation of a practical and dynamic nature is going to be obtrusive to some degree, it is possible to reduce that interference to a level which may only have a marginal effect on the activity under study (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p.107).

Observing and Recording Meetings

Systematic observation studies differ in recording behaviour. Williams (1984) stated that there is a distinction to be made between two aspects in a meeting, 'Content refers to what the group of people comprising the meeting is doing in terms of its purposes and objectives; process refers to the way in which the group goes about achieving its formal task-how it is carrying out its task' (p.207). Kidder (1991) said that 'Systematic observation places high emphasis on natural behavior'(p.280).

When observing a meeting it is important first to identify the type of meeting and then to decide what objectives are held by the members for the meeting, though objectives may differ between the participants (Williams, 1984, p.207). Judd (1991) recognised that at one end of the continuum there are methods that are relatively unstructured and open-ended. At the other end of the continuum there are methods that are more structured and predefined

(p.280). The most unstructured method would be a description of an event. Apart from problems of providing an exact reproduction this method fails to follow a method which summarises, systematises and simplifies the representation of an event (Denzin, 1989, p.171).

The communication process is an important aspect of any decision-making process. The transfer of information between participants of a meeting can be complex. Williams (1984) sees that: 'In a face-to-face meeting verbal communication is always accompanied by non-verbal communication and the two types of communication may contradict each other.'(p. 215).

The more structured methods of observation have a relevant target to the overall study and a specific and explicit plan to record the findings. Many structured approaches require some form of coding and a checklist system. Kidder (1991) recommended quotes, facts, impressions, unusual events, feelings, 'hunches' and comments concerning the benefits and costs of the data gathering methods (p.281). These need not be complex and lengthy. In fact simplicity in operation is necessary because these observations are taken 'in the field' and often at high speed.

There can be a number of different types of checklists. For example, Bryan and Test (1967) recorded yes/no responses in their work. Later they saw that it was possible to split responses into a number of refined groups based on a behavioural response (p.406). In this way a checklist can be constructed for a particular task and it will be a reliable and valid research tool. It will be explicit in the behaviour to be defined. Each type of interest should only be able to be classified in one particular category and the categories must

cover all the different types of behaviour but be limited to the target of the research. Williams (1984) suggested that: 'Checklists can be drawn up for each type of meeting, but every meeting is different so the checklists given should be freely adapted to suit the particular meeting you are observing' (p.211). However, Southworth (1987) maintained that recording was a difficult challenge and that it led to the researcher becoming; ' a weaker participant and a constrained observer' (p.87).

Decision-making in meetings can be seen to take place openly but there may also be implicitly made decisions (Williams, 1984, p.219). There may be no decision made, decision by one individual, decision by a minority group, by voting, by consensus and by agreement (Williams, 1984, p.219). Further research might review the quality of the decisions taken. Also, the way a decision is reached may well affect the quality and acceptability of the decision.

The author's use of observation

An important aspect of this thesis was that the data gathering was being undertaken by the researcher who had an active role in the event that was being studied. In this situation the researcher was able to develop research instruments to record the expected specified behaviour. All formal decision making meetings were observed until the Education Department began its work.

The researcher was not only a participant researcher but also an active political participant in the decision-making process. This was an important point. Detachment was difficult but was overcome by using objective techniques such as counting. All the education

working group and shadow education committee meetings were observed. The observation framework is at appendix 2 and is a simple counting matrix.

Despite the criticisms of the participant observer approach it would have been very difficult for a non-participant observer to gain access to much of the decision making process. Many of the meetings were private and others excluded the public for a period of time due to discussions over exempt information.

The role of the researcher was to record the behaviour of the individuals involved in decision-making.

In this case study there were to be two targets for observation:

- the effectiveness of the meeting in that recommendations were discussed and either approved or rejected.
- the role played by officers, members and consultants during the decision-making meetings.

It was clear that to make such observation possible, and for records to be kept, there needed to be some form of structured and easy to use recording system.

Appendix 1 shows a matrix which was used to record how effective the members considered the meeting to be. All members were asked all these questions after each meeting. This is to be completed for all working party meetings and the first education committee meetings. Responses were asked for directly after the meeting. This was a

time when the participants' memories were fresh and it was the only time with a month's time scale that the researcher could be certain to have access to each participant.

Appendix 2 is a checklist to record the contribution made by each individual on the working party and the education committee. It was carried out at the same time as the other recording. Here the researcher recorded which individual is speaking every two minutes. This would provide an indication of which people were making a large contribution to the debate and who, therefore, could be targets for an interview. Every two minutes was considered reasonable. It was rare for any speaker to talk for more than two minutes. Also the researcher was involved in the debates and any more frequent recording would interfere with this aspect.

To strengthen the validity of this approach there were three possible checks available.

- All meetings are recorded and the tapes were available to the researcher. However, such was the level of background noise and the nature of spoken dialogue, as opposed to written text, this source was not used in checking what was said, and by whom, in the meetings where decisions were made.
- The minutes of the meeting were made available quickly and they were a good check to what had been decided, although they did not record individual responses.
- The results of the checklists were used to record general information about the effectiveness of the meetings and the role of the individuals who were involved. With this information it would be possible to select individuals for interview and then explore the research questions in full.

Of the three research tools participant observation was the most difficult to organise and the results quite basic and general. In defence of the process it was expected to give the researcher an opportunity to employ a more quantitative tool in order to balance the qualitative interviews and documentary methods.

It was important to discover the length of time each member or officer took up in each of the meetings. It can be argued that a simple 'no' from the leader of the opposition could be far more important that a long speech by a more junior member. A large number of questions could easily delay or stop a decision being made. However, this would assume a dispute between members and political groups. Such a situation did not happen in the setting up process. As has been noted the process of decision-making began with a pre-agenda meeting. A broad agreement was then reached between senior members and officers. Senior members would then brief their own party group members. In the formal committee meetings the Chair of the committee or the adviser would explain the reason for the required decision. The opposition would support or not oppose the resulting decision. There are few examples over any decision in a formal committee. In this way it is possible to see the role of the senior members and officers because they are the individuals who introduce each item on the agenda. However, as mentioned previously, this only gives a general guide and is best used to test findings from the other research tools. The expected debates and opposition to a wide number of decisions just never happened in formal committee meetings.

Triangulation

Triangulation provides a reflection on the documentary, observation and interview data and on its validity. Triangulation can be seen as a method to explain more fully an aspect

of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint. The advantages of this approach are:

- The reliance on one method of data collection may result in the distortion of the results because every method is never neutral but acts as a filter to present selective experiences of the environment. This can be countered by using a variety of methods to collect data. When the results of these methods are compared and are found to present substantially the same results the researcher can be more confident of the reliability of the data.
- Researchers can choose to use a particular method of data collection for no other reasons such as, that it is convenient and accessible, familiar or considered superior.

By using more than one method the researcher would generate data from different perspectives and the proven correlations would indicate the validity of the data.

Historical Research

Historical research methods have an important part to play in this case study for three main reasons. Historical research is a common methodology in research subjects. All the research that the researcher of this case study has done had employed historical methods. The review of literature is a type of historical research. Certainly documentary research employs many historical methods. Also, historical research shares common ground with other normative and interpretative approaches to research. In particular, it looks for objectivity, attempts to minimise bias and tries to 'tell the whole' story.

Historical research has been described as: ' ...systematic and objective location, evaluation and synthesis of evidence in order to establish facts and draw conclusions from past events '(Cohen and Manion, 1994, p.45). It attempts to reconstruct the past from the

evidence that is available. This can include primary sources such as interviews and contemporary documents and secondary sources such as books. However, a significant difficulty in this approach is the danger of not obtaining adequate information. In this case study all decision-making meetings were attended and all formal documents from those meetings were consulted to prevent this difficulty. Interviews were held with all the senior officers and members who were in post. The great advantage of a researcher who was participant in these decisions was that they had a much better chance of collecting the greatest quantity of documents and having the widest access to influential individuals.

Historical research has been able to help develop an understanding of institutions and organisations. The historical study of the past can put an organisation into its own context and explain its development. In this way, trends can be identified, individual influence recognised and a sound basis for future study created.

Generally the criticism towards historical research is that:

- Without set questions or a hypothesis it generates a collection of facts.
- Secondary sources are more available and easier to use than primary sources.
- Failure to test the historical data for reliability.
- Insufficient analysis especially in recognising the historical context.
- Personal bias.

It was particularly important that this case study would adopt historical research methods. It was looking at a chronological event that could be precisely identified at a given time. It

also enabled a consideration of the links between people, their decisions and their places in the organisation at a particular time.

Much of the data could be collected using historical research methods. For example, one of the most important areas of data was in documentary sources. Primary evidence was available and, if anything, secondary sources were limited in number. External criticism was relatively straight forward as the researcher had been at the events that the documents were a record of. Internal criticism could be helped by a process of triangulation whereby the data that was generated could then be compared to the facts found through interviews and participant observation. Also, the researcher's main experience had been in historical research.

Research ethics

An important reason for the writing of this thesis was that the researcher was actually involved in the decision making process. In this situation a wide range of documentary evidence was available, interviews could possibly be arranged more easily and access be gained to discussions by political party groups and members and officer discussions. The researcher would be present at formal meetings, personally know decision makers and other interested parties but also they would be working within the decision making context and would be in a position to understand with the wider events which might influence a particular course of action. There would be guidance for later LEAs as further unitary authorities were expected to be created.

The criticism of this situation would be that the researcher would be too close to the events to record the decision making process objectively. The first concern would be the political

bias. The researcher was an elected member and belonged to a political party. In 1996-7 that political party formed the opposition. In this case it could be argued that political bias would cause problems for the researcher. Also, as the researcher belonged to the opposition party he would be excluded from discussions over strategic policy.

Another strong criticism would be that as a member the officers involved in the decision making process would be very wary of talking frankly with a member who might use the information for political purposes. There might well be a concern that although the researcher was a member of the opposition party there might in the near future be a time when his political party was in control of the council and research data could be used to an officer's disadvantage. Also, there is an officer-members' code of conduct which prevents a too close a relationship between officers and members. This was very important because the officers all knew the researcher well through their involvement in the researcher's own education career.

To help justify the position of the researcher in this context two bodies, the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and the American Educational Research Association (AERA) were consulted. However, this purpose also prompted questions concerning the probity of research gathering because the researcher was a part of the decision making process. There were serious concerns over whether data gathering would be compromised by being part of the decision making process. There were also questions over whether the data gathering should be done secretly or openly.

An important aspect was that the researcher of the thesis was a city councillor and part of the decision validity of the research. It could be seen that this could produce a conflict of

interests.(www.aera.net p.2). The researcher as a member might want the work of another political party to fail. Also, a researcher who is also member of the council might want to show the council in 'the best light' and so ignore possible problems and mistakes. In practice this was not an issue. The researcher was a new member of the council with little political involvement. There had simply not been the time or experience to build up group party loyalty. Also, the leading members of the other parties were well known to the researcher and in some cases they were professional colleagues. The other aspect was that Peterborough had wanted its own local council with full county council powers for a considerable period of time. Few members of the council were going to put the possible break with Cambridgeshire in danger through disruptive opposition. It was also very clear in 1996 that the Labour Party was going to be the administration in the Town Hall and win the forthcoming General Election. There was little to gain in causing problems for the setting up of the new LEA. It was an unusual situation to have a researcher able to be in the position to be involved directly in the decision making process. In practice, the researcher was a very new councillor and with a background in education. (www..aera.net.p.3). He was known to most of the officers. On a day-to-day basis there was little partisan rivalry and a greater desire to set up the LEA and be ready for Vesting Day.(www.aera.net.p.3)

There was an important responsibility to the participants of this research (www.bera.ac.uk p.1). For officers there may well have been serious worries because the research would look in detail at the way they worked. Individual politicians my have had much to lose if their ways of reaching decisions were made public. The researcher believed that all participants had the right to be informed of the work and their permission obtained. All

officers, consultants and senior members were approached and their permission granted. All members of the meetings were also informed of the research work.

Honesty and openness was of far more value especially when it would have been difficult to obtain the data secretly (www.aera.net p.3). The identification of research tools in this context was very important. Data had to be collected in an open and trusted manner. Interviews were very affective (www.aera.net p.4). Officers and members had the opportunity to meet the researcher and they gave individual views and opinions. In particular, they were able to feel part of the process and that they had directly given their views that would be valued and incorporated into the findings. Quantitative data collecting was quite difficult in committee meetings. The researcher was part of the meeting but he also had to record the level of participation. However, the researcher's actual involvement was quite limited as a junior member and other members were happy to fill in statements concerning the level of involvement as they saw this as a helpful exercise in their own work.

The use of a diary to collect data from meetings had been considered and rejected. There were advantages in that the researcher could write down the decisions of the meeting. This was rejected partly because it would be almost impossible to keep such an approach secret. No member would be treated as a valued participant if other participants suspected or knew that the researcher was going away to write up his own impression of the meeting

Documentary research was very successful. Officers knew of the research and were quick to provide access to primary sources. In fact, all the documents from all education shadow committees, education working parties and education committees were used. Policy

committee documents were also used when they involved education decisions. These were limited to funding and staffing decisions. The opening of the Local Government Information Service made access to secondary sources much better. Also, agenda always included relevant government papers or professional publications. For example, all discussions on the Standards Fund were accompanied by the government publication. This also accounts for source references concerning government publications but attributed to Peterborough City Council documents. The researcher had the right to access to all city council documents and these were supplemented by audio-tapes of all meetings. The setting up of the Local Government Information Service for members also made available any supplementary publications. Not only were minutes of meeting always available but members and officers made available a wide range of formal and informal working documents. In this way it was clear to members and officers that a full and detailed research project was being conducted. It became common knowledge that the work was being undertaken and that the researcher was often seen working on documents or requesting written sources.

The researcher discussed with every participant in the case study the likely risks involved. As stated above, the real risk was that information gathered by the researcher could be used at a later date for political reasons. In every case officers and senior members were more than helpful and the researcher was given valuable help and support. The main practical reason for that was probably because the majority of the officers and members who were consulted by the researcher soon left the unitary authority. Many of the officers were due to retire when the new city council had been set up and advisers were on limited contracts. Few members involved in the decision making process in 1996-1997 were still

members by 1999. By 2002 only two members remained involved in education and one of those members was the researcher.

However, although not one participant requested the right to remain anonymous all officers and members were made unidentifiable as far as possible. This was a safeguard in case problems arose in the future. In the event there were a number of events which resulted in major changes in the LEA and anonymity of participants prevented any political or career embarrassment.

The decision to identify Peterborough was taken very early in the writing of the thesis. There were concerns that the case study could be a source of embarrassment or be used against the city council in some way. However, there was no concern expressed by officers or members. There was a great pride in what the new unitary authority promised to become and participants were more concerned about people recognising the changes and opportunities available.

No attempt was made to gain consent from any officer or member to carry out the research. The member as of right would have access to documentary evidence and be able to carry out participant observation. There was little fear that a good spread of different categories of participants could be interviewed. Limited discussions were held with the out going chief executive of the council and two county council members who were eventually to gain a seat in the city council and join the education committee. In many cases there was no one to ask. In 1996 unitary authority elections had not been held and many members were about to retire. No city council members pre-1996 had any education committee experience. Officers had simply not been appointed and many officers who

were involved in the Local Government review were about to retire or their contracts finish.

By 2000 a number of articles and publications on unitary authorities and their education departments have appeared. It is common practice to name the LEA. York City Council is a good example and many of their experiences have been adopted by Peterborough City Council. There has been no evidence found that such academic work has been used against York LEA.

The identification and adoption of effective research tools was very important in this context. The writing of the thesis was also important as it was a case study. Such work tends to assume a more general readership. In this case it is hoped that the audience would not be limited to a largely academic readership but also a political and local government audience (American Education Research Association.net p.2) In this way it is written in a way which would be meaningful to the identified professional readership. (British Educational Research Association, www.bera.ac.uk p.3)

Chapter 5

Findings

Introduction

It was important to begin data collection quickly. It was clear that unitary authority status would have an affect on the officers employed by both the county and the district councils and that a number would seek retirement or promotion to other authorities. The priority was to observe the meetings that had the responsibility for setting up the education department. The Local Government Review: education, leisure, libraries and heritage-working party (education working group) was active between January 1997 and April 1997. It was replaced by the shadow education committee in June 1997 and by the full education committee in April 1998.

Organisation

The organisation of the research work was divided into two main aspects. Firstly, the participant observation of meetings and interviews was dependant on the researcher gaining access to the interviewees and attending a large number of meetings held within a limited number of months. Secondly, once the findings from observations, interviews and some documentary sources had been collected, further work could be carried out on primary and secondary documents and published works. At that point the findings from all research methods could be collated and comparisons made.

Data collection was largely determined by chronological events. The decision making process was formally carried out during a number of education committee or other meetings. Attendance at these meetings by the researcher was very important because the actual decisions were arrived at and agreed and there was a 'rolling programme' where one decision then led to the next decision to be made.

Documentary research.

The researcher had access to all City Council documents within a very short space of time. However, the quantity of council documents became such that it was essential that the researcher kept up-to-date with reviewing them. It became common for the council archives to build up a backlog of documents to be stored and a number were lost. It became essential that the researcher collected and reviewed each document as the council published it. However, it often took some time for published secondary sources and central government documents to be found or made available and many of these could be identified and left for a later date.

Interviews

It was important to carry out the interviews when the decision makers were in post. A high percentage of officers and members did not remain with the city council for any length of time. A number of officers intended to retire or move back to their previous county council posts. All City Councillors were to be re-elected at the start of the unitary authority.

After this data collection process it was possible to apply the data collected from meetings, documentary sources and interviewees to the research questions. A process of triangulation then followed to be able to compare the findings of the research process.

Observation

Originally, participant observation was to be a data collection exercise to record the debates which led to decisions being made. It became very clear that little debate actually occurred at education meetings and decisions were largely agreed and not even subjected to a vote. Instead, the objective of participant observation of these meetings was to discover which members and officers led the decision-making process and how the decisions were reached. In this situation it was difficult to apply any research questions.

The methodology was a quantitative method that was used as a way of directing further research. By identifying important individuals who could later be interviewed, the documentary sources could be used to discover their part in the decision making process. Similarly, members and officers who made only a modest or no contribution could be interviewed to discover their views on the decision making process.

At the beginning of the research the researcher had few expectations as to what would happen. There was no preconception about how the decision-making process would occur. In many ways it was a case of being involved in the meetings and seeing how they were conducted. At the beginning the researcher did suspect that a debate,

supported by evidence would take place and eventually a decision be arrived at. In fact, though decisions were made few debates or discussions were actually held.

Checklist of education working party and shadow education committee members and officer contributions.

(Overall percentage of verbal contributions made during all working party and shadow education committee meetings)

Education Members	**Speaking time (in percentage of total contributions)**
Member A	22
Member B	5
Member C	0
Member D	0
Member E	1
Member F	3
Member G	3
Member H	1
Member I	10
Member J	1
Member K	1
Member L	0
Member M	2

Member N	1
Member O	2
Member P	1
Member Q	5
Member R	0
Officers	
Director	21
Senior education officer A	4
Senior education officer B	9
Senior education officer C	5
Others	3
Total	**100**

(Appendix 2 shows a copy of this checklist)

Although both the education working group and the shadow education committee were being observed, they consisted largely of the same individuals. There were few changes during the two years in question.

Key	**Percentage**
Senior members	53%
Senior officer	39%
Others	8%

Overall, members spoke for an average of 58% of the time at the meetings. There was little difference in the percentage of time between the various meetings. This possibly

reflected the degree of organisation within individual party groups but there was little evidence to support it. The data emphasised that the Chair of the education working group and the shadow education committee always made a large contribution to each meeting. On average, the Chair spoke for 22% of the time. In comparison, the opposition representative spoke for10% of the total time. During the time remaining, the vice-chair and Liberal spokesman contributed for a further 5% of the time each and four other members spoke for between 2% and 3% of the time. The remaining time was taken up by the officers, with 39% and outside representatives or advisers made up the remainder of the time. Four members made no verbal contribution.

During 1996-7 members were asked to fill in the meeting rating checklist at every meeting (Appendix 1).

Meeting Rating Check List

(The 18 members of the education working party and shadow education committee were observed)

Elements of the Meeting	**Strongly agree**	**Mildly agree**	**Mildly disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
1. The purpose of the meeting was clear to all	14	2	2	0
2. There was pertinent participation by all	7	5	3	3

3. Mutual interest was shown in all members' points of view	5	7	2	4
4. Individuals or groups did not dominate the meeting	0	14	4	0
5. Disagreements were expressed and explained	0	15	2	1
6. Criticisms were frank and constructive	0	18	0	0
7. The atmosphere was supportive	0	18	0	0
8. Decisions were taken when necessary	16	0	0	2
9. Participants were interested in the meeting	12	4	2	0
10. Everybody contributed to reaching a decision	7	7	0	4
11. The decisions taken were fully supported and understood	7	7	4	0
12. Problems were tackled in an appropriate manner including a full diagnosis	7	7	4	0

13. The meeting was able to function in a flexible manner when necessary	7	9	0	2
14. The meeting did not stray off course.	7	7	0	4
15. The leader acted in an appropriate manner	11	2	3	2

This checklist was to test if the researcher's data accurately represented the perceptions of others. It also identified the members who were actively involved in the decision making process. Few members recorded that they were unclear about the purpose of the meeting. Members indicated that they were interested in different points of view and thought that decisions were taken where necessary.

There were disagreements in replies to other questions. Over half the group believed that there had been few criticisms of recommendations because problems had not been discussed to any great degree. This point of view was represented in all three political groupings and especially by junior and newly elected members.

All the members considered that they had contributed to the decision-making process. Even those who said little or nothing during the meeting felt that they had made a contribution.

Members were largely content with the way the meetings had been managed. They stated that the meetings had not strayed off course, although some inflexibility was claimed.

The officers' use of time at meetings was similar to the members' contribution. It can be divided into two:

- A seconded headteacher was present at the meetings but his contribution declined from 10% down to 2% as the external consultant developed his work.
- The external consultant contributed between 30% and 40% of spoken communication for each meeting.

From 1998 the new director of education took up his post. The checklist of officers' contributions (Appendix 2) showed that then over 40% of the contributions were made by the director of education and the three senior officers. The director spoke for 20% of the time. The officer responsible for quality and standards spoke for 15% of the time and the officers in charge of services to schools contributed for 5%. The remaining senior officer made no contribution of recordable length.

The next stage for the research programme was to look at the decisions which were made and to discover if the decision-making process was largely under the control of senior members and officers.

Documentary Analysis

1. Did central government have an important and controlling role to play?

(i) How did government legislation affect the organisation of a new education department?

Throughout the early part of 1996 expected changes in government policy was a major problem. During 1996, the last year of the Conservative government, few policy changes were made. However, in Peterborough, the Labour administration looked to make significant changes in education organisation when the widely expected Labour general election victory occurred during the following year. However, the main problem was that nobody knew what the new government was likely to introduce. Some officers and members may have expected changes that were similar to recent education developments that reduced the role of the LEA. Others may have looked back to the 1970s and wanted to re-establish powerful LEAs. This situation was to play an important part in the setting up of the new LEA and it led to uncertainty and a major change in the nature of the LEA half way through the decision making process.

In July1997 the Secretary of State published the White Paper 'Excellence in Schools ' which identified five principles:

- Education was to be at the heart of government.
- Policies would be designed to benefit the many.
- Standards matter more than structures.
- Intervention will be in inverse proportion to success.
- There will be zero tolerance of under-performance.

(Peterborough City Council, Education Department Agenda Papers, 10th September 1997, p.13)

Nursery education

In 'Shadow Circular 1/96: Early Years Service', the Labour Party stated that, if they formed a government, they would abolish the voucher scheme. In its place, they would establish in each LEA a forum of providers and users of Under 5s services (Minutes of the meeting of the Local Government Review-Education, Leisure, Libraries and Heritage Working Group, 4th February 1997, p.12).

After the May 1997 general election, the new government ended nursery vouchers and invited LEAs to show how nursery provision would develop along the lines of central government's wishes (Peterborough City Council, Education Department Agenda Papers 9th June 1997, pp.4-5.). The LEA began to make arrangements for children, initially between the ages of 4 and 5, to have access to education provision across the city (Peterborough City Council, Education Department Agenda Papers, 10th September 1997, p.17).

Change of status

All LEA, church and grant maintained schools became community, aided or foundation schools as required by the School Standards and Framework Act, 1998. This change brought 50% of all secondary schools and one primary school, which had been grant maintained schools, back into a relationship with the city council (Peterborough City Council, Education Department Agenda Papers, 10th September 1997, p.17).

Educational Standards

The Schools Standards and Framework Bill 1997 promised to give LEAs new responsibilities (Peterborough City Council, Education Update, 1997, p.1). The LEA was to support pupil achievement by developing initiatives that:

- Help schools with curriculum development.
- Ensure that all schools were part of the quality dialogue.
- Provide support for pupils who were on track for permanent exclusion.
- Develop a 14-19 partnership and its role in the vocational curriculum.
- Promote the development of a city-based school improvement alliance. (Peterborough City Council, Education Department, Agenda March 21st 1997, p.53).

The government's National Literacy Conference at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre on 20th October 1997 was the opportunity used by the Secretary of State to explain the National Literacy Strategy.

Each LEA was to be set targets that were to be reached by 2002. While the government realised that poverty and a high incidence of socio/economic disadvantage could make targets difficult to achieve, this was not acceptable as an excuse for failure (Author's notes from a speech by Steven Byers, Minister for Schools Standards. National Literary Conference 20th October 1997).

The new government was keen to reduce class size. Class size for Key Stage 1 would be no higher than 30 children per class within the next five years (Peterborough City Council, Education Department Agenda Papers, 10th September 1997, p.13).

(ii) How influential was the DfEE on the setting up of a new education department?

The work of the DfEE was to implement government policy. It was to guide through the laws passed by Parliament regarding education and ensure that they were put into practice at the LEA level. In many ways, the day-to-day affect on the LEA did not come directly from government legislation but how it was implemented by the DfEE. This was to have a significant affect on the new LEA, especially from 1997 when the DfEE was setting targets for change and the LEA had not completed its setting up process. Such a situation was to create pressures within the LEA in Peterborough.

The Standards Fund (TSF)

The DfEE's 'Framework for the Organisation of Schools', September 1997, supported LEAs in implementing the principles of 'Excellence in Schools'. Key requirements were set out for the funding of schools. The LMS proposals would involve consultations with schools, governors and the wider community. Each year there was to be a basic funding entitlement for each school (Peterborough City Council, Education Department Agenda, 10th September 1997, p.120).

The Standards Fund regulations stated that the LEA should ensure:

- Targeting of development opportunities through assessment and appraisal.

- Quality assurance of provision to ensure that professional development addresses identified needs.
- Maximum impact on classroom practice through monitoring and evaluating activities and target setting.
- Five training days in schools to be used for planned programmes of professional development.

(Peterborough City Council, Education Department Agenda, 10th September 1997,p.120).

School Improvement

The DfEE required LEAs to identify schools with weaknesses and those that were underachieving. LEAs had the duty to raise standards for the students in the schools. Also LEAs could report to the governors if it had concerns over the performance of the headteacher. If the LEAs were to 'confront the complacent and challenge the coasting' they were to do more than intervene in schools identified by Ofsted as requiring special measures (News from Ten, May 1998, p.1).

However, the DfEE did not want the return of the old interventionist LEA. Phrases such as 'school self-management' and 'intervention in inverse proportion to success' supported a partnership approach (Bangs, April 1998, Ten, p.2).

Local Management of Schools

The Secretary of State set out requirements for the funding of schools. Each LEA was to submit its own LMS scheme to the DfEE. Grant maintained schools were to be

funded by reference to the LMS scheme. However, when the proportion of students in grant maintained schools had reached 30%, as would apply in Peterborough, the LEA had to fund those schools according to the national Common Funding Formula.

2. How much freedom had local government to set up its own administrative organisation?

(i) Were local issues the main priority for local government in setting up an education department?

One of the most important reasons for the setting up of a unitary authority in Peterborough was the widely held belief that many of the city's problems and needs had been ignored. There was also a belief that in the past Cambridge had received more local government funding than was fair because many individuals who were associated with schools, social services and other county council services could present a good argument and the need was often visible within a short distance of Shire Hall. There was little evidence available to support these beliefs but they were influential during 1996 and 1997 in Peterborough. The new LEA was seen as a way of ensuring that Peterborough got its fair share of local government investment and that it could be focused on Peterborough's own problems.

Before the 1997 general election, the city council had been largely left alone to organise a new structure of local government. In 1996 the education working party had been preparing for a modest role in the context of a large grant maintained sector.

In November 1996 city councillors heard that Cambridgeshire County Council had suggested: '... that the county should continue to run most of the local authority services with the Peterborough schools buying-in through service level agreements (Notes of a meeting of City Council Conservative Members 19th November 1996.).

Even as late as June 1997, members at the policy committee meeting accepted that joint arrangements with Cambridgeshire County Council needed '...be entered into in the short to medium term' (Peterborough City Council Policy Committee (LGR) Public Report cited by Peterborough City Council, Education Department Agenda, 9th July 1997 p.71).

The local headteachers may well have welcomed such a move. There did seem to be some concern over the change over from one county LEA to a new smaller authority For example, Education Personnel Services (EPM) was an independent company that had been formed from the Cambridgeshire County Council's personnel department. The company provided training and personnel services for all employees of Cambridgeshire schools.

Peterborough's headteachers were unanimous in their support for EPM and it was clear from the beginning of 1997 that most schools would buy into EPM after Vesting Day. Even when the new LEA set up its own personnel service the headteachers preferred to use EPM. (Minutes of the meeting of the Local Government Review-Education, Leisure, Libraries and Heritage Working Group, 8th April 1997, p.58).

Providing services

Despite such developments, in November 1996 the Labour administration on the city council was planning to be a 'providing' council. A seconded headteacher to the education working party stated: 'We discussed the education implications and what the policy would be in a providing authority' (Notes of a meeting of Conservative city council members, 19th November 1996). Later, the city council's policy stated that it would be a 'provider' authority (Minutes of the meeting of the Local Government Review-Education, Leisure, Libraries and Heritage Working Group, 8th April 1997, p.58).

An example of the new LEA moving to in-house provision arose from working with 'Cities in Schools'. 'Cities in Schools' (CiS) was a national charity which worked with LEAs to provide for disaffected students. Peterborough had used this service due to the increase in the number of student expulsions and to extend an 'out-of-school course' for disaffected students (Peterborough City Council, Education Committee, Agenda 14th January, 1998). The new LEA ended the contact with CiS and, instead, the LEA staff, who had been working with CiS in Peterborough, were required to provide an alternative but similar service (Peterborough City Council, Education Committee, Agenda 14th January, 1998).

Admissions

Admission to schools had been an important issue in the city. Popular primary and secondary schools attracted large numbers of applicants. This situation had been traditionally a consequence of two main factors:

1. The city was a designated new town and had a large RAF base near-by. Large numbers of people came to the city often finding that their closest school was full.
2. The city had an ex-grammar school that enjoyed a high status and good examination results. Admissions were based partly on religious worship in the cathedral and musical ability.

The LEA expected to have a co-ordinating responsibility for school admissions. The White Paper 'Excellence in Schools' stated that LEAs would retain the responsibility for the admissions policies of community schools. Aided and foundation schools would put forward their own policies in the light of the LEA guidelines. If agreement could not be reached then it would become a matter for the Independent Adjudicator (Peterborough City Council Service Review Group Agenda 7th November 1997, p.6). The LEA planned to set up a local forum for school admissions and there was an expectation that there would be a review of secondary admissions procedures (Peterborough City Council, Education Department Agenda Papers, 10th September 1997, p.17).

For the education department, the major factor that influenced admissions was that school resources were now linked to student numbers through the LMS scheme. School admissions had become an influential factor in determining a school's outcomes and future (Peterborough City Council Service Review Group Agenda 7th November 1997, p.4).

The old LEA schools admissions system was considered to be successful. In 1998 91.4 % of transferring students received first choice school places (Peterborough City Council Service Review Group Agenda 7th November 1997, p.7).

However, in October 1997, the ex-grammar school proposed to open a junior department for its choirboys who were attached to Peterborough Cathedral. A significant point was that there would be automatic entry into the secondary school for the junior boys. This would give, in the first instance, 14 boys automatic entry into the school and restrict other students' opportunities.

As the proposals included a change in age range the governors of the school had to publish statutory proposals under Section 259 of the Education Act. The LEA objected under 'equal opportunities' because the proposals were for 'male cathedral choristers' and it was upheld after an appeal to the Secretary of State for Education (Peterborough City Council, Education Committee Agenda, 15th October 1997, p 59).

Exclusions and Suspensions

Peterborough had over half of all permanent exclusions in Cambridgeshire during 1994-5. The county total was 134 exclusions and Peterborough accounted for 78 (Cambridgeshire County Council memo Re: Peterborough LEA 31st July 1996, Appendix 41).

The Education Act 1997 made the LEA responsible for the education of excluded students. The LEA was required by the DfEE to advise schools, make available resources and make some differentiated arrangements for different levels of SEN and

to set up an appeals procedure (Peterborough City Council Education Committee Agenda, 10th December 1997, p.43). The authority published an exclusion policy. The chair of the education committee stated: 'We need to work with headteachers and governors, and talk to them to find out what support they need from us' (Peterborough City Council, Education Update 6, 10th December 1997, p.1).

The Education Welfare Service

Peterborough had student attendance rates that were significantly below national norms. In 1996, in years 7 to 10, there were 23 children in Peterborough with less than 20% attendance. There were only 18 in the remainder of Cambridgeshire. In Year 11 there were 27 students with less than 20% attendance in Peterborough and 30 in the rest of Cambridgeshire. The number of all pupils per EWO in Cambridgeshire was 3,806 with the shire average at 3,576 (Minutes of the meeting of the Local Government Review-Education, Leisure, Libraries and Heritage Working Group, 4th March 1997, pp.75-77).

Multi-Cultural Education

Peterborough received higher than average grants from central government for multicultural education. In 1996 Peterborough had 62% of all black and bilingual students in Cambridgeshire (Local Government Review-Education, Leisure, Libraries and Heritage Working Group, 8th April 1997 p.82-83). In April 1997, the education working group agreed that as Peterborough had more Section 11 students the new LEA should manage both authorities' multi-cultural services (Minutes of the meeting

of the Local Government Review-Education, Leisure, Libraries and Heritage Working Group, 8th April 1997 p.58).

Travellers' Children

There were 23 % of Cambridgeshire's traveller children in Peterborough making a total of 126 children (Minutes of the meeting of the Local Government Review-Education, Leisure, Libraries and Heritage Working Group, 8th April 1997 p.82-83). LEA and DfEE grants totalling £177,075 were spent in Peterborough on travellers' education (Minutes of the meeting of the Local Government Review-Education, Leisure, Libraries and Heritage Working Group, 8th April 1997 p.87).

As Cambridgeshire had more travellers than Peterborough, the new LEA expected Cambridgeshire LEA to run a joint service for travellers' education. However, by November 1997, there was no reply from the county concerning any joint arrangements and even a request from the DfEE asking the county to confirm its intentions went unanswered (Peterborough City Council, Education Committee, 5th November 1997, p.11).

Community Education

In 1996 Cambridgeshire County Council believed that community education would continue as part of the LEA. About £500,000 was the notional patch budget for the Peterborough area (Cambridgeshire County Council Memo re: Peterborough LEA, Appendix 45).

However, there was no discussion at all concerning any joint working with Cambridgeshire. Despite shared resources and buildings there was agreement that Peterborough should administer its own community education provision (Minutes of the meeting of the Local Government Review-Education, Leisure, Libraries and Heritage Working Group, 8th April 1997 pp.4-5).

One reason for this decision was that Peterborough's needs were different to those of Cambridgeshire. In April 1997, the community education officer indicated a number of issues that applied to the city. These included:

- Few concessionary fees for the elderly were available at community education centres.
- There were limited youth services.
- Management committees wanted to run their own community centres.

(Minutes of the meeting of the Local Government Review-Education, Leisure, Libraries and Heritage Working Group, 8th April 1997 pp.4-5)

Another reason was that Cambridgeshire LEA had reduced its community education funding by 50% in 1997 and had moved much of community education away from schools. However, in Peterborough there was strong support for certain areas of adult education to be prioritised. Areas such as 'people returning to work' and drug awareness and addiction were recognised as important issues for the city (Minutes of the meeting of the Local Government Review-Education, Leisure, Libraries and Heritage Working Group, 8th April 1997 pp.8). Also, many members wanted community education to be provided in community schools (Minutes of the meeting

of the Local Government Review-Education, Leisure, Libraries and Heritage Working Group, 8th April 1997, pp.4-5).

In October 1997 community education was confirmed as part of the education department (Peterborough City Council, Education Committee Agenda, 15th October 1998, p.1). The allocation of funds to different areas of the city was to be assessed through a population and deprivation formula (Education Update 8, Peterborough City Council, 11 February).

(ii) What were the methods employed to set up a completely new education department?

In May 1997 the education working party department found that much of its preparation had been made redundant with the election of a new government. In July 1997, the new Secretary of State published the White Paper 'Excellence in Schools' which indicated government policy (Peterborough City Council, Education Department Agenda Papers, 10th September 1997, p.13).

The external adviser to the education working party only gave a 'considered opinion' in response to the government proposals. He recommended to the Annual Council in May 1997 the appointment of a director of education and four section heads of service (Peterborough City Council, Education Department Agenda, 9th July 1997, p.62).

The structure of the education department was to be:

- Need Support.

- Education Support.
- Quality and Inspection.
- School Library Service.

In April 1997, the head of education support and the head of need support services were appointed by the executive sub-committee of the policy committee. In these cases the officers transferred to the city council from Cambridgeshire County Council as part of the TUPE agreement. The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations, 1981, protected the rights of individuals who transferred from one employer to another as part of a function which retained its identity after the transfer. This would have made it expensive to make people protected by TUPE redundant.

The head of quality and inspection was appointed in September 1997 and came from a neighbouring LEA (Policy Update No 3, 30th September 1997 p.1). This appointment was very important because it recognised the government's emphasis on school improvement.

The head of the library service post was not discussed and the responsibility for library services was later transferred to the community services department.

By September 1997 the staffing requirements had been based on the government's priorities in 'Excellence in Schools' (Peterborough City Council, Education Service Review Group, 25th September 1997, p.9).

Proposed Structures:

Sections	Number of Posts	(in £000s, salaries only)
Director's Office	2	86
Schools, Learners and Families	41	920
Quality and School Improvements	21	536
Planning and Resources	15	353
Totals	**79**	**1895**

(Peterborough City Council, Policy Committee Agenda 30th September1997, appendix 2)

At this point financial problems were causing concern in the policy committee. The Peterborough share of the old county education budget that had been used for administration was £1,578,000. Yet the new Peterborough LEA budget for administration was £300,000 higher (Peterborough City Council, Policy Committee Agenda 30th September1997, appendix 2).

Additional staff to respond to government policies had led to an overspend of £249,000 (Minutes of the meeting of the Local Government Review-Education, Leisure, Libraries and Heritage Working Group, 4th February 1997, p.13).

Dis-economies of scale also resulted in extra costs of £200,000. For example, instead of one Special Needs Education officer, there needed to be separate officers for Peterborough and Cambridgeshire (Peterborough City Council, Policy Committee Agenda 30th September1997, appendix 2).

Due to the extra costs the council's policy committee accepted a 'three section' organisation of the education department. However, doubts remained and the department was warned: '...that their structures must be kept within budget' (Peterborough City Council, Education Service Review Agenda, 7th November 1997, p.1).

Partnerships

The new LEA's intention was to work in partnership with its schools. The LEA's mission statement in 1996 stated that the new authority would: '...Work through a network of headteachers and governors' (Peterborough City Council letter, re: A Mission Statement for Education 5th December 1996).

The external consultant defined his view of 'partnership'. He claimed that the term 'partnership' could be defined as a combination of:

> '...residents, parents, service users, headteachers, unions, governors, further and higher education, local business/industry, the grant maintained sector, the churches, voluntary organisations, ethnic minority heritage groups, health and social services authorities, other agencies, interested individuals' (Minutes of

the Local Government Review, Education, Leisure, Libraries and Heritage Working Group, 8th January 1997, p.21).

This partnership in education was reflected in the composition of the LEA:

- Democratic/representational issues. Two representatives from the local further education colleges, four teacher representatives and three religious organisation representatives were co-opted onto the education committee. Parent representatives would also be on the committee.
- Consultative/negotiating mechanism. This included parental partnerships and the setting up of an annual education parents' meeting to consider the LEA's development plan.
- Communication systems. A newsletter was established (Peterborough City Council, Education Department Agenda 11th February 1998, p36.).

The first move to consult interested groups was in February 1997. The education working party sent out a questionnaire to discover the opinions concerning the development of education services (Agenda of the Local Government Review-Education, Leisure, Libraries, and Heritage Working Group, 17th February 1997, Agenda Item 4).

Professional support and development

The local government review working party stated that: '... there would be an inspectorate within the education department' (Minutes of the meeting of the Local Government Review-Education, Leisure, Libraries and Heritage Working Group, 8th January 1997, p.24). The external education adviser also assumed that there would be

LEA inspection and advisory staff (Minutes of the meeting of the Local Government Review-Education, Leisure, Libraries and Heritage Working Group, 8th January 1997, p.24).

3. Were other educational agencies brought into the decision making process to establish an education department?

It was surprising to discover that formal educational agencies had only a small part to play in the setting up of the education department. In fact the headteachers often appeared cautious in supporting the new LEA and, therefore, it was not surprising that the headteachers and governors' forum was not quickly established. Parent representation on the education committee did not quickly appear and a parents' forum was never established.

Headteachers and governors

The LEA set up a headteachers and governors forum. It consisted of:

- 3 governors, one from each of the secondary, primary and special school sectors.
- 4 primary headteachers.
- 3 secondary headteachers.

(Peterborough City Council, Local Government Review-Education, Leisure, Libraries and Heritage Working Group, Agenda 8th April 1997, p.79).

Parents

The DfEE required that parents be given a stronger voice on governing bodies and the LEA. An 'Instrument of Government' enabled local decisions to be made over the

size of governing bodies rather than having 'Articles of Government for Governing Bodies'. In March 2000 parent representatives were included on the education committee (Education Committee Education Spokes Group 22 February 2000)

4. What influence did non-education factors have?

The city was an area of high demographic growth with a relatively young and ethnically mixed population. During the previous 30 years there had been unparalleled economic growth and development and the establishment of many national and regional employers in the area. There was an increasing need for an educated, flexible and skilled work force (Wilkinson, 1998, in News from Ten, p.38).

There is no evidence to suggest that the churches were consulted formally by the education working group or shadow education committee at any time of the setting up of the new LEA. However, there was a representative of the Church of England and one for the Catholic Church on the shadow education committee.

In the next section the interview summaries provide the detail of the decision-making progress. The consensus involving members and officers and the relationship between the LEA and headteachers are explored. Also a number of executive decisions that had important influences on the new LEA are considered.

Interviews

The researcher had good access to a variety of members, senior officers and other individuals who were involved in the decision making process. The interviews

enabled a large quantity of factual information to be recorded and data from other research methods to be checked.

The interviews were successful in uncovering broader trends and influences. Interviews emphasised the type of relationship that the city council had with other authorities. They revealed the type of local government culture that had developed at the town hall and it emphasised the importance of individuals' values and beliefs on the overall policy making process.

The location and identification of potential interviewees was important. In 1995 the headteachers' representative and the external adviser were the only individuals involved in the review process. A local government review-education, leisure libraries working party (education working party) was set up in 1996 and then in 1997 the shadow education committee was set up to gradually take over the full responsibility for education. The selection of interviewees had to take these three stages into consideration. There needed to be at least two interviewees from each stage. There were problems identifying the key decision makers because there were so few officers and members involved. Also, instead of officers and members being involved with one stage they tended to spread over at least two.

It was important to have a balance between officers and members. It was also essential that the headteachers' representative, director and external adviser were interviewed to obtain an accurate and well rounded picture of the situation.

The interviews were started immediately because it was likely that a number of members and officers would not be available for a lengthy period of time. The problem was that if all interviews were held in a limited period only some individuals would be available and only a view from one particular time would be gained. To overcome this problem, interviews were phased over the three stages of the setting up process. The headteachers and consultant were interviewed in 1995-1996, members during 1996-98 and officers during 1996-1997.

The individuals who were interviewed were:

Senior political members of Peterborough City Council.

Other political members of the education bodies set up to establish the LEA.

Education consultant.

Headteachers' representative.

Senior education officers.

Local Members of Parliament.

1. Did central government have an important and controlling role to play?

(i) How did government legislation affect the organisation of a new education department?

As local government reorganisation began to develop there was to be a change in central government policies. At first, a Conservative government in 1996 allowed the city council to plan its own LEA (Member A). Central government was to have a very limited input into the setting up of the new education department (Member I). To

many councillors and officers this process had been expected. It was a local matter to solve the problems that the county council had not been able to solve (Member B).

However, after the 1997 general election, the Labour government had a number of interventionist policies. The influence of central government became stronger and new measures to make changes in education provision were to be implemented (Member A).

This was important because it appeared that the LEA was seen as an important agent to carry out reform. This meant that much of the previous planning was going to have to be changed (Member I). In fact, the government had made it clear that it was looking to the LEAs to provide a local organisation for important areas of education (Director of Education).

The LEA accepted its new role to promote school improvement (Member A).This was planned to be organised, in consultation with other council departments and other partners, to develop a city strategy for student achievement.

A new role for the education department was to bid for money from central government on behalf of the schools. At the time, bids for money, especially from the Standards Fund (TSF), were seen as a small aspect of administration and no specific officer support was made available. However, this process was to become increasingly important between 1998 and 2001. It had two particular results; firstly that increasing numbers of officers were being employed in putting together

increasing numbers of bids and, secondly, large amounts of money were being directed towards national targets and not to local ones (Member I).

(ii) How influential was the DfEE on the setting up of a new education department?

Members had expected that the DfEE territorial team, HMI and the Funding Agency would be closely involved in the setting up of the LEA. However, the DfEE appeared to have a limited role in the setting up of the education department. Perhaps, reflecting the overall central government's lack of involvement, the DfEE offered little advice to the education working group or the shadow education committee. Apart from a DfEE briefing on the role of the LEA for new unitary authorities there was little help (External consultant).

There may be a political explanation for the lack of DfEE involvement. Political pressure for unitary authority status for Peterborough had been directed towards the Secretary of State for the Environment. Education had not been considered as many of the city's secondary schools were grant maintained (Local MP). 'Furthermore, the DfEE had never supported unitary authorities and it had been a DoE initiative' (External consultant).

Officers accepted this minimal level of support. The director of education stated that he considered the development of a LEA administrative structure as a purely local, and essentially, officer-led, process (Director of Education).

2. How much freedom had local government to set up its own administrative organisation?

(i) Were local issues the main priority for local government in setting up its own administrative organisation?

Many of the members appeared to have shared a broadly based view of what should happen and there were few decisions that were very different from the traditional practice of the old county LEAs. The two local opposition groups did not have a written education policy and there was no evidence of a written education policy for the administration (External consultant). Certainly, by 1996, there was a substantial degree of cross party agreement over the likely structure and role of the proposed education department.

One reason for that belief was that Peterborough had a tradition of government in the city. For example, a number of members had been councillors in the Soke of Peterborough when it had powers similar to county borough councils. The city had also been part of three different county councils in 50 years with little time to build any loyalty to a particular county. Therefore, there was a strong and positive commitment to city based local government and a determination to set up a new council that could focus on the problems and opportunities of the city (Member N).

(ii) What were the methods employed to set up a completely new education department?

Policy

There was little evidence that the setting up of the education department was to be dominated by a pre-arranged politically inspired agenda. Although each national political party had an education policy there was also no evidence of any intervention or advice from any political party headquarters (Member A).

For the Labour group there were early indications that the setting up of the education department was going to be problematic. For example, at the consultant's interview at the city council, there were members who found it difficult to agree on general principles and there were suggestions that there were problems within the Labour group (External consultant).

The Conservative group was faced by general and local election defeats. Grant maintained schools in Peterborough had been successful but further development and reform was unlikely. There was little discussion of future direction.

Establishing a Structure

Between 1996-7 a cross party agreement over general policies was shown by the working relationship that developed between senior members on the education committee (External consultant). In particular, members A and I both had a long term commitment to locally provided education and they worked together to develop a consensus on education in Peterborough.

A good example of this consensus was, 'In 18 months no proposal in the education committee had to go to the vote' (External consultant). This situation was confirmed

'Over the course of two years there was not one vote taken over any recommendation or decision on the local government review-education, shadow education committee or education committee.' (Member A).

A reason for this lack of disagreement may have been in the consultation and discussion that went on before any decision-making meeting was held. Each month senior officers and members met to discuss a range of issues (Member M). It was at this stage that agreements and compromises would be made (External consultant).

Later in the month there were a series of 'group representative' meetings (Member I). Senior members and officers would agree on the agenda for the forthcoming education working party or shadow education committee meeting. At this point the meetings became the venue where problems were discussed and compromises made (Director of Education). Group leaders would later discuss the issues and decisions with other members if it was appropriate (Member B).

On the same day as the education working party or the shadow education committee meeting, senior members and officers would meet again to discuss the detail of the agenda. At this point it was usual that an understanding between the group leaders and officers was reached. Only then would group leaders meet their members to talk through the agenda and then attend the official meeting (Member M).

Another reason for a lack of disagreement was that the education opposition spokesperson made little attempt to influence events. There was a strong view in the

opposition that there was no point in active opposition because of the Labour party's general and local election successes. It would have been difficult to attack government policy so soon after such election successes (Member Q). The objective was to allow the administration to implement their proposals and wait for them to go wrong (Member I).

Senior Conservative members had also played a large role in county council LEAs and had found some previous central government reforms difficult to accept. They were in basic agreement with a LEA providing education services (Member B).

Members' Contribution

The role of members was limited by the meeting structure. There were few group planning meetings. For example, the Conservative group met three times a year to discuss likely issues (Member Q). Individual members' main opportunity to influence decisions was in the group meetings an hour before a working party (Member Q). Members did have the opportunity to change details in the recommendations put forward by officials or the external consultant during working party and committee meetings. A good example of this was to increase uniform grants by more than the inflationary cost (Member A). However, party discipline did not encourage this process and such changes were rare (Member Q).

A difficulty was the lack of experience of the members in education. They had limited contact with the county LEA and felt that they had to leave it to experts (External consultant). Other members had been district councillors. They were familiar with concentrating on operational detail rather than policy. For example,

some members appeared to be more interested in the advantages of school uniform rather than the structure of the education service (Member Q). Other members had been involved in county council administration, often in education. However, they found themselves heavily criticised for their previous work as members of the county LEA. (Member A).

There was a willingness to co-operate in education because it affected large numbers of children and their families (Member A). 'Quite simply there was a desire to keep the transfer of services as smooth as possible. To do this there was a general agreement to follow Cambridgeshire County Council's organisational structures and procedures' (Member B).

However, a less positive view was that change was going through so quickly that many councillors simply did not have the time or the ability to be able to deal with the setting up process (Member Q). Another view was that it could show a laziness in decision-making and that members and officers were content to leave the details of the decisions to education officers (Principal of a local F E College).

Officer Influence

During1995 and 1996 officer involvement was limited. Few officers had been appointed and the headteachers' representative and the external consultant were the main sources of advice and support. There had been a lack of new investment in facilities and services (Member Q). This local view, in fact, tended to reflect the national situation. In many areas of the country there appeared to be a lack of

enthusiasm for change and little support from the senior education officers' association and professional education bodies for unitary authorities. This situation may well account for the low level of involvement by many officers, schools and civil servants (External consultant).

The Director of Education appeared to have worked alone (Member I). He produced the detailed structure for the department by himself. No other staff or members had been involved in setting up the administration system (Director of Education).

Officers were often cautious over the move towards unitary authority status and a number had shown a concern for their own positions. 'Remembering the problems during the 1970s in local government reorganisation this was not surprising' (Member Q). For example, the relatively large spending departments in district councils opposed the new unitary authorities because it would reduce their overall responsibilities and budgets (External consultant). A good example of this concerned the leisure services department in the Peterborough district council before reorganisation. This had been a department with considerable influence. Unitary authority status would bring education and social service into the new city council and they would overshadow leisure services.

Initially, the new education department was to have responsibility for leisure, libraries and heritage. The title of the working group for education included these areas and decisions were made concerning these areas throughout 1996 and much of 1997. However, by combining youth, libraries, and 'heritage' services with leisure services into the new community services the prestige of 'Leisure' could be retained.

Two senior officers who were responsible for leisure were able to convince other officers that education should be separated from leisure, heritage and libraries should be detached from education (Education officer).

It was not accidental that education, social services and community services were housed together in newly acquired modern accommodation. Here, the three large spending departments would have the best accommodation, be able to monitor what each department was doing and still retain a separateness from the old district council departments in the town hall (Education officer). It was as if the old county departments were kept isolated from the town hall and the old 'leisure' department placed with a 'watching brief' over the new additions (Education officer).

3. Were other educational agencies brought into the decision making process to establish a new education department?

(i) What role was given to the city's schools to contribute to the decision making process?

A number of Peterborough headteachers and governors had opposed the application for unitary authority status. The grant maintained schools had no reason to support a unitary authority that might in the future gain powers to intervene in their development (Member Q). However, headteachers and governors from LEA schools were the most active in arguing against unitary authority status. These schools were successful in getting parents to oppose the applications for unitary authority status and

they nearly succeeded in gaining the local Labour party support for their protest as well (External consultant).

Improving Standards in Schools

'Standards in schools through much of the city were known to be below average' (Member Q). The education department consulted headteachers about the ways to improve standards. However, informal discussions with representatives of the primary headteachers and officers during January 1997 made it very clear that a large advisory service would not be welcomed after having had had the freedom to buy support and advice from other sources (Member B). The opposition spokesman stated that there would be no team of advisers similar to the powerful Cambridgeshire advisory body. The Liberal representative did not want a return to an advisory service. Another member wanted no advisers and that decisions about buying in concerning advice and support should be made by the individual schools (Member I). It appeared that a LEA led policy to improve standards was not going to be well received by the headteachers who believed that they, rather than LEA officials, knew the needs of the children (Member Q).

(ii) Were the churches consulted in the setting up procedure?

There was no evidence from any interviews that the churches were consulted. This may have been that the church primary and secondary schools already had been part of the consultation procedure. Also, all church secondary schools were grant maintained by 1996

(iii) Were parents, other voluntary bodies or statutory authorities consulted?

Joint Council Partnerships

The new unitary authority had given undertakings that the LEA would work jointly with other councils to provide services. However, there were few indications that such a policy would be successfully introduced. After many discussions with Cambridgeshire County Council, the new LEA would not agree to any substantial jointly run service agreements. For example, 'There was never a realistic chance of Peterborough co-operating with Cambridgeshire over child protection. With the death of a small child in the city and other operational problems in social services, Peterborough was always going to provide child protection services itself' (Member B).

Appointments

There was often confusion over the senior officer appointments to the education department (Member Q). This was because the city council made all senior appointments through the policy committee and not the education committee. There was no requirement for any education department member to be involved in the appointments process. The appointment of the director of education and two senior officers came as a sudden surprise to many members of the education committee (Member I). 'The director of education was introduced to the shadow education committee and I had no idea the post had even been advertised' (Member Q).

4. What influence did non-education factors have?

(i) What affect did the fact that Peterborough was a new unitary authority have on the setting up of an education department?

An important point in favour of unitary authority status had been the opportunity to deal directly with the city's problems. The education department had been seen as an opportunity not only to confront the problems of underachievement and deprivation but also to respond to the demands of new industry, social change and individual enrichment (Seconded headteacher).

To many members, the change to unitary authority was the last stage in the recent changes due to new town designation. This had been a dynamic process and many members had come into the city during this period. To other members there was a feeling that the city had lost the dynamism of the last few years and they were keen to see the self governing powers as a way to re-create the development of earlier years (Member B).

(ii) Did local cultural, economic and geographical influences have a substantial affect on setting up a new education department?

Other social and economic issues had an influence on education services in the city. This was a time of change in the area. Entry level and semi-skilled jobs were becoming scarce. The older areas of employment, engineering and railways had declined and the old factories and marshalling yards were derelict and visible from the city centre. New technology companies were being set up on green-field sites, financial services were moving to the city and there was easy commuting to Cambridge and London (Seconded headteacher).

Summary

The interviews supported the results of observations and documentary sources and they often indicated other influences on the decision making process. Interviewees confirmed that senior members developed a strong working relationship. Officers, particularly from Cambridgeshire County Council, were supportive of the decisions made by these senior members. Interviewees emphasised the influence that officers had by taking administrative decisions away from the strategic working parties and committees. A number of interviewees also indicated that the culture of local government officers influenced a range of decisions which members had little control over.

Triangulation

In this thesis the research methods used were interviews, documentary research and participant observations. This was an attempt to use both qualitative and quantitative methods. This would employ research tools that the researcher was familiar with and adopt the methods most suited the collection of data in the specific environment. It was also a feature of this thesis that most of the data was collected in a short time span. Interviews were being conducted as documentary sources were being published and observations were taking place.

1. Did central government have an important and controlling role to play?

The Role of Central Government

The general election of May 1997 made a change to the planning of the local government review in Peterborough. Both documentary sources and interviews with members showed this change.

In 1996 the city council had been left to plan a role for the LEA which would focus on local problems. Senior members saw that the setting up of a new education department was a local concern to solve local problems.

From May 1997 both documentary evidence and interviews highlighted the influence of a new government and its new policies. It was clear that central government was to have a large and increasing influence on education in the city. The publication of 'Excellence in Schools' (DfEE, 1997) marked the point where there was a change in the duties of the LEA and that it was to work in partnership with the schools to raise standards in line with national expectations. Members understood that the government was going to be more interventionist and expected the LEAs to implement its policies quickly. The director of education recognised that there was to be a move from the previous market organisation of education to LEA supported local partnership. Members and officers recognised that local priorities were not necessarily national priorities. Instead, the LEA was going to have to change its plans, adopt government policies and implement them.

The Role of the DfEE

There were few documents available to the researcher that indicated any DfEE support. Both officers and politicians made the point that local government review was a local matter. The external consultant also said that there had been no help from

the DfEE and that this was not a surprise because the DfEE had not been in favour of unitary authorities. Another view was held by a local MP. He thought that the decision for Peterborough to become an unitary authority was a political one and neither DoE nor the DfEE had supported it.

The DfEE was interested in outcomes. In 1997 it published the 'Framework for the Organisation of Schools' (DfEE, 1997). This explained how LEAs were to achieve the aims set out by 'Excellence in Schools' (1997). At the time it was seen to emphasise that funding was for schools. LEA expenditure was to be reduced to the minimum necessary. Also, the LEA had to ensure that the targeting of resources had to be based on appraisal and assessment.

2. How much freedom had local government to set up its own administrative organisation?

The evidence concerning the decision making process was usually similar from documentary sources and interviews. However, on occasions there were some inconsistencies. This may have been due to confusion because both members and officers had an increasing number of government documents and city council papers to read. Some members did not have the expertise in education to be able to answer complex questions during an interview. In fact, many of the differences between documentary sources and interviews were largely due to interpretation differences over a period of time.

The size of the education department had been a sensitive issue. The education working party had planned for a department of about of 60 LEA staff. Yet even as early as 1996 interviewees were suggesting that 100 staff would be required in a 'providing' LEA. By 1998, there were 169 staff employed in the education department.

Documentary evidence pointed to the director of education developing a four section structure. However, interviewees suggested that there were constant changes due to financial problems and officer recommendations.

At the same time, the shadow education committee did not appoint senior education officers. There is little documentary evidence which refers to the appointment of officers and interviews point to the fact that education members had little involvement in senior appointments. These appointments were the responsibility of policy committee.

For much of 1997 and 1998 there was a succession of documents setting out in some detail the organisation of the education committee. The decisions included finance, becoming a 'providing' service, partnerships with other authorities, schools and city council departments, LMS, school improvement, admissions, exclusions and suspensions, awards, EWOs, EPM, multi cultural education and community education. However, there was little or no mention of these aspects during the interviews.

The observations and interviews did provide data to explain this. The data gained from participant observation indicates that senior members and officers spoke for much of the time. Members and other advisers only contributed for an average of 8%. There was little time for members to discuss these matters and there was a constant stream of new decisions to be made at every meeting. It was not surprising that a number of member and officers were not immediately familiar with many of the detailed plans that had been approved previously.

Another aspect of participant observation was that members stated that they had understood the decisions made at the education committee meetings and that they had contributed or felt that they could have contributed if they had wished to.

Both qualitative and quantitative data pointed to a situation the members agreed that despite the large workload and the necessary quick decision making process, they understood what was been presented to them. They were also largely content to allow senior members and officers to guide the process through committee stages.

The interviews confirm this situation. In many cases, members did not debate possible strategic directions. Instead, they seemed to rely on senior members and the external consultant to recommend the course to take. There was also an increasing concern that the changes for unitary authority status had to go as smoothly as possible.

A number of documentary sources showed how members were content to approve a particular plan but interviews confirmed that they had concerns about it. For example, senior officers and members of the administration were keen to see both an inspection team and an advisory team as a central part of the programme to raise standards. This was approved but in interviews members and the headteachers' representative were clear that no inspectorate or advisory team could be accepted without significant member and teacher opposition.

The transfer of libraries from the education department to the new community services department was another example of lack of detailed debate. Documentary evidence was limited to a letter from leisure services requesting the transfer of the libraries to the new department and the minutes of the shadow education committee showed that this had been done. However, there was no discussion or debate over the matter. An interview with an education officer discovered the view that this proposal had been discussed at officer level. The shadow education committee merely approved it at a later date.

3. Were other educational agencies brought into the decision making process to establish a new education department?

The government proposals for the working of the LEA had emphasised joint departmental working. In particular, the work of social services and education was seen to be complementary in a number of areas. There were many agenda items looking forward to the implementation of the proposals. However, there was never a detailed debate over the proposals and few decisions were reached by members. In

fact, interviews with education officers pointed to the belief that there was never any likelihood of significant cooperation between the two departments.

4. What influence did non-education factors have?

The economic and social conditions of the city were a concern for both interviewees and documentary sources. Council documents continually referred to the needs of a growing city and looked forward to further economic development. This concern was fully reflected in the interviews with members and officers. Interviewees recognised that the period was a time of economic change. Engineering and manufacturing jobs were disappearing. New technology companies were arriving in the city and they were not finding skilled staff available. For some interviewees the new unitary authority was the finishing touch to the new town process. Whereas, for others, it was an important means of restoring the loss dynamism to the city.

The three research methods enabled the development of a well rounded case study that would be meaningful to both the expert and non expert reader. It was expected that interviews would provide much of the data. Documentary sources would provide a checking process. Participant observation would make quantitative data available to add further depth to the findings. In fact, documentary sources provided a large amount of detail. These findings were then checked by using interviews. Participant observation was very useful in supporting data previously collected on the local decision making process. This cross checking provided a test of reliability. This was particularly important when looking at the influence of central government and the DfEE and the actual decision making process.

There were a number of criticisms to be drawn from the use of these methods. Data collection was generally influenced by an interpretative approach. However, the research findings can be accepted. This can be shown by the fact that similar data, was collected from the variety of research tools. Also, this approach used the expertise and skills of the researcher who was more experienced in using interpretative approaches.

The next chapter will explore these findings in the wider context of the literature reviewed in chapters 2 and 3. This will highlight how the experiences of setting up an education department reflects the debate on local government and the provision of services in Peterborough and also how the process differed in one city due to a variety of contextual issues.

Chapter 6

Analysis

The findings for the previous chapter point to a range of inter related influences which worked together in the decision making process of setting up a new education department. From this basis it is possible to review how central government, the DfEE, city council, both members and officers, other local factors and other local influences interacted in the various stages of decision-making.

However, this would be only part of the analysis of the research findings. To introduce an aspect of structured testing based on academic models would subject the findings to a more rigorous testing process. Instead of merely describing decision making processes it is possible to look closer.

From this work it will be possible to recognise the relationship between individuals and groups, policies and decision-making and organisational structures and their development.

Central Government

Central government had a significant influence on the setting up of the education department. In fact, there appeared to be two different influences at work. Central government allowed Peterborough to become a unitary authority. Yet it offered very little support in the actual process of setting up a new city council.

The Local Government Act 1992 encouraged district councils and other interested bodies, such as the Society of Education Officers, to consider unitary authority status.

Peterborough and Huntingdon district councils explored the opportunities offered by unitary authority status. In 1994, Cambridgeshire County Council and the district councils of Peterborough, Fenland, Cambridge and Huntingdon reported favourably on the potential benefits of unitary authorities.

However, once the principle of unitary authority status had been agreed between Peterborough City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and central government there was little guidance from central government. This also appeared to be the case with the English Phase 1 unitary authorities. For example, York had little guidance except from the DoE over the problems of finance. Cleveland had only limited contact with the DfEE.

Peterborough City Council aimed to establish the education department with the goal to try to solve a number of city problems that had been left by the county council. This was in line with central government expectations. From1991 central government had wanted a structure of local government that would be more responsive to local needs and demands. For example, a justification for splitting up ILEA had been that the local boroughs would be able to meet local needs more precisely. In Wales the large counties, such as Gwynedd and Clwyd were divided up and smaller town based unitary authorities were set up in places such as Aberconwy and Colwyn.

The overall availability of advice for Peterborough City Council was limited. The Association of District Councils, Society of Education Officers and the Audit Commission all published documents concerning the setting up of unitary authorities. The preparatory work of Milton Keynes suggests that these publications had been

circulated and discussed. However, there was little advice on setting up education departments even though such issues had been the subjects of debate both nationally and internationally.

In fact, the local county and district council publications did mention issues such as 'providing and enabling authorities,' 'lead authority' and discussed high and low level involvement in 1994. Therefore, it is clear that the application for unitary authority status had taken some note at least of current debates on the future of local government.

However, while it might have been true that some general references were made to current issues in local government there was little evidence that officers or members were familiar with the detail of these publications. No mention was ever made of them and there was no reference to them in the education agenda papers. They certainly were not in the local government library until 2000.

One reason for this situation was that the initial planning in Peterborough took place as the reports were being written. The 1995 documents may have been published just as the Local Government Review began but there was a time lag before they were widely available. Also, officers and members in Peterborough may never have received any of the publications directly because education decision-making was not the responsibility of district councils. Advice for education at that time was from a seconded headteacher who did not have expertise in the structure of education departments. Only in 1997 did the city council ask Milton Keynes for advice that appears to have been based on the 1995 and 1996 reports.

A small education department of approximately 60 officers and clerical staff was set up. Although the Association of Education Officers favoured a LEA with a high level of involvement in the provision of services, the city council in 1994 had decided to provide a high level of service through a variety of partnerships in the private and voluntary sectors. One reason for this policy decision was because Peterborough's population was well below the Maud Report's recommendations for the size of population necessary to support the funding of education. Also, with half of secondary schools being grant maintained schools, there was only a limited administrative role to carry out. This was largely limited to LMS, special needs and non-teaching services.

By May 1997 it was clear that the new government wanted the LEAs to have a new role to encourage increasing standards in schools. However, much of the information in the White Paper was vague. This was not helpful for the strategic planning of the new LEA and it created speculation about future developments.

This was an important problem for a new unitary authority. It would clearly have been irresponsible for officers and members to wait over a year for a possible general election before starting to set up the education department. Yet, the 1997 general election had made education a major issue and members and officers would have known that change was going to occur. The education working group had started in 1996 and based their ideas on past procedure and expectations of the future. However, in May 1997, the officers and members found that their plans for the education

department were suddenly redundant, and the substantial part of the planning process had to begin again.

The newly appointed director of education put forward what the department saw as its responsibilities based on government legislation:

- Baseline assessment.
- Infant class size reductions to at least 30.
- National literacy and numeracy targets.
- Target setting for schools and the LEA.
- Setting up of the 'National Grid for Learning' in the city.
- Setting up 'families' of schools.
- Headteachers' training procedures.
- Setting up school homework centres and family learning schemes.
- More local decision making on planning school places and new arrangements for school admissions.
- No more partial selection by academic ability.
- Have parent members of the Education Committee.

This was a different role than the previous plans had prepared for. It was a list that involved significant commitment of time, staff and resources. Over 100 staff had to be recruited. No inspectors had been appointed and there was no computer system capable of setting up a detailed data base of schools and their results.

At the same time there was little time to plan the structure or role of the LEA because government reforms insisted on quick and decisive changes. During May 1997 the government ended nursery vouchers and invited the LEA to provide plans to show

how nursery provision would develop along the lines of central government's wishes. Yet in Peterborough's case there was only one LEA nursery school and a variety of types of private provision.

The new government was keen to reduce class size. However, during the planning period no officer or member knew whether this limit was to apply to classes in all schools or average class size in each school. It was to be the responsibility of the LEA to allocate the necessary funds to achieve this goal but no budget had been made available and no costings had been done to allow the LEA to make a bid to 'New Deal for Schools'.

The government wanted to develop partnerships between schools and the LEA. Yet, only 50% of all secondary schools in the city had any immediate experience of working with a LEA and many of the schools had been in the vanguard of the opposition to unitary authority status.

The issue of 'school improvement and quality' in the government White Paper 'Excellence in Schools' had a great influence on the work of the new LEA. The government took away much of the responsibility for measuring standards in schools but drew up a national framework for school improvement which did not depend on the LEA for implementation.

The new LEA was left to analyse the results and then follow a process that included negotiation with the schools to determine how standards were to be raised. At this

point there was no formally organised advisory group of headteachers, no inspectorate and no means of collecting information.

DfEE

The DfEE had an important influence on the new education department. Although the DfEE had little involvement in the planning process of the education department, it had a significant and direct influence on the structure and running of the department through its developing policy agenda.

There was little evidence that previous local education reform had extensive DfEE involvement. The results of previous reforms may have discouraged the DfEE from becoming too involved. For example, the 1974 local government reforms had been seen to be against the overall benefit of education. The arguments concerning the abolition of ILEA centred not on education but focused on political control, democratic accountability and financial control. There was also some evidence that the DfEE had not been supportive of the Phase 1 unitary authorities. The DfEE made only occasional visits to Cleveland and when York City Council was in dispute with North Yorkshire County Council over education funding it was the Department of the Environment that intervened to resolve the dispute.

The DfEE was less concerned about administrative structure but increasingly concerned about the outcomes and results of LEAs and schools. It became very influential through:

- The Standards Fund (TSF).
- Standards of school achievements as measured by SATs and GCSEs.

- LMS approval.

The Standards Fund (TSF)

The Standards Fund was used by the DfEE to identify its targets and focus funding on specific targets. It was to be the role of the education department to make bids for TSF money to the DfEE. The categories for funding were decided by government priorities and there was a requirement for LEAs to match central funding in some cases. In this way the funding available from the DfEE supported national priorities at the expense of local issues. Resources that were available for local developments were diverted to provide the LEA's contribution to match funding.

This situation was by no means limited to Peterborough. For some time a number of politicians had complained that money given for a specified use was spent by the local authorities elsewhere. Despite the identification of educational problems, such as academic standards, a LEA could divert the money for another purpose.

This had two important effects on the education department. TSF made the LEA the agent of central government. Local needs were not the issues that the education department had to resource. Funding from central government was directed to priorities that were not necessarily shared by the city council but the education department had to administer the funds and monitor the outcome of the spending.

The LEA had not planned for this role. No education structure had been put in place and no officers appointed to make the bids to the DfEE. Instead senior officers were diverted from their executive responsibilities to spend increasing amounts of time

making detailed bids. Local problems and issues remained ignored until a crisis developed and needed emergency action.

School Improvement

The DfEE placed the LEA in a difficult situation by making it responsible for school improvement but, at the same time, taking away most of the LEA's powers to achieve the goal. The LEA saw this as a duty that was going to be carried out in a traditional way. Plans were drawn up for a large inspection and advisory team which was to be 'vigorous' and challenging.

The LEA was to identify schools with serious weaknesses or those that were underachieving. It would be able to report to the governors if it had concerns over the performance of the headteacher. The LEA also had the duty to raise standards for the students in the schools.

The DfEE did offer the reassurance that the government did not want the return of the old interventionist LEA. Phrases such as 'intervention in inverse proportion to success' underlined this policy. However, the National Literacy Project in 1997 indicated that the DfEE was to present each LEA with national targets.

Peterborough LEA attempted to meet these targets by trying to formulate a professional development strategy. These targets focused on local needs. However, the strategy was never completed. Published results and comparisons with other LEAs presented other measurements of how well the schools had performed. Instead the education department was placed in a position where it had to react to published

examination results and Ofsted reports. There was little opportunity to plan, prepare and implement a new LEA policy to improve standards in local schools with the continuous pressure for improvement in national priorities that were being created by testing and inspections.

Local Management of Schools

The Secretary of State set out requirements for the funding of schools. There was to be a separation between LEA funds and the funding for schools. Each year there would be a basic funding entitlement for each school. The intention was to minimise the proportion of LEA budgets that were to be spent on administration. This could lead to a type of 'rate-capping' on LEA expenditure.

The DfEE went some way to respond to earlier ideas. In 1995 the Society of Education Officers had realised that some schools did not want the LEA's services and that it was important that schools had the money to buy in services from other providers.

In September 1997 it was decided by the shadow education committee that about 75% of the education block grant was to be delegated to schools through the LMS scheme. This situation held dangers for the new LEA because such a heavy amount of 'top slicing' reduced school funding to a low level. However, the LEA would need that proportion of funding if it was to be a 'providing' authority. Although the financial situation was very tight, leading members had forecast the end of rate-capping and increased local spending funded from the council tax. There was also a hope that government funding for local authorities would increase. Therefore, the

administration accepted the high costs of being a 'providing' authority and absorbed costs that were brought about by the lack of economies of scale.

However, the extra education funding for the LEA was lower than expected. The DfEE limited LEA expenditure of funds from the SSA. Other funds from the DfEE were often match funded and targeted.

Council

In 1995, the Society of Education Officers had favoured a return to 'providing' LEAs. They emphasised organisational problems that school driven models of education had highlighted. They also recognised that the government had laid a large number of duties on the LEAs and they had to be in a position to intervene if necessary.

The Society of Education Officers accepted that a LEA could develop a role whereby it would be a 'providing' authority but would contract out service provision to private contractors or other LEAs. In particular, unitary authorities, which might lack financial resources, were seen to be the most likely type of council to experiment with joint authority agreements to provide services to schools.

In Peterborough there was an important consensus between the senior political figures on the education committee. There was a belief in education being provided locally by LEAs. As late as 1997 the working party on education was still considering the LEA to be a strategic leader of education in the city and that its policies would be implemented through the schools. The agenda of each working party and shadow education committee before May 1997 was dominated by the belief that

Cambridgeshire LEA had under-funded education provision in the city. Partnership between the schools and the LEA was expected to be an unbalanced relationship with the LEA controlling strategic policy.

Other members found an alternative argument difficult to introduce. Senior officers and members dominated the working party and shadow education committee meetings to such an extent that it was difficult for other members to make a contribution. Also, a significant number of members were new to the council and they often had limited knowledge to develop an alternative policy to argue with senior politicians.

The director and senior education officers were unlikely to support alternative forms of structure. The director and the majority of senior education officers were appointed from Cambridgeshire County Council where there was a belief in the need for a leading and supportive role for the LEA.

Every month there were a number of meetings where issues were discussed and understandings reached. Senior officers met with the chairperson, opposition representative and the leader of the Liberal group. At another date, the group leaders would then meet their own members to talk through the agenda.

It was rare for any member to change any important recommendation which had been discussed at the previous meetings. This was well illustrated when members were asked by the researcher to fill in the meeting rating checklists.

Overall, the junior members of the education working party and the shadow education committee made only a small contribution to any discussion and they tended to be limited to asking questions. Junior members were only in possession of the facts that had been made available to them by officers and senior members who all shared a broad agreement on the type of LEA they wanted.

The consensus over the structure of the education department was considered as a matter for some pride. The lack of the need for voting was seen as an indicator that all parties had faith in the planning process.

There were a number views concerning decision-making. Firstly, it was recognised that the practical process of setting up a new unitary authority was a very time consuming business. Members and most officers had district or county council responsibilities as well unitary authority meetings.

Another view was that the lack of voting was indicative of a degree of laziness and a lack of thorough preparation. It was suggested from outside the city council that it had been easier to accept a recommendation than to have a lengthy debate.

Providing Authority

From 1991, it appeared that the future for LEAs was in some doubt. The 1993 Education Act marked a phase where the government set out to deconstruct local systems of education and the grant maintained school was expected to be the norm rather than the exception. In 1996 the KPMG/Association of District Councils recognised that each council had to come to a decision over whether it was to

centrally provide a comprehensive range of educational services or whether it was to be an 'enabling authority' and allow schools to find services from a variety of providers.

There was support for the 'providing' authority model. For example, the reorganised Scottish education authorities continued to provide a wide range of services. In Peterborough, the Labour Party stated that it wanted a 'providing' unitary authority.

In practice, it was difficult for the LEA to move to a 'provider' organisation. LMS gave schools an amount of freedom to choose their own suppliers of services. Grant maintained schools had experience with contractors and were unwilling to end the arrangements. The LEA was too new to be able to provide a range of well tested services to schools and diseconomies of scale would make many of its services expensive.

The providing policy began to falter quickly. For example, 'personnel services' was divided between EPM in Cambridge, the personnel section in the LEA and 'personnel' in the council's corporate services department. Also, the education department was not staffed by specialists who could implement a providing role. In that situation the services became inefficient.

In 1994, Peterborough District Council expected the new unitary authority to have a wide range of shared service provision in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council. Even by 1996, the county expected that it would provide the existing services with Peterborough LEA buying into them.

Shared service provision might have been an advantage for the education department in its policy of being a 'high involvement' authority. The best example of the benefits of shared services came from the library service. It would have been a significant loss for the city to lose access to the well-developed Cambridgeshire library service. However, only small scale concerns, such as outdoor education, were jointly provided with Cambridgeshire County Council.

It could be argued that the needs of Peterborough were different from neighbouring authorities. For example, in the provision of nursery education Peterborough's needs were different from those of Cambridgeshire. In some cases, there was a lack of interest in sharing services. In the case of travellers' children's education letters were not answered. Consequently, the new Peterborough LEA would not have been confident on entering into service partnerships with such an authority.

Structure

One point in the Local Government Commission's 1991White Paper was the desire to see new structures in local government that included increased local involvement. Certainly the KPMG/Association of District Councils looked forward to the opportunities of having a choice of a variety of structures when unitary authorities were being set up.

There was little evidence of different structures of local government organisation being discussed and only later did the Audit Commission's publications become available. Professional journals contained no mention of unitary authorities and LEAs.

In Scotland, the re-organisation of local government saw the re-establishment of powerful city and county government. The experience in Wales and first phase unitary authorities pointed to unitary authorities adopting structures similar to those of the counties.

By 1998, it was clear that most unitary authorities had adopted 'functional' structures that included personnel and welfare, environment and corporate services. Few councils adopted commercial, community or neighbourhood structures.

In Peterborough, there had been limited debate over the structure of the education department. Senior members had ideas of a large education department that was to draw up policy and implement it throughout the city. The vision of the structure of the LEA was similar to the large neighbouring county LEAs.

By September 1997, the Director of Education had drawn up the final education department structure. It was a structure that a county council would have used at any time from the 1970s onwards. However, it was very expensive to set up and run.

The policy committee of the city council had the responsibility for recommending spending by the council. By November 1997 it became concerned that the proposed LEA budget was £300,000 higher than previous expectations. The shadow education committee ignored the warnings and approved the structure of the department.

The new unitary authority had an opportunity to review the traditional departmental structure of councils. In 1995 Cooper and Lybrand/Society of Education Officers put

forward the belief that council departments could benefit from working closely together. After briefings by Milton Keynes, in 1998, members began to discuss increased consultation and joint workings between committees. In particular, ideas such as placing social services 'children' responsibilities together with education were discussed.

However, joint departmental working was not successfully introduced in the new unitary authority. In the case of social services, the workload and problems over the implications of a nationally reported incident diverted attention away from joint departmental developments until the introduction of multi-agency initiatives, such as 'Sure-Start', at a much later date.

Another example of poor joint departmental working, was the move of libraries and heritage responsibilities from the education department. This change was carried out in such a manner that it was difficult for any future joint departmental development to be carried out between education and community services. Originally, Cambridgeshire County Council ran education libraries and heritage as one department. This included the responsibilities for youth clubs, sports centres and other leisure services. With no formal discussion, officers recommended the transfer of responsibilities for these areas of 'informal education' away from the education department and included them with leisure services in a new community services department. It was difficult for members and officers from the two departments to establish working relationships for some time.

Local Government 'Culture'

Although there was limited evidence available, it became clear that the 'culture' within the city council had a significant effect on aspects of the decision-making process. In particular, three examples pointed to a decision-making process that appeared to function away from the formal committee structure.

Officers had professional roles that they did not consider were open to committee debate. An example of this situation was the director of education who insisted that the operational structure of the education department was his responsibility. The structure was explained to members and questions answered but no vote was ever taken. At the same time, the policy committee, which was concerned over the financial implications, commented on the proposed structure but did not veto it. The only change in the education department's structure happened due to officer intervention. The director of education supported the inclusion of libraries, leisure and heritage in the education department. There was never an official explanation detailing why they were then transferred to community services.

However, during an interview, it was suggested that the district council's largest department had been Leisure. It was likely that the leisure officers had insisted that the new community services should have the responsibility for leisure, libraries and heritage and prevent a very large education department dominating the city council.

The establishment of the new unitary authority was designed to include officers from both the county and district councils. The director of education and senior education officers came from Cambridgeshire County Council. However, the culture of the city

council was so different from other authorities that it proved to be a barrier for staff transferring from the county council. Within two years, officers from the previous Peterborough district council had filled most of the senior posts.

Other local factors

Peterborough headteachers' cluster group

The 1991 Local Government Commission expected closer working relationships between schools and LEAs. In 1995, the Coopers and Lybrand report accepted that the credibility of the LEA was determined by the working relationship between the LEA and the schools.

At the time of setting up the new LEA the objectives of senior members and officers appeared to point the way to a strategic leadership of a high involvement LEA. This offered an unequal partnership and one which headteachers and governors were cautious of accepting.

Early experience in other local authorities pointed to a number of problems. In 1996, the Scottish local government re-organisation resulted in a greater political involvement in education decision-making. Welsh schools were concerned that there might be a return to the powerful LEAs of the 1970s and 1980s.

There had been a fear that small authorities would lack the resources to properly fund education services. In 1970, the Maud Report had suggested a minimum size of 250,000 population for a LEA. Most unitary authorities were to be much smaller than that and there were fears that they would not have the resources to adequately fund

the schools. In Wales, schools had been used to certain levels of funding and headteachers feared that the new smaller unitary authorities would not be able to provide the necessary service and support.

A number of headteachers challenged the LEA. There was little confidence in the new LEA. Grant maintained schools were running their own affairs successfully. Some headteachers of LEA schools had supported remaining in Cambridgeshire and had opposed the setting up of the unitary authority.

A number of headteachers were not convinced about the professional creditability of LEA officers. Some officers had limited experience in education administration and their knowledge of local schools was weak. Officers who had come from Cambridgeshire were largely unknown in the city or their previous work had not met the expectations of the city's headteachers. It was clear to many in the schools that the education department would not be a central provider of a comprehensive set of services and there was considerable doubt over whether it would even be able to fulfil its legal responsibilities in full. At best, the officers could offer to be 'honest brokers' of the decisions to be made with the schools.

The headteachers expressed their concern over the likely effectiveness of the education department. Both primary and secondary headteachers insisted that the city council should agreed to employ 'Educational Personnel Management' to administer the personnel arrangements of the schools. This had been part of the Cambridgeshire County Council education department but it had been 'privatised'. Without this agreement many of the headteachers would not support the new city council. This was

almost a declaration of a lack of confidence in the LEA and the headteachers wanted to safeguard an important area of their staffing administration.

At that point the education department set up a headteachers' cluster group. This attempted to bring together primary and secondary headteachers and old grant maintained schools with LEA schools. It was also an attempt to bring the schools and the LEA into a constructive working relationship.

In fact, the formation of this cluster group led to a financial problem in the education department. Although there were differences between the different types of schools, the discussions centred on the funding of the schools.

The LEA was concerned that the demands of government legislation, and the expectations of the DfEE, would create a much larger responsibility and work load. The estimate for the LEA percentage of the total education budget was 30%. This was unacceptable for the school headteachers who saw it as a strategic interference in their establishments and also an impossible figure from which to fund the schools. The percentage figure was to have to go to 20% and eventually lower.

Admissions

The admission to schools had for a long time been an issue in the city. The situation was influenced by two main factors:

1. The city was a designated new town and had a large RAF base near-by. This meant that large numbers of people came to the city often finding that their closest primary school was full.

2. The city had a very popular ex-grammar school with links to the cathedral which enjoyed a high status, conducted a selective system of selection and had very high academic results.

The ex-grammar school attempted to break away from a previous county agreement and change its admissions criteria. The LEA had to act immediately because the major factor that influenced admissions was that school resources were linked to student numbers through the LMS scheme. If the LEA had not resolved the situation it would have lost all support of the secondary schools.

The LEA objected under equal opportunities legislation because the proposals were for 'male Cathedral Choristers' and effectively selection by ability and it was upheld after an appeal to the Secretary of State for Education. (Peterborough City Council, Education Committee Agenda, 15th October 1997, p 59)

Other local influences

A major aspect of the government's re-structuring of local government was to allow councils to become more responsive to local needs. Peterborough's request for unitary authority status emphasised the need to tackle the city's specific problems.

However, there were few examples of interested local groups becoming involved in the setting up of the education authority. The churches were not involved to any great extent and their representatives were not regular attendees at education meetings. The only direct contact came in a letter concerning the problem of transport for church schools. Local community groups may have channelled their concerns through their

ward councillors. However, there is no evidence of any official contact. Government funded bodies, such as the local Training and Enterprise Council, also made little contribution.

How the research questions have been answered

Grounded theory

A number of models of decision making in public authorities have been developed, such as the rational actor model, bounded rationality, disjointed incrementalism, organisational process, bureaucratic politics model, Sabatier's political change model and Bachrach and Baratz's model. These models illustrated different but often overlapping aspects of the decision making process in local government. Although it is unlikely that any one model will explain all decisions completely, it is necessary to use them to view the decision making process in a rounded form and attempt to develop a general explanation of the way the education department was set up.

Rational actor model

The first test of the rational actor model was to define or identify the problem. A major difficulty with the setting up of the education department was that there was little evidence that any officer or member actually defined what the department was to achieve.

Before May 1997 the new LEA lacked a detailed educational philosophy on which to base any over riding objectives. Instead practical and specific outcomes and administrative practices were discussed. The LEA was to help schools with

curriculum development, involve all types of schools with the LEA in raising standards, encourage vocational education and reduce student exclusions.

The external consultant also presented a number of areas of possible concern. The new LEA was an attempt to improve on the county's performance in the area, extra funding was to be given to the schools and educational standards were to rise. There were intentions to develop partnerships with schools, parents, voluntary bodies and other public agencies. These were adopted by the shadow education committee but there were no education officers to determine executive objectives.

After May 1997 specific changes occurred. There were statements of intent to form partnerships with schools, set up a headteachers' forum and begin negotiations with schools over LMS. The LEA was to be a 'providing' authority. Many of the initiatives were based on expected government policy or vague statements of intent but there was no published or debated policy behind them. In fact the education department was only able to publish its education development plan in 1999.

With only limited aims the education department was to have a structure which was designed in a general manner with no specific goals to work towards. As there were no specific policy aims and limited objectives it was difficult to identify a number of possible ways of implementing general but often changing intentions.

This may help explain the changes in the proposed structure of the education department. Originally, the structure was to be based on the old county LEA which

included libraries and heritage. Then the structure was changed to include a director's section and eventually a three section education department.

This pattern of change over two years highlighted the move from accepting a limited role that the county LEAs had had during the 1990s to a more interventionist role from 1997. However, the problem remained that the members and officers did not know the detail of government policy in 1997 and so they could not be certain that what they were planning was actually the best way of organising the department.

The director of education designed the structure of the education department. No other member or officer was involved in this process. Within a rational model the strategic decision making committee should have developed policy. However, the shadow education committee was never asked to do this. Few objectives were developed and it was difficult to identify a departmental structure, which would be able to implement objectives. The new department structure became a compromise between government demands to raise standards and local priorities that focused on social needs, exclusions and special education.

The rational actor model would tend to value the expert or professional. A public body would often have a chain of command and a flow of information between all levels of responsibilities. The director of education was accepted as the senior officer who had the expertise to draw up the structure of the department. However, in this case, the director had no defined policy to work to and there was no hierarchy of officers who could contribute to the decision making process.

Other local government officers had an important influence on the structure of the education department. These officers had worked in the old district council and they had operated in an established management hierarchy. They were able to review proposed changes within their own departmental context and then develop recommendations to protect their positions. In this way it was possible for officers in other departments in the city council to bring about important changes in the role of the education department.

The rational actor model had a number of weaknesses in this case study. The education department was set up during a time of significant and rapid ideological change. In this situation there was a constant change in the identification of appropriate problems. Also, once problems were identified they changed over time as events developed. This model also assumed an established hierarchy with a relatively mechanistic and consistent role. Therefore there was some difficulty in applying the model to a new education department in a new local council and during a time of change in national government.

Bounded rationality

Bounded rationality was a model that attempted to overcome some of the difficulties of the rational actor model. There was recognition that the decision maker could have all the facts available but that it was too much to expect that all the possible solutions could be analysed.

The setting up of the new education department was at a time of constant change. The decision makers had to adopt an acceptable outcome in the face of competing and

ever changing demands. This would help explain the decisions reached at strategic and executive levels. The shadow education committee was faced with ever changing demands. It was difficult to predict what might be required in the future and so decisions had to be made that were flexible in the face of future pressures. For example, the change from a four section department to a three section one indicated that the shadow education committee could manage change quickly.

Bounded rationality helped explain why the director of education set up a structure that changed at least three times. He could not accurately predict future developments and he tried to adopt a flexible management structure. Within this context the loss of libraries and heritage responsibilities could have been seen as a 'victory' for the new community services department. However, it also could be seen as an example of education department management structures responding to central government demands. The test of the eventual management structure would be in its flexibility to manage changing demands rather than in the efficiency of providing a particular service. In this situation there was no interest in finding maximum outcomes only acceptable ones.

Bounded rationality was able to give a much better explanation of why the LEA decided on the final management structure. Whereas the rational actor model pointed out a number of difficulties over policy development and implementation, the bounded rationality model emphasised the need to be flexible and to make decisions within the existing context. Rather than see the decisions made by the LEA as a problem, the bounded rationality model recognised that the decisions were flexible and acceptable responses made within the context at the time.

Disjointed incrementalism model

Disjointed incrementalism was a model that could be used to help explain why cautious policies and a conservative management structure were judged to be acceptable by the LEA.

There was a cautiousness in setting up the education department. The education working party and the shadow education committee had a number of opportunities to introduce radical changes to the management structure of the department. This opportunity was shown during the meeting with councillors and officers from Milton Keynes and published examples from York. However, the working party and shadow committee referred back to Cambridgeshire LEA practices and accepted the advice from an external consultant who had worked with a variety of unitary authorities that had set up traditional education departments.

The majority of senior education officers came from Cambridgeshire County Council. This ensured that many county practices would be adopted in Peterborough. The stated intention by the city council was that the transfer from county to city control had to be 'seamless' and the city had to be seen as successful from the start, staff and practices were to ensure a continuity of service.

Disjointed incrementalism could be used to explain the decision making process of the LEA from 1996 onwards. Policy making in public authorities could be seen as a continuous process as the authority attempted to manage a constant stream of events. Decision making would be a serial process and that builds up into a pattern. The new

authority expected to be able to modify the solutions as the results of previous policies came to light. In practice they adopted previous county policy, looked for neighbouring experiences and then the LEA would be in a position to modify their proposed solutions if new events occurred.

Disjointed incrementalism also recognised the nature of public decision-making. The working party and shadow education committee was composed of a number of different individuals and groups who contributed a collection of different views. Disjointed incrementalism allowed for a decision to be reached and then, after evaluating the results, for another policy to be adopted. This model did not accept the authoritarian hierarchy of decision-making but allowed for a more realistic plurality of decision-making which was part of the complexities of political life.

This model appeared to offer an analysis of the style and process of public authority decision making. However, the difficulty was that it tended to focus on style at the expense of radical change. It was a conservative model that rejected large scale change as being counter productive. Yet, in the case of Peterborough, one of the reasons for setting up a city LEA was to encourage large scale change. Also, the model was largely concerned with 'outcome'. There was little emphasis on the ways in which the process of decision-making could have on the eventual decision.

Organisational process model

The interdependence of people and groups in the decision making process was an attractive model to use to explain the implementation of the decision to create an education department. This model recognised that policy was the outcome of the

interaction between groups and individuals. It was attractive because the decision making process involved two separate arenas. The inner arena consisted of political groupings of members, officers from different authorities, officers from different departments, a school headteacher and an external adviser. The outer group was made up of the local political parties, voluntary bodies, headteachers and governors, the church representatives and other interested parties.

There was a broad consensus between senior members, the external consultant and officers over the nature of the education department. It was conservative, cautious and pragmatic rather than radical, vigorous and philosophical. Regular group spokes' meetings maintained this consensus and the meetings were supported with advice that emphasised previous county experience.

Officers played an important role in the implementation policy. Delegated powers enabled them to make decisions on the structure of the department without referral to members. There were also opportunities where the expertise and professional advice of officers was accepted with little or no debate by members.

The outer group was less active. This was because many of the outer group had links with the inner group. Local political parties could channel ideas and concerns through their city councillors. In a similar way, the churches and voluntary groups appeared to play little part but there is the likelihood that a number of unrecorded and informal discussions took place. A shadow education committee member may well also have a significant role in a local voluntary body. An officer would often have a responsible

position in a local church. Also, in such a small city, there was an informal network of friendships and family relationships that may have been very important.

The one exception was headteachers and governors. This outer group was very active. It provided a professional adviser to the education working party and had a representative on the shadow education committee. Throughout 1996 and 1997 the headteachers and chairs of governors were very critical of the new LEA. The education department spent a great deal of time trying to encourage headteachers to support the new LEA and respond to their criticisms.

There was a problem with this model. It would have been largely acceptable if the education department had been made up of large sections. However, before 1998, it consisted of individuals and small sections. Decisions were was made by individuals who were new to the city or their LEA post. Organisational culture and standard working practices did not exist at the time in the strength that this model assumed.

Bureaucratic politics model

The bureaucratic politics model was helpful in explaining the process of setting up the education department. It emphasised the individual's influence and the competition between key individuals rather than focusing on organisational features.

This model reflected the competition between officers and between members and also between the two groups. Although there was a consensus between the senior members concerning the process of setting up the education department, there was evidence of competition between individual members. For example, in political groups there were

supporters of a high involvement 'providing' authority and those who supported an minimum involvement 'enabling' role. Many senior officers competed for increasing influence and responsibilities as shown by the movement of sections from one council department to another one.

This was an attractive but simplistic model. It assumed that a person's position in the organisation determined their behaviour. In the city council there were differences in the degrees of influence. Politicians from the city wards were far more influential than the members from the rural wards. A senior officer from the old city based district council had more influence than one who had transferred from Cambridgeshire County Council.

Also, in this model, no account was taken of an individual's ambitions and values. An individual's emotional state, age and outlook would all have a role to play. For example, the immediate closing of a failing school by the director of education on the LEAs first day was a move which could not be predicted unless some account was taken of these more subjective factors.

Ideology and perception in the decision making process

The previous models tended to concentrate on policy processes and ignore important aspects such as beliefs of individuals. These aspects were important because they were part of a 'filtering' process. This was a process where an individual, when confronted with a large amount of information, used their own ideas and experiences of the world to make sense of the information. Information that supported the individual's view of the world would be the most likely to be adopted.

This view was helpful to explain the consensus between members and officers when setting up the education department. Many of the members and officers shared similar experiences. They had lived in the city for long periods, had been involved with council work for much of their careers and had experience of high involvement 'providing' LEAs. They recognised the problems that faced the city and they had experienced the great changes that the new town development had caused.

As the amount of information increased with the development of the LEA the decision makers made sense of the data by interpreting it to fit their experiences. In this situation a number of problems began to arise as the government's policy, which targeted national priorities, was 'filtered' by individuals who attempted to put a city interpretation to it.

Such a group view survived in working parties and sub-committee meetings because of 'group think'. Senior members and officers agreed with each other and other members accepted their lead. A number of members had shared similar experiences that supported the senior members' views. Also, some councillors felt prevented from asking questions or expressing doubts over decisions if they had been endorsed by the rest of the group.

Implementation, non-decisions and power

The agenda was controlled by the group spokes' meeting. The chair and external consultant, or later the director, introduced items for discussion. In this way the consensus was maintained and potentially threatening matters kept away. For

example, the issue of the 'providing' LEA was never debated. It always appeared as part of a money saving initiative or an improvement in a service.

This situation had an important influence on the implementation of decisions. Agreed decisions had to be implemented quickly because of the amount of time available before Vesting Day. However, the actual process of implementation was poor. The education department consisted of a small number of people and they were unable to cope with the work load. Also, few priorities were identified. During the setting up process, all decisions were important to enable a smooth transition from county to city control. Therefore officers were unable to prioritise their work and the administrative process broke down.

Sabatier's political change model.

Theoretical models were not necessarily competitive rivals because they tried to explain complementary aspects of an issue. Sabatier attempted to develop an empirical model that linked bureaucratic or institutional models with values and beliefs.

Sabatier developed the idea of the policy sub system that included both the policy maker, groups which implemented decisions and those who disseminated and evaluated them. In the case of the education department, these would include the sub committee members and senior officers, education officers, headteachers and governors, the press and Ofsted.

Within each sub system there would be a number of competing groups and people with similar ideas distributed throughout the organisation. There would be also be a number of 'policy brokers'. This advocacy coalition model was attractive in that it sought to explain the culture and working of the education department within the city council. For example, a large number of ex-Cambridgeshire County Council staff were employed in the education department. This may have helped to set up an education department that was a copy of the Cambridgeshire LEA. At first, many officers were content to buy in a large number of education services from the county or to set up joint working agreements. There was also evidence that ex-county senior officers who worked in neighbouring departments also tended to contact each other for informal advice and support rather than refer to the town hall. In this situation it would appear that shared beliefs and common ideas had developed in Cambridgeshire LEA and there was a process that carried them over to Peterborough.

Another development was also occurring. The departments that had the highest number of ex-county officers, such as education, were housed in a new building some distance away from the town hall. During the course of the next 18 months ex-county staff in the education department, the director and two senior officers from Cambridgeshire County Council left the LEA. At the same time ex-district council staff from a number of departments were transferred to the education department. Within two years a majority of education department staff were ex district council employees.

Sabatier's three levels of belief also helped explain the decisions made in the education department. There was limited evidence concerning deep core belief. The

findings indicated beliefs that involve public service, a commitment to the city and working in a spirit of cooperation and mutual benefit rather than competition. If this was the case there was substantial evidence that the officers and members had a culture which was essentially conservative and cautious and that there was a deep seated commitment to the city and its traditions and practices.

Sabatier's second level of belief involved influences such as economic, social and technological change. These forces tend to change more often than first level beliefs. There were a number of concerns in the city which the unitary authority was expected to work on. Initial submissions for unitary authority status included views on how a smaller authority would recognise local problems. To some groups and individuals the dynamism of the new town development of the 1970s and 1980s had gone. Instead places such as Milton Keynes and Corby were developing at the expense of the city. Others saw the city on the edge of economic change with high technology companies moving into the area but finding services and skills lacking. There was no provider of higher education in the city.

With regard to the application of policy to specific areas this would be much easier to change. The new town development commission had controlled much of Peterborough for a nearly 15 years. Cambridgeshire County Council was the city's first tier of local government. The city council was a district council with only a limited role. However, if the city was a unitary authority it would be easier to prioritise local needs.

To entwine these belief levels together Sabatier saw three essential conditions. He believed that there would only be a limited number of competing advocacy coalitions and that the core groups would be largely stable.

At first, this could be assumed to be the political groups. However, the city's political groups were not stable. With elections every three out of four years there was a continuous change of individual councillors. A minority political group controlled which party formed the administration. In fact, the competing advocacy groups tended to base themselves around rural and city backgrounds and include both members and officers.

The dominant advocacy group took about 18 months to establish itself. Core attributes did not change and the education department largely structured itself to respond to local problems and work in a conservative and cautious manner. The major attack on the core beliefs of the advocacy coalition groups came from outside when the government initiated a range of new and important responsibilities for the LEA which were based on national priorities and not local needs.

Minority advocacy groups did have significant influence on the non core levels of policy. Senior officers from the old district council were able to make recommendations on how the education department should be structured and run. Officers and members with a county background were able to propose a management structure that copied the old Cambridgeshire LEA.

Sabatier's model was attractive in that it attempted to involve both institutional models and values and beliefs. However, there was a difficulty over the fluidity of decision-making which makes Sabatier's model difficult to use. In particular, it was difficult to define 'policy advocate' and 'policy broker'. Individuals could be in both roles at once. Also, there was little attention paid to the process of actual policy making. This was a weakness because decision-making was the main work of the working parties and committees that decided on how the education department was going to be set up. Long term beliefs were seen to be the foundations of political activity. However, self interest, short term expediency and a unexpected events may also be important.

Bachrach and Baratz

Bachrach and Baratz recognised the lack of a general universal theory. They attempted to develop a model which could be used to test specific case studies and look at the nature of power and discover how decisions and non-decisions were made.

Bachrach and Baratz (1962) rejected the 'elitist' approach that equated expected power with real power (p.947). Instead they supported a 'pluralist' approach which stated that power was the '...participation in decision –making and can be analysed only after careful examination in a series of concrete decisions' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962, p.948).

Such an approach was considered to be needed early on in the research. At the very start of participant observation it became clear that little debate was occurring in the committee stage and that senior members and officers appeared to be in agreement.

This was underlined when a number of key senior officer appointments were made and the education committee had been totally unaware that they had been. Clearly, the decisions were being made away from the education committee and power lay outside the official committee structure. Also, the shadow education committee and education committee were being used to ratify previously made decisions and their agenda was full of items that most members agreed with.

The pluralist was not concerned with the reputedly powerful but:

- Select for study a number of key as opposed to routine political decisions.
- Identify the people who took an active part in the decision-making process.
- Obtain a full account of their actual behavior while the policy conflict was being resolved.
- Determine and analyse the specific outcomes of the conflict. (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962,p.948)

However, Bachrach and Baratz realised that the pluralist approach took no account of the fact that power was exercised by confining decision-making to 'safe' issues. Also, the pluralist approach did not provide any criteria for distinguishing between unimportant and important issues (1962, p.948).

In this situation it was important to have access to other decision-making meetings. In this case study interviews became increasingly important. The pre-committee meetings and part group briefings were the areas where many of the decisions were made. In particular, the pre-committee meetings that involved senior officers and members, were very important and appear to be where issues were discussed and

agreements reached. Few recommendations came to committee which involved any disagreement and no votes were ever taken.

They argued that no one could be certain, in any given situation, that the unmeasurable elements were inconsequential and were not of decisive importance. If that was the case, then power could not be actually embodied in concrete and necessarily have identifiable outcomes (Bachrach and Baratz, p.948). For example, 'A person or group-consciously or unconsciously –created or reinforced barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts, that person or group had power' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962, p.949).

A good example of this situation was in the appointment of senior officers for the new education department. The appointment of the director of education and the senior management team could have led to a number of disputes. Instead, the administration took the decision to policy committee. This followed council procedure in that the policy committee had the final veto on spending and it was responsible for appointments. However, it had little expertise in education appointments or professional appointments.

There is little evidence available to indicate why this appointment route was taken. It is possible that the senior members of the administration were on both the policy and education committees. The opposition party had members who were experienced in education but not on the policy committee. Also the senior appointments came from Cambridgeshire County Council. This may have been a politically sensitive issue for the administration. However, it may have been felt, and there is documented evidence

in previous chapters, that the administration's main priority was a smooth change over to city control. The appointment of senior officers who had expert and professional knowledge of the area and who had been previously appointed to their county posts by the opposition representative on education, may have been supported to meet this priority

They saw that power was exercised when one decision made by one person affected another person. However, the decision maker might also have influenced social and political views and organisational practices. That would have limited the scope of issues to safe areas and that would safeguard the decision maker's position (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962, p.948).

In this situation it was relatively straightforward to see the shadow and education committees being kept to ratifying decisions concerning 'safe' issues. The education committee agenda was often full of recommendations concerning the cost of free school meals and uniform grants and Standard Fund bids.

It was also difficult to decide on which decisions were significant and could be tested. There may have well been no agreement to what the important issues were or even whether there were any (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962, p.949). Bachrach and Baratz said that it was not enough to define a critical issue until there were likely to be at least two preferences over the possible outcome (1962 p.950). There needed to be the mobilisation of bias-to recognise the dominant values and political myths of the institutions, the vested interests. Armed with that knowledge it might be possible to define significant issues (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962, p.950).

Throughout the case study there was the unfolding of key issues. At the beginning of the work the researcher considered that the setting up of a working and efficient education department was the main issue. The case study was expected to look at the way the structure of the LEA was developed and the political debated involved.

However, it soon became clear that overall political views concerning the role and functions of the city council and its relationship with interest groups and individuals in the city were as important as a structure for the education department. The rapid loss of ex county council employees for the education department and the move towards a 'providing' authority were two examples of how the education department was set up to reflect the views and beliefs of dominant political and social groups in the city.

Bachrach and Baratz called for the study of power to recognise the 'two faces of power'. The researcher will not ask the elitist question 'Who rules?' or the pluralist question 'Does anyone have power?' The researcher should investigate the mobilisation of bias in the organisations under study. By analysing the dominant values, myths, procedures and rules, the researcher would make a careful inquiry into the individuals and groups who might have gained from the existing bias and those individuals and groups that would have suffered from it.

It was not surprising that there was very limited evidence of voluntary groups and interest groups having a significant role in the setting up of the education department. Their interests were already reflected by the members and officers in the new city

council. It became clear that employees and officers had close political, professional, social or family connections. These often cut across political boundaries and tended to reflect a local and city based 'culture'.

Next, there would be an examination of nondecision-making; whereby individuals and groups seek to limit the scope of decision making to safe issues. The most significant example of this was the fact that the education committee never voted on one issue. Every issue was always accepted. This was not difficult in the sense that important issues such as appointments and departmental structure were not debated but a recommendation presented.

Finally, with the knowledge concerning the restrictive face of power as a foundation for analysis and as a standard for distinguishing between routine and key decision-making the researcher could begin to analyse participation in decision-making of concrete issues (Bachrach and Baratz,1962, p.952).

This is exactly what the researcher had to do. Rather than record the debate of contentious issues in committee the researcher found that a few members and officers dominated the discussions of the committee. In this case, it appeared to be far more important to recognise which individuals were controlling the direction of the committee rather than what was actually being said.

However, the significant problem remained in that such an approach went beyond that which was immediately objectively measurable. Bachrach and Baratz accepted the criticism but they still believed that unmeasurable aspects could be as 'real' as a

measurable element (1962, p.952). This model emphasised the need to recognise the unmeasurable. This would be a valuable approach in a later chapter. However, there were real misgivings about adopting a model with serious weaknesses.

Little of these findings were actually measurable. Time factors may well have prevented detailed debate. The use of the policy committee for appointments was in line with council procedure and custom. The seemingly council wide preference for providing a wide range of services could have been due to the great need for them in certain areas. The quick departure of county council staff may have been due to promotion, retirement or poor commuting conditions.

In 1963 Bachrach and Baratz stated that decision-making was brought about by the combination of:

1. Power-relational, conflict of values, threat of sanctions.
2. Authority- relational, possible conflict of values, no severe sanctions.
3. Influence-relational, demand rationally perceived, conflict of values, no severe sanctions.
4. Manipulation- non-relational, non-rational, no conflict of vales, no sanctions.
5. Force-relational to non-relational, application of severe sanctions (1963, p.640).

In stating these five factors, they recognised that there were few accepted definitions. For example, Bachrach and Baratz stated that there was little agreement over terms such as power and are confused with other concepts. Power and influence were used interchangeably and force and authority ignored (1963, p.632).

They recognised that researchers had often assumed that power was observable in decision making processes but that they had over looked non-decision making (1963, p.632). Decision makers were also subjected to a variety of often unmeasurable influences. 'A variety of complex factors affect decision-making-the social, cultural, economic and political backgrounds of the individuals' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1963, p.632).

In this complex situation, Bachrach and Baratz said that to say one person has power is unacceptable for three reasons:

1. It failed to distinguish between power over people and power over matter.
2. The view that a person's power was measured by the total number of desires that he achieved is erroneous. One cannot have power in a vacuum-but only in relation to someone else.
3 The possession of the tools of power did not mean that person is in possession of power (1963, p.633).

They also saw that 'force' was an important factor of power, for example, 'Force is manifest power' (1963, p.635). That the availability of sanctions - reward or penalty - was a necessary condition of power. By itself force was not sufficient to have power (1963, p.634).

Instead, Bachrach and Baratz suggested that power was:

1. There is a conflict over values or courses of action between A and B.
2. B complies with A's wishes.

3. He does so because he is fearful that A will deprive him of a value or values which he, B, regards more highly than those which would have been achieved by non-compliance (1963, p.635).

However, for Bachrach and Baratz the 'rule of anticipated reactions' meant that though B accedes to A's demands, A tailored his demands in the light of B's likely reactions (1963, p.635).

In that way Bachrach and Baratz were able to distinguish between power and force:

> '....the difference between power and force is simply that in a power relationship one party obtains another's compliance, while in a situation involving force one's objectives must be achieved, if at all, in the face of non-compliance'(1963, p.636).

In other words: 'Where power is being exercised, the individual still retains this choice' (1963, p.636). However, force may not be relational. Here the compliance maybe forthcoming in the absence of recognition on the compiler's part, either of the source or the exact nature of the demand upon him (1963, p.636).

Force and manipulation, like power, involved a conflict of values, but unlike power, they are non-rational and tended to be non-relational (Bachrach and Baratz, 1963, p.636). 'One person has influence over another within a given scope to the extent that the first, without resorting to either a tacit or an overt threat of severe deprivations, causes the second to change his course of action. Thus, power and influence are alike in that each has both rational and relational attributes. But they are different in that the exercise of power depends upon potential sanctions'(1963, p.637).

In a humane society authority could perform a valuable function of limiting the behaviour of people in official positions to legitimate acts for their actions must be justified by reasoned explanation.

Bachrach and Baratz believed that decisions were not just brought about by the exercise of power. They were brought about partly by the force, influence and /or authority. Every social decision involves interaction between individuals and at least one person's compliance must be obtained. For example, '... a decision is a set of actions related to and including the choice of one alternative rather than another'(1963, p.639).

In this way Bachrach and Baratz presented a broader, conceptual frame within which may be easier to compare the factors underlying different decisions in different circumstances (1963 p.641).

This broader framework was very important. It would be easy to suggest that decisions were made along party lines because members would respond to party discipline and senior posts were in the gift of party leaders. It is often forgotten that party leaders are voted into their positions each year and they were aware of the many different sub-groups within their group. For example, the Conservative group was divided up between the urban members and rural members. The Independent group was made up of independent, Liberal and Liberal-Democrat members. There were also divisions between members who have full time careers and those who were free

during the day and between members of old established families and those members who had arrived in the city during the new town development.

However, developing their earlier work Bachrach and Baratz were also able to look at the area of nondecision-making. 'When the dominant values, the accepted rules of the game, the existing power relations among groups, and the instruments of force, singly or in combination, effectively prevent certain grievances from developing into full-fledged issues which call for decisions, it can be said that a nondecision-making situation exists' (1963, p.641).

Although Bachrach and Baratz believed that it was true that a nondecision was not visible to the naked eye, a latent issue was discernible and so it is the mobilisation of bias. Thus it can be said that the nondecision-making process (the impact of the mobilisation of bias upon a latent issue), in distinction to a nondecision, is indeed subject to observation and analysis' (1963, p.641).

In those instances when a latent issue, usually kept submerged, was successfully pushed forward and emerged as a public issue, it was likely that the mobilisation of bias would be directly and consciously employed against those who demanded a redress of grievances by the decision-making organ (1963, p.642).

In this case study it was possible to recognise that there were latent issues which were submerged. Although it was almost impossible to identify a 'city culture' which was valued by many members and officers there were a number of discernible aspects. The opposition of the headteachers' group is a good example where, on the surface,

there was concern over funding but submerged were a number of issues regarding the holding of power and the way of life for the people in the city. Another example was the move by one school to change the admissions system to secondary schools and set up its own junior school. There were a number of constructive reasons for this development and it enjoyed considerable parental support in the city. However, it was very quickly rejected by all political parties in the city council and referred to the Secretary of State for Education for a final decision. That such a relatively minor proposal prompted such a rapid and substantial response was a good indication of the mobilisation of bias.

Bachrach and Baratz were correct to say that there was not one universal academic model of decision-making. It is unlikely that one model will ever be more than generally indicative. Decision-making happens in a number of ways. It may be viewed as an objective or an more instrumentalist process. Decision-making processes are different in different types of organisations and at different levels.

Both Sabatier and Bachrach and Baratz attempt to provide models which seek to be universal models with a variety of success. However, they are probably best used as complementary models which look at different aspects of the decision making process.

Academic models of decision-making were very effective in looking closely at the decision making process and helped greatly to indicate a variety of trends, issues and aspects. However, each academic model of decision-making indicated a particular aspect of the decision making process or offered support for the findings of another

model. In a similar way as Sabatier it may well be more effective to adopt a number of different models and incorporate them in an incremental or layer approach. In this way, depending on the thesis involved a range of appropriate models can be chosen. In this way the subject can be analysed by the use of the most effective models but at the same time it would share some models and their findings with other similar case studies. In this way, the unique requirements of a particular case study can be accommodated and, at the same time, it can share a number of comparative tests with similar work.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

In Chapter 1 Handy was used as an example of how some commentators were viewing organisational change. This case study has highlighted some of the changes that were predicted. The 'status quo' was not the way forward and continuous incremental change was not the process which confronted the new LEA. It appeared that officers and members wanted to change as little as possible; indeed in some cases to go back to re-create the LEA of the 1970s and 1980s, where change meant more of the same; only better.

However, in this situation, change was uncertain and unpredictable. Handy called this 'discontinuous change'. (Handy, 1991, p.7) Here change is not necessarily incremental but different types of behaviour, re-thinking the way things are learnt because the knowledge and experience of elders is not always appropriate and because of the increasing use of new technology.

The demand was increasingly for results and there was an opportunity for change in the way services were delivered. In Handy's views of organisation it can be plainly seen that the city council looked to the traditional practice. There was no attempt to set up an 'established core' of professional officers. In the new council's strategic and executive cabinet arrangements the senior core people were to be partners alongside the senior members. This was not to happen and indeed senior officers were the first to be retired or made redundant. (1991, p.76)

There was much talk about a 'pancake structure' but the education department continued to grow in numbers rapidly. In a 'providing' authority there was little thought about a contractual fringe of individuals and organisations.

Handy saw that it was the organisation's job to produce results. However, at times the new LEA appeared to want to provide employees with an alternative community providing work and meaning for all, for life, and function as a deliverer of central government policies (1991, p.70).

Overview of findings

Central government was the single greatest influence in the setting up of the education department. Government legislation changed the role, responsibilities and structure of the new department. In particular, the role of 'partnership' made the development of a 'providing' authority difficult and created a number of problems for co-ordinated leadership for the LEA.

There was a change in government policy during 1997. In May the general election replaced the Conservative government with a Labour government. Previous central government policies had stripped many duties and responsibilities from the LEAs. Yet, from 1997, the new education department was given new responsibilities for school improvement.

There were a number of changes. These included central government legislation that ended vouchers for nursery education and demanded classes of 30 or less for infant schools. These were sudden moves and they 'unsettled' the education department.

They put it into a position where it had to make quick decisions and set up the changes at a time when it was still trying to decide on its strategic development policy and lay down a structure for the department.

The city council and education department appeared to be unaware of any debate concerning the provision of services. Senior members and officials made no mention of alternative ways of providing services. Members from other the administration and opposition groups, senior officers from the old district and county councils and the external consultant were convinced of the advantages of a traditional county LEA structure and role. Officers and members operated as 'leaders' of education in the city and not as partners in service provision. There was an overall belief in LEA provided education to solve local problems and the expectation of new funding arrangements to make this possible.

As the DfEE was not involved in the setting up process little external advice was available. There were few education officers involved in the decision making process and members were not briefed on education matters until 1997. There was no local government library available until 1998 and there was no evidence publications from the Audit Commission were available and read. In the minutes of the education working group and shadow education committee only government publications were listed as attributed sources.

The DfEE was an important influence on the early development of the department. At first, the DfEE did not intervene. There was no guidance on any matter except for a small number of HMI visits and there is no evidence of any other form of help.

Another barrier to successful re-organisation was the level of funding. Central government had provided a loan of £5 million for the city council to carry out re-organisation. At the same time, there was a belief by members of the administration that extra funds for education were going to be made available by central government and be channelled through the LEA. The education department had been set up to be a 'providing' authority with a structure that was able to carry out an interventionist role. However, central government did not provide a sufficient level of funding to the LEA and the education department was set up to perform a role which it was never called upon to carry out.

The LEA found it difficult to respond to DfEE requirements. After the 1997 general election, the education department had been hastily re-organised as an enabling organisation with a staff of about 60 officers. However, The Standards Fund threw a huge burden on to the department. No planning had gone into how the LEA was going to bid for funding. Instead, officers were faced with drawing up a number of bids, which took time and resources to produce. Yet the successful bids only increased education funding by 1.5 % and in those areas which the DfEE had targeted. These targeted areas were important national issues but often they were not the main local priorities.

Another demand made by the DfEE was the raising of standards in schools. The LEA had little power to make schools act in the desired ways but they were held accountable. A range of SATs, GCSEs, A levels, literacy and numeracy tests were used to monitor standards and the results were published.

Although the city had few 'failing schools' it had relatively low external examination results. The publication of results was to be a serious problem. The department had never been set up for a monitoring role. There was no IT investment made to produce statistical data and there was only a small inspectoral team.

Local social and economic issues were considered partly responsible for low examination success. A large percentage of students left school at 16. Entry into further and higher education was limited. Employment opportunities in the city had been for semi-skilled and manual workers with minimal academic qualifications. A number of areas in the city suffered from a range of social problems that lead to poor attendance, behavioural problems and a high level of student suspensions and exclusions.

However, the DfEE targeted national priorities and these were often different to local ones. The LEA was therefore in a difficult position. The DfEE required that it met national targets with money from The Standards Fund. Yet the problems which prevented schools from improving were not national priorities. So they did not receive any extra funding and they continued to limit student performance.

There was a belief that the old county council had often ignored the needs of the city. To help implement change officers and members attempted to create an administrative 'pancake structure', where the officers who were responsible for decision making were directly available to headteachers and other service users. Consultative organisation was also built into the structure and there was an optimism

about the possibilities of new information and communication technology helping to monitor the improvement in school achievements.

There was also conservatism in the new LEA. Although education and social services were the largest departments, and many of their officers were formerly county council officers, the culture of the unitary authority remained city-based. Members were predominantly ex-district councillors. County council members who became unitary authority members were in a small minority and they usually had been both city and county members.

City council officers were in post in the town hall as the unitary authority structure developed. Decisions were made in Peterborough and county officers always met in the city. There was little evidence that district council departments were protected but the old district council's leisure, works board and housing departments were retained and some county responsibilities were transferred to them.

By the end of 1997, the city council had concerns over a number of educational issues. It had become difficult to implement national policies and attend to different local concerns as well. Local problems became enmeshed in a series of consultative programmes and a lack of funds. At the same time, the national policies included the use of inspection, league tables and 'best value' to monitor progress. The new education department was faced with meeting these targets and every failure was published in the local papers.

Extra financial help from The Standards Fund might have helped local priorities. However, these funds were often dependent on 'matched' funding. A small unitary authority was not able to match fund all the grants because of its limited financial base and the fact that money was being used to meet other DfEE demands.

The education department received limited support from the local schools. Many schools had opposed unitary authority status and half of all secondary schools were grant maintained by 1996.

Few efforts were made to learn from the schools, which had undergone significant changes during the past few years. Headteachers and chairs of governors were briefed on proposed changes but few were involved in the planning process.

It was very important that the first act of the new education department was to shut down a school which had been identified by Ofsted as having serious weaknesses. No evidence was ever made available to explain all the motives behind this decision but there was little doubt that an important message over control and leadership of education services was being given to educational providers in the city.

The education department found it challenging to work with many of the secondary schools. The discussions over LMS resulted in the re-adoption of a county policy. This LMS policy, together with the use of targeted central funds on areas of deprivation, created problems for many schools. An increase of an extra £1million put in from city council reserves did little to placate the schools.

The education department was responsible for school improvement. Yet it had few powers to change school practices. It also did not have the resources to effectively intervene. By 1999 87% of the education budget had been devolved to schools and the department simply did not have the money to employ advisers or set up IT systems to analyse statistical returns.

Increased financial delegation to schools caused further redundancies in the education department. The cost of government initiatives and redundancy payments created further cost-pressures that were to bring about another series of redundancies. This made it even more difficult for the department to intervene because it did not have the staff to work with the schools.

Educational success was not rewarded. Although it might be said that successful schools would be fully subscribed and be financed through optimum student numbers, this was not the answer to the problem of fairly funding schools. Schools identified as 'failing' schools or 'schools in special measures' found themselves better resourced. Some primary schools could receive 100% more per student than 'successful' schools through a combination of the LMS formula and The Standards Fund. This only served to further widen the split between schools in the poorer areas of the city centre and the suburban schools.

Significance of the research

The research work was designed as an original case study, which examined one specific issue. It was original in that little research work had been carried out on unitary authorities and on setting up an education department. Secondly, it was

intended as a summary for Peterborough officers and members and a guide to other councils undergoing change.

The second area of significance is that it remains one of the few sources that shows decision-making in local government reform. During the research process it was very clear that not only were there very few documentary sources available concerning local government reform over the last 30 years, little had been published which studied unitary authorities and new education departments.

In practice, it was able to point out the successes and failures of the new education department directly to the officers and members. By 1999 there were serious financial and policy decisions affecting both the council and the education department. This case study was used to emphasise the financial and structural difficulties to a group of officers and members.

The author was in an interesting situation. He had been recently elected to Peterborough city council in its last year as a district councillor and then continued as a unitary authority councillor, eventually with senior responsibilities in education. Therefore, a wide variety of documentary evidence would be available, he would be part of the decision making process and have access to the senior officers and members.

Initially, few officers and members appeared to have had misgivings about talking to a junior member who was professionally known to them. Later, the situation began to

change. By 2000 the researcher held a senior political appointment on the education committee and the education department had undergone significant change.

There were a number of problems over separating research work from council decision-making. In particular, participant observation did cause a number of problems. However, above all, the contact between the researcher and the major decision makers was exceptional and it facilitated access to key participants.

Lessons for the future

Unitary authorities needed a much higher level of support than they received. The new education department had only government legislation to guide it towards its new responsibilities. No allowance was made for new authorities and the education department was expected to respond to government legislation as successfully as a long established county LEA.

It may be argued that local government should be developed to respond to local needs and demands. If that was so then local funding through the council tax and business rates would provide the appropriate finance. In fact, the new unitary LEAs shared similar challenges and difficulties that were the direct result of the change of government. Yet no central government concession or help was ever received.

The DfEE was the likely source of support for the new LEA. Yet the DfEE appeared to have little interest in how an education department was set up. It seemed to be only interested in the outcomes.

The DfEE must have been aware that the individual unitary LEAs were carrying out similar commissioning processes in a changing environment. It might have appeared that it was in the interests of the DfEE to have a number of new and well established unitary LEAs to carry out government policy. It must have been obvious to DfEE officials that Peterborough, in deciding to establish a large 'providing' LEA, was preparing for an inappropriate future role.

There was a need for DfEE support. It should have had an overview of what it considered to be future demands, possible structures of organisation and a programme of preparatory training. During the process of setting up education departments similar councils should have been formed into self-help groups and their progress monitored by the DfEE. Allowances and flexibility could have been built into the process to reflect local needs.

There was a naivety about the setting up of the education department. It was considered by both members and officers to be essentially a local responsibility with a variety of local needs. The interests of a number of community groups, economic and social concerns and political ideals also tended to cloud important issues.

Instead, the setting up of the education department should have been seen as a management process that was to meet government legislation and provide an education service for the city. Its first priority should have been to benefit the students and schools in the area. The success would be reflected in examination achievement and Ofsted inspections.

The new unitary authority structure worked against the education department. The division between the policy committee and the education committee was particularly problematic. Senior education officers were appointed by the policy committee. On the other hand the policy committee might well have been aware that education committee spending programmes were too high but they never attempted to stop them

.

The findings of this research suggest a number of indictors that may help LEA re-organisation:

- To develop a planning process which takes into account the variety of levels of decision making that are involved. These may include government, government departments, local councils, education departments and schools.
- Awareness raising, training and continuing support for the those involved in the re-organisation.
- There should be monitoring of situations where there may be a clash between conflicting national government policies.

The organisation of the new LEA suffered from three important flaws. Firstly, members and officers had spent three years campaigning and preparing for unitary authority status under a Conservative government. In 1997 a new Labour government came to power. Suddenly, the education department was faced with a number of new demands. It had to be clear that a small unitary authority, with limited resources, could not successfully quickly change its preparations on the election of a new government.

In addition, there was a belief in the town hall that the new government would increase expenditure and that 'providing' authorities would replace Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) processes. This did not happen. Yet as late as 1997 members of the city council administration were confident that rate-capping was going to end and that enhanced funding for education was going to be given to the LEA.

The new LEA was committed to consulting the local community before decisions were made on education issues. A number of channels of consultation were planned to be set up. This policy resulted in significant delays in the decision making process which led to frustration and disillusionment. In particular, the LEA found itself unable to initiate the consultation process because it could not fund and service it properly.

Local schools never accepted the authority of the new education department. The grant maintained schools disliked coming under LEA influence again as foundation schools. Other LEA schools had supported strong links with Cambridgeshire County Council and were often unhappy over the end of this relationship.

Headteachers showed their lack of confidence when they insisted that school staffing should be administered by a commercial company, Education Personnel Management, and that the Cambridgeshire LFM formula should continue. The situation further deteriorated when a local school made two attempts to end the established secondary school admissions arrangements in the city.

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The influence of the local culture of the city was important. Many officers and members had worked in the city council for many years. They had built up a network of connections within the town hall and with other outside agencies. Family and social ties often connected members and officers.

Changes to individual council departments were made safe. Previous city responsibilities were safeguarded and strengthened. Old county responsibilities were allocated to established city departments at the change to unitary status. The vast majority of officers at the town hall were drawn from the district council. Also, the requirement for officers to live in the city was tightened and became a condition of employment.

Identification of new directions for further research

The future of local government is in doubt. Central government wants to ensure that promised improvements in services are actually carried out. It would appear that, if local government cannot provide these services, then central government would use other providers. The increase of the powers of the European Union have taken over a number of traditional central government roles. In its turn, central government has begun to intervene in areas that previously had been the responsibility of local authorities. Also regional development boards and regional government offices may provide the basis of a new system of regional government.

The 'culture' of the city council was an important but unmeasured factor. There were two major aspects which need further research. The first was that the 'culture' of the city council dominated the setting up process. Although most of the leading members

and officers came from Cambridgeshire County Council it was the city council's traditional organisation, values and objectives which dominated the education department.

The 'culture' of the unitary authority was also influenced by officer appointments during 1996-7. A number of ex-local politicians were appointed to a number of middle-level officer posts. No work has been done to understand the background, experience and values of officers in the unitary authority and how their aims and objectives are actually implemented.

A further element of the development of a particular city council culture was the cross-county border co-operation. It was clear that a disproportionate number of unitary authority officers were actually appointed from two neighbouring counties. Later promotions and career moves usually involved the same local authorities.

However, the main area of future study is to evaluate the successes and weaknesses of the new unitary authority education department. Certainly, within two years of the creation of the new department, the failure to respond effectively to a range of national and local pressures brought about its complete reorganisation.

Postscript

In 2000 the education department was re-organised. During the previous 18 months the department had failed to control its expenditure. An overspend of nearly £1million forced the administration to make a number of changes. The director of education and a senior education officer resigned from the city council. Another senior education officer had previously left the department a few months earlier.

A headteacher from a foundation school was appointed as director of education. New goals focusing on financial controls and school improvement were drawn up and a new two section department established. A number of education officers were made redundant, primary and secondary advisers were appointed and a new information management system was installed.

In 2001 there was an Ofsted inspection of the education department. The results are to be published in October 2001.

Appendix 1

Meeting Rating Check List

(Total of 18 members in the education working party and shadow education committee)

Please tick in the box you think is closest to your view

Elements of the Meeting	**Strongly agree**	**Mildly agree**	**Mildly disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
1. The purpose of the meeting was clear to all				
2. There was pertinent participation by all				
3. Mutual interest was shown in all members' points of view				
4. Individuals or groups did not dominate the meeting				
5. Disagreements were expressed and explained				

6. Criticisms were frank and constructive				
7. The atmosphere was supportive				
8. Decisions were taken when necessary				
9. Participants were interested in the meeting				
10. Everybody contributed to reaching a decision				
11. The decisions taken were fully supported and understood				
12. Problems were tackled in an appropriate manner including a full diagnosis				
13. The meeting was able to function in a flexible manner when necessary				

14. The meeting did not stray off course.				
15. The leader acted in an appropriate manner				

Appendix 2

Education Members	**Speaking time**
Member A	
Member B	
Member C	
Member D	
Member E	
Member F	
Member G	
Member H	
Member I Researcher DO	
Member J	
Member K	
Member L	
Member M	
Member N	
Member O	
Member P	
Member Q	
Member R	

Officers	
Director	
Senior education officer A	
Senior education officer B	
Senior education officer C	
Consultant	
Headteacher	

Others

Religious

Trade unions

Expert witness

Police

Chief Education Officer (Cambs)

Notes

Appendix 3

The timetable of the significant decisions and events leading to the establishment of the education department.

1995	
Dec	Local Government Commission recommends that Peterborough City Council should be awarded unitary authority status
1996	
January	
February	
March	
April	Start of Vision planning and Values statements.
May	Analysis and disaggregation planning of budgets

June	Disaggregation bid
July	First concerns over LEA costs
August	
September	
October	
November	Local Government Review committee established. A 'providing authority' was to be the policy for the new council
December	External adviser appointed. Headteachers warn over LEA costs
1997	
January	Local Government Review-education, leisure, libraries and heritage first meet

February	Early Years and Nursery provision planning First Standard Fund bids
March	
April	Appointment of senior education officers begins. Head teacher/Governors forum set up
May	Shadow unitary authority established. Shadow education committee set up. General Election
June	Confirmation of council structure Excellence in Schools Government White Paper
July	
August	
September	Unitary first budget setting begins 'Framework for the organisation of schools' DfEE Policy Committee warn over LEA costs
October	National Literacy Conference

November	
December	New education department structure approved
1998	
January	First budget confirmed
February	
March	
April	Vesting Day Unitary authority established LEA set up
May	
June	

July	
August	
September	
October	
November	
December	
1999	
January	Education Development Plan published

Appendix 4

Local Peterborough Context

Peterborough had been a centre of government since Roman times and its early importance grew alongside the development of the monastery. Peterborough was a 'Soke', that was a Danish government unit, and it involved an area of land which was much bigger than the usual city (Peterborough City Council, 1997, p.3).

In 1541 Henry VII granted Peterborough city status. It became a borough within Northamptonshire in 1874 and in 1888 the County of the Soke of Peterborough was created. The city was an 'excepted' district with delegated powers over services such as education. In 1965 the Soke and Huntingdon were joined to form a new county. In 1974 Peterborough and Huntingdon became district councils and came under the new Cambridgeshire County Council (Peterborough City Council, 1997, p.3).

When the railway arrived during the 19th century it then became an engineering centre. The commercial and business aspects of Peterborough were diversified as a result of the new town expansion (Peterborough City Council, 1997, p.5).

The city doubled in size due to the new town development. In 1992 the population of the city was 156,200. About 138,000 people live in the city itself and there is a significant ethnic minority group that makes up 7.4% of the population (The Review of Local Government in Cambridgeshire, 1997, pp 5-7)

SPECIAL NOTE

THE FOLLOWING IMAGE IS OF POOR QUALITY DUE TO THE ORIGINAL DOCUMENT.

THE BEST AVAILABLE IMAGE HAS BEEN ACHIEVED.

Statistical information

Population Ethnic Group	Cambridgeshire		Peterborough	
	No.	%	No.	%
White	622,246	96.5	141,803	92.5
Black Caribbean	2,206	0.3	1,208	1.0
Black African	886	0.1	204	0.1
Black Other	2,203	0.3	597	0.4
Black Total	5,295	0.8	2,009	1.0
Indian	4,521	0.7	2,662	1.8
Pakistani	5,412	0.8	4,752	3.0
Bangladeshi	614	0.1	54	0.1
Chinese	1,837	0.3	358	0.2
Other Asian	2,131	0.3	734	0.5
Other Non-Asian	3,069	0.5	794	0.5
Non-White Groups	22,879	3.5	11,363	7.5
Total Population	**645,125**	**100**	**153,166**	**100**

These figures do not take into account the make-up of the white community. Peterborough is home to significant numbers of people from Poland, Germany, Holland, Ireland and Italy. The only sub division of the white group is the reference to persons who were 'Born in Ireland', who numbered 2,500 at the time in 1990. The City Council estimated total ethnic population was 22,590 in 1990.

Peterborough LEA is responsible for 78 teaching establishments that can be broken down into the following categories:

	No of Schools	No of Pupils
Nursery	1	160
Primary (Infant & Junior)	58	15,917
Secondary	13	12,961
Special	4	320
PRU (Pupil Referral Unit)	2	53
TOTAL	**78**	**29,411**

	City	Statistical Neighbours	National Average
Percentage of Pupils eligible for Free School Meals – Primary	23.5%	14.3%	19.7%
Percentage of Pupils eligible for Free School Meals – Secondary	20.7%	12.8%	17.6%
Percentage of Pupils with statements of SEN - of Primary School Age	2.5%	3.0%	2.7%
Percentage of Pupils with statements of SEN - of Secondary School Age	4.5%	3.8%	4.0%
Percentage of Pupils for whom English is a 2nd language (EAL)	11.4%	-	7.8%

Key Stage Three Results

The table below summarises the percentage of pupils attaining Level 5+ at Key Stage 3.

	English			Maths			Science		
	1998	1999	2000	1998	1999	2000	1998	1999	2000
Peterborough	59.1	56.0	58.1	56.2	59.5	62.0	51.6	49.6	54.6
Statistical Neighbours	66.7	65.9	66.0	63.9	66.8	68.8	60.9	60.4	64.3
National Average	65.2	64.0	64.1	59.9	62.8	65.5	56.5	55.5	60.1

GCSE Results

	% 5 or more A*-C		
	1998	**1999**	**2000**
Peterborough	42.2	41.8	42.3
Statistical Neighbours	48.4	50.8	50.9
National Average	44.7	46.6	47.4

Unemployment (January 2001)

The total number of claimants for Peterborough district was 2,233 in January 2001 compared to 2,870 for January 2000

	January 2001 (%)	**January 2000**
Peterborough	*2.6*	*2.9*
East of England	*2.2*	*2.7*
East Midlands	*3.3*	*3.6*
UK	*3.5*	*4.0*

(Peterborough Fact Sheets, Peterborough City Council, 2001)

The Local Government Commission for England was established in July 1992 under the Local Government Act 1992. Its function was to review the structure of local government in areas of England as specified by the government (The Review of Local Government in Cambridgeshire, 1994, p.1).

Appendix 5

Formal Peterborough City Council meetings observed by the researcher

Local Government Review-Education, Leisure, Libraries and Heritage, 8th January 1997

Local Government Review-Education, Leisure, Libraries and Heritage Working Group, 4th February 1997

Local Government Review-Education, Leisure, Libraries and Heritage Working Group, 17th February 1997

Local Government Review-Education, Leisure, Libraries and Heritage Working Group, 4th March 1997

Local Government Review-Education, Leisure, Libraries and Heritage Working Group, 8th April 1997

Peterborough City Council Shadow Education Committee, 4th June 1997

Peterborough City Council Shadow Education Committee, 9th July 1997

Peterborough City Council Shadow Education Committee, 10th September 1997

Peterborough City Council Shadow Education Committee, 15th October 1997

Peterborough City Council Shadow Education Committee, 5th November 1997

Peterborough City Council Shadow Education Committee, 10th December 1997

Peterborough City Council Shadow Education Committee, 14th January 1998

Peterborough City Council Shadow Education Committee, 11th February 1998

Peterborough City Council Shadow Education Committee, 11th March 1998

Peterborough City Council Education Service Review Group, 25th September 1997

Peterborough City Council Education Service Review Group, 7th November 1997

(The Service Review Group was to monitor the quality of council education services. Until this point there were no services provided)

Peterborough City Council Education Executive Panel, 2nd October 1997. (This was limited to one meeting because executive panels were designed for quick decision-making on issues brought by officers in between committee meetings. Until this point there was no work to be done).

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Agenda of the Local Government Review-Education, Leisure, Libraries and Heritage, 8th January 1997

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