

GROUP 2. ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGEMENT NEEDS

21. The Group recognised that access to administrative and management training was often confined to senior levels of staff. However, it considered that the operational efficiency of a polytechnic could be improved by applying appropriate management techniques to a much wider range of jobs, including relatively junior posts. For this reason it was important to examine every job, in order to identify elements of work that required management skills, particularly in cases where the work of junior staff supported or merged with duties carried out by senior colleagues. Without prejudice to this interpretation of training needs the Group decided, because of time limitations, to concentrate on two main categories of staff, (i) academic staff at all levels, and (ii) senior administrative staff.

22. It was stressed that the methodology used to assess training needs for these two groups could be applied to other job categories. However, before proceeding to a detailed analysis of training needs, the Group identified four main areas of administrative and management activity associated with teaching and non-teaching work in polytechnics; (a) institution administration and management (b) finance, including budgetary control and procurement (c) interpersonal skills (d) management of staff development systems. The Group recognised the existence of other areas of management activity in polytechnics, but it considered that the four areas identified embraced the most important administrative and management processes. Accordingly, the Group analysed each area to identify specific training needs for several levels and categories of staff. Training needs associated with financial and procurement procedures were accorded high priority.

23. The special needs of very senior staff received close attention in the detailed analysis of administrative and management training needs. Principals and vice-principals carried responsibilities for the management of substantial human and physical resources and required training in modern, corporate management techniques. The Group considered that all newly appointed polytechnic heads and deputy heads should have access to high level management training, ideally before taking up the post, or as soon as possible thereafter.

24. The Group stressed the need to use job descriptions in the staff development process. The responsibilities of job holders with similar titles varies in relation to the size of a polytechnic, the nature of its work and stage of development. For example, the level of managerial responsibility exercised by a departmental head in a small polytechnic equated to that of a sub-department or section head in a much larger institution. Accurate job descriptions - in addition to their main use in the overall management structure - afforded a mechanism to check the degree of responsibility of a job-holder during an appraisal of his training needs.

25. Management techniques developed and used by commerce and industry could be examined by polytechnic management for possible use in the planning and implementation of academic work processes. For example, the management of curriculum development could be improved by resource planning methods, based on techniques used in the engineering and construction industries.