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# **An investigation into how human and social capital may be acquired and utilised by school governors**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the  
University of Sunderland for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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others with insight that being a school governor is an enjoyable way to do work within the community and to develop in other ways.

## **Abstract**

School governors in England have been described as the “Hidden Givers” (James, et al., 2010) but many governors, particularly parent governors and governors appointed by the Local Education Authority, have been criticised for what they bring to the governing body. This research was conducted at a time of change for governing bodies which, from 2014, had to consider the existing skills of governors when recruiting to the governing body.

The thesis is based on a small-scale research project utilising a case study methodology (Cohen, et al., 2018; Punch, 2009). Interviews were conducted with 20 school governors within one local authority area in the north east of England. The interviewees included members of governing bodies of both academies and maintained schools. Some of those interviewed had served as school governors for over 20 years while others were relatively new to the position. It was intended that the diversity would allow an insight into the research from the perspective of a range of governors. Data analysis was conducted using qualitative data analysis techniques.

Coleman (1988) suggests that the term human capital refers to the skills and capabilities that an individual holds (Coleman, 1988). Social capital theorists (e.g. Putnam, 1995; Coleman, 1988) suggest that social capital is

about relationships and comes in various forms including binding, bridging and linking (Woolcock, 2001). This thesis investigates how being a school governor can change the levels of human and social capital of individuals performing the role.

The thesis was based on three research aims. The first aim was to consider whether school governors simply applied existing skills to the role and, if so, whether this was a good thing. It was found that while some governors did only apply existing skills that many also gained new skills.

The second research aim was to investigate what people gain in terms of training and experience from becoming a school governor. The literature available (e.g. Thody, 1999) suggested that governors do not attend training very frequently. The interviewees stated that they did attend training when things changed or they felt they needed to refresh their knowledge but said that they did not see the point of repeating training. Governor training is not prioritised and these governors felt it was important. The work undertaken by governors included serving on a range of committees and acting as link governors. Governor training was used in a range of circumstances including voluntary work and paid employment.

The final aim was to identify whether some governors gained real benefits as a result of becoming a school governor. Many of the governors made statements which showed a very strong bond with the school, reflecting

stronger social capital which some utilised outside the school context. These governors already had good levels of social capital before they became school governors but developed it further within the school governor role.

The thesis suggests on the basis of the evidence collected that being a school governor benefits both society and the individual and that these benefits are utilised not only within the school but in the wider community.

## **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

The chapter will begin by considering the positionality of the researcher (section 1.1) before going on to consider the context in which the research took place (section 1.2), the research aims and the link to questions (section 1.3), a consideration of why this research matters (section 1.4) and an outline of the structure of the thesis (section 1.5).

### **1.1 Positionality**

The researcher became a school governor in 1986. At the time she was an Undergraduate and was very politically involved. Political involvement meant that she was involved in the process of recruiting over a hundred new school governors and, having approached and ‘encouraged’ individuals to become school governors, it would have been hypocritical of the researcher not to take up the role herself.

Almost 25 years later this research idea came about after the researcher had obtained years of experience as a school governor in different education authorities in England. She was aware of research indicating that school governors were too often influenced by the headteacher (see for example Grace, 1995) and they were not challenging headteachers sufficiently (ibid). This had led to calls for recruitment of better qualified governors. The researcher thought about her own recruitment to the role and that a 22 year old Undergraduate would probably no longer be regarded as ‘qualified’ to be a school governor.



The motivation for the research has two elements. Firstly, the researcher believed that the training provided by governorship had led to benefits for her but recognised that this did not necessarily mean that there were benefits for other governors. This led to the focus on whether governors benefited from this voluntary role. The second element was that the researcher perceived that the calls for more 'qualified' governors would potentially exclude those who were not 'qualified'. The Office for National Statistics (n.d.a) report about London residents aged over 24 found that those with GCSE level qualifications were consistently more likely to be above the income threshold than those who did not, therefore, those who would be excluded on the basis of skills or qualifications may be those whose income levels were low. These motivations for undertaking the research raised a further question: if benefits do accrue to school governors (for the purpose of this research it was important that this was not assumed) should groups of individuals on low incomes be excluded from the role and hence the benefit?

The researcher does recognise that not everyone can be an effective school governor. However, she does not think that individuals should be excluded on the basis of qualifications they hold (and therefore potentially because they have low income (the link between qualifications and income is mentioned earlier in this section)).

Having considered positionality and potential bias, the context of the research needs to be considered.

## **1.2 Context of the research**

This research considers only the English education system. In the past, the English and Welsh education systems similar but the systems were separated Welsh devolution (see the devolution settlement (Wales Office, 2013)). The research took place in one local authority situated in the north east of England between 2015 and 2016. The local authority in which the research was conducted has been anonymised within this thesis with any identifying information removed or generalised.

Chapter 2 deals with the context to the research. Nevertheless, it is important to consider the governors and some aspects of the specific local authority in order to gain an understanding of the setting in which the research took place. The first area to consider is the governors.

### **1.2.1 The governors**

The main source of data was the use of interviews with governors. The research participants served on governing bodies of schools within one local authority area in the north of England at the time that the research was undertaken. The pilot study took place in 2015 and main research took place in 2016 (see section 4.6).

Because of changes to the local authority the governors were recruited either directly by the researcher or by an administrator who worked for a multi-academy trust (see section 4.3.3).

### **1.2.2 The local authority**

The population within the local authority area in which this research took place is generally in line with the statistics for the region. Information from the Office for National Statistics (Nomis, n.d.a; Office for National Statistics, n.d.b; Office for National Statistics, n.d.c) was utilised to consider a number of local authorities within the region. The local authority educational statistics indicated performance below the national average (House of Commons Library, n.d.). The indices of multiple deprivation showed many areas within the region and the local authority with high levels of deprivation (Office for National Statistics, n.d.b) alongside a smaller number of areas where deprivation was very low (ibid). Overall the local authority would be considered to be deprived compared to England as a whole (ibid). This is important because this suggests that the local authority area has a population with lower levels of economic wealth than other areas (for statistics re the overall levels of wealth see Office for National Statistics (n.d.d)).

### **1.3 Research aims and questions**

There were three research aims which led to 12 research questions. The differences between a research aim and a research question include the

more generalised nature of the research aim which needs to be broken down in order to be tested.

The research aims and research questions are reproduced below and will then be considered by research aim:

- a) To consider the proposition that school governors should and do simply apply pre-existing skills to the role.
  - i. What skills do governors bring to the role?  
(Research question 1a)
  - ii. What skills do governors believe they apply within their roles as school governors? (Research question 1b)
- b) To investigate what people gain in terms of training and experience from the role of school governor.
  - i. What training opportunities are made available to governors within each authority? (Research question 2a)
  - ii. Who uses the training opportunities that are available?  
(Research question 2b)
  - iii. How many governors use the training and how frequently? (Research question 2c)
  - iv. What is the training used for? (Research question 2d)

- v. What effect do school governors feel the training they undertake has on them? (Research question 2e)
  - vi. What benefits do governors believe the experience of being a governor has provided to them? (Research question 2f)
  - vii. Do governors use skills and experience that they feel they have learnt from being a governor in a work or community context? (Research question 2g)
- c) To identify whether some governors gain real benefits as a result of becoming a school governor.
- i. Do governors increase their social capital as a result of their work within the school governing body?  
(Research question 3a)
  - ii. Do governors increase their cultural capital as a result of their work within the school? (Research question 3b)
  - iii. Do governors perceive that their being a governor has any effect on the opportunities available for their families? (Research question 3c)

Having outlined what the research aims and questions are, the research aims and how the questions to be considered later in the thesis, relate to them must be considered.

### **1.3.1 Research aim 1 – To reconsider the proposition that school governors should and do simply apply pre-existing skills to the role.**

Within the positionality statement in section 1.1, the researcher questioned whether they would have been recruited to be a school governor under the current system.

This leads to Research question 1a which concerns the skills governors bring to the role. This question focusses on the human capital governors possess which is considered in the literature review. The guide to recruitment of school governors mentions that their service allows the school to filter volunteers by location and by “The professional skills you are looking for” (Inspiring Governance, n.d.a; Inspiring Governance, n.d.b ). It is worth noting that Governors for Schools (n.d.) also state that they also link potential governors to schools on the basis of their skills. In one article the head of ‘School Governors One Stop Shop’ (SGOSS which is now called Governors for Schools) provided a matrix showing how professional skills could be applied to school governorship (The Key, n.d.a). The type of skills identified within the article included legal (employment law) and marketing (to promote the school) (ibid).

If governors need these ‘professional skills’ before becoming a governor then the research needs to consider what skills they believe they apply within the role (Research question 1b) to see whether they do simply apply the skills they already hold or whether they learn new skills. This question

may lead to the identification of some skills which governors may believe they did not hold at the outset of their school governorship. There is anecdotal evidence of this from Governors for Schools (n.d.) where businesses are told that employees can gain “leadership and decision-making skills” (ibid) as a result of being school governors (a similar point is made by Inspiring Governance which informs employers that encouraging school governance can be a “free workforce development opportunity” (Inspiring Governance, n.d.c). The research question sought to allow governors to identify the skills they used more generally.

Hence the research questions underpinning this aim are:

- Research question 1a: What skills do governors bring to the role?
- Research question 1b: What skills do governors believe they apply within their roles as school governors?

### **1.3.2 Research aim 2 - To investigate what people gain in terms of training and experience from the role of school governor.**

This research aim is about the acquisition of capital through being a school governor and is central to the thesis. It is broken down into seven research questions. The first five research questions under this research aim (Research questions 2a to 2e) relate to training. Training is, as will be seen within the literature review an activity which links with human capital and it

was thought that training may be the way in which governors obtained any new skills to help them do the role.

Research question 2a aims to consider whether school governors have training that they can access from the local authority. At the outset of this research the most likely source of training was the local authority. Other sources of training were available at the time the research was undertaken but the most logical starting point was the local authority since all governors served in schools within that area.

Research question 2b considered who used the training opportunities available to governors. This was influenced by research on governor training which suggested that some governors were less likely to use training opportunities made available than others (particularly councillors) (Deem and Brehony, 2000).

Research question 2c considered how many governors attended the training and how frequently. Research has suggested that relatively few governors obtain training. In the original plan, this data was to come from the local authority gatekeeper (a section of local authority staff servicing governors within their area) but by the end of the research the staff dealing with school governors had been distributed to more general departments. The data instead came from the governors who took part in the research.



Research question 2d considered whether governors used training only within their governorship or whether they applied it more widely. In section 1.1 the researcher considered that they had gained benefits from being a school governor. Although not articulated within section 1.1, one of the benefits she felt she had obtained was training which could be used within her work role (i.e. it developed her human capital). This was important because if such training was used then there was an indication that governors were developing human capital that they used in other contexts. However, the researcher did not seek to gain validation of her belief, rather she used her role as a participant observer (outlined in Chapter 4) to inform the development of a research question.

Research question 2e considered what effect governors felt that the training provided had on them. This aimed to consider whether they felt attending training sessions was worthwhile. If they did not attend training regularly was it because training provided was of poor quality and irrelevant?

These research questions focussing on training were important because they seemed the most obvious way in which governors could obtain new skills. However, it was important to keep an open mind about whether training did lead to any increase in human capital.

Research question 2f dealt with the benefits that experience as a school governor may lead individuals to develop. Given that training was perhaps

the most obvious way in which skills could be developed (given the human capital literature), it was recognised that governorship was not simply about attending training sessions. Governors may benefit from the experience of being a governor. It was important to recognise that where they felt they had not benefited that this was recorded too.

Research question 2g sought to investigate whether the training and experience the research participants had gained through their service as a school governor had benefited them outside the role (e.g. in a work or community context). Work or community contexts are general enough categories that they should capture possible benefits but not be so wide that a governor would struggle to identify an impact. It is recognised that there is some overlap to Research question 2d but it can be distinguished because it is more specific about the type of areas where benefits may be employed.

The research aim was to investigate what people gain in terms of training and experience from the role of school governor. This research aim has been broken down into questions which can be answered. If governor training was not used and no benefits were identified by the governors, then that finding will be reported in the conclusion of the thesis.

- Research question 2a: What training opportunities are made available to governors within the local authority?

- Research question 2b: Who uses the training opportunities that are available?
- Research question 2c: How many governors use the training and how frequently?
- Research question 2d: What is the training used for?
- Research question 2e: What effect do school governors feel the training they undertake has on them?
- Research question 2f: What benefits do governors believe the experience of being a governor has provided to them?
- Research question 2g: Do governors use skills and experience that they feel they have learnt from being a governor in a work or community context?

### **1.3.3 Research aim 3 - To identify whether some governors gain real benefits as a result of becoming a school governor.**

An individual may possess different quantities of capital in different forms and the possession of such capital does lead to benefits which are not tangible (such as having a large home) but can be identified (see for example Coleman (1988) who found that children within a catholic community had lower high school drop out rate (under 4%) than US public schools (almost 15%)). For example, social capital may lead the individual to increase the number of networks they are involved in and to strengthen their bonds or even to gain the confidence to do new things.

The first research question under this research aim (Research question 3a) considers whether school governors increase their social capital as a result of taking up the role. This links to the less explicit research questions about benefits to be accrued in earlier research aims but they were mainly focussed around the development of human capital.

Research question 3b considers whether governors increased their cultural capital through their work on the governing body. The domain has gained recent prominence in education through the decision of Ofsted to require school leaders to give all pupils the “knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life” (Ofsted, n.d.a; Ofsted, n.d.b., p. 10). Consequently, the question arose of whether these were the only areas of capital that could be increased – human capital would be identified in the first two research questions. Economic capital was not an area investigated because it would involve measuring income and other assets and any analysis was likely to be intrusive and awkward. Given that the research was about the governors as individuals it was considered only where it was mentioned by governors and as far as possible placed under human capital.

Research question 3c considered the areas of social capital and emotional capital (which was drawn from Bourdieu’s (1980) conception of social capital by Nowotny, 1981). Families are an important part of the lives of individuals and it was decided to ask the governors about whether they did

feel that being a school governor had an effect on their families. In some ways this might be inferred for parents of children at the school, but it cannot be assumed because it will depend upon the situation of the governor.

Types of capital are discussed in more detail within the literature review (see sections 3.2 to 3.7) because they are linked to the research aims and findings very directly.

The research questions were phrased to ensure that they did not assume that participants in the research did benefit from their school governorship. The aim of the research was to investigate whether individuals benefited rather than what benefits they gained.

The research questions falling under this aim were therefore

- Research question 3a: Do governors increase their social capital as a result of their work within the school governing body?
- Research question 3b: Do governors increase their cultural capital as a result of their work within the school?
- Research question 3c: Do governors perceive that being a governor has any effect on the opportunities available for their families?

### **1.3.4 Conclusion**

Having outlined the research aims and the resultant research questions (these questions are considered in section 4.3.1.3) the next point to be considered is why the research matters.

### **1.4 Why does this research matter?**

One of the reasons for undertaking the study was that it was set at a time of educational change. A further reason was that it was not only education but governing bodies themselves that were changing. For example, a national database of school governors was to be created and some information had already been placed into it at the time of the research (this database has now been archived). In the past this information was held by local authorities for maintained schools within their jurisdiction as initial research discussions with the local authority where the research took place had indicated. Subsequent investigation revealed that, due to academisation, relatively few schools are maintained and hence the data held would be unrepresentative of governors within the local authority area.

Within the research period, changes to the education system were being announced and while this time limits some of the research findings it does allow the consideration of this snapshot of time. This time period (between academies being created and all schools becoming academies) provided an insight into how governors may benefit from taking up the role before all governors are recruited on the basis of their skills.

The research has a social context. If governors do obtain benefits from their involvement and the skills-based recruitment does cause a reduction in the recruitment of governors from the community that a school serves then the community may be disadvantaged further.

### **1.5 Structure of the thesis**

Chapter 2 considers the context in which the research was undertaken. It begins by considering state funded education, then considers educational policy, the stakeholders in education (including the changing influence of these stakeholders), the development of academies and free schools, the composition of school governing bodies, the work undertaken by school governors, before finally considering how it has changed.

Chapter 3 commences by considering school governing within the neoliberal context which includes the market-led nature of schools and the political nature of school governing. The second element of the literature review concerns class and traditional views of capital. Different forms of capital (human, social, emotional, economic, and cultural) are considered before they are linked in a section on capital, learning theory, education and skills. Finally, the chapter concludes with a consideration of the link between voluntary work and different types of capital.

Chapter 4 focusses on the methodological basis for the research. The first section considers the context of the research and the positionality of the researcher. The second section shows the decision about research methodology and the decision to utilise a case study approach. The third section concerns the design of the research including why interviews were used as the research instrument, details of participants and the interviews conducted. The fourth section deals with trustworthiness of the research. The fifth section concerns the data collection process and the sixth considers the pilot study undertaken.

In chapter 5 the findings of the research are presented. The findings are considered by research question and compared to areas of the contextual chapter and the literature review. The findings chapter begins by revisiting research aims and the research question before considering the sample of governors and questioning whether the data will be skewed due to the demography of the group of governors. The next section is about research aim 1 which is subdivided into two research questions. It is important to note that governors brought a range of skills to school governance, but they had to learn quite a few things to become effective governors. The second research aim considered governor training and how it was used. The final research aim considered whether the act of being a governor increased their social, cultural, and emotional capital. The final section in the findings chapter considers the pressure put on governors which came up in the



findings as a theme but was not part of the research questions or a question asked to governors.

In chapter 6 the conclusions are presented which show that governors learn a great deal from being school governors and that they create important networking links to the school and the community it serves.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

The first area considered was positionality and the researcher acknowledged her biases and situatedness as far as practicable. In the second section, the context of the work was briefly considered (it is considered in more detail in Chapter 2). The third area demonstrated how the research aims led to the research questions while the fourth section considered the importance of the research. The final section considered the structure of the thesis and the contents of subsequent chapters.

## Chapter 2 – Contextual Chapter

Having outlined what the thesis is about, this chapter seeks to consider the context which impacts on the research.

The focus of this thesis is the acquisition of capital by school governors. As such the focus of the literature review is capital in its various forms and how capital may be expected to accrue to governors as a result of their work.

The sections in this chapter provide an underpinning context in which capital may later be considered. Equally important is that elements of capital can only be understood within a wider context and providing insight into these areas is necessary to underpin the focus of the thesis. The chapter uses a thematic approach to allow important points to be linked and made.

The first section considers state intervention in education. This involves consideration of who education is for, what should be taught and who should be educated. The rationale for state provision should provide insights into other areas of the context.

This leads to the second section: if the state is to intervene in education, it is important to consider how this is effected in practice. The rationale for intervention is considered separately but the role of and the consideration of the agents of state intervention (e.g. school inspectors, local government and multi-academy trusts) are important in determining how central

government (which provides the money for education) controls how education is shaped in practice.

The third section considers educational stakeholders such as parents, employers and society as a whole. This is important because each stakeholder may hold slightly differing viewpoints about what should be taught and what the priorities within education should be. The influence of each stakeholder group is seen to change over time and hence there is a historical element to this analysis. It is also important to recognise the expansion of the state and the importance of globalisation, and this is considered within this section.

The fourth section considers the school context. The aim of this section is to consider pressures placed on schools and to consider their increasingly diverse nature due to the development of academies and free schools. The participants within the research operate within the governance structures of schools, hence recognising this diversity is important.

The fifth section considers what school governance is and how, during the duration of the thesis, it has changed from stakeholders at the centre of school governance to the need for school governors to have particular skills. The work of school governors is considered in this section. The fact that governors have training is recognised within this discussion.

Having outlined the areas to be considered it is pertinent to consider the first section which is about state intervention in education.

## **2.1 State intervention in education**

Perhaps the first element that should be outlined here is what is meant by intervention? The state provides money to a variety of educational contexts including nurseries, schools, colleges and universities: the provision of money can be regarded as an intervention. Secondly government may dictate particular standards, (for example through Ofsted) either directly or indirectly. The decision about which qualifications would count within school performance tables or changing the examination grades from letter based to number based could be considered to be examples of government intervention in standards. This thesis is restricted in scope to the English School Sector and hence the focus of this consideration of government intervention is within that context.

There were debates about funding education as far back as 1804 (Talbot, 1804) The initial stages of government intervention in schools came about to ensure that schools were built by church groups which would be responsible for running them (Education in England, n.d a.; Paz, 1980; Morton, 1997; Education in England, n.d.b). Central government has provided funding for education in various forms in the intervening years but has sometimes used agents to provide it. At the outset it was Church Societies (Paz, 1980); later it was local education authorities (Education Act

1902) and in recent years it has been through outside agencies as the provision has moved toward state influence through networks (Ball, 2012a; Ball, 2012). The organisation of elementary education was formalised in the Elementary Education Act (1870). For more information please see Kradolfer and Geiss (2016) The manner of government intervention is considered in the second theme.

Over 40 years ago, James Callaghan, then Prime Minister, went to Ruskin College where he delivered a speech on education in which he pointed out that if the public pay for education then there is a public interest in it (Education in England, n.d.a). It was not for educators to determine the shape of education (Education in England, n.d.a). Education policy may be outlined by politicians but there are competing perspectives about what should happen: education policy is not a debate based on simple facts but rather individual and group values (Jones, 2013).

Since education is funded by the state there are three questions that need to be answered: Firstly, what is the purpose of state funded education? Secondly, what type of education could be provided by the state; and finally, to whom should education be provided?

### **2.1.1 What is the purpose of state funded education?**

The purpose of educational provision is not uncontested. Some educational provision is made informally within society (e.g. parents educating their

children about social norms or education about dealing with disasters) and much of this type of informal education is not funded by the state.

An analysis of policymakers in the US found that the primary purpose of education mentioned by State governors (Carpenter and Hughes, 2011) was for economic reasons (e.g. the growth of the “Knowledge Economy” or simply for economic prosperity). Noddings (2015) asserts that Plato’s educational model was “designed to produce competent adults” (Noddings, 2015, p. 8). The two are not mutually exclusive viewpoints but the emphasis of the former is to consider the economic contribution of the individual while the other view is much wider and focuses on the human. The weakness in both perspectives is that they are shaped by education outside the UK.

In contrast Biesta (2015) contends that the purpose of education has three domains: qualification, subjectification and socialisation and hence is considering a slightly different viewpoint to either Noddings (2015) or Carpenter and Hughes (2011). The purpose is not to provide economic growth (at least directly) which is something which is societal in nature; or simply humanistic. Instead it is a multi-faceted perspective where education is divided into subjects and qualifications (i.e. about means and outcomes) and about providing a societal perspective and a space where individuals are socialised. Biesta’s (2015) focus is schools and hence it is important to

recognise that the US Commentators did not necessarily have the same focus.

In summary, why do governments fund education – to produce better economic outcomes (Carpenter and Hughes, 2011), to produce adults with particular skills and dispositions (Noddings, 2015) and to use schools to socialise children (Biesta, 2015).

### **2.1.2 What should schools teach?**

If the purpose of education is contested, the question of what should be taught is equally so, because it is intrinsically linked to the purpose of education. If the purpose of education is simply to provide economic prosperity as the state governors mentioned by Carpenter and Hughes (2011) suggest, then what is taught in schools would simply be the skills required by business and industry. Unfortunately, the skills required of one generation may be redundant for the next. Those who are a generation removed from education may need their skills updating or even to acquire skills of a completely different type if they are to hold down a job. If education is about improving individuals, then what is taught in schools may have a very different shape from that envisaged by Carpenter and Hughes (2011).

Callaghan's 1976 speech was clear that education was about economic prosperity, for example where he considered the science curriculum in

schools. He suggested that teaching needed to shift away from the academic to the technical to become more relevant to “practical applications in industry” (Education in England, n.d.a). At first sight this appears simply to link the needs of industry to the curriculum but it could be seen in a slightly different context. Was Callaghan stating that the focus of the curriculum should be toward what employers can use now rather than about new developments? Over 40 years on it can be seen as a starting point within England for a change in educational provision. It can be seen as the first move towards a more neoliberal and business focussed agenda. Prior to 1976 the government approach was to leave education to educational professionals (Department of Education and Science, 1977); after 1976 the state began to intervene much more overtly in schools and education more generally (see for example the Education Reform Act, 1988).

Teachers, parents and industry, are stakeholders that are considered in section 2.2 of this contextual chapter.

### **2.1.3 Who should receive ‘free’ education?**

The final dimension of this analysis is to whom education should be provided. Before considering this, it is important to recognise that not everyone considers that state intervention in education was a positive development. West noted that parents had a real choice for their children before schools and that the education of children was happening prior to the time of compulsory schooling (West, 2003a; West, 2003b). However, the



researcher would suggest that West's neoliberal perspective, while raising points based on historical fact (note West's (n.d.) discussion paper which quoted the Newcastle Commission in 1857 as noting that almost every child had received some form of education despite the need for parents to pay) did not come to a conclusion which could be seen as non-political. West's (2003a; 2003b) answer to the question would be that nobody should receive a free education.

In 2019, it seems clear that everyone has a similar opportunity to gain education. All young people have to be in education or training until they attain the age of 18. Only ten years ago this age was 16. The age at which compulsory education is completed has increased during the period of state intervention in education (see for example Cowan, et al.'s (2012) analysis of two occasions where the School Leaving age was raised in England – 1947 and 1972). These decisions have been political ones with educational effects and also effects on the labour market. One of the effects of raising the school leaving age is to reduce the number of people within the labour market which may cause unemployment to fall. Increasing the school leaving age may also raise educational achievement and the skills available to employers and increase the individual's human capital (children who left school at 15 in the early 1970s were not able to sit school O Level or CSE examinations at 16). Buscha and Dickenson (2015) contend (in contrast to the expectations of human capitalist theorists (see section 3.3)) that increased investment in education through the raising of the school leaving

age by a year in 1972 actually led to reduced earnings for the group of individuals affected by the change.

#### **2.1.4 Conclusion**

From this analysis it is evident that government does intervene within education and that the shape of that intervention has changed over time. It is clear that the purpose and nature of education provided are not uncontested areas and Callaghan's comments about meeting the needs of stakeholders is be considered in section 2.4. However, it is important at this point to consider some aspects of educational policy – within the wider context of governance as well as through a consideration of stakeholders - and the shifting influence of stakeholders on the creation and implementation of policy.

## **2.2 Educational policy**

Educational policy has context and one of the first areas to be considered is the increasing globalisation of policymaking. The second element is consideration of governance and the networks of individuals that have an increasing influence on policy.

### **2.2.1 Globalisation**

In considering the educational policymaking climate it is easy to fail to provide a global perspective. This global perspective cannot ignore the

1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (n.d.). The web page which shows section 28 of the convention makes primary education compulsory and countries are encouraged to develop “different forms of secondary education” (United Nations Human Rights, n.d.) and the convention applies to all children up to the age of 18. The convention provides for the minimum standards – primary education has been provided by the state within England since the 19th Century and the age of compulsory education has increased to 18 in recent years (Education and Skills Act, 2008, c25).

The global context is not restricted to the United Nations; countries have compared their education systems to those prevalent in other nations for hundreds of years. Curtis (1967) points out the influence of overseas educational ideas even before the advent of compulsory education in England.

In recent years the results of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tables (Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development, n.d.a) have been used to compare results of children between countries. The top performing countries have consistently been found to be in Asia, particularly Singapore, Japan and China. Within Europe, Finland has generally performed very well and this has led to an interest in the way their education system works. The Department for

Education (n.d.a) website quotes Nick Gibb, the Schools Minister as noting that the primary curriculum review “ . . drew on numerous other international examples ...” (Department for Education, n.d.a).

Gibb went on to suggest that Finland derived its success from a teacher-centred educational culture rather than a pupil-centred culture (Department for Education, n.d.a). The point is not whether Nick Gibb was right in his analysis, but rather that he explicitly stated the influence of other countries on domestic policymaking. This globalisation perspective will be noted later within this section. It is not a new viewpoint; Deem and Brehony (2000) considered globalisation almost 20 years ago within their article about educational policy.

### **2.2.2 Central government partnerships**

The first funding for schools was provided by central government to ensure that schools were available and worked with agents (the Church Societies) to provide them. Gradually the partners changed to Local Education Authorities which were made up of locally elected representatives of their community. Although political differences did remain after the Second World War, the Education Act (1944) was enacted under a coalition government. This dominance of provision by local authorities prevailed until the mid 1980s, although education policy was set nationally (Bache, 2003)

The election of a Conservative government in 1979 led to the Education Act (1979) of that year which reversed the policy of successive post war governments towards comprehensive education (see Education in England (n.d.c) for Circular 10/65 which directed local authorities to draw up plans for comprehensive schools) The formation of education policy during the 1980s was most obvious in the Education Reform Act (ERA) of 1988 which could be regarded as an attempt by government to introduce a market into education (James, 2014) since they allowed parents to choose a school (rather than it being determined by the local authority through catchment areas) (ibid) and provided information for parents about the performance of schools on which they could base their decision (ibid).

The Education Reform Act (1988) led to radical change in the structure of education, particularly in the relationship between central government and local government in the provision of education. Local education authorities were affected in a number of ways. Firstly, the creation of Grant Maintained Schools (Phillips and Harper-Jones, 2002) and City Technology Colleges (Education Reform Act, 1988) allowed funding to be provided directly to schools by central government (normally funds would be allocated via the local education authority). Secondly, the parental choice introduced by the Education Act 1980 was strengthened because artificially low admissions numbers for 'popular' schools to protect less popular schools were reduced (Education Reform Act, 1988). Thirdly, headteachers and governors were, under Local Management of Schools, given financial control over some of

their budget (finances previously controlled by the Local Education Authority) (Education Reform Act, 1988).

There was little momentum for opting out of local authority control and by 1997 the pace of opting out had reduced (Meredith, 2002).

### **2.2.3 The Labour government and the widening of partnerships**

The Labour Governments of 1997 to 2010 brought in new modes of educational provision (i.e. Academies) (James, 2014). Private Finance Initiatives were introduced to fund school building and this led to central government increasing partnerships with many organisations but particularly businesses. Academies and free schools are forms of schools available to almost all children but there are concerns about whether there are social justice issues (Walford, 2014). Concerns surrounding the new types of schools and social justice included ‘the selection of particular groups for particular types of employment’ (Walford, 2014, p. 264) and academies appearing in areas with “inequitable school mixes” (Walford, 2014, p. 264)

The provisions led to new partnerships being developed, with local authorities becoming increasingly peripheral in education. It was not just partnerships with business which were being encouraged, partnerships between agencies, e.g. social services, schools, local authorities and police, were also encouraged (see more in the Children, Schools and Families Act

(2010), the Children Act (2004) and Dyson, et al. (2009)). These partnerships and the creation of networks of philanthropists, business people and the public sector to provide services for education and, in the case of academies (developed under the Labour government for 'underperforming' schools) the provision of education itself.

#### **2.2.4 Partnerships and networks**

At first sight this movement towards wider partnership appears to be simply a process through which education is provided more efficiently. Ball and Junemann (2012) argue that this does more than simply replace the actors: it changes values. Public Sector "Service" is replaced by "enterprise and entrepreneurship" (ibid, p. 31) while bureaucracy is replaced by the practices of "innovative, externally oriented, dynamic and enterprising" management (ibid, 2012, p. 21). Changing values is about embedding neoliberal ideas into the public sector to make the ideas appear more natural.

Apple (2014) links value changes to the neoliberal agenda and seeks to explain why it has gained such dominance in political life:

"Ideologies, properly conceived, do not dupe people. To be effective, they must connect to real problems, real experiences. As I document, the movement away from social democratic principles and an acceptance of more right-wing positions in social and economic policy occur precisely because conservative groups have been able to work on popular sentiments, to reorganize genuine feelings, and in the process to win adherents." (Apple, 2014, pp. 20-21)

This value shift is significant because it has allowed the neoliberals to shift the educational agenda. Schools are blamed for poor examination results in areas of “economic and educational neglect” (Apple, 2014, p. 20) rather than increasing support to the local communities which have suffered neglect.

Educational provision can be seen to be based on central government policy with the provision of services undertaken by other actors. The creation of academies before and after 2010 has led to the creation of networks where philanthropists, business and public services are inextricably linked. The current Chief Inspector for Schools is not someone who has ever qualified as a teacher (the first head of Ofsted not to have done so and the first whose appointment has not been confirmed by Parliament) or worked within a classroom. She is clearly linked to these networks having worked within multi-academy trusts (MATs) after working in the finance sector (Gov.uk, n.d.a). Ball and Junemann (2012) mention that prior to taking up her current role Amanda Spielman, was a Trustee for the New Schools Network, while being a member of an organisation considering the school assessment system (ibid, 2012) and also being a “director of ARK schools” (Waterman, n.d.a., p. 11) where the previous Chief Inspector for Schools also served (Ball and Junemann, 2012, p. 122).



Ball and Junemann (2012) argue that by participating within educational networks, individuals can

“...accumulate valuable information and move ideas and influences between sectors. Location in a network is key to social capital ... Networks are made up of relationships in which social capital can be deployed, invested and accumulated.” (Ball and Junemann, 2012, pp. 10-11)

Ball is talking about the power an individual may hold within the educational system, due to their positionality in educational networks. An individual governor in a north east school is unlikely to possess this quantity of social capital, but it is relevant to the thesis as social capital is explored in section 3.4 and will be one of the areas considered when undertaking interviews.

The creation of these networks and the devolving of some education policymaking (e.g. academies do not need to follow the national curriculum) has led to new providers of education but Ball and Junemann (2012) argue that this has been at the expense of those who work in schools, as their pay and conditions have deteriorated.

It should be stated that the increased use of agents in the provision of education does not mean that the state has a lesser role in education. Rather, the shift towards network governance (Ball and Junemann, 2012) has led to increased power for central government and less power for local government in the provision of education.

Having considered the creation and implementation of educational policymaking it can be concluded that globalisation and international provision of education has featured in the decision-making process. The changing shape of educational provision and the increasing importance of networks within both policymaking and in the provision of education has been clearly identified.

Having gained insight into these areas it is important to consider who the stakeholders in education are and why it matters.

### **2.2.5 Parental choice**

Parental choice may be considered to be a relatively new phenomenon but in reality, it is not. It is recognised that for many families there was almost no choice due to family circumstances.

The choice of school in the past was based on family income. A family with high income could pay for their child to attend a private school, pay for tutoring of their child, or could purchase a home in a particular school 'catchment area'. Private schools continue to exist and that, if a child from a relatively affluent family does not get into the government funded school their family would prefer, it remains a choice. The percentage of pupils attending fee paying schools rose slightly from under 6% in 1979 to 7% in 1999 (Taylor, 2001) but fell slightly between 2017 and 2019 (Department for Education, n.d.b). It is recognised that private tutoring exists and that in

2019 the Sutton Trust (n.d.) found that 27% of pupils had received private tutoring at some point compared to 18% in 2005. In 2019 users of private tuition indicated that they had used it to help with school work or a particular GCSE or to help them with school entrance (Sutton Trust, n.d.)

At first sight, to give parents the choice of school for their child does not appear to be a political but a human decision (we are allowing for the person who knows the child best to make a decision based on the interests of that child). A parent understands the habitus in which a child is situated (Reay, 1996) and can make informed decisions on that basis. Parents may be considered to be happier with the admissions decisions made (in 2008-9 there were 82,280 appeals against admissions decisions (Department for Education, n.d.c) and by 2018-9 the figure had fallen to 59,420 (Department for Education, n.d.d.)) so it may appear to be that the situation has improved. However, this may simply be due to unhappy parents thinking it is futile to appeal or lacking the confidence or means to do so.

The United Kingdom (UK) is an unequal society (Reay, 2015). Educational resources in the past (in this case 'good schools') were divided unequally due to parental income with middle class children benefiting by the decision of their parents to live in locations with 'good schools'. This is still an issue but, by allowing parental choice, the decision about which child attends which school appears to be fairer. How fair is it in practice for different groups of parents?

The advent of parental choice may appear to have reduced this inequality of choice but may not have done so in practice.

”Choice, like involvement generally, is not context free; it is the product of social location, gender, ‘race’, class and geography.” (Reay, 1996, p. 590)

Reay’s (1996) study considered mothers only and it is impossible to compare differences between gender response over choice based on her paper. That is not to say that gender is not significant, only that it cannot be compared where only one gender is considered.

The habitus inhabited by working class mothers in Reay’s (1996) study was one where they did not have equal access to the education system and felt ignored by the school which led to loss of empowerment and reduced confidence (Reay, 1996). Their geographical location (which would be influenced in part by their incomes), coupled with the lack of money available to the family, prevented mothers accessing schools too far away from home (cost of bus fares). For some mothers, the demands of working to survive was found by Reay (1996) to lead to problems finding quality time with their children. If a parent on a low income faces a choice between increased working hours or family hunger, they will choose additional work.

Working class families also faced a difficult decision were they to make sacrifices to send their child to a perceived good school which often contain high percentages of middle-class children. Going to a middle class school

may have effects on the child as they may become different from the rest of their family through increased levels of education (Reay, 1996) and potentially lose their working class habitus (Reay, 1996 and she also confronts her own movement from working class child to middle class adult within her 2013 paper (Reay, 2013)). In terms of the child themselves, negotiating the cultural differences between home and school may be very difficult (Reay, 1996) and in a white, middle class dominated classroom they may become socially rejected unless they conform (Reay, 1996). Reay's educational journey was outlined in her 2013 paper and she describes social mobility as "frequently being outside your comfort zone" (Reay, 2013, p. 373).

The habitus of middle class mothers was one where lack of choice for their child meant that there were few schools they would like (as opposed to being able to afford) to send their children to (Reay, 1996). Where parents sent their child to a low performing school this was due to a commitment to comprehensive schooling and a fairer educational system, but this clashed with their desire to do their best for their children. This was seen by Reay to lead to "dispositions of empathy, pity and openness" (Reay, 2015, p. 17) but in some cases risked becoming "overwhelmed by fear, contempt and, in some cases repulsion" (Reay, 2015, p. 17). They worried that their child would be influenced by bad children (Reay, 2015).

The children of middle class parents who attended low performing schools could, according to Reay (2015) suffer the discomfort of privilege: empathy for their peer, embarrassment about their background and a sense of superiority over those children who did not have those resources (Reay, 2015).

Reay also noted that race played a part in the choice of school for some parents. The reason for this related to the habitus of race particularly for parents of black or mixed-race children (Reay, 1996).

Emotional capital (which will be considered in the literature review in section 3.5) has a link to this theme of parental choice. Reay tells us that:

“Emotional capital is generally confined within the bounds of the affective relationships of family and friends and encompasses the emotional resources you hand on to those you care about.” (Reay, 2004, p. 60)

The choice of school for a child relates directly to the affective relationships with family and is about the emotional resources passed on to children.

Parents navigating through the choice of school for their child need to ensure that they pass on to their child the emotional resources they need to make a success of the decision. In Reay’s 2015 paper she investigates the strain caused by divided habitus and the difficulties for children who face the need to fit in with their peers and aspire for future success through working hard in school. In this circumstance the requirement for emotional capital is strong.

Parental choice has led to an increase in perceived choice. Choice of school for children comes at a price and an inequality for some families.

### **2.2.6 Conclusion**

Educational policy has been shaped by globalisation – with increased comparison of educational attainment between countries and ideas used on some countries tried in others.

At times, the privatisation of the economy has been perceived as the removal of government from the provision of education. Central government has retained its place within educational provision: what has been seen is the creation of new partnerships with business and altruistic individuals at the expense of local government and more traditional stakeholders. Partnerships and networks have increased since 1979 and were well established by 2010. Educational policy also has other dimensions, such as parental choice and other areas of policy are further considered within section 3.1.

## **2.3 Stakeholders in the education system**

In 1977 the Taylor report (Department of Education and Science, 1977) found very different arrangements in the governance of publicly funded schools within England. The report was enacted in the 1980 Education Act (although the commencement of the provisions did not take place

immediately); the transition to the Act was provided by The Education Act 1980 (Commencement No.: 3) Order. The Education (No. 2) Act 1986 c. 61 amended the 1980 Act and identified the number of governors who would be on each governing body.

The website displaying the 1986 Act states that a typical primary school of say 100 to 200 pupils would have the following structure if it were controlled by the local authority:

- “(a) three parent governors;
  - (b) three governors appointed by the local education authority;
  - (c) one teacher governor;
  - (d) the head teacher, unless he chooses not to be a governor; and
  - (e) either—
    - (i) three foundation governors and one co-opted governor, in the case of a controlled school; or
    - (ii) four co-opted governors, in any other case”
- (Education (No. 2) Act, 1986)

A controlled school would often be a church school with a religious foundation. The stakeholders here are quite clear: parents, local education authority, teachers/headteachers, a religious foundation (if applicable) and the local community (section 6 of the Act makes it clear that the co-opted members should be connected to the local business community). It should be noted that this structure has an overtly local nature. It is also noted that there is specific mention of business although the number of governors for these co-opted roles was small (4 co-opted governors compared to 8 others). Schools are part of the communities they serve and in 1986 this was felt to be important.



The structures that were brought in, provided for stakeholders to be included on the governing body. The first group were parents of children at the school; it is clear that this group were stakeholders with a vested interest in the school. The second group that were included were representatives of the Local Education Authority – these representatives were often councillors or people who were active in political parties. The third group were from the community, and the aim was to recruit people from local businesses. The final group were teachers and other employees of the school, and representatives were elected to serve on the governing body. The headteacher could choose whether to become a governor or not.

It is important to recognise that there are explicit disqualifications under Schedule 4 of the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations (2012). Some are procedural such as being a pupil at the school or being aged under 18. Other reasons for not being able to undertake school governorship include disqualification as a company director or charity trustee, being bankrupt, being disqualified from working with children, and certain criminal convictions.

By 2017 (Department for Education, n.d.e) schools were given greater flexibility but had to have at least two parent governors, one staff governor, one LEA governor, additional governors, and co-opted governors (see

section 2.5). Most governors were to be co-opted on the basis of the skills they possessed. (see section 2.5).

The composition of school governing bodies is very different for academies and free schools (Department for Education, n.d.f) and an increasing number of schools were converting away from the maintained schools sector (Department for Education n.d.e). The Department for Education published statistics on their website the numbers of schools that had converted. At that time, the percentages of state funded schools were as shown in Table 2.1 below:

Type of establishment	Academies	Free schools (including Studio Schools and University Technical Colleges)	Local Authority Maintained schools
Primary	34.9%	1.3%	63.8%
Secondary	69.4%	8.6%	22.0%
Special School	34.1%	5.9%	60.1%
Alternative provision	29.3%	13.8%	59.9%

*Table 2.1: Overall percentage of state-funded schools by type (adapted from Department for Education (n.d.g))*

Table 2.1 shows the percentage of schools in each age phase which were academies or free schools. It is notable that over 70% of primary schools were predominantly local authority schools while nearly 80% of secondary schools were either academies or free schools. At the outset of the study in 2009 relatively few schools were academies and the choice of governors for the interviews could have been achieved using only members of maintained

schools governing bodies. However, it was decided, after the increase in the number of academies, particularly at secondary level that, in order to get the perspective of both secondary and primary schools both academies and maintained schools would need to be included within the sample of governors interviewed.

Multi-academy trusts have no limitations on the composition of their 'Governing Body' although there is a guide to Articles of Association provided by the Department for Education (n.d.f). In piloting interviews for the thesis an interview took place with someone who served at local level on a multi-academy trust (MAT) and the difference in governance arrangements was apparent. Because the trust arrangements are different between MATs and the power delegated can be different, it could be difficult to identify whether it was a member of the Trust or a member of the local governing body that was actually a "school governor" for the purposes of this thesis.

In the 1986 Act, the stakeholders in education were very clear. By 2020, with an awareness of the context, stakeholders are more elusive.

Parents will seek to educate the whole child but will also be mindful that they need to be prepared for employment. They are aware of panic "over falling standards and illiteracy, the fears of violence in schools ... " (Apple, 2014, p. 23) and concerned about the future of their children in an

employment market (Apple, 2014, p. 23) where zero hours contracts are very common (ibid).

The influence of the Local Education Authority, and therefore perhaps political input, has reduced on governing bodies as their composition has changed. Some MATs and maintained schools have politicians on their trusts or local governing bodies. In the case of maintained schools, they are appointed through Local Education Authority but in multi academy trusts (MATs) it may be done more informally. The reduction in political discourse results in a greater range of areas being considered, decisions are taken away from local communities and moved to a powerful elite of players on an international scale (Ball, 2012a). Governing bodies come to implement policies without questioning their suitability or relevance to the context of the school.

The role of business (and of philanthropists) has increased both due to the expanding numbers of academies, and due to the changes in the composition of school governing bodies (which emphasise the skills possessed by governors). This increased role for business could be expected to change the emphasis of schools towards the acquisition of skills required for employment, but it is too early to judge whether this is in fact the case.

Having considered the stakeholders within schools, the changing composition of school governing bodies and changes to the school system it is now time to consider the development of the current school system in more detail.

## **2.4 Development of academies and free schools**

In the 1980s, the first efforts were made by government to bring external partners into the education system. The Assisted Places Scheme (The Education (Assisted Places) Regulations, 1980) reduced the fees due for children from relatively poor families who sought to attend private schools. City Technology Colleges (CTCs) and Grant Maintained Schools (Education Reform Act, 1988) were established with external funding for children whose families were unable or unwilling to pay for their education – CTCs were independent schools situated in urban areas. School separation from local authorities was increased by the delegation of money to schools under the Local Management of Schools (Education Reform Act, 1988) which also resulted in school governors spending more time considering budgets and other financial matters. Hence new partnerships were established with businesses such as private schools, external funders (such as business people who supported CTCs) and with governors.

The 1990s led to continued educational change, particularly after the election of the Labour Government of 1997. This marked the introduction of further partnerships between central government and external agents.

Teachers were to be subject to performance management (which altered their conditions of service) and new modes of educational provision (i.e. academies) were introduced (James, 2014).

The academies as envisaged by Lord Andrew Adonis, who has been described as “the Labour Minister who oversaw many of the academy creations prior to 2010” (West and Wolfe, 2018, p. 19), aimed to overcome educational disadvantage by bringing new sponsors into the education system for failing schools (Laws, 2016). They were essentially independent of even central government control.

In 2010 the election of a Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition led to many more schools being encouraged to convert to academies (Waterman, n.d.b) with the promise of additional money and greater freedom. Michael Gove the new Education Secretary predicted that “The majority of schools are expected to turn into academies” (Shephard, 2010) (for information on Gove’s legacy, see Lightman (2015)). The percentage of schools that have converted to academy status is (as shown in Table 2.1 in Section 2.3) is overall still under 50% some ten years after the 2010 election (for further consideration of academy conversion read Hicks (2014) which identifies the political elements in the growth of academies). There is a question about the disparity between the two phases of schooling: why have primary schools remained maintained schools? Unfortunately, it is a question that

cannot be answered within the context of this study but may be interesting to research in the future.

The 2016 White Paper 'Educational Excellence Everywhere' stated that "By the end of 2020, all schools will be academies or in the process of becoming academies; by the end of 2022, local authorities will no longer maintain schools." (Secretary of State for Education, 2016, p. 53). The White Paper did not preserve places for parents on school governing bodies, instead emphasising the skills governors possessed. In May 2016 the Government abandoned the forced academisation proposal (although this has not been articulated by ministers) (Whittaker, 2016). In September 2016 Justine Greening (the Secretary of State for Education) announced at the Education Committee, in response to a question by Stephen Timms, that parents were to continue to have places on school governing bodies (Adams, 2016).

In section 2.2.4, there was a discussion about the networks of individuals involved in different elements of the education system. It is interesting to note that UTCs have a central trust (the Baker Dearing Educational Trust) which was established by Ken Baker (the Secretary of State for Education who created the Education Reform Act of 1988 (see section 2.2.2)) and Lord Dearing (a former Civil Servant who had worked in business late in his career) (University Technical Colleges, 2019). Another of the trustees is Andrew Adonis who implemented academies in the 2000s ) (University

Technical Colleges, 2019) (see section 2.2.3. This links to the educational policy areas considered earlier because those who have promoted the removal of local authority control from education now serve on organisations which are linked to more recent developments.

The academic results shown by UTCs have been criticised in research published by the Educational Policy Institute (Robinson and Domínguez-Reig, 2018). The Institute's research also concluded that although free schools had high academic results this could partially be explained by the characteristics of pupils at some of the schools (Mills, et al., 2019).

Nick Gibb the present Schools Minister is quoted on the Department for Education website as having commented very positively about the benefits of giving freedom on educational policies to academies.

“Academies and free schools have control over the curriculum they teach, and with the National Curriculum setting the standard high, innovative schools led by exceptional head teachers have developed world-class curricula.” (Department for Education, n.d.a)

This gives rise to the question of why only academies have this freedom. Essentially this is because they are independent schools and hence have the rights of private schools to make their own decisions. However, returning to Callaghan's (Education in England, n.d.a) 1976 speech, if academies are funded by the state then academies must be accountable to the stakeholders of education.



In conclusion, the growth of academies was a natural progression from measures under previous governments to work with other agents in the provision of education.

Having considered the growth of academies it is a suitable point to consider how the work of governing bodies has changed from that envisaged by the Taylor Report.

## **2.5 Composition of school governing bodies**

The composition of school governing bodies was alluded to earlier in this chapter when consideration was given to stakeholders and the move toward more skills-based recruitment of governors. This section provides more detail about the regulations surrounding the composition of school governing bodies and what this leads to in practice.

### **2.5.1 What the regulations say**

For maintained schools, structures do exist through regulations provided by the Department for Education (n.d.e). Academies have a very different governance structure from maintained and controlled schools. It is more closely aligned with the structure to be found in companies. While guidance is provided by government (Department for Education, n.d.h) academies do not have to follow it.

At first sight the regulations (Department for Education, n.d.e) as outlined seem straightforward. Up to one third of the governing body may be made up of people who work within the school and this number includes the headteacher and one staff governor (ibid, n.d.e. Three other types of governors are mentioned in the document: one LEA governor may be appointed, two parent governors can be appointed; and the remaining places must be held by co-opted governors (Department for Education, n.d.e). The minimum size for a maintained school governing body is seven (ibid, n.d.e). Let us assume that a headteacher and chair of governors meet to consider the structure of the governing body. They have three scenarios they want to consider as the headteacher has two staff they would like to serve on the basis of their skills. They want to see what the size of the governing body would be if no additional staff were recruited (Scenario 1), if one staff member was recruited (Scenario 2) or two staff members were recruited (Scenario 3). Table 2.2 has been created to help them make a recommendation.

Type of Governor	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
Headteacher	1	1	1
Parent	2	2	2
LEA	1	1	1
Staff	1	1	1
Co-opted non-staff	2	3	5
Co-opted staff	0	1	2
Total Governors	7	9	12

*Table 2.2: Composition of a maintained school governing body under the 2014 regulations*

In Scenario 1, the minimum size of a governing body is seven and the headteacher and staff governor are less than one third of governors at the minimum size. In Scenario 2, the headteacher, staff governor and a co-

opted staff governor can only be accommodated with the increase in size of the governing body to nine. In Scenario 3 there are four governors from the staff. Hence in order that they be at the maximum level of one third of the governing body there need to be 12 governors.

It is not that stakeholders have been replaced but the influence of some groups has been reduced from those provided in the Education (No.2.) Act (1986) where a larger number of governors were from the local authority and there were more parents (Education (No.2) Act, 1986). What is notable is the use of the co-opted governors who are appointed to fill gaps in the skills of the existing governing body.

This change of composition cannot and should not be taken at face value as an attempt to depoliticise the governing body. Legislation does not exist in a vacuum, and nor do the changes. These changes were made on the basis of a wider long standing, neoliberal, pro-market agenda which can be traced back to Callaghan's Ruskin College Speech (Education in England, n.d.a). Within the Conservative party this 'free market' thinking may be traced back to 1970 (Selsdon Group, n.d.), and certainly to the formation of the Selsdon Group in 1973 (Selsdon Group, n.d.).

### **2.5.2 Who is represented and who is underrepresented?**

Ellis's (2003) report focussed on groups which are under-represented on school governing bodies including those from minority ethnic groups, single

parents, the poor and the young. The question of why these groups are under-represented needs to be examined and questioned. However, the problem with the report is that, while it suggests reasons for the under-representation it does not provide hard evidence of its own, relying on other surveys to identify the gaps in representation. The question of what barriers exist is much harder to answer now as the information is no longer centrally collated about membership of a school governing body. The statistics themselves have altered too with the labour market becoming distinctly different from that prevailing at the time of the 2003 survey. For example, the growth of zero hours contracts which grew from 801,000 in 2015 (Office for National Statistics, n.d.e) to 1.052,000 by 2020 (ibid, n.d.f)). This growth makes it harder to determine who is really unemployed, who is underemployed, and who is working more than one job. It is recognised that this growth in zero hours contracts could be simply a matter of improved collection of statistics, but it could also be the result of an increase in labour casualisation. One of Ellis's findings was that governors were seen as "... middle class, well educated, and professional." (Ellis, 2003, p. 46). If people are struggling to survive, they are unlikely to be able to find the time to take up school governorship.

Phillips (2005) focussed on how social groups could have an equal voice. Groups surrounding schools could include parents, but it was important to consider items such as gender and ethnicity. The increasing numbers of women in the labour force had, in Phillips' (2005) analysis reduced their

involvement in their localities although evidence about volunteering mentioned earlier in this Chapter showed that they were approached to volunteer.

One area considered by Philips (2005) was the representation of parents but there is evidence that parent governors sometimes focus on their own children rather than all children at the school (McClellan and Gann, 2002).

This is perhaps one of the items which needs to be addressed in future research – a larger survey of governors to see what the profile of governors really is like throughout the country. One of the obstacles to such a survey is that academies are not controlled by local authorities and hence local authorities do not collect the statistics.

In contrast, the structure of governance in academies is considerably different. Academies are trusts with a two layered governance structure. The question arises in this case of who are the equivalent of governors? The first layer is the equivalent of shareholders who appoint the trustees and who have a limited financial interest in the trust. The second layer are those who run the trust (i.e. the trustees) who are directors of the charitable company and responsible for ensuring that the trust meets its objectives (Department for Education, n.d.f). Having considered the work undertaken by each layer of governance it seems that local board members are the school governor equivalent, but it is recognised that their power is much

more restricted. Where a multi-academy trust (MAT) is established the situation becomes more complex – local governing bodies may be established for each local academy which is part of the MAT but governors on the local bodies are not trustees unless they also serve on the trust's board. It is important to determine who the governors are and to set the line which separates those who are considered governors from those are not. Given that the trust delegates powers to the local governing bodies it is taken that all such members are governors whether or not they are members of the trust. How is this different from maintained schools? It can be quite considerable. The important thing to recognise is that they come in different forms so comparing one multi-academy trust with another or an academy which has only one school can lead to very different structures, and very different information being provided.

Incidental to the type of school an individual becomes a governor of the question of involvement arises. Will the governing body of a mainstream school or academy become exclusive (i.e. “make it difficult for those hovering on the edges to feel at home within the group?” (Phillips, 2005, p. 89). Phillips suggested that involvement in activities outside of home and work reflected self-assumption about their “own competencies: whether they think they know anything about the issues under discussion, whether they think they have something worthwhile to say.” (Phillips, 2005, p. 87).

The impetus to alter school governorship for maintained schools may be found in the report of a ministerial working group published in April 2010 by the Department of Children, Schools and Families entitled “The 21st Century School: Implications and Challenges for Governing Bodies”. This report indicated that

- “The majority of governing bodies do a good job;
- Governing bodies need to be clear about their purpose and follow a defined set of principles for good governance of schools;
- There needs to be more clarity concerning the strategic management role of the governing body and the day to day management role of head teachers to ensure that neither party crosses over into each other’s role;
- The principle of stakeholder representation on governing bodies is essential but needs to be balanced against a requirement that all governing bodies have the necessary skills to carry out their tasks;
- Improvements to the training for governing body chairs, new governors and governing body clerks needs to be made to clarify the points above.”  
(Department of Children, Schools and Families, n.d.a., p. 3)

The decision to alter the composition of school governing bodies in 2012 must be seen within this context. The aim was to increase representation of people with the “necessary skills” (ibid, p. 3). This leads to the question of what necessary skills are?

In 2010, SGOSS stated on their website within their recruitment materials that:

“There are no specific skill requirements for the role. However, schools do benefit, and are increasingly

interested in volunteers from the Finance, Legal, Business, Marketing, HR and Construction sectors” (SGOSS, n.d.)

What is concerning is that these are skills for which people are paid and hence skills for which individuals would otherwise be using to receive a monetary reward – but being a school governor is an unpaid role which is taken on by volunteers. This is, however, significant in providing a contextual understanding of school governance in the second decade of the millennium and explains why governors are being increasingly required to bring skills with them to the governing body.

The question which arises from such a list of skill requirements is what motivates people to become school governors. Existing literature suggests that school governors are perceived as “... middle class, well educated, and professional.” (Ellis, 2003, p. 46). Should our schools have governors whose experience is in areas which can be applied to the school context relatively straightforwardly or should our schools seek to develop the individual?

## **2.6 What do school governors do within the role?**

SGOSS gives an insight into the role of governors which can be related to the findings of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (n.d.a) report:

“School governors make important collective decisions and the governing body is answerable to parents and



the community. The responsibilities of the governing body can be summarised as providing strategic management, acting as a critical friend and ensuring accountability.” (SGOSS, n.d.)

Essentially school governors are lay people who work with headteachers to provide leadership of their school through their work in a school governing body but they are not paid for this work.

The statutory framework in which governors operate is not easily accessible to most lay people (they need to know relevant Acts, sections and appendices). The Department of Children, Schools and Families (n.d.b) produced regular updates to a publication entitled “The school governors Guide to the Law” (Department of Children, Schools and Families, n.d.b) which provided school governors and other lay people with an insight into the legal environment in which they operate. This is no longer available and instead governors need to look for guidance to a Governance Handbook (Department for Education, n.d.i) (previously governors handbook (Department for Education, n.d.j) which is now produced by the Department for Education (DfE) and tells governors what the DfE regards as good school governance. The actions of governors are now subject to a competency framework (Department for Education, n.d.n) which outlines exactly what school governors and chairs of governors need to know about the school including the “Skills and effective behaviours” (Department for Education, n.d.n) required from them.

There are a number of areas in which school governors may be involved (although they are unlikely to be involved in all of them unless they are the chair of the governing body): strategic management, acting as a critical friend; ensuring accountability and the importance of training.

### **2.6.1 Strategic management**

It is not possible for school governors to be involved in every aspect of the school, no matter how much they may want to, as they have a limited amount of time available to them (Creese and Bradley, 1997, p. 108) and may feel overburdened with unnecessary paperwork (Thornton, 2000).

Hence, governors are encouraged to focus on the strategic elements of their work (Earley, 2003); they have even been compared to the non-executive directors of companies. As being a school governor is unpaid, this comparison appears rather unfair. If a strategic focus is to be obtained, governors need to be able to provide overall direction about the way the school should move forward.

In contrast, professionals in schools sometimes want to further their own agenda rather than involve governors in strategic management (Grace, 1995). The reasons for this include the fact that school governors do not necessarily come from a business background and may find it hard to understand the professional and educational aspects of their role as strategic managers. However, according to the legislation, the role of a governor is to lead the school and direct its future. It was envisaged that

they would write the school development plan but as Creese and Bradley (1997) noted this is not always the case in practice. Having considered strategic management, it is now pertinent to consider the Critical Friend role.

### **2.6.2 Acting as a critical friend**

As McClellan and Gann noted, the problem with governors acting as critical friends is that schools often want the friendship without the criticism (McClellan and Gann, 2002). If governors do not always work effectively in setting out the strategic direction of the school, they cannot be critical but simply act as a friend of the school. The headteacher is unlikely to relish the prospect of having their work criticised.

### **2.6.3 Accountability**

Professionals within schools do need to work effectively between Ofsted inspections and do not operate within an educational vacuum. Unless school governors ask questions that professionals find difficult to answer, the decisions of professionals may go unquestioned and they may become complacent. Young (2016) suggests that this questioning is almost a charade where governor questions are minuted so that they are ready to be shown to Ofsted. Without criticality there may be no accountability.

In theory, the school governing body should be the main area where policy making is discussed, but they are able to delegate some functions to

committees. The budget for the school must be passed by the governing body in maintained schools (Department for Education, n.d.j), but the decision to buy paper clips may be delegated to school staff.

In the past, parent governors were often accused of representing the particular concerns of their children and basing their information on anecdotes to challenge the school (McClellan and Gann, 2002).

headteachers were concerned that their school governors were 'good', did not 'interfere' (Grace, 1995) and that they had a good working relationship with the chair of governors because they were seen as being a strategic power holder within the governing body to prevent "... illegitimate intrusion of lay power ... " (Grace, 1995, p. 86). It is important to recognise that Grace was concerned with School Leadership, in particular the perspective of headteachers. Governors were not interviewed.

Creese and Bradley (1997) indicate that "Governors depend on the headteacher and staff for information about the effectiveness of the school and do not have systematic processes for monitoring the school." (Creese and Bradley, 1997, pp. 112-114). It is therefore too easy for governors to simply act as a rubber stamp for decisions really made by professionals (Robinson, Ward and Timperley, 2003). Earley indicates that governing bodies need much improved access to information and should seek external support to achieve this if required (Earley, 1997). Although Earley is not explicit about the agencies which may provide the support, it is likely

that local education authorities (LEAs) would have been approached very early on.

Headteachers sometimes see the governing body as external to the school and, while they may share information with the chair of governors may feel more reluctant to do so with other governors (Cullingford and Swift, 2001). Governors in contrast may see the headteacher as being trusted to inform them when things were not going well (Creese and Bradley, 1997).

It is not just that management are accountable to governors: governors are also accountable. When Ofsted inspect schools, they hold governors accountable alongside the leadership team. LEAs visited schools regularly and have good information about their strengths and weaknesses (Mclean, 2001) but the role is now likely to fall on school improvement partners (SIP) or to data provided by RAISEonline.

There is an assumption that the governors can interpret the data provided to them. Robinson et al.'s research indicated that this was not the case (Robinson, Ward and Timperley, 2003). If chairs of governors require training, it seems likely that other governors are in a similar position. Hence it seems pertinent to consider governor training at this point.

#### 2.6.4 Training

It is notable that the Department for Children, Schools and Families (n.d.c.) report confirmed that governors need to be trained in specific aspects of their role to ensure that their time is spent wisely. Why do school governors need organised training while the non-executive directors of hospital trusts have none but are also volunteers (Martin, 1995). Perhaps this should be viewed in a slightly different way. Firstly, why do the hospital trusts not organise such training, i.e. is there something within the context that is different (e.g. are the non-executive directors experienced in the area of medicine, or are the roles very different), are the numbers of volunteers different, or is there no requirement for training? Secondly, how do non-executive directors come to be in post? Veridus indicates that although they were volunteers in 1995, by 2010 they were recruited by public advertisement and were paid (Veridus, n.d.).

As Martin pointed out, there was no minimum entitlement to training and no compulsory training for school governors (Martin, 1995) but some training and support was made available by various bodies.

However, despite all of the resources available, it is significant that

“... the amount invested by local and central Governments in governor training has been small compared to that spent on headteacher training”  
(Thody, 1999, p. 127-128)

This situation was not connected to austerity as the Conservative-Liberal Coalition was not in power leads to some significant questions such as why, at a time that school governors were finding themselves with increased powers and responsibilities, was their training budget subsumed into the general school budget? Thody (1999) implies but does not state that this led to less training being undertaken by governors, but there is little direct research evidence that this is the case.

Banwell and Woodhouse's (1996) research indicated that some governors did not use training and information provided by the local authority. Banwell and Woodhouse's reasons for non-attendance could be summarised into three areas – a perception that the governors would not learn anything, a feeling that the governor was there to be a specialist in a particular area and that the training sessions would be incomprehensible. It is also crucial that all governors, including those requiring disabled access and whose first language is not English are considered (Banwell and Woodhouse, 1996).

What could be done to improve training provision? Firstly, research has shown governor calls for training to be based around whole governing body needs and targeted at their school governing body (Banwell and Woodhouse, 1996; Martin, 1995). Banwell and Woodhouse state that, nevertheless, some governors should receive centralised training, particularly headteachers, teacher and LEA/councillor governors (Banwell

and Woodhouse, 1996). It will be interesting to consider whether this has happened in practice.

Secondly, Thody states that "... the majority of courses continued to be task rather than skill-related, with some dissatisfaction expressed with overly didactic teaching, occasional criticisms of lack of time for discussion and of information overload," (Thody, 1999, p. 123). In other words, the way courses are delivered did not always match governor expectation – they wanted skills based courses which allowed discussion and did not bombard them with too much information.

What types of skills governors need to learn? There is some concern that governors are ineffective as strategic leaders of schools (Earley, 2003) and that there needs to be greater emphasis on strategy and accountability if school governors are to ask the questions they need to about the school and its performance (Earley, 2003, p. 365 ). Earley's study was based on a small number of schools in a particular situation and again may not be replicated in other schools. Governors in recent years have been strongly encouraged to carefully question their school leaders.

Access to training and resources also needs to be considered. As has been outlined, this may be difficult due to the individual differences between governors (e.g. they may need material translating into a different language). The advent of the Internet has enabled governors and other



individuals to access resources outside formal training sessions (Barron, 2004; Barron, 2006). In the age of lifelong learning this increased access to resources is significant. Were governors accessing online training in 2017?

More recently James, et al. (2010) noted that governors “had very clear views about training and its focus and the need for it to be relevant.”

Sometimes James, et al. found that training was shared with other governing bodies and that “meeting other governors ... can be very beneficial” (James, et al., 2010, p. 54).

### **2.6.5 Conclusions**

The aim of this thesis is not to consider the work of the governing body but whether skills and experiences are applied to the work. However, it is important to note what they do in order to ensure that the context is understood.

There are three aspects of the work of governors: strategic management, acting as a critical friend and accountability. This section also considered training.

Strategic management concerns the future direction of the school and it is important because it is contended by some authors that governors, they do not always provide it. There have been criticisms of governors and schools when governors act as critical friends. The final element of their role is

accountability: governors are (in theory) accountable in the same way that staff are accountable. In practice, what a governor loses from failing to undertake their duty to the school is loss of a voluntary role but staff members may lose their career.

The final area considered under this section was training. Training for governors has been subject to criticism for many years but its aim is to equip school governors with the information and skills required to undertake their role effectively. Money previously ring fenced for school governor training has been subsumed into the main school budget for many years, causing some governing bodies to use the money for other items in school (e.g. books). By 2010, governor training was beginning to take new forms (e.g. training for one or more governing bodies on a single topic). It will be interesting to see where governors obtain their training and whether they attend regularly.

Having considered what school governors do within the role, the question of how the work of governing bodies has changed since 1986 arises.

## **2.7 Changes to the work of governing bodies**

The introduction of Local Management of Schools as a result of the Education Reform Act 1988 did change the responsibilities of school governors who were now obliged to consider financial matters which had previously been within the remit of local authorities. This meant greater

responsibilities for individual governors, many of whom may have had limited experience of complex financial decisions.

School governors have traditionally been recruited as stakeholders to represent the views of the group they represent on the governing body. Many governors have received training in the role and learned about educational issues such as the curriculum, and about areas such as finance. Some complaints from governors and headteachers indicated that some governors made almost no contribution to the Governing Body. The change in the composition of school governing bodies can be linked to this: perhaps if governors make no contribution it is because they lack the necessary skills.

Shearn, et al.'s (1995) article about governors, their chairs and the headteacher indicated that the headteachers were sometimes very disdainful about their governing body. For example: "...the governing body has `no commitment; they are the kind of people who just turn up and sit there'" (Shearn, et al., 1995, p. 179) and (in this researcher's view rather condescending) "'They haven't the ability to take decisions', so `they take my advice' ." (ibid, 1995, p. 180). In other words, headteachers perceived that governors were sometimes "out of their depth" (Shearn, et al., 1995, p. 182). Similar comments about governors can be found in Grace (1995).

As was noted earlier, the number of Local Education Authority governors had reduced since 1986. James, et al. (2010) mentions the depoliticisation of school governance, as school governors were no longer considering political questions; they were implementing political decisions made by others. He recognises that the role remains political but says it has changed from being party political to one around the “politics of ensuring proper management” (James, et al., 2010, p. 899): is this a positive step? Although school governors are not policymakers, they should consider the policies they are implementing in their school and hence political questions perhaps should be asked.

Educational literature relating to the work of school governors is frequently on the topic of the governors as managers. The advent of LMS (under the Education Reform Act 1988) brought financial management to school governorship while governors now perform a range of management functions that were previously undertaken by the local authority. The reduction in the role of local authorities within schools and the advent of academisation (i.e. school governors as members of trusts and boards which control the school) makes the managerial role more crucial. This in turn has meant that governing bodies have now changed in composition (see section 2.3) and what is being sought are the skills required to run a school in a business-like manner rather than influence those who are employed to do so.

The movement towards academies led to a reduction in local accountability because while local authorities have a local remit, many multi-academy trusts do not and Glatter suggests that this represents a “further dilution of local empowerment” (Glatter, 2011, p. 167). One multi-academy trust abolished local boards entirely (E-Act, 2017) The extent of local accountability for the academies in the local authority in which the governors within the research served, was not investigated within this research.

At the outset of this study the idea that a pre-existing skills set may be required for membership of school governing bodies was not considered as likely. However, it is obvious that certain skills were always required for school governorship, such as an ability to read and to discuss. What is now different is that the pre-existing skills required of school governors are often professional in nature, such as financial skills, building and technical skills. This may mean that who becomes a governor will change. However, as the new regulations (Department for Education, n.d.k) had been in place for a relatively short period of time at the time of this research, and that period has been one of educational change, it is difficult to judge the actual effect on the composition of school governing bodies.

### **2.7.1 Conclusion**

The 1977 Taylor Report found huge disparity between 'governing boards' of schools. The model of school governorship introduced in 1986 seems very different from that governors faced in 2016 at the time of the research. The purpose of the research was not to consider the work governors did directly but to find out what they felt they did as it related to the application of capital. Discussing changes to the work of governing bodies is made more complex by the growth of multi-academy trusts because the work and composition of local governing bodies can differ markedly (for example on some local governing bodies there are no parents of children at the school).

Having considered how changes to the educational context have affected school governors it is pertinent to draw some conclusions from the analysis

## **2.8 Conclusions**

Governments intervene in education because they supply the money to fund it. This money comes from people and businesses that pay tax and hence government is accountable for the money spent. The shape of government intervention has changed over the years and this led to consideration about the purpose of education.

The consideration about what education was for, changed the shape of educational policy. Educational policy is increasingly shaped by networks

of individuals and groups that work with government to deliver educational services. The movement within education policy is to marginalise local authorities and to bring power to central government.

The stakeholder approach to school governing bodies was supposed to make the school accountable to those it served. The failure of school governing bodies to fall in line with government policies was thought to be due to the domination of local education authority representatives. Greater numbers of governors recruited for particular skills aimed to depoliticise school governance. The advent of academisation also had an effect.

The growth of academies and free schools over the past eight years has been rapid and the changes to the education system have been marked. Networks of people (see 2.2.4 and 2.4) were apparent within the growth of free schools, particularly University Technical Colleges (UTCs).

The role of school governors and their work in school has changed profoundly from that envisaged in 1986. The depoliticisation of school governance could be regarded positively (the interests of children are perceived to be removed from the sway of politicians) but could also be seen to have reduced consideration of the wider policy context and how particular policies affect the school (i.e. reduced accountability for education to the community served by the school).

Having considered the context of school governing bodies, Chapter 3, the Literature Review will discuss the literature which is available and relevant to the research questions.



### **Chapter 3 - Literature Review**

The contextual chapter was separated from the literature review because it did not address the research questions on which this thesis is founded directly but it provided a background in which the research questions may be understood. The focus of the literature review is to explain the concepts raised within the research questions and to identify areas which may be found within the findings chapter of the research (Chapter 5).

This chapter commences with an overview of class and capital before focussing on human (section 3.2) and social capital (section 3.3) in more detail and as some of the investigation considers economic (section 3.4), emotional capital will be considered (section 3.5) and cultural capital (section 3.6) they will also be considered. The consideration of capital is important because it is at the centre of the research and research questions outlined in Chapter 1. The term capital is considered in the context of human capital and social capital.

The chapter will go on to consider the societal context (section 3.7) in which school governors operate and from which governors are recruited. Having considered the context, the chapter will examine school governing bodies and how they work (section 3.8). Because the focus of the research questions is capital rather than management, the section around what governors do will be relatively short.

Section 3.9 considers the link between capital, learning theory, education, and skills. Governors are volunteers and hence considering the motivation to become a school governor is linked to why people volunteer (section 3.10). As will be seen in the findings chapter, many of the governors volunteered for activities outside their work role before and after becoming a school governor. As will be outlined (in section 3.4.12) volunteering is linked to social capital but may also have effects on an individual's human capita (section 3.10.1).

Having considered the structure of the chapter it is timely to consider the first element of the literature review: the link between class and capital.

### **3.1 School governing within a neoliberal context**

School governance took place before 1980 but as Taylor (Department of Education and Science, 1977) noted it was variable in the arrangements used between schools and between local authorities. The 1980 Education Act introduced the need for schools to have governing bodies (section 1 of the Act) with the Schedule ensuring that the name of those governing schools became 'governors' rather than 'managers' with stipulations about when schools could have a joint governing body. The detailed structure for school governance was provided by the Education (No. 2) Act 1986.

For the purposes of this thesis neoliberalism is viewed using Ball's (2013) perspective:

“At its most visceral and intimate neoliberalism involves the transformation of social relations and practices into calculabilities and exchanges, that is into the market form – with the effect of commodifying educational practice and experience. Neoliberalism is made possible by a “new type of individual”, an individual formed within the logic of competition – a calculating, solipsistic, instrumentally driven, “enterprise man”.” (Ball, 2013, p. 132)

A neoliberal would therefore not be someone who felt that schools should obtain educational supplies from a private firm but have no further views on the suitability of markets to education. To a neoliberal, markets are the only efficient way to allocate resources. To neoliberals there should be an education market, an internal market, staff should be paid by results, parents should choose schools and schools should be judged on social mobility. Competition is seen as a good thing and qualifications could be seen as a competition between individuals, and pupils should learn at school what success and failure really mean in order that they are better prepared for the future. The market led nature of schools is considered in the next section but before considering it, we need to see neoliberalism and its link to history.

There were signs in the 1970s that ideological positions were shifting to the right both internationally and within the UK. The formation of the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) in 1955 (Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), n.d.) marked the first think tank calling for ‘free market solutions’ which describes itself as “entirely independent of any political party or group” (Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), n.d.). In 1955 the world was one of post-war

consensus. Economic problems in the 1960s and 1970s led politicians to seek alternative solutions and in 1970 Conservative politicians met to consider the Conservative Manifesto for the 1970 General Election. In this manifesto was the following paragraph:

“We want people to achieve the security and independence of personal ownership greater freedom of opportunity, greater freedom of choice, greater freedom from government regulation and interference. A responsible democracy based on honest government and respect for the law.” (Conservative Party, n.d.)

This does not contain all of the areas of the neoliberal agenda, there are strong echoes to the rationale espoused for implementing measures for greater use of the market to distribute resources in words like “freedom of choice” and “the security and independence of personal ownership and “greater freedom of choice”.

It may be questioned why, from a neoliberal perspective, schools needed to have school governing bodies. One economic justification is that the perfect market is made up of individual firms each competing against each other (see Slater, 1997). All firms have a governance structure (e.g. articles of association). In the economic model of the perfect market (Slater, 1997), competition leads to effective markets hence barriers to competition between schools (such as the local authority) need to be reduced. The neoliberal perspective could be seen to be ideological in nature as it affects the world. However, it is based on the ‘truth’ of an economic model that seems to have almost universal acceptance. In 2008 neoliberalism was

described as the “... prevailing economic paradigm in the world today ...”  
(Ross and Gibson, 2008, p. 2).

How did a particular paradigm attain such a status? In part it was the economic problems faced by many world economies (including the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK)) during the 1960s and 1970s.

There are four main pressure groups which aligned to the ‘free market agenda’. Firstly, the Institute of Economic Affairs (which has already been outlined), which pre-dated the other groups by almost a decade (Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), n.d.).

Secondly, the Selsdon group which was set up in 1973 when the government changed its agenda from the radicalism of the free market 1970 Conservative Manifesto (Selsdon Group, n.d.). It is open to all Conservative party members and seeks to shape the ideas of the Conservative Party.

Thirdly, the Centre for Policy Studies (which was founded by Margaret Thatcher and Keith Joseph in 1974 (Centre for Policy Studies, n.d.)) and lays claim to having

“... championed the use of synthetic phonics in schools, which has - since its introduction under David Cameron - raised children’s literacy standards and

reversed Britain's decline in the PISA tables". (Centre for Policy Studies, n.d.)

Despite assuring people that it is " ...independent and non-partisan" (Centre for Policy Studies, n.d.). it does state that its "... mission is to develop a new generation of conservative thinking, built around promoting enterprise, ownership and prosperity." (Centre for Policy Studies, n.d.). It should be noted that while the direction of thinking is laid out, the use of a small rather than capital 'C' is meant to distance itself slightly from the Conservative Party.

The final group that injected neoliberal ideas into the political agenda was the Adam Smith Institute (ASI) which was formed in the 1970s (Adam Smith Institute, n.d.). The group states, on its website, that it "is Independent, non-profit and non-partisan, we work to promote neoliberal and free market ideas" (ibid). The ASI are very open in their commitment to the neoliberal agenda and want freedom in many more areas including drug policy.

Neoliberal ideas spread more widely in the 1980s and were adopted by some on the left as ideas through which more socially just policies could be implemented. New schools, built to replace aged ones, utilised money from Private Finance Initiatives (PFI). While there was no market, schools were linked to a building provider which owned the building used by the school and to which payments were to be made for heating and other costs for a number of years in the future. Such solutions reflected global changes

which “have increasingly been characterised by the involvement of private actors in state education” (Papanastasiou, 2017, p. 82). Ideas from one country are implemented into another in an increasingly globalised society and hence changes in one country may be utilised in another.

Having identified what is meant by neoliberal and obtaining an insight into how it has permeated public policy it is time to consider two areas: firstly the market-led nature of schools and secondly the political nature of school governing.

### **3.1.1 The market-led nature of schools**

Because market use within schools is so widespread only a sample of items can be utilised within this section to provide insight.

Not everyone is optimistic about the ability to change the new right education system (Chitty, 1989), Reforms are brought in with a stated aim of improving educational opportunities but Hursh (2008) suggests that data shows that the reforms within the United Kingdom have increased educational inequality rather than provided opportunities for ‘social mobility’ (Hursh, 2008, pp. 30-31). One of the areas considered by Hursh is competition and this section will briefly consider it in two forms: competition between schools and competition within schools.

What type of competition between schools exists? Some degree of competition has always existed (e.g. sports fixtures). Some of the competition between schools concerned assisted places at private schools for some children, the creation of City Technology Colleges in deprived areas which were privately funded schools (Education Reform Act, requiring schools to create a prospectus (The School Information (England) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/1124)), funding schools on the basis of pupil numbers (the school funding formula for maintained schools may be found in documents such as Department for Education (n.d.l) creating a publicly available list showing the examination results of pupils at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 (Gov.uk, n.d.b) and Ofsted replacing HMI (which reported national pictures rather than individual schools (Smith, 2000). Government has had to standardise what goes in performance tables (Gov.uk, n.d.b) because schools played the system. This causes many schools to focus time and resources on those who can achieve the benchmark standard (Hursh, 2008). The reason for this is that parents may base their decision about which school to choose for their child on the performance of a school against other schools and the school relies on pupil numbers for the money it receives from government.

Competition within schools can be financial or aimed at improving motivation. Not all things which schools do amount to competition. At first sight competition seems a 'good thing' but it may not always be on closer examination. A teacher making a judgment on the level of attainment in a



particular piece of work is not competition. However, when the work is returned to students and compared to others, competition may be engendered and for some pupils, comparison of marks may cause demotivation (Dweck, 2007). Competition may also be utilised to determine resource allocation; for example teacher salary may be dependent upon meeting targets under performance management and this could include pupil results within their classes.

Hence even at a very superficial level, there are a number of ways in which schools could be seen to be market-led. Competition between schools, school performance tables, payment on the basis of performance management for staff, parental choice and Ofsted. The link between neoliberal ideas and the workings of schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can be clearly seen and as people who are responsible for schools, there is a clear link between politics and school governance.

### **3.1.2 The political nature of school governing**

In his 1995 book, Grace asserted that despite the changes brought in during the 1980s and early 1990s

“... examination of the headteacher’s accounts and of headteacher discourse revealed that the majority of them had not experienced, at that time, any sense of a changed power relation with governors” (Grace, 1995, p. 77)

Some of the changes were implemented to increase governor power and hold headteachers to account as well as to give more power to the “parent/consumer” (ibid, 1995, p. 80). Grace contended that some of the headteachers he met during his study “believed that government reform of English education had actually resulted in an unintended enhancement of the power position of headteachers” (ibid, 1995, p. 79). This section seeks to consider whether this perspective remains almost 25 years after this book was published.

It is important to state the researcher’s positionality within this literature review as it differs greatly from many other governors. The researcher left four school governing bodies after the decision was made that they should become academies. The proposals made in Educational Excellence Everywhere (Secretary of State for Education, 2016) that every school was to become an academy made her question whether she could remain as a school governor. Given her involvement in politics, the political nature of school governing appears self-evident, but it is not to all governors. Hence the question arises of what is political about being a school governor?

At first sight, being a school governor is not political. Governors help the school to serve its community. On closer inspection it is not just the questions asked by school governors but those which are not asked very often that make school governance political in fact.

The UK's Combined Code of Corporate Governance (Financial Reporting Council, 2003) is often taken as an exemplar for the responsibilities of corporate boards. It specifies the responsibilities of corporate boards as to:

“...set the company's strategic aims, ensure that the necessary financial and human resources are in place for the company to meet its objectives and review management performance. The board should set the company's values and standards and ensure that its obligations to its shareholders and others are understood and met” (Financial Reporting Council, 2003, p. 4).

At first sight strategic management seems apolitical. Management is a business concept and strategic management involves the long-term plan of the business.

There are a number of elements in this that are, in fact political. Firstly, it assumes that the school needs to act like a business. Secondly, it assumes that planning for schools should be done atomically rather than planning for all children within a community. Thirdly, it assumes that schools have information that is not at their disposal (e.g. the amount of funding to be received by year).

The political nature of a school governor decision over the siting of a new building was mentioned by James, et al.. (2010). They were not explicit about the political dimension but, when considering a new building, questions arise of how to finance the building (e.g. private firms paying for it and the school renting it (sometimes called PFI with the acronym standing

for Private Finance Initiative), school reserves or central government), where to site the building (move to a new site or to build on the playing field, considerations of the needs of the local community), and whether a building will attract more parents to send their child to the school. These link to the financial management of the school because in essence governors must decide whether the capital resources expended on the new building will be financially justified.

The relationship between school governors and the headteacher is a very difficult political area in some schools. Governors want an effective working relationship with the headteacher and recognise the need to delegate matters to senior leaders. Do they want to be people who tell senior leaders when they make a mistake or have gone beyond their powers? If governors do not challenge the headteacher then they will suffer the consequences when things go wrong because they are as accountable as the headteacher for problems within the school.

Being a critical friend involves asking questions. James, et al. (2010) suggested that lack of questioning was felt to be a problem by headteachers (this could be seen to echo Grace's 1995 findings). In a more recent study, Young (2016) found that sometimes questions were asked in order that the question and response could be noted and shown to Ofsted. At least one local authority has provided a guide for governors on asking

the right questions (Leicester Learning Services, 2015) so perhaps Young's findings are to be expected.

Governors have not always been regarded as able to formulate their own questions and Young (2016) points to Ofsted guidance provided to headteachers, lists of questions within a governors handbook and to the National Governors Association (National Governors Association, n.d.a; National Governors Association, n.d.b) list of questions. The questions provided to governors do not question the underlying political nature of the decisions made (e.g. 'Why is teacher pay determined through performance management?' rather than 'what questions are required so that performance management works effectively in the school?').

Accountability and critical friend may be thought to be similar, but accountability can be about the accountability of staff for their performance. A school governor may rely on the headteacher to consider the performance of a member of teaching staff. If the headteacher likes or dislikes a member of staff, then the information provided to governors may be misleading.

Is performance management something that is value free or politically driven? Performance management may be about removing bad teachers and incentivising performance, but this provides a market driven view of the

way pay should be awarded. Few school governors seem to question their involvement in a process of performance management.

Governors recruited on the basis of their 'skills' may be requested to utilise them for the good of the school. Young (2016) found that the skills possessed by governors were frequently expected to be provided without cost to the school (James, et al. (2010) noted this too). Governors are not generally (other than the headteacher and staff governor) to be involved in the operational aspects of the school (as Young (2016) notes). As noted in 3.1.2.1 the governor role involves the strategic direction for the school not operational matters that are dealt with by staff. The involvement of governors in the operation of the school was mentioned by James et al.. (2010) where one governor questioned "whether school governing was becoming beyond the scope of a voluntary responsibility" (James et al., 2010, p. 55).

### **3.2 Class and capital**

The most important elements at this stage of the literature review are to ensure understanding of the concepts of class and capital and to explain why capital rather than class was used to consider benefits to and sacrifices by governors.

### 3.2.1 Class

The concept of class is most closely associated with the work of Karl Marx although his initial concepts were developed and adapted by subsequent theorists such as Marcuse, Gramsci, Habermas. Close review of Marx's perspective on class is impossible within this thesis but it is important to consider what the term means.

Gordon (1949) suggests that the term "Class" at its heart is the division of society into groups which are based around the researcher's decision of what class means, for example, wealth or occupation, or family background. Gordon traces the term back to early publications where the term was used either in a Marxian (economic way) or subjectively (which centred around class consciousness). Marx wrote about a time not long after the industrial revolution where workers moved into industrial processes. The proletariat could, according to Marx (Marx and Engels, 1867), free themselves of the oppression of the capitalist classes to give themselves the fruit of their labour rather than it being accumulated as capital for others.

The Office of National Statistics (n.d.g) used occupational categories to determine class. Payne (2013) points out that the use of occupations means that the people who are within the capitalist class (at the top of the class pyramid) are not included. The identification of occupations of governors within this thesis was considered in the findings chapter and this could have been translated to identifying a class for each governor, but it

would have distracted from the central point. However, as Payne (2013) notes, there are obstacles. Where a post is full time, the class of an individual may be quite obvious. However, the rise in self employment, the use of zero hours contracts and the increase in part time work may cause problems identifying the social class of an individual purely from their occupation (ibid, 2013).

According to the Credit Suisse Global Wealth databook (n.d.a), the top 1% own 24% of the wealth within the UK compared to 21% in 2010 (Credit Suisse, n.d.b). The top 10% are said to hold 59.3% of the wealth (Credit Suisse, n.d.a) compared to 54% in 2010 (Credit Suisse, n.d.b). Credit Suisse is a bank and has interest in using these statistics to identify potential clients, but the figures are held by central government. For the purposes of this thesis, the point made by these statistics is that, in terms of wealth distribution, the UK is more unequal in 2020 than it was in 2010.

We cannot take statistics at face value; we need to think about those who are included and those who are not. People who live on the goodwill of friends who put them up for the night or those who live in parks or the entrances to shops may not be captured by these figures. The term wealth may also be contested. One of the reasons for households having wealth over £100,000 may simply be that they purchased or inherited a home, and it has increased in value. Unfortunately, it is impracticable to consider every aspect of the political decisions which determine government figures. It is



worth noting, however, that within this thesis, like for like comparisons have been made wherever practicable. Where a statistic has been quoted it has been considered and seen within its context, rather than just being accepted without question.

Bourdieu (1993; Bourdieu, 1986) sees classes as fractioned. The dominant class possess economic wealth while intellectuals (who have relatively little such wealth) are seen as a dominated fraction of the dominant class because they possess cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1993). Bourdieu contends that each class possesses differing proportions of different types of capital (Bourdieu, 1993).

Why was class not something that was used to determine whether there were benefits of school governorship? In simple terms because it would not have provided insight into the situation. If governors are middle class before appointment and middle class afterward then any benefits would be hidden. Equally changes in occupation may provide an insight into class but someone who has been a governor for 30 years would tend to change jobs and to have more money during the course of their career. Because class is much more elusive than it first appears, capital seemed a rather more refined way to investigate the research questions.

In 2013, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) did a survey which was based on the premise that existing models of class seemed “out of date”

(BBC, n.d.). The BBC stated that it worked with sociologists and the questions reflected Economic, Social and Cultural aspects to assign a class (BBC, n.d.). The items they chose to look at reflected on capital rather than class: the income of an individual (which is a crude form of economic capital), the people they socialised with (which is social capital) and the type of activities they enjoyed (this aligned loosely to cultural capital). Hence this could be regarded not as the headline “The Great British Class Survey” (BBC, n.d.) would suggest but rather as a survey which identified the different forms of capital held within the individuals who undertook the survey and using the quantities of each type of capital to identify their class.

This survey linked directly to both class and to capital. Having considered what class is about it is time to consider traditional perspectives on capital.

### **3.2.2 Traditional views of capital**

The primary form of capital considered in this thesis is social capital which Lin (2002) describes as having become the prominent form of capital. To the classical economists however, capital was seen to have a financial component – and it is this definition which appears to be most widely understood. The earliest use of the term “capital” derives from, at the latest, the work of the classical economists such as Adam Smith (Smith, 1904), David Ricardo (Ricardo, 1821) and John Stuart Mill (Mill, 1909).

Although some later writers (e.g. Schultz, Bourdieu) mention the work of Karl Marx, it is clear that the term capital was not coined by him, and that he had a good understanding of the work of the classical economists (including Smith, Ricardo and Mill) when writing the texts associated with him (see for example McLellan, 1977, p. 255) . Where Marx differed from the classical economists was his emphasis on labour as producing that capital.

It is possible that Marx was viewed as the source of the term simply because his book, “Capital” was polemic: the reality is that he used the term early in his writing (see for example McLellan, 1977) and “Capital” can be seen as a development of the ideas he expressed in earlier papers: it was also a term that he continued to develop subsequently.

### **3.3 Human capital**

Human capital provides a framework through which cultural and social capital may be considered. The term ‘human capital’ was developed by Schultz (1961a; Schultz, 1961b) and Becker (1960) whose study of the returns on investment in education was mentioned by Schultz within his 1961 paper. Becker (1960) and Schultz (1961a) use definitions of human capital which include investment in education, training, and health. It is recognised that some health benefits could have been gained through school governorship (e.g. learning about a health education policy in school may cause greater awareness of the need to keep healthy) but there seems no direct link between investment in health and membership of a governing

body. Hence, for the purposes of this thesis the investment in health is not considered further.

It is important to consider economics and its link to economic sociology.

This section considers: human capital and its links to economics and economic sociology; what human capital means within the literature; the similarities and differences between education and training and how capital and learning theory link together.

### **3.3.1 Human capital, economics and economic sociology**

Having identified what is meant by the term 'human capital', it is important to consider the context of its development. The early studies which considered human capital took place in the early 1960s (Becker, 1960; Schultz, 1961a). Both Becker and Schultz came at the question from the perspective of economists. Hence it is important to consider the nature of economics.

Economic methodology appears linked to the natural sciences and hence is sometimes viewed as the more senior of the social sciences (Hirsch, et al., 1990, p. 42). As a former economics teacher the researcher loves the cleanness of the discipline but also recognises its shortfalls.

The importance in the status of economics is that it is the foundations of neoliberalism which has at its heart the concept of the market as a fair tool

for distribution of resources. One of the most recognisable models used in economics is the neoclassical theory of the firm (see an introduction to the concept for non-specialists by Slater, 1997). This theory assumes that buyers and sellers have perfect information (Granovetter, 1985), that there are many firms and many buyers (all firms and consumers acting to maximise their utility (Hirsch, et al., 1990)) with identical products in the market and it leads to conclusions that markets are the best means of allocating goods. What people often forget is that it is based on a model which makes assumptions: including the assumption that other things remain the same.

At first sight it appears to be a conclusion that is value free because it is based on a model which makes ideological sense (this links to Apple's assertion that the neoliberal ideas have taken hold because they link to real life problems (e.g. inflation) and the solution is the lower prices markets should provide under the model). The weakness of the theory is in its assumptions that can almost never be met (Hirsch, et al., 1990).

Granovetter (1985) contends that neoliberal theories, based on the theory of the firm, have survived because they are politically attractive to some individuals.

Economists see assumptions as external to the model (Hirsch, et al., 1990) and the reality of the assumptions within the societal context is not considered (Hirsch, et al., 1990). People's behaviour is not explained within

the assumptions of the perfect market. To understand behaviour we need to move towards a more sociological perspective (Granovetter, 1985).

What is the difference between economic sociology and microeconomic theory? Microeconomic theory considers small areas of the economy and models them. Swedberg, et al. (1990) suggest that, in contrast, economic sociology sees the economy as “part of society and subordinate to the social system.” (Swedberg, et al., 1990, p. 64), and that the economy has boundaries with other parts of society, although “the economic system ... [has] its own distinct autonomy” (Swedberg, et al., 1990, p. 65). Where the two can be equated is that both have models but in the case of economic sociology the theories come from data rather than considering the utility of the model from the data.

If as Swedberg, et al. (1990) contend, the economy is said to be subordinate to the social system, we must question whether this would be universally accepted. Is the social system really the dominant part of society? Marx would certainly dispute this (Marx, 2013), as would Bourdieu (1986). It could be argued that the social system is subordinate to the economic system because people move around the country (or even move countries) to find work and to invest money. The boundaries between the economy and other parts of society are not distinct. The final point re the economic system having its own identity is equally difficult to justify because while the system employed differs within different economies the system in

one country is linked through trade, banking etc with almost every other country. To accept the system as autonomous is to accept the ideology of capitalism (this is not a criticism of the ideological perspective, but simply the failure of Swedberg, et al., (1990) to acknowledge that this is an ideological perspective in itself).

If economics is based on assumptions which are unrealistic as both Granovetter (1985) and Hirsch, et al., (1990) state, there may be benefits of using a more sociological approach to provide insight into the human behaviour that the assumptions of the theory of the firm cannot.

Hirsch, et al., contend that sociologists start with what the data shows and use the data to make hypotheses and predictions (Hirsch, et al., 1990). They warn that the basic assumptions for sociology should not be abandoned in favour of “surgical elegance” (Hirsch, et al., 1990, p. 46) due to “discomfort with [the] sloppy reality” (Hirsch, et al., 1990, p. 46) faced by sociologists.

Sociology (in which much of the social capital literature is rooted) is based on research rather than theory, generally gathering data before building theory (Hirsch, et al., 1990,). It is a very different discipline to economics and asks different questions particularly that of questioning the assumptions made (Hirsch, et al., 1990). Sociology and economics meet in areas such as human capital. What is human capital?

### **3.3.2 Considerations of human capital**

Much of the literature about human capital has been written from an economic perspective. The reason for investment in human capital is that economic growth can most readily be explained by human capital (Becker, 1964). From that perspective, it is not the human but the economy which matters.

One perspective on human capital as espoused by the economic sociologists is that we can link qualifications and earnings relatively straightforwardly (Field, 2008). An individual with high levels of qualification would be expected to earn more in employment while an individual with low levels of qualification would be expected to earn less. The reality may be somewhat different because as Field states, “economic behaviour is always embedded in social structures and shaped by cultural values ...” (Field, 2008, p. 56). For example an individual may be reluctant to move location because of support structures within their home town even though they may earn more by moving somewhere else or perhaps takes a job at a lower wage because their cultural values make them want to work with people who are disadvantaged. People may be rational actors, but the factors within that rationality include: our friendship groups; the networks we are part of; and our investment in the community. These factors may not easily be considered within an economic model.



The foundations of human capital were, as outlined earlier, formed within an economic context. Schultz (1961a) wrote about the disparity between the human investment in migratory farm workers and other workers. He noted that the reason for low wages amongst migratory workers were lack of schooling, poor health, lack of skills and “little ability to do useful work” (Schultz, 1961a, p. 4) This can seem at first sight to simply repeat Marx’s view about capital (which were outlined in section 3.1.2) but it is slightly different. Marx was arguing that the labourers produce capital for others. In contrast Schultz is arguing that the pay of workers is affected by differing human investment.

Schultz stated that the returns from investment in human capital are as high as those for other forms of capital even allowing for the fact that some educational investment is on courses such as culture and hence may be regarded as consumption (Schultz, 1961a, p. 15). This will be discussed in 3.8 which is about training and education.

Schultz argued that statistics about capital with regard to college education were often aggregated or averaged when different patterns could be found according to locality or the “quality of education”(Schultz, 1961b, pp. 1038). Shultz (1961b) argued that the statistics should not be taken at face value, the model does not predict which individuals will increase their earnings, only that some will (ibid, 1961b) (this imperfect information available to the student was also mentioned by Rosenbaum (1986)).

In order to understand human investment, Schultz states that there is a need to estimate both conventional costs (e.g. fees) and the cost of income the individual forgoes (Schultz, 1961a, p. 11). Hence if an individual decides to go to University but would normally earn £20000 per year and would be unable to work on taking up their degree the costs to them of taking up the course is the fees plus the income of £20000 per year that they forgo. It is also important to recognise that not all education is for investment.

Returning to Schultz's point that education may have two forms – consumption and investment (Schultz, 1961b). This is capital invested in an individual. The consumption component is to satisfy an individual's immediate needs (Schultz, 1961b; Becker, 1964), for example reading a computing webpage because you want to do something in a spreadsheet and the help on the software you are using is not getting you to a solution. The investment component is about an individual's investment in future earnings (Schultz, 1961b; Becker, 1964). It can be hard to detach the two components in practice (if the spreadsheet knowledge is later used at work some of the cost becomes investment and hence human capital).

Becker (1964) attempts to construct a model to explain disparities between ability and earnings based on data (this concurs with the position of Hirsch, et al., (1990) which was discussed in section 3.3.1 where economists were

said to work on the basis of the creation of models). Becker (1964) found that becoming a college graduate was dependent on high school ranking. High school ranking (how well someone did in high school) could be seen as a measure of ability, but the assumption could be questioned. High schools are not uniform so rank in one may not be equivalent in another. The measure of ability used by Becker (1964) was IQ. However, such a measure of ability is not one which is universally agreed as being accurate (Nash, 2005; Rosenbaum, 1986)) and hence may impact on Becker's results.

If ability and earnings are linked, then a superficial analysis may lead to an expectation that college graduates would earn fairly equally. Becker found that the earnings of college graduates were higher than those who did not graduate but that having a father in a professional occupation increased their earnings by a further 16% (Becker, 1964, p. 85). This use of education as a measure of human capital was mentioned by Paxton (1999).

Rosenbaum (1986) points out some limitations of human capital theory. At the heart of human capital theory is an assumption of an open opportunity for people to attain (Rosenbaum, 1986); a further assumption that the level of attainment reflects how hard the student/employee worked; and finally an assumption about the individual's existing attainments (Rosenbaum, 1986). This concurs with the discussion about assumptions made by the economists which were made by Hirsch, et al., (1990) in section 3.3.1).

Becker's study did not question whether some individuals did not attend college due to lack of capacity to access funds for payment of fees. Without the ability to attend college, an individual could not attain a college degree. In the case of students showing high school ranking, this assumes that the ranking was fair and accurate. It is important to consider assumptions on which studies are based and too often, as Hirsch, et al., (1990) suggests this is not done.

Schultz (1961a) talked about an underinvestment in education and training despite increasing numbers of High School and College graduates. Schultz did not go into the assumptions which lie beneath markets, but one of the assumptions is perfect information – and it is clear that if there is underinvestment or where decisions are made by individuals who are not aware of the effects of those decisions on their future then the market may not be acting efficiently.

As outlined earlier, economic sociology has informed the methodology of a number of the contributors to the human capital debate. Human capital (i.e. investment in individuals (usually through education)) is difficult to measure but such quantification is often attempted (Dinda, 200; Becker, 1964; and Schultz, 1961b).

The thesis considers human capital very directly – it is concerned with human behaviour and what drives individuals to become school governors.

Once they become school governors, do they further invest in education and training to increase their human capital? Given that school governance is voluntary it is clear that governors are not undertaking the role to obtain income (economic capital) – but they are giving up time to undertake the role and there must be reasons why this is the case. In becoming a school governor, an individual is making a sacrifice (this may vary between individuals but may include giving up time with their families or giving up another voluntary activity). One benefit they may get from taking up a role as a school governor may be that they find that their human capital is increased due to areas of governor activity such as training.

### **3.3.3 The problem with the economic view of human capital**

Human capital is a form of capital identified within economics to consider how humans can benefit themselves by investing in education, training and health. There has always been a link between economics and sociology but sociologists need to be aware that economics, although it retains higher status, is not an ideology free social science. The weakness in the economist's view of human capital is that it does not recognise that people have embedded relationships, that they may not want to separate themselves from other people and to take advantage of the potential benefits they may receive from undertaking further education or training.

Field (2005) points to a study by the National Institute of Adult Education in 1969 which considered the link between education and cultural pursuits. The research found that people studying were more likely to “belong to clubs and societies, and to take an active interest in community service and cultural pursuits.” (Field, 2005, p. 10). This is long before Putnam’s concern with links between social capital and civic associations. It is important to remember that studying leads an individual to obtain human rather than social capital. This could indicate that if social capital is high, an individual may invest in human capital. An alternative hypothesis also presents itself, do people who invest in human capital through education use this to enhance their connections (i.e. social capital) by involving themselves in civic affairs?

It is clear that most investment in adult learning is not restricted to activities which engage people in learning to improve their skills for work, it may be predicated on the importance of informal learning, its benefit to civic engagement and building communities (Curniffe, 2010). The vision is of volunteers leading such initiatives rather than direct government intervention. However, the past 20 years have seen reductions in Further Education Staffing (Gov.uk, n.d.c), and large reductions in spending on non-employment adult learning (Britton, J, et al., 2019).

### 3.3.4 Conclusions

Human capital came from the economics area of the social sciences and concerns investment in an individual's future. Economics is based on models and appears value free. In practice it is value laden due to the assumptions made by economists. People do not always act in the way that an economist would perceive a rational person to act (not moving for a better paid job or not accepting a promotion cannot be explained in an economic model but can be explained by economic sociology). The starting point for economic sociology is the data rather than a model. Theories develop from actual data rather than the theory being tested by the data. However, the problem with this is that data is not value free. Decisions about the data to collect may be political. The reason this area is so important is because conceptions about market efficiency are often based on models rather than facts.

Human capital is about making decisions which will help in the future. The link between qualifications and earnings is well established (Field, 2008). The more we invest in ourselves the more that we will benefit in the future (Schultz, 1961a). However, much of the data is based on averages and it cannot be predicted whether an individual will benefit from the investment made (Schultz, 1961b). Education has two forms according to Schultz (1961b): that which we consume and that which we invest in. In practice it may be hard to divide the two, but human capital is about the investment for future consumption.

The problems of human capital theory include the facts that there is not an equal opportunity for people to attain (some people may never get the opportunity) and even if they do get the opportunity to attain, the final result may not reflect effort (someone with lots of commitments such as a second job may not have the time of someone who does not) and may not be linked to previous attainment. Having considered human capital, it is now time to consider social capital.

### **3.4 Social capital**

This is a very complex section with thirteen elements. The first section (3.4.0) will be an introductory one, defining the term. The second section investigates the origins of the term – what is its relationship to previous definitions of capital? The third section links and distinguishes human and social capital. The fourth section (3.4.3) considers why social capital is capital. The fifth section considers the three main writers on social capital: Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam. The sixth section deals with forms of capital (and how bonds are created). The seventh section deals with the bonds created by social capital. The eighth section considers how social capital may be measured. The ninth deals with the structure of organisations and how the number of layers and the position of an individual within it affect the social capital they hold. The tenth section investigates how and when social capital may be exploited. The eleventh section deals with civic engagement and its link to social capital. The



twelfth section deals with the link between education and social capital – this builds on section 3.4.2 where human capital and social capital are linked. The thirteenth section deals with the effect of socialisation on social capital. Finally (in section 3.4.13), the question of declining social capital is considered.

### **3.4.0 Introduction**

As Farr (2004) noted “The term [social capital] is proliferating meanings and provoking contests.” (Farr, 2004, p. 6). This makes the term very hard to utilise – a term with many different meanings may be hard for individuals to fully understand. Hence it was decided to check for the earliest use of the term.

### **3.4.1 Origins of the term**

Farr’s (2004) conceptual history of social capital attempts to reconcile the different traditions which develop social capital as a term from its history in the hands of economists. Farr (2004) claims that Marx used the term “social capital” (Marx and Engels, 1867; Marx, 2013; Farr, 2004) in 1867 within Volume 1 of Capital but the context in which it is used suggests that he was considering the total capital in society (i.e. societal capital rather than social capital) (Note: the original text was sourced (Marx, 2013) and read in light of Farr (2004)). What Marx stated was that a better understanding of how different forms of capital are divided in society could

be gleaned by averaging out the composition of each form of capital across each branch of production, and then averaging out all branches (Marx and Engles, 1867). It is clear that this is about the composition of capital within society rather than stating that social capital was an element of capital.

A different and more recent definition was found by Farr (2004) (the original source is used here) in a paper by Hanifan (1916) where she stated that:

“In the use of the phrase social capital I make ...reference ... to ... goodwill, fellowship, mutual sympathy and social intercourse among a group of individuals and families who make up a social unit, the rural community whose logical center is the school” (Hanifan, 1916, p. 130).

What Hanifan’s article referred to was not anything Marx or the classical economists would recognise as capital. It certainly bore no resemblance to Marx’s “social capital”. Hanifan saw social capital as being about shaping a community through a school, through the use of evening classes, community meetings to make the place more pleasant for people to live in. There is a clear linkage between this view and the perspectives provided by Putnam (1995) where social capital is based on community activities.

A network of relations which was developed between people in a geographical area based around the schools, and these community networks did lead people to work together on a range of projects which in turn led them to put money toward building roads which benefited the whole community. These roads could in turn lead to increased economic

prosperity (and hence economic capital for the populace) but may never have been improved without the development of community networks.

### **3.4.2 Human and social capital**

Lin (2002) makes a useful distinction between human capital and social capital:

“Human capital consists of resources possessed by the individual, who can use and dispose of them with great freedom and without much concern for compensation. Social capital consists of resources embedded in one’s network or associations... . One implication of the use of social capital is its assumed obligations for reciprocity or compensation.” (Lin, 2002, pp. 55-56)

How is social capital different from human capital? According to Lin, social capital is not within the individual, but it is about networks – it is about using the capital we invest in these networks. The definition provided is one of many, and is not uncontested. However, it is a starting point.

If social capital is invested in networks, the question arises as to how social capital can be linked to lifelong learning – which is often associated simply with classes taken within institutions by people who are older than normal. School governorship on the surface cannot fit this definition. The governing body is not an educational institution concerned with teaching members about anything. However, Field (2005) suggests we need to place in context:

“People acquire new skills and knowledge, and create new understandings, through interaction with known others, in settings – family, workplace, neighbourhood – that seem to be characterised by high levels of stability. Thus in adult life, we appear to find that social capital can provide a substitute for human capital.” (Field, 2005, p. 78)

This clearly relates to both human and social capital. It relates to human capital because the acquisition of new skills and knowledge can lead an individual to increase their human capital and it also considers the context of learning – the interaction creates networks and the nature of the network can facilitate learning. Teachman et al’s (1997) article also suggests that a link also suggests that human and economic capital can be generated by social capital.

Field argues that the investment in human and social capital can be measured:

“Where ideas such as ‘community’ or ‘lifelong learning’ sound fluffy and possibly wasteful, the language of human capital and social capital suggests that we can identify and measure the costs and benefits of public investments in each, and compare them with similar counts for other areas of public spending.” (Field, 2005, p. 7)

This is a policymaking statement and can be linked to the UK government attempt to provide quantitative measures of social capital in other areas (Office for National Statistics n.d.h; Office for National Statistics, n.d.i; Office for National Statistics, n.d.k;). It also alludes to an economic methodology “Cost-Benefit Analysis”. Measures are rarely as clear cut as they may be

presented: this leads to the question of how we measure costs and benefits of public investments.

What is the cost of public investment in a community? Field (2005) is not specific. Does it include items such as financial investment into firms within the community or into community associations, the provision of education, the investment received by charities which choose to spend it in a particular community?

#### **3.4.2.1      Activation of human capital by social capital**

It has been argued that unless individuals have social capital, then they cannot activate human capital, indeed Field (2008) argues that:

“Even when people are members of a variety of networks, with varying levels of shared values, they still have to learn the skills required in order to benefit from cooperation.” (Field, 2008, p. 76)

In the case of school governorship, individuals may know about committees, delegation, procedures, even capital investment decisions (through membership of other organisations) but may still require training in order to become an effective school governor (see section 3.4.5).

Having considered the links between human and social capital the next section considers whether social capital is capital.

### **3.4.3 Social capital as capital**

Woolcock (2001) is unapologetic about referring to social capital as capital:

“To talk of social relations as “capital,” for example, is not sociological heresy or a sell-out to economics: it simply reflects the reality that our social relationships are one of the ways in which we cope with uncertainty (returning to our family when we lose our job), extend our interests (using alumni networks to secure a good job), realise our aspirations, and achieve outcomes we could not attain on our own (organizing a parade).”  
(Woolcock, 2001, pp. 74-75)

Woolcock’s (2001) examples are rather basic but at their heart are many of the types of social capital individuals employ (see section 3.4.6). Binding social capital which is that an individual shares with family and close friends, bridging social capital which individuals share with people they are associated with at similar levels and linking social capital is much more heterogeneous in nature (Field, 2008) and may involve working with people we would not normally meet.

Having outlined why social capital is capital, and hence why it forms part of the areas to be investigated, the three strands of social capital theory must be considered.

### **3.4.4 Three views of social capital**

There are three strands to the social capital debate which are considered:

The first view to be considered is that of Bourdieu whose work considers human capital, cultural capital and social capital; secondly, Coleman whose work has an economic sociology perspective and considers all types of

capital; and finally Putnam's work about the importance of trust within social capital. There are a number of distinguishing features to each writer's view of what social capital is about and in order to compare them it is important first to consider what they wrote. The first writer to be considered is Bourdieu on the basis that his work is the most general and provides an overall framework for the consideration of capital which while related to other authors begins from an anthropological perspective.

#### **3.4.4.1 Bourdieu**

Before considering Bourdieu's (1980) view of social capital it is important to see it within his view of capital more generally:

“ ... capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as *economic capital*, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights; as *cultural capital*, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications; and as *social capital*, made up of social obligations (“connections”), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility.”  
(Bourdieu 1986, p. 243)

This statement shows the subservient nature of social capital as perceived by Bourdieu. Economic capital was clearly the root of capital with the other forms of capital simply economic capital in disguise (Bourdieu, 1986). He did not consider how economic capital could be converted into cultural or social capital. Nor does this definition really do more than provide a superficial link between the different forms of capital he identified. What is

notable from the perspective of other authors is that Bourdieu identifies cultural capital in institutionalised form (educational qualifications) as being convertible into economic capital.

By 1980 when he wrote the “Social Capital: Provisional notes”, Bourdieu (1980) had already invested fourteen years of research on cultural capital. The reason for his late acknowledgement of social capital and for his restricted definition of it may be for two reasons: firstly, the human capital debate was increasingly influential and it was clear that a contribution to the debate was required and secondly his research on cultural capital had a great deal of academic research invested in it – any definition could not ignore the shape of cultural capital he had already outlined.

For the purposes of this section, Bourdieu’s first real venture into explaining social capital was in an article he wrote (in French) which he entitled “Le Capital Social: Notes provisoires” (Social Capital: Provisional notes) (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 2). The definition provided in the paper had different elements. Firstly, there are resources – which may already exist or may exist in the future. Secondly there is a membership of a group in which there are agents with a closeness to each other. The capital held by an individual depends upon their network connections (the more they can use and the more capital the members of the network they can utilise the greater their capital). There is homogeneity to some extent in the network. These links lead to mutual exchanges. Finally, the exchanges lead to a



multiplier effect on the capital possessed by individuals. The group could be brought together by geographical factors, by socialising together or because there are economic links between them or a combination of all these factors.

Bourdieu did incorporate many of the ideas in the paper into a book chapter on the Forms of Capital (Bourdieu, 1986). In this chapter he incorporated the idea that social capital could be converted into other forms of capital.

A rather shorter definition can be found in Bourdieu's, 1986 paper:

“Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a “credential” which entitles them to credit in the various senses of the word.”  
(Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 248-249)

This is similar to the earlier definition. There are resources linked to membership of a group or network. Members are backed by capital of the group and this leads to credit/reputation. The first thing to consider is what is meant by network. Bourdieu does include membership of a family group but indicates that the group could be an association or party or even a whole nation (Bourdieu, 1986). Some groups are high status, some delegate power to one or a few spokespeople, and if someone brings discredit to the group they can be removed (Bourdieu, 1986). The quantity of social capital someone has depends on how many network connections

they have and how much capital is possessed by those they are connected to (Bourdieu, 1986). Someone who has many connections but whose connections have little economic capital may have less social capital than someone with fewer connections but whose connections have large quantities of economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

In order to be involved in an organisation with high social capital, an individual is expected to use professional skills and to expend time and energy (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 33). In other words, membership of such organisations is exclusive and depends on the available capital an individual has and is willing to invest in the enterprise.

Can social capital be measured using Bourdieu's conception of the term?

Bourdieu's language is very precise, and he is concerned about methodology:

“Bourdieu, maintains that every act of research is simultaneously empirical (it confronts the world of observable phenomena) and theoretical (it necessarily engages hypothesis about the underlying structure of relations that observations are designed to capture). Even the most minute empirical operation – the choice of a scale of measurement, a coding decision, the construction of an indicator, or the inclusion of an item in a questionnaire involves theoretical choices, conscious or unconscious, while the most abstract conceptual puzzle cannot be fully clarified without systematic engagement with empirical reality (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 35)

It is clear that Bourdieu is very precise in his methodology and does not use data simply because it is available. His preoccupation with language is

clear in his creation of a variety of terms to ensure that they are not embedded with hidden meanings (e.g. habitus, doxa) (Bourdieu, 1993). He criticised bureaucratic sociologists for treating people as “interchangeable statistical units” distinguishing them from an ethnologist who seeks a “person of standing sought out for long and detailed discussions” (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 16). It is clear that the use of economic models and the use of statistics to provide indications on the average behaviour of individuals would be regarded by Bourdieu as providing little insight and being methodologically flawed.

Bourdieu purports that class is important to the level of capital possessed (see section 3.2.1) but that different forms of capital may be present in members of different classes. He considers that people who have high levels of one type of capital do not necessarily possess high levels of other types of capital. His work mainly focuses on cultural capital and focuses on education to illustrate many of the points he makes.

Bourdieu’s views social capital as being related to networks that an individual is connected to whether by geography or economic life or by social interaction which may be relatively homogenous in nature (Bourdieu, 1980; Bourdieu, 1986). There are resources which are exchanged within the group between members. An individual’s social capital is related to who they are connected to and the use of these networks may lead capital to be much higher than the individual’s capital

alone particularly if they are connected to people who hold more capital than they do.

Having considered Bourdieu's perspective on social capital it is pertinent to consider the view of Coleman.

#### **3.4.4.2 Coleman**

Coleman is probably the most influential writer on the topic of social capital – as his methodology has been employed across a range of situations and provides a direct link between the economic sociologists and the topic of social capital.

In his 1988 paper Coleman links his work to the economic sociologists and to economics more generally:

“My aim ... is to import the economists' principle of rational action for use in the analysis of social systems proper, including but not limited to economic systems, and to do so without discarding social organization in the process” (Coleman, 1988, p. S97).

This first sentence in this statement would be an anathema to Bourdieu (1980). He would question why the principle was being brought in, what was “rational” and why Coleman is taking this particular approach. The reality is that it allows Coleman to identify social capital as a “. . . particular kind of resource available to an actor.” (Coleman, 1988, p. S98). This is a very different methodological approach to Bourdieu and Wacqant (1992) – it is almost unquestioning of the assumptions made in the principle of rational

action or the real effects. This is what Bourdieu would identify as bureaucratic sociology (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). However, there are links to Bourdieu's perspective on social capital – there is a resource element, a social organisation element and a recognition that the resources are available to an actor.

Coleman at no point deals with cultural capital which is at the heart of Bourdieu's understanding of capital. Coleman does, however, distinguish human capital from social capital:

“ ... human capital is created by changes in persons that bring about skills and capabilities that make them able to work in new ways.

Social capital ... comes through changes in the relations among persons that facilitate action. If physical capital is wholly tangible, being embodied in observable material form, and human capital is less tangible, being embodied in the skills and knowledge acquired by an individual, social capital is less tangible yet, for it exists in the relations among persons.”  
(Coleman, 1988, pp. S100-S101)

In other words, an individual may create human capital by changing themselves while social capital is held in the way people link to others. It is clear that it is the economic perspective that Coleman is following here and hence his work is closely linked to economic sociology. A specific example used to distinguish the forms of capital is “family background” where economic capital is the family income, human capital is the parents education and “provides the potential for a cognitive environment for the child that aids learning” (Coleman, 1988, p. S109) while social capital is the

relations between the children and their parents and other members of the family (Coleman, 1988, p. S110). Some of this social capital within families may be emotional capital (see section 3.5).

A family may have a high income and the parents may be well educated, but unless the adults are within the family and they pay attention to the child there is little social capital and the educational growth of the child will be affected (Coleman, 1988). Coleman (1988) argues that the more siblings children have, the less individual attention they receive and the weaker the educational outcomes will be for the children.

Coleman's perspective on human capital and social capital can be found in two papers he produced in 1987 – one of which was contained in the book on economic imperialism, the other concerned families. The first paper concerned social norms and social capital. Coleman was concerned about social norms which is a term often taken for granted – the normal way of behaving, but Coleman states that it is not so straightforward for sociologists, that economists ignore them while other social scientists are uneasy about considering them but to the sociologist they are so prevalent that they are inescapable (Coleman, 1987a).

A desire to say something insulting to someone may be curtailed by a social norm not to do so. It can prevent social conflict, or the norm can prevent an

individual saying something they think needs to be said so another person is not upset.

In essence, social norms are expectations “which express what action is right or what action is wrong” (Coleman, 1987a, p. 135) within a particular context. If the norm is shared by another person “he accepts this right as legitimate” (Coleman, 1987a, p. 135).

Social norms act like unwritten laws on the way individuals need to behave toward one another. To some families where status is irrelevant, there may be little pressure from parents to conform to social norms. If the child behaves badly, they have little status and little to lose by such bad behaviour (Coleman, 1987a, p. 151).

It is within this context that Coleman (1987b) asserted that without social norms individuals may be more satisfied with their own unrestrained actions but that their overall satisfaction would be reduced because of the unconstrained action of others. In these circumstances, social norms, according to Coleman amount to social capital.

Coleman (1987b) studied families where he noted that children were becoming autonomous from their parents at an earlier age:

“... There have been conflicting trends which made this decline less rapid than it otherwise would be, trends such as later marriage, longer financial

dependence of youth on parents, and a more extended period of education” (Coleman, 1987b, p. 35).

Extended periods of education may cause young people to be dependent both while undertaking education and subsequently when they are obtaining (or seeking) employment, hence there may be a link between financial dependence and education.

Having introduced Coleman’s view of social capital, Putnam’s perspective on social capital may be contrasted.

#### **3.4.4.3 Putnam**

The basis of social capital to Putnam was associations. His initial work had been in Italy where he had considered credit unions.

In some ways, the work of Putnam cannot be easily distinguished from the ideas of Coleman, although he does not acknowledge this within his 1993 book (Putnam, 1993). What is different is that Putnam was not a sociologist; he was a political scientist and hence his work focuses less on the topic of education and much more on the area of political democracy. What is similar is the methodology employed by Putnam, and the definition of social capital employed. The foundation of Putnam’s early work was his initial work about Italy – in which he dealt with social capital only toward the end of the book. Putnam provides an insight into how associations may lead to social capital: it is this element which makes it relevant to the thesis.



Although Bourdieu and Coleman start from very different perspectives in their view of society their views on social capital do demonstrate some similarities (although the detail does differ).

Class is important to Bourdieu (1980) and he considers different forms of capital. In contrast Coleman (1988) only considers human capital, economic capital and social capital. However, Bourdieu's focus on cultural capital is not present in Coleman's analysis. Coleman's (and to some extent Putnam's) interest in social norms in maintaining networks was not really considered by Bourdieu.

Although Coleman (1988) does consider education it is within the context of social capital. Coleman stated that the quantity of social capital was reducing – this was not something mentioned by Bourdieu. Coleman's social capital may be held in very small groups such as a family or very large groups and he does not consider a potential for capital to grow due to mutual exchange.

Perhaps this is due to the areas of social capital considered by Coleman as he focussed on the how networks are formed and the conditions necessary for them rather than particular disagreement with Bourdieu's perspective. Putnam's perspective tends to agree with Coleman.

It could be considered that many aspects of Coleman's work fit well alongside Bourdieu's perspective – but there remain differences even if some are in emphasis or the areas covered within their work.

Having considered the perspectives of the three main writers on social capital the next section considers what forms social capital may take.

### **3.4.5 Three forms of social capital: obligations; information flow and trust**

Coleman (1988) sees social capital not being something an individual possesses but something that is within the networks that exist between individuals and something that purposive organisations may possess (Coleman, 1988; Paxton, 1999). Coleman identifies three forms of social capital:

“In explicating the concept of social capital, three forms were identified: obligations and expectations, which depend on trustworthiness of the social environment, information-flow capability of the social structure and norms accompanied by sanctions” (Coleman, 1988, p. S119).

Let us begin by considering the form of social capital which Coleman considers obligations.

Coleman does provide examples of social capital where trustworthiness is taken for granted (e.g. diamond merchants in New York (Coleman, 1988))

and considers situations where social capital depends on trust and the extent of obligations (Coleman, 1988).

Diamond merchants trust each other with thousands or hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of precious jewels. Coleman (1988) argues that the reason such trust is shown is the fact that they share religion, location, and family connections. The closeness of the ties leads to high levels of trust. A fraudulent transaction would mean more than punishment by the state; it would break very strong social bonds and effectively remove any social capital from the individual.

To explain the issue of obligations and trust, Coleman (1988) cites Gluckman's (1967) idea of simplex and multiplex relationships.

Coleman (1988) asserts that, in multiplex relationships

“ ... persons are linked in more than one context ... The central property of a multiplex relation is that it allows the resources of one relationship to be appropriated for use in others.” (Coleman, 1988, p. S109).

Coleman considered the dropout rates in three types of schools between Sophomore and Senior Year (Coleman, 1988). In public schools the dropout rate was 14.4%, in non-Catholic schools 11.9%, and in Catholic schools only 3.4% (Coleman, 1988). When he examined the non-public schools with religious foundations he found a similar dropout rate to the catholic schools which Coleman (1988) suggested was due the nature of

the multiplex relationships (church and school) that was keeping dropout rates low.

On the one hand, this makes sense – religion may have an effect on the pupils at a school. However, Coleman assumed that the relationships were multiplex. He assumed that if children were sent to religious schools that they followed a particular religion outside school, that their parents, friends, social groups and social activities were linked to the church. He assumed that the involvement of the parents in the church and its activities meant that the child was part of a network involving the whole family and that failure in school would have an effect on this network in many ways.

Information is important, according to Coleman as a basis for action. If an individual holds information they usually do so for their own use (Coleman, 1988b) and passing it to someone else may lead to an obligation being owed by the receiver of the information. In social relationships some information may be freely shared between friends. One of the variables often used within the studies of social capital is that of trust in other people. If asked the question “Do you trust other people”, the response may be no, thinking of criminal behaviour, but in reality, our everyday experience may actually involve trusting people much more than we realised.

“... it is widely accepted that attitudes and behaviour often do not correspond. Partly this seems to arise because surveys tend to depend on self-reported attitudes, and subjects may be unaware of what they

really feel, or may decide to give an untruthful answer.” (Field, 2008, p. 117)

If an individual does not trust an organisation or another individual then it is likely that there will be no link to them, and the individual will not invest in social relations with them. The importance of this trust is recognised by Field (2008):

“Trust is certainly related closely to social capital, conceptually and empirically, and it will emerge ... as one of the most important resources to arise from membership in social networks. Yet it is almost certainly best treated as an independent factor which is generally a consequence rather than an integral component of social capital.” (Field, 2008, p. 72)

An individual may have trust without having social capital – they may be completely trusting and this may be without any foundation. The individual may not actually have any increased reputation as a result of the trust, may have no real links to rely on and hence have very little social capital. A person may trust a group of friends who tell them how good they are at singing (when this is not the case) or who prevent the individual linking to others because they say that the other group is not trustworthy. Hence an individual can have high levels of trust without high levels of connections to others or high levels of social capital.

Putnam (1993) acknowledged that his writing about trust did stem from Coleman’s work on networks. Personal contact allows us to see whether other actors are trustworthy and the more we have contact the more actors can generate trust (Putnam, 1993).

Putnam's (1993) work on Credit Unions led him to consider the issue of trust within social capital

“Rotating credit associations clearly violate the logic of collective action: Why shouldn't a participant drop out once he has received the pot? Seeing that risk, why would anyone else contribute in the first place? ... Yet rotating credit associations flourish where no legal Leviathan stands ready to punish defection.” (Putnam, 1993, p. 168)

Rotating credit associations are groups of savers who contribute an equal amount at each meeting and each member of the group receives the whole amount contributed when it is their turn. There are no legal documents, no real records are kept and there is nothing to enforce continued membership.

The question distinguishes Putnam from Coleman in that the latter assumed that consumers were rational. In this situation the rational consumer would drop out immediately after they receive the money: but Putnam found that they did not. The reasons for this were trust, co-operation; high levels of social capital which were invested in the credit union and the more frequently social capital was used, the more social capital each individual possessed (Putnam, 1993, p. 169).

Putnam considers the types of networks that spawn social trust.

Considering that while most organisations have both vertical and horizontal elements, it is the more horizontal nature of some organisations that makes them effective networks (e.g. “sports clubs, cooperatives, mutual aid

societies, cultural associations and voluntary unions” (Putnam, 1993, p. 175)). His rationale is that vertical information flows lead people to hide things that could lead them to be exploited by those in power (Putnam, 1993).

It is good government that interests Putnam. It is the horizontally ordered group which is of most interest in this thesis because the thesis is concerned with the acquisition of capital and Putnam informs us that this model led to higher levels of performance (Putnam, 1993).

Lin’s (2002) premise is that social capital is simply: “... investment in social relations with expected returns in the marketplace.” (Lin, 2002, p. 19).

Putnam’s work re credit unions shows that while there may be an economic reward, there is also an element of social capital that is not about using it in a market.

Putnam (1993) expounds a theory that social capital results from a circle of reinforcement:

“Trust lubricates cooperation. The greater the level of trust within a community, the greater the likelihood of cooperation. And cooperation itself breeds trust. The steady accumulation of social capital is a crucial part of the story behind the virtuous circles of civic Italy.”  
(Putnam, 1993, pp. 170-171)

In other words, if we trust we will co-operate, this accumulates social capital, so our level of trust increases so we are more willing to co-operate

so social capital further increases (Putnam, 1993, p. 177). If we find we cannot trust, we will not cooperate:

Coleman (1988) concurs with Putnam (1993) that social capital is a public good. The following quote shows that social capital has economic implications:

“One special feature of social capital, like trust, norms, and networks, is that it is ordinarily a public good, unlike conventional capital, which is ordinarily a private good ... Like all public goods, social capital tends to be undervalued and undersupplied by private agents.” (Putnam, 1993, p. 170)

Firstly, it uses economic terms such as public and private goods that assume the reader understands the terminology within an economic context, and it secondly assumes some basic understanding of economic theory regarding markets. The contention of economic models is that public goods are those that benefit the community rather than those which benefit the individual alone (see Slater, 1997). If asked to give donations for streetlighting, some individuals may choose not to donate but would automatically obtain the benefit of such lighting if they went down the road – i.e. they would freeload. This undervaluing by the community would lead to an undersupply. In contrast, market theory suggests that private goods (e.g. food, computers, and telephones) will work efficiently in the market.



This quotation could be said to distinguish social capital from trust, norms and networks. A distinction which is not clearly made in other parts of Putnam's work.

### **3.4.6 Social capital bonds**

Coleman's work clearly suggests that different types of bonds may exist between those who hold social capital. This section will consider three types of bonds: binding, bridging, and linking social capital.

It is important to recognise that if individuals are honest with themselves, that they would not choose to invest time and effort in activities from which they receive no benefit (although this benefit may not be in monetary terms, it may be in terms of the way they feel having done something). Lin (2002) asserts that rational individuals fundamentally seek to minimise loss and maximise gain (whilst it is recognised that this is an economic perspective, the loss or gain considered is not restricted to financial considerations).

Consider the following example, the human capital that children are born with: their parents. A child (or children) within the family will interact with their parents daily and parents set expectations about the behaviour of the child (Parcel and Dufur, 2001, p. 32). Parents may not be the only influence on children, their school, family human capital and the financial capital within the home may have a significant impact on the social adjustment of a child (Parcel and Dufur, 2001, p. 45). Bonding social capital may continue

throughout life with such close family, close friends or close relations and such persistent relationships may lead to an imbalance in transactions (Field, 2008, p. 73). Parents may help out their child if the child is having problems because the bond between them is so binding.

It is not only in the work situation that structure is important. Some parents spend hours helping children with homework or helping out on school boards (Woolcock, 2001). Parcel also points to the advantages of children who come from small families – they tend to have greater quantities of

“social capital available to them through their parents, also receive a greater return from building relationships with teachers their parents describe as caring.” (Parcel and Dufur, 2001, p. 41).

In order to pass on lots of social capital to our children, Parcel and Dufur’s findings suggest that this is best achieved by having small families.

Coleman (1988) makes a similar point about the bonds of small families.

Parcel and Dufur (2001) found that:

“Social capital in families is stronger in stable families; when the parents are committed to each other, children benefit from the stability of the union. In addition, children benefit from continued exposure to the social connections that both parents have with others outside the family group, such as neighbors, school personnel, or work colleagues.” (Parcel and Dufur, 2001, p. 33)

This suggests that social capital is reinforcing. Living within a family with strong bonds of social capital it is likely that the family will also be able to

draw on the social capital of the community and this is an asset that can be transferred from parents to children.

There is also a link to human capital, if parents and teachers have high levels of human capital, these may ensure that children comply with social norms (Lin, 2002). The ability of children to comply with social norms will influence their subsequent ability to engage in social capital.

Binding social capital "... is inward looking and binds people from a similar sociological niche; it tends to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups" (Field, 2008, p. 73). A similar point was made by Woolcock (2001). This means that it is less useful when a fresh perspective or view is needed, but it is at the heart of much of the social capital individuals depend on.

It is important to remember that not all individuals receive equal amounts of such bonds. Those whose parents have died, or who find it difficult to make friends may have fewer links. Those who have a stable family and are outgoing may have many more links. The quantity of these links is not the only thing of significance, the nature of the links is also unequal. To recognise inequality is not to criticise the child whose binding social capital is less secure. Rather it is to recognise that other forms of social capital may be particularly important to children whose parents cannot provide an equal level of social capital.

A second set of social capital available is bridging social capital where connections are made with others who have similar interests (Woolcock, 2001; Field, 2008). This can result in the creation of new close friendships and cause an individual to adopt new perspectives but may simply cause a reinforcement of existing friendships within a new context. School friends may remain in touch throughout life, as may people who attended College or University alongside an individual.

A third, more diverse set of social capital comes where there is engagement in groups with heterogeneous membership (Woolcock, 2001, pp. 71-72) (e.g. a school governing body) where members may include the headteacher, parents of children in the school, business people. In other words, it is a place where we meet people with different backgrounds and potentially different communities.

Forbes and Zempelli (2014) state that the greater the heterogeneous nature of our friendships, the more likely we are to undertake voluntary work. Hence if an individual has a large amount of linking social capital then we are likely to be volunteers. This is important because school governors are volunteers.

### **3.4.7 Measurement of social capital**

Paxton (1999) identifies three problems with the previous measurements of social capital: firstly, there is no agreement on what the term means and this has resulted in the use of indicators that need to be challenged (Paxton (1999) questions whether voting is a measure of social capital, arguing that voting “should be considered an outcome of social capital rather than a part of social capital itself” (Paxton 1999, p. 90).

What is of concern is that she uses a similar methodology herself although the statistics she uses are slightly more relevant and easier to defend than some of those used by Putnam (1995). It is unclear why Putnam included certain group memberships while others were excluded. The question arises of how many individuals undertake such activities and how many activities each is involved in but this point is very difficult to discover on the basis of aggregate data.

The second problem is that measurements rely on membership of voluntary associations equalling social capital (Paxton 1999, p. 90) while the third problem is that the statistics do not look at the patterns of social capital in terms of how it is distributed (Paxton, 1999, p. 91).

As has been noted earlier, Putnam did consider membership of associations over time but this was in his co-authored 1999 paper with Gamm (Gamm and Putnam, 1999) and hence Paxton is unlikely to have

had access to it at the time she was writing. Is it the nature of an organisation or the quantity of memberships that should be regarded as important (eg Michelle Obama recently acknowledged joining a wine club because “It seemed like the very professional thing to do” but she didn’t drink wine at the time! (Byrne, n.d.). This leads to the question of whether the wine club membership provided social capital? Obama felt at the time that it was ‘professional’ and hence provided status, but this is not the type of membership Putnam would have considered to contribute to social capital.

Hall (1999) contends that government policy can increase social capital (Hall, 1999) – and policymakers are aware of this. The Office for National Statistics produces statistics about perceived social capital (Office for National Statistics, n.d.h; Office for National Statistics, n.d.i; and Office for National Statistics, n.d.j; Office for National Statistics, n.d.k). The European Commission (Cahia, et al., 2007) has also published papers on social capital, as has the OECD (Healy and Cote, 2001). It is significant that these organisations have taken up the banner of social capital and, in theory, allows such capital to be increased through public policymaking. Measures used to find social capital are, however, relatively simplistic and do not really contribute to the theoretical underpinning of social capital. The 2020 reference tables on social capital (Office for National Statistics, n.d.l) look at personal relationships, the number of people who are interested in politics,

the percentage feeling fairly or very safe walking alone after dark by gender and the percentage of people who trust national government.

While Putnam (1995) included groups such as bowling (he used the term “bowling alone” in his article on Tuning in and Tuning out), the Elks and taking part in card games (Boggs, 2001) – he ignored the “countertrend” social movements. Boggs, in contrast, says that given that the counterculture groups were “intensely committed to personal transformation and cultural renewal would be understood as the ideal embodiment of SC ...” (Boggs, 2001, p. 286).

Boggs (2001) argues that while conventional social capital may be waning, this is not true of other forms of social capital

“But SC in its virtually endless modalities is still here, visible for anyone to detect and perhaps even more cohesive and widespread than in the past: the problem is not only that so much contemporary SC departs radically from older forms Putnam seems to favor but that it frequently leads away from generalized citizen activity within the public sphere.” (Boggs 2001, p. 295)

Boggs (2001) argues that what Putnam sees is only conventional forms of social capital rather than recognising that in fact the countertrend led individuals to work together across a variety of environmental, feminist and protest groups (Boggs, 2001). He continued by stating that the links between individuals in the countertrend led them to very strong cohesive networks that crossed a number of organisations none of which Putnam

appears to have considered to be civic. This suggests that Putnam may have adopted a particular ideological position – that the “countertrend” was a threat to democracy rather than providing an opportunity for individuals to really participate and make their views known to those in power (in a way that bowling leagues may not provide).

Having considered the measurement of social capital and the fact that its measurement may be confused by the changing nature of organisations it is timely to consider the structure of organisations and how they can alter social capital linked to them.

### **3.4.8 Organisational structure**

The nature of the organisational structure was considered by Putnam (1993) and he concluded that social capital is gained most effectively in organisations with a horizontal structure. A greater understanding of structures may help to provide insight into the opportunities for an individual to use their social capital.

The first area which needs to be considered is the number of levels within an organisation just as there are in a school governing body. Lin (1990) describes levels as “A level is defined as a set of social positions that have similar command of resources and access to social resources per occupant.” (Lin, 1990, p. 253). In extreme cases there may be only two levels – one level with resources, the other without. The effect of this is to



encourage all to aspire to increased position – to be within the level that has the resources. Such a position reduces the effect of ties between groups (Lin, 1990) – why would someone with resources link to someone without anything to offer in exchange? That is not to say that such ties would not exist at all, but simply that such ties would be weak. Some individuals on a governing body know more about the work of the school (e.g. the Chair or people who go into school regularly) than others. Some individuals may have more status as a result of their work or skills.

If the system contains many different levels, then resources will be more evenly distributed and the effect of position declines. This may lead to more ties being created (although they will remain weak) (Lin, 1990).

The second area which Lin considers is how individuals are distributed between the levels. In theory an organisation could have two levels: in the first level one person is a member of the top level with everyone else at the lower level; in the second the numbers of people in each level is approximately the same. Organisations may have different numbers of levels in practice and the way people are distributed between levels does vary. If an organisation has a pyramidal structure (i.e. there are fewer people at the top levels than at the bottom levels) then access to different layers of the structure may be restricted. Where the organisation has similar quantities of people within layers there is greater opportunity for members of one group to interact with members of other groups (Lin, 1990).

Maintained school governing bodies generally have a chair of governors but are otherwise very flat structures. In contrast Academies have Directors who have different powers to the people on more local boards (the shape of academy governance can vary but there is a more obvious layering within academies).

In a pyramidal structure, those at the top who already have status, and good contacts, can link to anyone they choose. In contrast, those at the lower levels find their opportunities to interact with individuals in higher levels much more restricted because there are more people in the lower levels compared to the higher levels. It is those at the lower levels of an organisation who most need to develop their connections if they are to alter their position within the structure and develop their social capital (Lin, 1990)

In contrast, if there are relatively few people at the lower levels, they have the chance to develop larger quantities of contacts with the levels above them and to therefore have increased opportunities to move upward to those levels (Lin, 1990).

The third area for consideration is resource differentials. Basically, the greater the resource differential, the more difficult it is for individuals to alter their position within the structure (Lin 1990)

“The interactions between contiguous levels may be attenuated or suppressed as the resource differential increases. In the structure where resource

differentials increase toward the top, we predict that social mobility in that direction becomes increasingly more difficult.” (Lin 1990, p. 257)

Where there are many people in the top echelons who hold similar resources, the benefits of mutual links are reduced since they hold fewer resources than those above them. Increasing the resource differential reduces the opportunities for moving position within the structure (Lin, 1990, p. 257). Governors, in theory receive no resources and hence this is not relevant but in practice their skills and experience may reduce opportunities to move to higher levels in the structure.

Having outlined the link between organisational structure and the acquisition of and the quality of links within the network, it is pertinent to consider how social capital may be used by governors even though they do not hold it themselves.

### **3.4.9 Using social capital**

If education and income are, as Field (2008) suggests, good indicators of the levels of social capital, then there must be an awareness that social capital may promote inequality because some networks have restricted membership.

Membership of organisations can be personally beneficial:

“Being assured of and recognised for one’s worthiness as an individual and a member of a social group sharing similar interests and resources not only

provides emotional support but also public acknowledgement of one's claim to certain resources." (Lin, 2002, pp. 19-20)

In other words it is worth making the sacrifice of belonging to groups because it brings personal benefits by increasing our links to economic capital, but provides support leading to increased status within society. The question that must now be investigated is how this materialises when seeking to mobilise these networks. Two areas will be considered. Firstly, accessibility to networks and the nature of the links between individuals and networks, and secondly, how individuals mobilise or are able to mobilise these networks.

The first area for consideration is access to networks. Field (2008) suggests "... that education and income are associated with good access to personal networks, but they are also associated with access to the new technologies." (Field, 2008, p. 123). People live in a world dominated by new technology and are very aware of the opportunities that such technology brings to networks outside our social group:

"Social capital must be understood as a relational construct. It can only provide access to resources where individuals have not only formed ties with others but have internalised the shared values of the group. For this reason, it is important to treat the concept as a property of relationships." (Field, 2008, p. 161)

It is not to say that members of Facebook do not share ties, but the values they share are much more diverse than in a normal group. What social networks do is to break down barriers to indirect contacts in a way that has

previously been more difficult but where indirect contacts have previously been less accessible and based on recommendation (Lin, 2002, p. 44).

Individuals participating in such groups may find that membership increases their social recognition (e.g. that other parents approach them to discuss aspects of the school which are of concern, or providing training in committee procedures that lead them to undertake increased levels of responsibility within a workplace and perhaps to lead committees or to take responsibilities within the governing body). Lin (2002) describes this as follows:

“Social recognition confers identity and reputation, providing recognised individuals with still more resources and a sense of worth and security within the structure. In general, two types of resources can be defined for individual actors: personal resources and social resources.” (Lin, 2002, pp. 41-42)

The benefit a school governor can receive could be either resource based (e.g. the training provided) or simply increased sense of self-worth (which is a very personal resource).

Social standing may be important if an individual has economic wealth:

“Economic standing and social standing are complementary in that the former requires social legitimation and enforcement for its symbolic value (money), and the latter builds on the economic well-being of the group (or embedded resources in the network) in which the reputation is sustained. Without social enforcement, economic standing collapses; without collective wealth, social standing is meaningless. Yet, each standing can be seen as an independent motive in exchange. Exchanges can be

used to extract economic capital (resources through transactions) or social capital (resources through social relations)” (Lin, 2002, p. 150).

Economic and social standing may be different. Should an individual’s social standing reduce, access to economic capital also reduces. How could social standing reduce?

Lin (2002) states that

“Reputation, then, is the aggregate asset of recognitions received. It is a function of the extent to which one receives recognition in a social group.” (Lin, 2002, pp. 152-153).

Reputation, whether positive or negative may help involvement in particular social groups. For some individuals, reputation is meaningless outside a small social group (e.g. a group of thieves).

One implication of the use of social capital is its assumed obligations for “reciprocity or compensation.” (Lin 2002, pp. 55-56). The question arises of why individuals become involved in civic engagement activities.

#### **3.4.10 Civic engagement and social capital**

Paxton (2002) suggested that membership of voluntary associations increase the quantity of political participation while social capital bonds affect the quality of the participation (Paxton, 2002).

In other words, Paxton (2002) is contending that if people participate in voluntary associations, they are likely to participate politically – something found in Putnam's (1993) studies. Social capital is crucial because it affects the quality of our participation rather than participation rates. The stronger our associational ties, the stronger is our participation in politics.

Putnam (1994) looked at networks of civic engagement and political participation. While he noted a link between civic engagement and social capital, he accepted that they were not synonymous:

“Bowling in a league or having coffee with a friend embodies and creates social capital, though these are not acts of political participation.” (Putnam, 1995, p. 665).

Hence it must be posited that when Putnam uses the term civic engagement, he is using the term as a way of encouraging the reader to think about engaging with other citizens.

Putnam's 1995 paper considered the reduction in membership of voluntary associations in the USA (also noted by Paxton 1999) but concluded that it was the influence of television which caused reduced civic engagement (Putnam 1995; Paxton 1999).

Boggs (2001) criticises Putnam stating that he confused membership of bland consensus groups with civic participation. At the time Putnam is concerned that the membership of such groups was declining, large-scale

movements for social change were coming in but were not included within Putnam's analysis (Boggs, 2001).

Hall (1999) found that in Britain the average number of memberships British people reported "grew by 44 per cent between 1959 and 1990, rising most rapidly during the 1960s." (Hall, 1999, pp. 423-424).

In other words, Hall found no substantial decline in the levels of social capital (Hall, 1999, p. 428). He does not refute the influence of television on involvement in social networks (Hall, 1999, p. 434) (the quality of involvement may have been reduced). Hall indicated that expansion of education since the second world war in the United Kingdom (UK) had increased the size of the middle class and that this has influenced the numbers of people participating in groups (Hall, 1999, p. 435). Putnam also states that education is a significant influence on civic engagement (Putnam 1995, p. 667). If school governors are predominantly regarded as being middle class, perhaps this expansion of the middle class led more people to have the opportunity to engage in civic roles (an individual living at a subsistence level or below may be required to undertake paid rather than voluntary work).

Despite an increase in civic (although not necessarily political) engagement, Hall (1999) does recognise that social trust (the willingness of individuals to trust their fellow citizens) has decreased during the period (he links this to



changes in social attitudes during the 1960s and 1970s. (Hall, 1999)). Hall (1999) also noted that experiences which could reduce social trust (such as divorce, unemployment or relocation) had increased but found that those individuals who were members of two or more organisations tended to express greater levels of social trust than those who were not (Hall, 1999). Was it membership of associations that helped these individuals to maintain trust, or were they more willing to be members of associations because they were trusting? Hall, however, asserts that associational membership can be encouraged by government.

If government can encourage associational membership, then what can education do to improve the social capital of an individual?

#### **3.4.11 Education and social capital**

Networks are based on trust. Binding networks (as has already been considered) tend to be close bonds based on family and friends. Linking networks tend to be based on looser affiliations such as membership of associations. If we do not trust, we do not engage in networks effectively which causes us to have limited quantities of social capital and this is suggested by Field (2005) to cause individuals to be less open to new learning. If an individual wants to learn something, they base their learning initially on their networks, family, friends, and on their associations. If they trust their networks and want to investigate further, then they may seek recommendations about where to do so.

Field suggests that the link between social capital and education may be iterative, as people make connections as well as strengthening them, allowing individuals to “turn social capital into an applicable resource” (Field, 2005, p. 31).

This is interesting because it suggests that human capital and social capital are both linked and self-reinforcing in a way that Becker (1964) and Schultz (1961) did not envisage, but Coleman (1988) did allude to. It is also interesting because Field explicitly links his lifelong learning study to an area of management theory which considers how social capital may be used to enhance human capital within firms (see for example Crossan, et al.. (1999) and Doz (1996).

Field clearly does not see education within the limited boundaries that the management theorists do – rather he wants learning to be considered more widely than would normally be recognised:

“... Underpinning the policy thinking has been a largely instrumental view of the purposes of learning, ...All too often, ideas of a wider purpose to learning start and end either with individual self-fulfillment or national economic growth... . But there is more to learning than this” (Field, 2005, p. 154)

Learning is not purely about enhancing human capital to make people more productive. The link between business and education is clearly made by the placing of school education (to the age of 19) within the Department for

Education and the placing of Higher and Adult education in the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills.

Field was involved in a 2002 learning survey in Northern Ireland which had similar findings to the 1969 study:

“In all those interests involving a high level of interaction with others the survey found that participants were more likely than the population at large to be adult learners ... These findings are broadly consistent with the general hypothesis of a positive association between social capital and participation in adult learning.” (Field, 2005, p. 83)

The findings were that if an individual was engaged in a club which led them to be sociable, then that individual was more likely to participate in lifelong learning. This raises the question how the survey defined lifelong learning. Was it in terms of participation in formal activities, or did it include learning between individuals that takes place informally? Perhaps the nature of activities chosen reflects the nature of an individual's learning style. More outgoing people may seek out formal class-based educational opportunities, while those who prefer activities which are more solitary may learn more informally.

Field does contend that there is a societal context to education and its relation to learning (Field, 2005, p. 10) but the methodology he employs to see past the type of learning undertaken is limited. Field does explicitly link learning and social capital:

“These findings suggest a degree of complexity in people’s learning careers, in which lifestyle, age and social position intersect with degree of social engagement to produce particular patterns of participation. Yet one consistent pattern appears from the data: those who are engaged in the most active social and cultural lives are also the most likely to be in control of their own learning, and to be doing their learning for educational and personal reasons.” (Field, 2005, p. 84)

The nature of what he sees as “in control of their own learning” needs to be considered further than just participation in formal educational settings. The term could be used to describe someone who chooses not to engage in formal education due to personal decisions but chooses to learn more informally. Field (2005) subsequently acknowledges this:

“In some circumstances, when it comes to new ideas or skills or information, many people prefer to trust their networks rather than rely on educational institutions. Nevertheless, the findings broadly confirm that at the most general level, and all other things being equal, people who have the most connections are the most positive about learning in adult life, and are more likely to participate in organised learning than people who are more isolated” (Field, 2005, p. 101)

In other words, the more positive a person is about education, the more likely they are to engage with organised learning as an adult. This statement also shows an economics-based approach (other things remaining the same equates to the economists “ceteris parabis” which is the foundation of many economic models), but it is less clear in real life where things do not remain the same, indeed this (as has been earlier described) is one of the problems for sociologists – the real world is not a

model that can be played with. The real world is messy, sociology is about what can be ascertained and what we can discern from the data gathered by a researcher. (Hirsch, et al., 1990). If a person chooses to learn new ideas or skills through their networks (Field, 2005), perhaps what should be considered is why this is the case rather than simply accepting that it is so. Field (2005) may not explicitly say that social capital is important for the creation of human capital but he does state that people who have most networks (i.e. higher levels of social capital) are more likely to participate in education and training (which develops their social capital and human capital) than those who have fewer networks.

#### **3.4.12 Socialisation**

Our normal inclination is to work and socialise with people who have similar experiences and lifestyles to us – particularly if they have similar hierarchical positions and network locations (e.g. place of work, social organisations) (Lin 1990; Lin 2002). Those with financial and cultural capital tend to be more engaged with others in a similar position while the least privileged are involved in networks with people in similar positions (Field, 2008) and are therefore less able to access new resources (Field, 2008).

In order to alter that position it will require a person to make much more effort to go outside their normal social circles “and is more costly in

commitments to reciprocity and the offer of one's resources for the initiating actors" (Lin, 2002, p. 51).

Hall (1999) relates that:

"The patterns of informal sociability of the working class are more likely than those of the middle class to revolve around close contacts with kin and with a small set of friends all of whom are relatively closely connected with each other. On the whole, these are likely to be friends of long standing, often old school friends. By contrast, the social networks of the middle class tend to be more extensive and diverse. They are likely to see twice as many colleagues from work fairly regularly outside the workplace; they draw their friends from a more diverse range of sources, and those friends are often not closely connected to each other" (Hall, 1999, p. 438).

What Hall does not appear to have considered is the range of organisations working class people may be involved in (e.g. trade unions, sporting clubs, and musical activities such as choirs and brass bands). If those contacts are heterogeneous in nature this may facilitate volunteering (Forbes and Zempelli, 2014)

Aspirations to gain improved resources may encourage a person to move away from these normative groups and if we overemphasise social mobility then "social identity and group cohesion [break down]" (Lin, 2002, p. 141). If we focus on solidarity with similar people then we can find "class identification and conflict" (Lin, 2002, p. 141).

If there is too much concern with solidarity, the layers within the social structure become more obvious and conflicts arise between classes (Lin 2002). Conversely, becoming overly concerned about mobility then leads to social capital being lost because there is no group cohesion on which trust can be based (Lin, 2002). Mobility is only possible where heterophilous interaction occurs (Lin, 2002).

This leads to an obvious policy for government – increasing the opportunities for heterophilous interaction to increase the social capital of communities and therefore those who live within them. This is a difficult balance to achieve at a macro level – it is difficult enough for individuals.

As Woolcock notes:

“In short, for development to proceed in poor communities, the initial benefits of intensive intra-community integration, such as they are, must give way over time to extensive extra-community linkages: too much or too little of either dimension at any given moment undermines economic advancement.”  
(Woolcock, 1998, p. 175)

Hence, what Woolcock (1998) is proposing is that the community becomes an organisation which develops the social capital within it, and that over time the community develops links to those outside. Encouraging bridging and binding social capital in the first instance before linking with other communities may be the best solution. The problems caused by policies which damage the social capital of disadvantaged people can be numerous and hence policies need to be considered with care.

The final area to be considered is whether the neoliberal world is reducing the social capital of individuals: the question is whether communities are declining.

### **3.4.13 Is social capital declining?**

Coleman (1988) views social capital as a public good (where society as a whole is rewarded rather than the individual) and at a time when strong families and strong communities are declining due to social structural conditions “we can expect, *ceteris paribus*, we confront a declining quantity of human capital embodied in each successive generation.” (Coleman, 1988, p. S118). He does not base this view on objective data. Rather it is based on the subjective interpretation of available data. Coleman tells us that communities are declining.

Coleman (1987b) posits a policy solution to the perceived decline of social capital in society:

“... new investments to provide social capital for the next generation are both in demand and socially desirable... .Yet they cannot be like the school in the kinds of qualities they engender in children, for the social capital that is now eroding leaves a more fundamental vacuum. They must be institutions that induce the kinds of attitudes, effort, and conception of self that children and youth need to succeed in school and as adults.” (Coleman, 1987b, p. 38)

This is one solution to the problem of declining communities but one which needs consideration in light of emotional capital (see section 3.5). It also links closely to the work of Putnam (1995) which tells us that communities



are more settled than previously and backs this up with evidence that communities are present but take on new forms (e.g. the decline in bowling teams simply denotes less interest in bowling or organised activities rather than declining social capital) (Putnam 1995).

Coleman blames the changing nature of society for this decline in social capital:

“In the individualistic present, each narcissistically attends to self-development, with little attention left over for children, certainly not for others' children. It is very likely a reaction to this absence of community social capital that has led many inner-city black parents to send their children to Catholic schools and other black parents to establish, with a few friends, small ad hoc private schools.” (Coleman 1987b, p. 37)

By focussing on developing ourselves, our children suffer (in Section 3.5 it will be suggested by Nowotny (1981) that the investment of the mother in the family is crucially important in the development of emotional capital) and so does the community leading to declining social capital within communities. Coleman (1987b) argues that this is the reason for some parents sending their children to catholic schools or to private schools. If the inner-city parent sends their child to a catholic school, they do so in order to enhance the child's connections and therefore social capital. The problem is that, while social capital clearly exists for these children, there are other children who do not gain such benefit. Those who are disadvantaged by their exclusion from the social capital also suffer reduced

contact with those who go to the catholic schools and may have passed on social capital to them.

#### **3.4.14 Conclusions**

Social capital is a multi-dimensional contested concept. There is clear overlap to other forms of capital, but social capital is related to individuals as part of larger networks. The link between human capital and social capital is important and relatively uncontested, the question is whether human capital is required for social capital or whether social capital is required for human capital. Human capital is about investment in ourselves and about learning but we do not normally learn in a vacuum: we can utilise prior learning and experiences, discuss ideas with other learners to obtain a shared meaning, and even living in a community can bring new forms of informal learning to bear on us.

#### **3.5 Emotional capital**

Bourdieu's work on habitus (see for example Bourdieu (1966); Bourdieu (1986); and Bourdieu (1994)) has already been mentioned and, although it is acknowledged by writers on the topic that he did not talk about emotional capital (e.g. Reay 2004), his writings provide insight into the foundations of the topic. Bourdieu (2000) tells us that "we make an environment which feels 'at home' and in which one can achieve that fulfilment of one's desire to be which one identifies as happiness." (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 150). We function in our social world and within fields and this helps form our habitus

(Bourdieu, 2000). Nowotny (1981) noted that social capital according to Bourdieu was about capital which helped an individual to obtain an advantage in society through the use of networks.

The concept of emotional capital is sometimes regarded as an extension of Bourdieu's social capital (e.g. Reay, 2000). The first to write about it was Nowotny (1981) in a book chapter relating to women in public life. She conceived it as private capital "which is valueless in the public sphere, [which] is largely used for further family investments ... " (Nowotny, 1981, p. 148). This is not the context in which subsequent writers have necessarily written about the topic (e.g. Andrew, 2013, Zembylas, 2007 and Genderon, et al., 2016) but it is the way in which it was originally conceived and the way in which Diana Reay has addressed the topic in many of her publications (Reay, 2000, 2004 and 2015).

Nowotny was writing about the glass ceiling where women went into jobs but few attained leading positions in their employment. The reason for that was that women were focussed on their "private sphere" (their home and families) (Nowotny, 1981, p. 148) and were concerned that their husbands were well presented at work and that their children's needs were met (ibid, 1981).

Nowotny was writing about a situation which existed almost 40 years ago and hence the societal context has changed quite significantly. The 1983

General Election in the UK led to a House of Commons Chamber where only 3.5 per cent of MPs were female (Audickas and Cracknell, 2020, p 4 [note that the Audickas and Cracknell figures are rounded up]). This was low even by post war standards although the figure had never been above 5%. In the General Election of 2019, the percentage of women elected was 33.8% of MPs (Audickas and Cracknell, 2020, p 4 [note: for the first time the majority of Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs were female]). MPs are significant given the nature of Nowotny's study about women in public life, but involvement in the public sphere is not limited to people who are elected to Parliament. Women have also been increasingly involved as directors of companies. Evidence of this is provided by studies which show that the FTSE-100 companies (the top 100 large publically quoted companies on the stock exchange) saw their percentage of female directors grow from only 5.8% in 2000 (Singh and Vinnicombe, 2000, p. 23) to 34.5% in 2020. (Vinnicombe, et al., 2020, p. 4). This pattern suggests that women are increasingly engaging in the public sphere and that the situation of 2019 is significantly different from that Nowotny was writing about; not only because of changes in society but that she was discussing a different country. It is not contended that we live in a society which provides equality of opportunity for women, but it is important to recognise the context has changed from the time that the original definition was created.

Having recognised the context in which emotional capital as a concept was created it is important to recognise what was and may now be meant by the

term. Nowotny's (1981) hypothesis was that women, excluded from the social fields to establish quantities of capital that were recognised in the public sphere, accumulated emotional capital within their private sphere which they used to invest in their families (Nowotny, 1981). Reay's (2004) definition is more explicit:

“Emotional capital is generally confined within the boundaries of the affective relationships of family and friends and encompasses the emotional resources you hand on to those you care about (Reay 2004, p. 60)

These strict limits on emotional capital as remaining within the private sphere means that it has limited applicability in practice and the changing environment faced by women as they move into the public sphere in greater numbers and increase their acquisition of more traditional and recognised form of capital. In another article, Reay limits the definition to “...the emotional resources passed on from mother to child through a process of parental involvement” (Reay, 2000, p. 569): parental involvement is significant in Reay's work. The limit here is more explicit than that of Nowotny as it deals only with mothers and children while Nowotny states that it can also extend to wives and husbands. This restriction is not universally accepted.

Both Andrew (2013) and Genderon, et al., (2016) seek to move emotional capital outside the private sphere. Andrew's article concerned work within caring professions and is hence much more based on elements of human capital. Genderon, et al., recognise that there is a private element but again

aligns more closely to a human capital perspective of adapting to changes in the world of work and society more generally. It is not linked to Nowotny's (1981) emotional capital which rests the capital in individuals but applies it only within the private sphere. Given that women are increasingly acquiring capital in more traditional and more recognised forms as they move to the public sphere, perhaps the capital that would have been utilised within the family is now being employed within the individual. A more explicit link is through empathy.

Genderon, et al.'s perspective could be linked to more traditional concepts of emotional capital because it is made up of emotional competencies which can be learned by individuals and utilised to increase their performance in their public sphere (e.g. work and in society more generally). Empathy is one of those emotional competencies that helps us to connect "people, culture and society" and motivates people to be altruistic (Genderon, et al., 2016, p. 73). This links closely with Cooper's perspective that:

"Empathy, a uniquely powerful quality, bequeaths moral strength which furnishes people with the courage to argue for their beliefs, helps them to resist corruption, to challenge the status quo and oppressive regimes and to remain open to new thinking." (Cooper, p. 251)

This is helpful because within the context of this study it may be found that governors gain empathy due to their involvement in the school. It is also important because habitus and our sense of place is intrinsic to an understanding of Bourdieu (1988) and his work is intrinsic to this study.

Much of Reay's work (eg 1996) has been focussed on emotional capital in the context of school choice and its effects on parents (mothers) and their children. Reay argues that working class parents have demands on their time simply to survive and that this can lead to problems in finding "emotional space" (Reay, 1996, p. 582). This emotional space is not explicitly mentioned by Nowotny (1981) but seems crucial to an understanding of emotional capital.

The question to be asked within the findings chapter is whether the governors displayed dispositions of altruism. Having considered capital, class and society it is pertinent to consider who the school governors are and who may not be represented.

### **3.6 Economic capital**

Economic capital is perhaps the form of capital most closely associated with class and with traditional definitions of capital. As was noted in section 3.1.2 the early economists linked capital directly to the ownership of resources and to the concept of wealth (see for example Smith (1904)). It is about the financial status of an individual. Pinxten and Lieven (2014) define economic capital as "material assets" (ibid, 2014, p. 1097) that we own which may be monetarised (ibid, 2014). This thesis considers economic capital in several ways.

The first way is through its link to human capital (e.g. where people invest in education or training to improve their work opportunities) they may do so to gain economic capital in the future.

Economic capital is related to this thesis in other more elusive ways such as exclusion. Lack of economic capital may mean that an individual is excluded from an activity because they cannot afford childcare or they cannot afford the price. Those with higher levels of economic capital may be able to afford to give up the chance to earn more to undertake voluntary work. Someone with a zero hours contract or someone who works a shift pattern may be unable to give up the opportunity to work because of their low levels of economic capital.

For these reasons, a lack of economic capital may prevent some individuals from taking up voluntary work including school governorship while others can afford to give up their time.

### **3.7 Cultural capital**

Bourdieu (1966) considered the question of capital two years after the publication of Becker's (1964) book on human capital (Bourdieu, 1966). While his standpoint differed markedly from Becker's the aim of the paper was to show that schooling was linked to inequality. In the minds of Becker and other proponents of human capital this was because schooling



identified people with ability and people had unequal amounts of education. To Bourdieu schooling itself was the cause of inequality (Bourdieu, 1966).

Bourdieu's early work was reviewed within English publications but it was not translated into English until, in 1979, a slightly earlier work Bourdieu had collaborated on with Jean-Claude Passeron "The Inheritors: French Students and Their Relations to Culture" (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979) was translated. Because much of Bourdieu's work is published only in French it is less accessible to the predominantly English-speaking market.

In the years leading up to his death, much of Bourdieu's work became available in English but some of his early work remains available only in French. The main thrust of Bourdieu's work is on cultural capital, rather than social capital but much of what he considers to be "cultural capital" is treated in different ways within the literature surrounding social capital.

Before going into social capital, it is important to understand what Bourdieu meant by cultural capital. Bourdieu describes how he first became aware of cultural capital when he proposed a "... theoretical hypothesis which made it possible to explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children ... to the distribution of cultural capital between classes and class fractions." (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243). It was clear to Bourdieu that the question was not one of ability, but about scholastic investment strategies and the way capital is reproduced (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 244). A peasant farmer is likely to spend

a great deal of time at work scraping a living, and have neither the time nor resources to take their children to museums or art galleries in the way that more affluent individuals may be able to. This places their children at a relative disadvantage in the education system. Bourdieu (1986) stated that the education system reproduces the social structure and that cultural capital comes with time expended which only becomes possible where an individual possesses economic capital.

Cultural capital is regarded as “linked to a body” and unlike economic capital cannot be transmitted instantaneously although it may be acquired unconsciously (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 244-245). The possessor of cultural capital may be unaware that they possess it, they and others may simply regard it as a legitimate competence (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 245). For example, a qualification in art history may be linked to a parent taking a child around art galleries, discussing art, encouraging an interest in the subject. What is viewed by society is the qualification. The time spent developing this interest may be hidden and this is the advantage of cultural capital being symbolic. A qualification, because it is embodied, is not easily transferrable to future generations (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247).

Bourdieu makes one other important statement about cultural capital:

“The work of acquisition is work on oneself (self-improvement), an effort that presupposes a personal cost ... and investment above all of time ... . the least inexact of all the measurements of cultural capital are those which take as their standard the length of

acquisition – so long, of course, as this is not reduced to length of schooling ... ” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 244)

At first sight this appears to simply repeat what we would be expected given the other statements made by Bourdieu. The last element “so long as this is not reduced to the length of schooling” is significant because it distinguishes schooling from cultural capital. Schooling is regarded as reinforcing and legitimising cultural capital but not necessarily to its acquisition. One simple reason why the length of schooling is not capable of being reduced to cultural capital is that some students may spend 12 years in compulsory schooling but fail to achieve the grades they desire. If they do not achieve the grades, they may take an additional year to obtain the qualification but leave with the same level as those who left after 12 years. Equally if they obtained the qualifications the following year and subsequently failed the next set of qualifications they could have 16 years in school (rather than 14) but leave with qualifications lower than many of those who left after the more normal 14 years. School to Bourdieu is not a place of equality but of qualifications, entitlements and aspirations (Bourdieu, 1993); in other words it is a place where social inequality is legitimised (Bourdieu, 1993).

Although Bourdieu seems to distinguish cultural capital from human capital, it is clear that there are some common points of reference:

“Economists might seem to deserve credit for explicitly raising the question of the relationship between educational investment and on economic investment (and its evolution). But their measurement of the yield

of scholastic investment takes account only of monetary investments and profits, or those directly convertible into money ... ; they are unable to explain the different proportions of their resources which different agents or different social classes allocate to economic and investment and cultural investment.” (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 243-244)

Bourdieu does not use the term “human capital”, but it is clear that this was influenced by the work of Schultz (1961a) and Becker (1964) on human capital and recognised that the outcomes of cultural capital (including qualifications) would be regarded by economists as part of this human capital. For both Bourdieu and Schultz, increased investment in education yields economic rewards. To Bourdieu, the economic perspective limits our investigation into monetary units and ignores the impact of culture and family (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 244).

### **3.8 Governance capital**

The concept of “governance capital” as outlined by James, et al., (2010) is used only tangentially within this thesis because it is not about the individual governors (which this thesis investigates) but rather the collective capital available to the governing body as a whole and the networks available to governors (ibid, 2010). There are links to human capital where, for example, governors receive training. The link to the skills based recruitment of governors could be linked to James, et al.’s. (2010) paper where he argues that the capital held within a governing body can be amplified (positively or negatively) by the status of the school and the socio-economic context of the school. This concept may be compared to the

capital available on the managing board of a company or business entity and James, et al., (2010) explicitly link school governing bodies with the UK's Combined Code of Corporate Governance.

The next section considers learning and skills within the context of capital and learning theory.

### **3.9 Capital, learning theory, education and skills**

Learning theories are used within education and skills development in a wide variety of contexts. The pedagogy of teachers depends upon their understanding and application of learning theories including that of writers such as Vygotsky (1978). A skill is about the ability to do something but education can be seen slightly more widely. Tight (2002) provides two alternative views of education and training: first, that skills are part of education and that education in turn is a component of learning; the second view is that some learning is education, other learning is training and learning is both education and training. Undertaking a language course involves education (the meaning of language) and training (the acquisition of the language).

When a child learns to place one block on another it is not simply learning a skill but linking this to when it may be applied (Vygotsky, 1978) (i.e. education). In the case of governors, learning a skill (e.g. how to interpret data as a governor) may be applied in other contexts and it is this concept

which may be regarded as education. Some of the education and training received could be considered to cause them to enhance their human capital.

Vygotsky sees the mind as “a set of specific capabilities” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 83) and learning as “the acquisition of many specialised abilities for thinking about a variety of things” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 83) that are independent of each other and which develop independently. Language plays a key part in education. The meanings of words are often contextualised by individuals. Vygotski (2012) points to Tolstoy’s recognition that a concept cannot be relayed between a teacher and a pupil because of the nature of words and the variety of meanings that are conveyed. So, words may have different meanings within different forms of capital.

Vygotsky’s (1978) learning theory centres around the zone of proximal development which is the gap between the capability of a child working on their own and that which they may be capable of when guided by either the teacher or by more able pupils (ibid, 1978). The difference between the child’s capabilities is that some functions are not quite mature and the guidance prompts them to become more capable.

The use of peers in this context is important as, language between children of similar developmental levels is more likely to be understood by a child than the language of a teacher (Vygotsky, 2012).

The problem with learning theory is that it considers the development of children rather than the development of adults. School governors are adults. We need to recognise that, although the principles of the zone of proximal development may parallel what is happening in adults, it is not necessarily applicable to them. Where it may be relevant is the training and experience governors receive where working with others causes them to develop their skills beyond the level that they would otherwise be at given their life experiences.

In what ways may learning theory be useful within the context of this thesis?

Firstly, it reminds us that governors may learn from undertaking the role, particularly through training but perhaps through experience. Secondly, it links the ability of governors to improve their skills as a result of links to peers (e.g. other governors with more experience or other skills) and this links to the application of social capital.

Vygotski (2012) also considers the influence of culture in the development of thought and language but does so in the context of a child: by the time an individual becomes a governor they have internalised culture and formulated behaviours and understandings. Adolescents can understand

concepts by abstracting and generalising rather than manipulating tangible items in the way a child may require (Vygotski, 2012). Hence governors would be expected to be able to abstract and generalise items at least to the level of an adolescent.

Having considered the skills possessed by governors it is important to consider an area where being a governor links to many forms of capital: volunteering.

### **3.10 Voluntary work and why people volunteer to be governors**

Being a school governor means undertaking voluntary work by giving up time to help run the school and hold its management to account. All governors in this research undertake voluntary work – what will be looked for in this research is additional volunteering – but the percentage of people stating they do voluntary work in the UK in 2014-5 was 19% (Office for National Statistics, n.d.j) but this fell to 17% in 2015-6 (Office for National Statistics, n.d.k).

The first thing to consider is what motivates people to become school governors, how voluntary work affects the community and the link between social capital and volunteering. This leads to Ranson's (2011) study which considered whether governors (who are volunteers) really could have the ability to rule over a complex secondary school? This issue has been considered in much of the literature about what school governors do and



how well they do it (see for example James, 2010)). It is not central to the question of the development of capital by people who governors are. In contrast, the question of why people undertake voluntary work is relevant because, as will be shown, research suggests volunteering and hence volunteering as a school governor depends on an individual's human and social capital.

### **3.10.1 Motivation**

Much of the research undertaken on the topic of motivation concerns motivation of pupils at school (e.g. Cimpian, et al., 2007). This leads to considerations about whether a pupil is goal or achievement oriented (Maehr and Stalling, 1972; Grant and Dweck, 2003) and whether they have a fixed (Dweck, 2007) or growth mindset (Dweck, 2007) but this is not helpful when considering why school governors take up the role.

Motivation within education is usually concerned with the motivation of individuals to perform tasks within educational settings. The types of motivation often mentioned are achievement motivation and goal motivation

#### **3.10.1.1 Traditional views of motivation**

In considering motivation, it is important to identify that the research may examine the motivation to become a school governor, the motivation to train, and the motivation to continue being a school governor. Before considering those areas, we need to consider what motivation is and learn

about motivation more generally. Barron's (2006) findings are more recent and focus on continuing motivation.

Maehr and Stallings' (1972) research considered whether external evaluation, while leading to temporary increased levels of performance may decrease a child's continuing motivation. They found that where children were not assessed they continued to choose hard tasks. In later work, Maehr (1976) suggested that there "are also theoretical and scientific reasons for considering continuing motivation as a separate and unique variable" (ibid, 1976, p. 445) and suggested that continuing motivation may be the critical outcome of learning experiences. He attempted to identify what continuing motivation was and questioned whether it was persistence, or simply part of intrinsic motivation. He stated that continuing motivation was "an identifiable pattern of education-related behaviour" (Maehr, 1976, p. 447).

The specific definition created by Maehr in the 1976 paper was:

"(1) a return to a task (or task area) at a subsequent time, (2) in similar or varying circumstances, (3) without visible external pressure to do so, (4) and when other behaviour alternatives is available."  
(Maehr, 1976, p. 448).

This is useful because while Maehr considered children, this definition could be seen to apply to adults.

Maehr (1976) indicated that there were “highly likely to be multiple causes” (ibid, 1976, p. 450) and that continuing motivation is affected by person, situation and person-situation interaction (Maehr, 1976). Maehr collaborated with others in a 1991 study which considered achievement contexts and found that “achievement motivation is a function of both expectancies and values” (Farmer, Vispoel and Maehr, 1991, p. 37). They found that teachers sometimes were unaware of the strength of achievement motivation in some groups because it did not take place within the school context.

Maehr’s (2001) also investigated goal theory which suggested that it is not only the way an individual chooses to behave that is significant, it is also the quality of the behaviour that matters, for example their thinking, reflections, problem solving and creativity. (Maehr, 2001). Maehr (2001) considered that the interaction between individuals may influence motivation (Maehr, 2001 (which Butt, et al. (2017) also found in their study). Maehr continued this theme in his 2008 paper on culture and achievement motivation (Maehr, 2008). This is important because it considers that serving on a school governing body may lead individuals to alter the quality of their behaviour particularly in the area of cultural capital. By joining a governing body an individual may receive training whether overtly or through assimilation in problem solving and thinking skills and perhaps about other areas such as learning about finance.

### **3.10.1.2 More recent writers who focus on motivation to volunteer**

Research in psychology suggests that people are more altruistic when they believe someone needs help due to external factors rather than when it is due to factors that could be controlled (Weiner, 2006). The problem with Weiner's work was that it dealt heavily with achievement motivation which while it may be relevant to the study (i.e. feeling a sense of achievement when Ofsted gives the school a good grade) is not at the heart of why people volunteer to be school governors. It is, however, relevant to one of the factors which may motivate people to volunteer.

Ertas (2014) argues that those who are in government jobs are more likely to have an interest in being altruistic (Ertas suggests they have "...a desire to work for the common good rather than individualistic concerns" (ibid, 2014, p. 256)). Although the research was conducted in a different culture (the United States), it was interesting to note that those volunteers who worked for government were more likely "to volunteer in educational organisations" (ibid, 2014). The disposition to volunteer is linked to level of education (ibid, 2014) but this may be linked to the types of jobs potential volunteers with lower levels of education may hold. Similarly, the government employees in Ertas' study were said to be more likely to have a family (ibid, 2014) than those who were not and this perhaps explains their decision to volunteer in educational roles. Having children may cause an individual to take an interest in education and Roth (2011) states that interest and motivation are linked.

Butt, et al., provide four motivations for volunteering which he terms ABCE: firstly, affinity (being with friends, family and community and socialising) (Forbes and Zempelli, 2014 who also argue that this may in turn lead to more volunteering opportunities); secondly, beliefs (the volunteer seeks to volunteer due to their personal values); thirdly career progression (an opportunity “when they want to learn or understand something that is not afforded in their current employment” (Butt, et al., 2017, p. 597)); and finally ego enhancement (“ ... to be recognized, praised or acknowledged” (Butt, et. al, 2017, p. 598)). Pate (2017) concurs with Butt, et al (2017): Pate’s study of olympic volunteers provided a new category of travel which was irrelevant to this research.

Taylor (2006) provides a very different perspective. Are class differences and power relations recognised within volunteering (Taylor, 2006). If my employer tells me to volunteer, then am I really doing so of my own free will? If I would volunteer anyway then yes. If there is a veiled threat that promotion will be stopped unless I do this, is it really volunteering. She argues that volunteering is unpaid work, and it will be interesting, within this research, to see whether motivations were influenced by power relations.

Why would an employer encourage people to volunteer? Knox argues that there is a “ethical imperative of honoring contractual obligations to society”. (Knox, 2020, p. 449). There are many schemes within firms to encourage

volunteering, but Knox (2020) points out that employees who volunteer are more productive in the long term.

An element of motivation which may be important and very much link to the concept of social capital is in the area of whether they take the interest home – does it affect their views and actions with regard to their own children and to the children that they know. Does being a school governor have an effect on those children because of the knowledge they gained within the role?

The role of a school governor is somewhat different. The question which arises from such a list of skill requirements as shown on its recruitment pages by SGOSS ( n.d.) is what motivates people to become school governors. Existing literature suggests that school governors are perceived as “... middle class, well educated, and professional.” (Ellis, 2003, p. 46). Should our schools have governors whose experience is in areas which can be applied to the school context relatively straightforwardly or should our schools seek to develop individuals.

### **3.10.2 Community capacity**

Coleman (1987b) argues that social capital can be found in a range of areas within a community: A community can provide links which both parents and children may take advantage of. The loss of community may particularly harm the most disadvantaged “for the loss of social capital in the

community hurts most the children with least human and social capital in their families.” (Coleman, 1987b, p. 37). If parents lack the human and social capital that other parents may have to pass on to their children, Coleman is arguing that in the past this was mitigated by community intervention.

Lovell et al.’s (2015) consideration of community capacity found that what was a community depended, as Bayerlein and Bergstrand (2016) suggested, on place. People who volunteered within communities were more positive about community capacity than those who did not. The Conservative Manifesto (Conservative Party, 2015) pointed out that 3 million more people had volunteered between 2010 and 2015 (Conservative Party, 2015, p. 45). This does not mean that community capacity has increased. Low numbers of volunteers (17% of the UK population volunteers according to the Office for National Statistics (n.d.k)), with a high capacity could do more than high numbers with a low capacity. Hence as Bayerlein and Bergstrand (2016) suggest, recruiting those volunteers to be valuable contributors would, according to Lovell, et al. (2015) be the right strategy.

Bode (2017) considered adolescent volunteering and found that

“... majorities of young people feel strongly about volunteering. They generally feel that it is personally fulfilling and that it is part of being a good citizen, but also feel pressure to volunteer for their résumés, in

order to set themselves up for jobs or college after high school” (Bode, 2017, p. 26)

Although Bode does not state that they are creating capital through volunteering, this raises the question of whether this is “volunteering” (i.e. being under no obligation to do so) or doing something because their future depends on it. Doing something that is part of being a good citizen suggests that this is a “duty” of some kind while “personal fulfilment” suggests an element of doing the volunteering because it makes them feel better (i.e. a motive that could be described as selfish).

On the benefit side, how can the benefit a young person gets from attending a youth club be quantified? By reduction in crime? What about the other benefits – how can the opportunity provided for friends to meet up in an organised activity be quantified? Where this area is of importance is only in terms of recognising that policymakers may be concerned with costs and benefits of particular policies and justification will be required for additional funding.

Just as youth clubs may provide education, it was notable that in the past, and to some extent the present, movements existed for older people:

“In western Europe and Australasia, adult education movements developed from the 1920s onwards that were less concerned with democratic citizenship and collective advance than with leisure and sociability. ...” (Field, 2005, p. 12)



Field (2005) contends that the move towards leisure and sociability of adult educational movements increased after the introduction of the welfare state. Field does not articulate the reasons for the dates he provides but it is perhaps significant that the 1945 reforms followed the Second World War. This may explain the trend of the change within the adult education movements – movements Field articulates as including the trade unions, cooperative associations, and social democratic movements. Having been scarred by war but brought together in cooperative small units, veterans may have been more concerned to maintain their leisure time and to have time to socialise. Formal education is not the only way to learn and it should be perhaps recognised that learning may simply have become less structured and more informal.

What about the costs to the community – the opportunity costs of parents who spend less time with their children because of involvement in community activities.

### **3.10.3 Social capital and volunteering**

Before undertaking voluntary work, individuals need to volunteer in the first place. Bayerlein and Bergstrand (2016) remind us that “recruitment matters – and in a big way – for distinguishing the civically engaged from the non-engaged” (Bayerlein and Bergstrand, 2016, p. 164). People are more likely to volunteer after being approached to do so, but that who is recruited are “... those who are expected to be valuable contributors once active.” (ibid,

2016, p. 164). This outcome was also found by Bryant, et al., (2003) where 80% volunteered their time after being asked to do so compared with 21% who volunteered without being asked. In other words, almost four times more people are likely to volunteer after been asked to do so. Bryant, et al., (2003) stated that when considering which volunteers could be valuable contributors, it was human capital that was considered important and that those with this capital tended to be well educated, those with more children, and/or women. This concurs with Philips (2005) who linked educational achievement with the self-confidence to become involved in “civic” activity. Bryant, et al., (2003) argued that his sample indicated that human and social capital was a strong indicator of individuals who would volunteer without being asked.

Who is recruited depends on contact between people, what they discuss during the contact, geographical proximity (living in the same community provides shared spaces). In line with the social capital theorists, Bayerlein and Bergstrand (2016) contend that “The more contact between people, the more opportunities there are to make requests to get involved.” They state that interactions are not uniform: not every interaction between people leads to requests to undertake volunteering but “Conversations about social and political matters ... are likely to ease the transition to recruitment” (Bayerlein and Bergstrand, 2016, p. 165). Frequent interaction is more likely to occur where people live close to each other and shared space including shared activities did lead people to be approached.

Predominantly it is the middle classes, who are the people who are already volunteering in areas such as school governorship. Informal learning is a mechanism which it is anticipated may be utilised by governors in the acquisition of capital:

“Some forms of volunteering may bring middle-class people into contact with others from very different backgrounds and thereby contribute to overall social solidarity ... However, while there is good evidence to show that civic engagement is generally high among the middle classes, it is in decline among the working class ... The risk, then, is that in this context, middle-class volunteering is contributing – however unintentionally – towards greater inequality of well-being.” (Field, 2005, pp. 144-145)

If this is linked to the earlier statement made by Field that those who have good networks are most likely to learn, which provides them with reinforcement for their existing networks, then the question is whether those who are most engaged in the formal learning processes mentioned by Field (2005) are from the middle class. It may be that those who are engaged in voluntary activities, come into contact with people of different social backgrounds, become more confident and subsequently engage in learning to increase their human capital through involvement in such groups and that this is reinforcing. Field is not arguing against middle class volunteering, but against them being dominant in terms of numbers within groups which may cause working class people to feel alienated from involvement, to reduce their linking social capital and hence reduced opportunities for developing human capital.

Field recognises the value of community and of the need for some external intervention and partnerships. He argues for heterogeneous networks to work alongside the more homogeneous community. Homogeneous communities can be limited by the situation of their members and have distinct boundaries but can also be confident and coherent. If too much intervention is present, then such confidence is reduced, and a dependency on the external partnerships will emerge rather than the community being empowered to overcome the problems they face (Field, 2005, p. 142).

Heterogeneous networks can provide linking social capital.

“Linking social capital is, in general, more likely to be associated with exposure to a multiplicity of information and knowledge. It might be expected that, other things being equal, exposure to heterogeneous information through a variety of loose ties is likely to promote ambition and effort, as well as fostering ingenuity and creativity.” (Field, 2005, p. 33)

In other words by providing heterogeneous networks in a community it is possible to enhance the community and promote opportunities for the people within it.

How does this link to the topic of the thesis? School governors according to the stereotypes come from middle class backgrounds and are relatively old (i.e. they could be regarded as a relatively homogeneous group). What is required is heterogeneous networks that enable people to link together, to develop their social and cultural capital, an environment in which capital expands and human capital may increase.

Why would an individual volunteer to become a school governor? Literature about volunteering extends outside this field – although it is frequently aligned to it. At the time of writing up the thesis, the Conservative Government which was still in power had been elected with a manifesto which included a section entitled “Helping you build the Big Society”:

“And we will make volunteering for three days a year a workplace entitlement for people working in large companies and the public sector. People could, for example, volunteer for a local charity or serve as a school governor (Conservative Party, 2015, p. 46)

If volunteering was to be an entitlement, was this necessary? Writers such as Giddens (1999) noted that large numbers of people volunteered either regularly or within a year (e.g. Giddens, 1999). Giddens noted that most of the increase in civic activity occurred amongst those who were relatively affluent and that there was a link between level of educational achievement (this was also noted in Ertas, 2014) and self confidence that leads people to engage in volunteering in an area such as school governorship. Giddens (1999, p. 80) used the term “communal energy” to express the new ways into which people were giving their time and indicated that traditional forms of civic engagement such as those utilised by Putnam’s (1995) studies were no longer useful.

Rege (2008) considered social status and why people care about it.

According to Bode (2017) there was a concern about the future: the children were not creating résumés to get low status jobs. Rege’s (2008)

perspective developed on Fershtman, et al. (1996) that we make choices not only based on money but on areas such as social esteem.

Rege (2008) investigated two rationales. The first occurred when an individual sought to give the impression that they had material wealth. The second occurred when the individual wanted to give an impression about their abilities. Traditional economic theory would suggest it was for the former reason, but Rege contended that people were seeking acknowledgement of their abilities. While intertwined, this high social status brings with it more social capital and hence greater opportunities for an individual to be someone to be regarded as a valuable contributor (Bayerlein and Bergstrand, 2016).

### **3.11 Conclusions**

The work of governors in school cannot be seen in isolation. School governors are volunteers for the role and the literature surrounding volunteering has been considered (see section 3.10) because it is an area which is important in this research. Certain groups may lack the capacity to volunteer (particularly those who are less affluent, or who work shift patterns) but their lack of representation amongst governors is often hidden because there is no regulation that prevents them from becoming school governors if they hold skills the governing body needs. Two groups that may be over-represented in the governors interviewed in this research are

government employees and those holding higher levels of education than the average member of society (see section 3.10.1).

School governors may learn from both training and experience within the role and may be able to improve their skills (see section 3.9). Undertaking education and training provides an individual with a set of new skills which can be applied in new contexts and such training is provided for those who become school governors. The problem is that some individuals are excluded because they work irregular hours or have childcare issues, while others are specifically not recruited because they lack the skills the school needs (see sections 2.5.1 and 2.5.2). This leads to the question of why skills are considered important when training is provided. If training is provided on areas such as school finance why are existing financial skills sought before appointment? Most people utilise basic financial skills every day and some individuals are disqualified from being school governors (see section 2.3) because of their handling of either their own finances or the finances of others. Allowing individuals to develop their financial skills would cause them to expand their human capital.

Being a school governor involves working within a system that is based on markets (see section 3.1.2) where the political aspects of school governing are hidden behind a mask of neoliberal ideas. Schools diverting money away from education and into marketing is hidden as 'parental choice' because of the neoliberal desire for markets. The link between governance

structures in the school setting and corporate boards is rarely questioned but may again be linked to the belief of neoliberals that schools should be like companies. Prior to the 1980s there were many types of ways to implement school governing bodies (Department of Education and Science, 1977) and until 1988 they were not responsible for finance in the school (Education Reform Act, 1988). School governance is a voluntary activity: governors are not paid while the directors of corporate boards are. Nevertheless, the work of school governors is scrutinised by Ofsted in a way that no corporate board would be checked by an external organisation.

The importance of class in capital was considered in section 3.2 and was found to have been developed in recent years from an occupational basis because of increasing levels of labour casualisation and self-employment. Bourdieu's consideration of class where each class holds differing proportions of different amounts of capital is a more modern perspective than using basic occupational groupings and is increasingly accepted (see section 3.2.1). For the purposes of this thesis it is Bourdieu's insights which have been used to allow insight into whether governors have acquired new capital rather than the blunt instrument of class or holding a job role within a particular occupational group.

If Bourdieu considers different types of capital, it is important to consider what types of capital governors may possess. Six types of capital were considered: human, social, emotional, economic, cultural, and governance.



The analysis spent little time considering three of these areas. One of these three, Economic capital (section 3.6) is about material assets and so was not included because of its personal nature to be considered as part of human capital (where economic opportunity is often linked to areas such as education) but it is recognised that certain groups of people are excluded because they lack economic capital.

The second area was not dealt separately within the research was cultural capital (section 3.7) where the link between education (which represents human capital (Schultz, 1961a)), economic resources and the time and resources to acquire cultural capital were considered. This is an important issue in education but something that will be very difficult to elicit within this research. It was decided to look at this within the context of human capital, as length of schooling can provide some insights but alongside qualifications.

The third area not considered in detail was Governance capital which was considered by James et al., (2010) but was not considered further within the thesis because it looks at the amount of capital possessed by the whole governing body and this thesis considers individual governors from different schools.

This left three areas which were considered in detail: human capital, social capital and emotional capital. Human capital (section 3.3) is important

because it looks at existing levels of education and training. It is recognised that human capital can take different forms: consumption and investment. The former considers the everyday things we may do to find something out but without needing to make sacrifices to do it while investment is about future earnings. The literature surrounding human capital comes from an economic and economic sociological viewpoint which is often quantitatively based and makes assumptions about motivations. One of the important links between human capital and education is investment in education. Research has shown that individuals may not invest in the level of education that society needs without intervention. Human capital theory suggests that, overall, society benefits from investment in education but cannot easily predict which individuals would benefit from investment and by how much. The reason for this is that the information is aggregated and depends on factors outside the individual (e.g. where they live, and the occupations of their household). Links were found between those who were in education and belonging to clubs and societies (section 3.3.3) and the question is how this link between membership (which is linked to social capital, see section 3.4) exists and whether social capital is required for the acquisition of human capital or whether human capital leads to the development of social capital or whether both occur at the same time. Human capital is not always developed through formal learning and it is importance to recognise it within this thesis where informal learning may be a mechanism through which governor obtain human or social capital.

Social capital is a more difficult concept because it is more elusive and can be found in the bonds an individual possesses. School governors operate within a relatively flat hierarchical structure where there is a chair of governors and a headteacher but otherwise may find that there are no pyramidal levels. The flat structure means that individuals should gain social capital relatively effectively from being a school governor. The problem with social capital is that it is difficult to measure – if 100000 members of an organisation exist and I am a member do I have more or less social capital as a result than in an organisation with two members? I have less connections in the latter and such an organisation may have no influence or status but I may just sign up to the larger organisation (e.g. signing up to the National Trust so I can visit different historical sites or to a political party to show my support) but take no active role within it. Social capital is about the links between individuals and they may be binding, bridging or linking in nature but they may form a picture about the status of an individual within their community. School governorship causes individuals to work with others who may have similar interests and backgrounds (this can be bridging social capital) but may also cause them to work with people from outside their community (this is linking social capital). If governing bodies are too homogeneous then this may not lead to increased social capital because there will be relatively few new links to be created. However, if the governing body is too heterogeneous governors may not increase social capital because other governors may feel alienated from involvement.

There are three areas where social capital can be seen: our obligations, the flow of information and trust (section 3.4.5). This leads us to consider how many links individuals have to one another. In a small community links between individuals can be highly influential and obligations may become very important (e.g. involvement in community activities). If someone in that community fails to meet their obligations (e.g. volunteering to help out on a stall on the village fete) it will be widely known as information will pass through the links others possess and the level of social capital the individual has will decline. The failure to meet the obligation may lead to trust in the individual declining in areas other than the village fete. In larger communities the effect may be smaller due to more simplex relationships. One area of social capital is the social standing and reputation it brings (see section 3.4.9) and hence should increased social capital be a result of being a school governor, increased social standing and reputation may result.

The final area considered was emotional capital which is strongly linked to social capital particularly to binding social capital (which is the type of social capital most closely allied to the ties within families). Emotional capital was developed from Bourdieu's social capital (helping individuals obtain an advantage in society through the use of networks) by considering the private sphere and considering how mothers helped their spouse and children to obtain an advantage in society. It is strongly linked to binding social capital which is often found within families. The premise was that

women were excluded from the social sphere (by looking after their family) and accumulated emotional capital in the private sphere which they expended on providing opportunities for their families.

Having considered crucial elements of literature surrounding the research questions, the time has come to consider the methodology utilised within the research.

## **Chapter 4 - Methodology**

Having considered the literature surrounding the research questions it is important to consider the methodological approach used within the research. This is important because choosing the correct methodology and methods provides a positive link between the research topic, the literature and the findings of the research, enabling the reader to understand the context of the findings and the way the findings were reached.. The chapter begins with an introductory section (section 4.1) which includes the context of the research (section 4.1.1), the positionality of the researcher (which includes recognition of the researcher as a participant observer, a recognition of potential bias, a reflexive section and a consideration of the epistemological stance adopted within the research) (section 4.1.2). Research methodologies are dealt with in section 4.2.

Section 4.3 considers the design of the research (looking at areas such as reliability, validity, representativeness and triangulation before considering the settings for the design, who the research subjects (participants) are, the instruments used within the research and how they were devised. The pilot study is considered in section 4.2.4 and the data analysis is dealt with in section 4.2.5

### **4.1 Introduction and overview**

The first elements to consider are areas surrounding the context of the research: the general location of the research is discussed (the specific

local authority in which the governors' work is not identified) and this is followed by an acknowledgement of the positionality of the researcher.

#### 4.1.1 Introduction to the context

The context of school governance was examined in Chapters 2 and 3. The research did not take place in a vacuum. The main research took place in 2016 while the pilot study took place in 2015. All of the governors taking part in the research were serving on the governing bodies of schools situated in one local authority area in the north of England.

Events were taking place which impacted on schools during the research period (2015-6). Before considering what was happening it is important to outline the timetable of the research and why 2015-6 is such a crucial period within the research. The timeline for the research is shown on Table 4.1 below:

<b>Secondary Research</b>	
Reading books, journal articles, legislation, websites and research reports	2009-2017 and 2018-2019
<b>Primary Research</b>	
Creation of data collection instrument	2015-
Pilot study (including recruitment of governors for pilot)	2015
Consideration of revisions to instrument	2015
Recruitment of governors	2015-6
Data collection	2016
Data analysis	2016-7 and 2019

*Table 4.1: Timeline of the research*

The timeline shown in Table 4.1 must be seen in light of the rapid growth in academy schools after 2010 and the reduction of local authority influence in schools. This growth in academy schools necessitated the inclusion of academies in the study. The reason for omitting academy schools at the outset of the study was that academy structures were varied and identifying who was a governor was less clear.

Another of the changes that was taking place at the time was change to the composition of school governing bodies. This change had been talked about at the outset of the research in 2009 but took a number of years to implement. The DfE statutory guidance on the composition of governing bodies (Department for Education, n.d.e), published in 2017 is an amended version of an original 2014 document (Department for Education, n.d.k). Statutory guidance means that "... governing bodies must have regard to it" (Department for Education, n.d.e). The composition of school governing bodies did not change overnight and this meant that some maintained schools would have governing bodies composed on the basis of the new structure which is (skills-based) while others would still be on the very different old structure at the time of the research.

Educational Excellence Everywhere (Secretary of State for Education, 2016) provides a further insight into the move towards academies. The paper proposed that every school would become an Academy (Secretary of



State for Education 2016). During the interviews some governors may have thought that their maintained school was to become an academy within a very short timescale. Educational Excellence Everywhere was never implemented but school governors are likely to have known that school governance was changing. Some of the governors who took part in the interviews were drawn from school governing bodies which were using the old composition regulations for maintained schools, while others were using the new composition outlined in the Department for Education (n.d.e) statutory guidance while other governors were from academies with a completely different structure. Some governors were members of both maintained school governing bodies and academies.

The context of the local authority was described within the introduction chapter. The north east of England has less racial diversity, lower educational attainment, a slightly older population and a greater level of deprivation than the UK more generally. These factors may be important when considering the sample of governors who took part in the interviews.

#### **4.1.2 Positionality**

The researcher has been a school governor in different local authorities since she was an undergraduate. This provided an insight into the work of a school governor and into possible responses to the research questions. In undertaking this research, the researcher attempted to avoid using this

insight and to utilise responses provided as though seeing them as someone who had not been a school governor.

As someone with insights into school governance through experience over 30 years in a number of local authorities throughout England, it is important to recognise that the researcher is a participant observer, that she holds opinions about school governance and that she had reasons for undertaking this study. The researcher has resigned from at least three school governing bodies when the decision was made that the school should become an academy. As a researcher she felt ethically bound to try to keep her opinions away from the analysis of data in order that it was authentic and unbiased but recognises that political opinions should be overtly mentioned within this section to alert the reader of potential bias (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1955; Vidich, 1995).

The researcher works in a day job that links education and computing. She has been a student member of the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants for almost 30 years and has been a Chartered Information Technology Professional and a member of the British Computer Society (the Chartered Engineering Institution for Information Technology Practitioners) for 20 years). Her teaching qualification was in economics and as an undergraduate she took several economics-based courses. One of the problems with these disciplines is that they do not reconcile with overt expression of political views within an academic context very easily. This is

important because within this thesis, political perspectives are overt and will need to be brought out because they are often hidden by those who make decisions.

Had the opportunity to fully employ grounded theory been practicable within the constraints of a Ph.D. the study would have begun and operated as grounded theory research. The demands of ethics, and the need to register for a degree while outlining the research strategy and the research aims meant that this would have been very problematic in practice. This led the researcher to utilise some features of grounded theory, but it is, in essence, research that was based on qualitative techniques.

For the purposes of this study participant observation is a situation which occurs where the observer is part of the process being observed but not necessarily an active participant in the process. In this case the researcher is a participant (as a school governor) but not in the same school as any of the governors who took part in the research. In order to maintain anonymity of the local authority the researcher cannot state whether they have served as a governor in the same local authority area as the governors who took part in the research (please note that this is due to the requirement for governor names to be published on school websites and the maintenance of the governor database and for no other reason).

A participant observer could be someone who has a situational knowledge (e.g. as a school governor) and may be known to other participants in that capacity. They may not be participants in the school governing body being examined and hence to some degree may be relatively passive (within this research it can be confirmed that the researcher did not sit as a governor with any of the research participants).

It is therefore important to consider the literature around data collection, before considering observation as a technique for research, the effect of an observer also being a participant, and to consider situatedness.

It is too easy to see data collection as a value neutral process: that “Data collection does not take place in a vacuum ... Perspectives of social reality are shaped by the social position and interests of both the observed and the observer as they live through a passing present” (Vidich, 1955, p. 360).

These perspectives may differ between the actors. Strauss (1991) puts this slightly differently:

“For certain purposes it may suffice to describe interaction as going on between persons who each enact a role or occupy a status. The actors, then, are said to perceive the situation, observe what is required with respect to the status of each, and carry out the requisite or selected line of action” (Strauss, 1991, p. 49)

Strauss is saying that participants act as they are expected to act within contexts and their status may constrain their actions. When one individual interacts with another, each brings with them a series of experiences and

perspectives of what is expected. In this research one school governor is acting as researcher and another school governor (who realises the positionality of the researcher) is the research subject. The research subject may feel that they need to act in a particular way (e.g. as a 'good governor' would act) rather than what would normally take place in practice. In order to counteract this, governors were told that there were no right answers to questions, that their answers would remain anonymous and that no identifiable information would be provided within the thesis (See Appendix B).

Bourdieu (2003) sees participant observers as pretenders who come in from an alien world and fictitiously immerse themselves in a new society (Bourdieu, 2003, p. 282). This anthropological view of participant observation is distinguished from participant objectification where an individual looks at what is possible within the social conditions that prevail and hence also examine the effects and limits of that experience (Bourdieu, 2003, p. 282). Participant observers may be people who come to the situation new, but may also be people who are already participants in the context they are observing – but in any case it is useful to consider that when observing a situation there are limits which are placed on the observer and that almost all observers are in some ways participants. For example, a participant observer may hold a particular position within a school governing body which precludes them observing it (e.g. a Chair or Clerk). It may be rather better for the observer to look at a different

governing body in which direct participation is less likely (in the case of this research the participants do not serve on a governing body alongside the researcher). It may be that the opportunity arises for those observations to take place within a normal context in order that actors are “not aware that the investigator is using his behaviour as a source of information” (Janes, 1961, pp. 446-7). Schwartz and Schwartz (1955) also urge observers to be active participants because they found it helped the observer to recognise “the subtleties of communication and interaction.” (1955, p. 349).

Undertaking this research as a school governor meant that the researcher understood the context in which governing bodies operated and the organisation of governing bodies (at least at the outset of the study).

Vidich (1955) in contrast urges observers to objectify their experiences because by committing themselves to the observee’s perspective they may lose their objectivity and develop “vested interests” (1955, p. 357). He argues for the need for observers to have a credible role whether as an observer where everyone knows that they are being observed and by whom or as a disguised participant (Vidich, 1955, p. 355). Without such a role, the observer may be viewed with suspicion and fail to receive the data they require:

“When one as an individual connects to or engages in interaction, one becomes aware that one is observed and perceived by other participants. Participation does not mean that one has to contribute to communication” by expressing oneself. Just being present makes one as participant (Keiding, 2011, p. 108).

It is important to simplify this point for understanding. What Keiding is saying is that all observers are participants whether they think they are or not. This ties into Becker's (1958) perspective that the presence of an observer may lead the person being observed to act differently from the way they would behave in the absence of the observer.

Participant observation does have some important advantages; the research worker has knowledge of the context in which they work and recognises what otherwise alien words and actions mean within that situational norm (Vidich, 1955, p. 354). Because they are within the context they see the normality of the situation and can talk to other participants about how they interpret events the observer has noted in a way that would be impossible from a totally objective perspective (Becker, 1958). It is a two-edged sword, and the researcher must be aware that there are advantages to non-involvement as well as to being a full-blown participant.

An observer there to be addressed has lower levels of complexity involved in an observation than one who takes part in discussions and has greater time for self-observation. On the other hand, direct involvement produces opportunities to test understandings and meaning attribution (Keiding, 2011, p. 109).

Where researchers are too involved in the context, they may do more than recognise the language of the environment they are working within. Rather

they may become part of the environment in a way which prevents them viewing the evidence objectively and just seeking to identify what people mean and understand in the context. Objectivity is very difficult to attain even where the researcher is not directly involved within the context but it is important to strive for if results are to reflect the words of the interviewee rather than the biases of the interviewer or researcher (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1955).

Participant observers must be both conscious of their need for objectivity and aware that the data collated will depend upon their participation as an observer (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1955). They must also be aware of positionality as a participant observer. Those being observed may be reluctant to share information with an observer who is not a participant, but may be willing to share where they feel that they are disclosing information to a participant unaware of their role as an observer (Becker, 1958). They may also behave differently within a group and these behaviours may only be seen in the presence of people within the group (Becker, 1958).

So what lessons can be drawn from the literature? Firstly, that observation allows researchers to obtain rich situational data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) which very few other sources allow them to obtain. The reason for this is that the observation of the interaction between participants allows the researcher to obtain a better understanding of their relative status and expected actions and interventions (Cutcliffe, 2000; Strauss, 1991).



Secondly, observers may find that they are subject to bias (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1955) whether they are participant observers or not and that they must beware of them if they are to be objective in their analysis of the observation. Thirdly, observers have emotions, and this may cause them to become biased (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1955; Widdowfield, 2000) – particularly if they are too involved in the context. Fourthly, participant observation means that an individual must recognise their limitations (Vidich, 1955).

It is recognised that this study is based upon the premise of participant observation. The problem with participant observation is that as a participant, the observer has a particular view within the system and cannot be wholly objective (see section 4.1.2). The disadvantage of this is clear: the observer starts with their own experience and is part of the situation they are analysing which is clearly tending towards making the research less scientific in nature. The advantage may be that they have an understanding of the situation that allows them to recognise the variables which exist in a way that an impartial observer may not and one in which by knowing other participants they may find it more easy to establish trusting relationships. As Vidich (1995) notes “What an observer will see will depend largely on his particular position in a network of relationships.” (Vidich, 1995, p. 354).

This is important in this research. Educationalists use jargon constantly and this may prevent outsiders (even new governors) from understanding situations and the context in which they work while some governors see their involvement as being an opportunity to secure a better future for their children within the school (e.g. to identify problems their child has with a particular teacher). To someone who is an experienced governor these items should lead to fewer problems in securing full understanding and ensuring that they learn the perspective of the participant (after all they may have been through it themselves).

The involvement of the observer as a participant in the activity under review can therefore be seen to be less than perfect but also to provide a unique insight which may not be obtained by an external observer. In some studies, particularly those where generalisable outcomes may result this involvement may prevent the objective of the study.

Being a participant observer can influence the data collected by an individual— some participants may be more open because they know the individual while others may be on guard because they know that they will work with the individual in future. Even where it is full and detailed data which is collected, the data will require careful categorisation and we need to recognise that much of the evidence may not be suitable for publication (Becker, 1958). Having considered the difficulties of being a participant observer it is now pertinent to consider the methodology aspired to but not

followed fully in practice. Elements of grounded theory have been incorporated into the research.

One area that may lead to bias is our emotions (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1955). Emotions are a natural process and are not easily elicited using non-qualitative research techniques (Strauss and Corbin, 1988) should not be regarded negatively in every situation. It is where they interfere or lead to bias in the observation emotions (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1955) that a researcher needs to carefully consider them, particularly where the emotions are strong and negative (Schwartz and Schwartz (1955) mention areas of concern such as “anger, discomfort and frustration” (ibid, 1955, p358).

As a participant observer who is also a school governor, the emotional attachment of school governors to their school would be expected. It is important that the researcher tries to account for such bias and need for bias to be identified and dealt with (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Although observations were not part of this research, it is important to recognise that observers, whether participants or not, may not be objective.

Although Vidich (1955) was not considering participant observation but observation as a research technique more widely, his point that observers

see thing depending “largely on his particular position in a network of relationships” (1955, p. 354) is well made. Observers tend to skew their descriptions and observations according to what they believe is important (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) and even the words they use may “carry overt or moral judgments” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 18). He sees it broadly as being determined by the social position of the observer (Vidich, 1955, p. 354) and the further the distance between the observer and the person being observed, the less willing will the latter be to disclose what the observer needs to see (note the Hawthorne effect mentioned by Chiesa and Hobbs, 2008).

Becker (1958) argues that participant observers must attempt to be more formalised and systematic in the way they observe in order that they may be more scientific rather than “artistic” (Becker, 1958, p. 660). Becker considers the problems of participant observation: the difficulties of summarising data and the frequency of the occurrence.

The first point is that data from participant observation is not easily summarized (Becker, 1958) – when dealing with interviews it is about what is said by an individual and how far we can make it more generalisable. A researcher cannot publish all the data but must ensure that the data is available (Becker, 1958).

It is important to check the frequency of an occurrence ... that something occurs is not sufficient, where it occurs and whether it is typical does matter. Becker argues that conclusions drawn from observation should be quantitative in nature. (Becker, 1958).

Not all social scientists view participant observation in a positive way. For example, Bourdieu (2003), from an anthropological viewpoint tells us that:

“It is indeed scientifically attested that her most decisive scientific choices (of topic, method, theory, etc.) depend very closely on the location she (or he) occupies within her professional universe, what I call the anthropological field, with its national traditions and peculiarities, its habits of thought, its mandatory problematics, its shared beliefs and commonplaces, its rituals, values, and consecrations, its constraints in matters of publication of findings, its specific censorships, and, by the same token, the biases embedded in the organizational structure of the discipline, that is, in the collective history of the specialism, and all the unconscious presuppositions build into the national categories of scholarly understanding” (Bourdieu, 2003, p. 283).

This needs further consideration. Bourdieu may be distinguished because he is dealing with a slightly different field, anthropology rather than sociology or the other social sciences. Many of the points he makes are valid across disciplines: unless a researcher tries to question their own bias, the value of their research will be limited. This perspective is supported by Schwartz and Schwartz (1955) who state that seeking out biases is a continual process and that when an individual finds a bias in themselves, they must think through the effects on the research. Bias leads researchers to recognise their limitations but identification can help

individuals to overcome some of those blocks and limits (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1955, p. 353).

There are many ways in which people may be biased. Individuals tend to react to people based on their past experiences and the blind spots of the individual. The researcher may therefore consider a rationale for an individual acting in a particular way in a biased manner – attributing a positive or negative rationale rather than attributing an impartial, descriptive, and unsentimental perspective.

Individuals are, at heart, human beings and that cannot always be unsentimental – indeed a researcher’s relationships with those being observed may suffer if they are too detached. Schwartz and Schwartz (1955) point out that a researcher may not be aware of the processes our relationships go through because they are in a state of continuous flux. Sometimes a researcher finds themselves forging close relationships with some of those they are observing and at other times being angry with them with the researcher’s perspectives shaped by “conscious and unconscious motives, emotions, thoughts, feelings and imagery” (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1955, p. 350). These emotions may in turn affect the effectiveness of the observation they are undertaking (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1955). The researcher must beware of situations where observers come into conflict with those being observed, cause them anxiety or are disrespectful toward them (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1955, p. 347).

These situations will impede the observation but may not come about through overt action but may occur through passivity and hence observers must take care to ensure that they take great care in their relationships with those being observed.

This research has a political and ideological context as almost all research does (Alvesson and Skolberg, 2018). The research is about school governors but does not question whether schools should have governors, what their role should be, the quality of the work that school governing bodies do. In contrast, the research does not ignore what governors say they do for the school governing body or the skills they feel they use.

These questions around the scope of the research all are choices made by the researcher.

Cohen, et al., (2018) consider reflexivity as a central component in qualitative research. Reflexivity involves recognising the place of the researcher in the world that is being considered. The reason why it is needed is that qualitative inquiry is “not a neutral activity” (Cohen, et al., 2018, p. 302). What are the things that a researcher needs to consider? Their “personal characteristics, experiences, knowledge, backgrounds, values, beliefs, theories, age, gender, sexuality, politics, theories, race, ethnicity, conceptual frameworks and prejudices” (Cohen, et al., 2018, p. 302) alongside “issues of power and status” (ibid, 2018, p. 302).

Some of these items may be less pertinent to the study than others. In the context of this research sexuality, for example, is not seen as relevant although in other areas of research it could be crucially important. Within this thesis the political positionality of the researcher may be considered very important.

Within the context of this thesis, the researcher contends that she is a long-standing opponent of neoliberalism and that this is due to her values, belief system and experiences. A long standing opposition to neoliberalism and a record of resigning when schools become academies should, however, not be taken as meaning that the neoliberal case is wrong: it means that while considering the neoliberal case that the researcher has beliefs which suggest that alternative views represent a perspective more in line with her own. It means for the purposes of this research acknowledging different views (particularly of research participants whose views diverge from that of the researcher) and placing them firmly within the research as research findings.

Age, gender, race and ethnicity are important. At the time of undertaking the secondary research the researcher fell into one of the middle age categories which, as with gender, can point to particular perspectives. Although the researcher is white and British, over 90% of the population within the region share these characteristics.



In the case of status, the issue of class was covered in the literature review. Although not highly paid, the researcher recognises that she does not exist at subsistence level (during the research period (2016) she was asked for documents to claim food at a foodbank; this had the effect of making her aware of the level of need and her duty her to make regular contributions to foodbanks).

In most situations the researcher does not seek power but holds positions in a wide range of organisations (e.g. treasurer of a branch of the British Computer Society, vice President of a Branch of the National Education Union) and is a member of a large number of professional and social organisations (e.g. the British Educational Research Association, Chartered Association of Certified Accountants and the Soroptimists) as well as serving as a school governor.

Although very interested and active in politics outside work, the politics of the workplace holds little interest. There are areas of power relations that could come into the research (e.g. were the researcher to be a chair of governors while the participant a member of the governing body whose appointment was soon to end). The decision to use some people known to the researcher as acquaintances within the sample was made case by case ensuring that if a power relationship existed it was a power over the researcher by the participant. In almost every case no such power relationship existed. It is recognised that the interviewer does hold some

power within the interview due to the decisions over the questions posed, the pace of the interview and the way the interview is conducted but no overt attempt was made to influence responses to questions.

The question of reflexivity and the positionality of the researcher were considered when creating the research questions, the instruments used to undertake the research and also within the analysis. Care was taken to ensure that what was analysed were the words and perspective of the research participant rather than the researcher.

This research has a constructivist stance. Following Charmaz (2006), it is recognised that “subjective meanings are attributed to the data by participants and researchers, and there might be multiple interpretations of what these meanings are” (Cohen, et al., 2018, p. 716). Hence when considering data analysis very great care was taken to ensure that as far as possible, the participant’s meanings were used rather than the researcher’s.

## **4.2 Research methodology**

The purpose of the research is to consider the acquisition of different types of capital by governors.

This thesis is focused on areas of the social sciences including political science and hence the methodology employed should be relevant to those utilised within that area. Social scientists employ both qualitative and

quantitative methodologies and often use the term 'science' to provide a link between their discipline and what is sometimes perceived as the rigour of natural sciences (Cohen, et al., 2007).

The question of whether qualitative research may have 'rigour' has been questioned and will be considered further in section 4.4.1. The basic premise of the response will be that qualitative research should not look to quantitative techniques used in scientific research for the answers but that different criteria for trustworthiness should be utilised (Guba, 1981; Mays and Pope, 1995; Cope, 2014).

#### **4.2.1 What type of research methodology would be appropriate?**

Burgess (1993) states that attitudes towards research methodologies have changed and the effect of this is that researchers need to look at the area they want to research and to utilise the research methods which are most appropriate to investigating it: in essence they are part of the research process.

The research methodology employed within any research should be based on methods suitable to the research questions (see section 1.3 where the research aims, and research questions are outlined). Hence it is pertinent to consider the research questions and whether they are qualitative or quantitative in nature (see Table 4.2 below). This is done with an

awareness that qualitative research is an umbrella term for a heterogeneous collection of research techniques (Rolfe, 2006) including content analysis (Elo et al., 2014).

Research question	Quantitative or qualitative
Research question 1a - What skills do governors bring to the role?	This is clearly <b>qualitative</b> in nature. Its aim is to describe the skills brought as the governor identifies it rather than quantify it into numbers.
Research question 1b - What skills do governors believe they apply within their roles as school governors.	This is also <b>qualitative</b> because it relates to the skills school governors believe they apply rather than how many they apply.
Research question 2a - What training opportunities are made available to governors within the local authority?	This is an exploratory question, but it is again <b>qualitative</b> in nature because it asks about what is available rather than how much or how frequently these happen?
Research question 2b - Who uses the training opportunities that are available?	This is also <b>qualitative</b> because it is about the types of governors using training.
Research question 2c - How many governors use the training and how frequently?	This is a <b>quantitative</b> research question and will need some quantitative consideration.
Research question 2d - What is the training used for?	This is a <b>qualitative</b> question because it is exploratory in nature and seeks to find out what the training governors receive is used for rather than how many governors use the training.
Research question 2e - What effect do school governors feel the training they undertake has on them?	This is about exploring the effects of training and is also <b>qualitative</b> .
Research question 2f - What benefits do governors believe the experience of being a governor has provided to them.	This is a <b>qualitative</b> question because it looks at the benefits from an individual perspective. This question could be seen to assume that there are benefits to governors but by asking

	governors about this they may feel it has not benefited them.
Research question 2g - Do governors use skills and experience that they feel they have learnt from being a governor in a work or community context?	This is a question which has a yes or no answer which suggests measurement and hence <b>quantitative</b> analysis. It is hoped that this question will identify not only whether they use such skills and experience but perhaps provide insight into how they use governor acquired skills and experience. This insight into how they use such skills is <b>qualitative</b> .
Research question 3a - Do governors increase their social capital as a result of their work within the school governing body?	Again, this is a yes or no answer which suggests measurement and hence <b>quantitative</b> analysis. It is hoped that if it does that it will provide insight into how this increase happened. Hence it is a <b>qualitative</b> research question.
Research question 3b - Do governors increase their cultural capital as a result of their work within the school?	This is also a yes or no answer which suggests measurement and hence <b>quantitative</b> analysis. It is hoped that if it does that it will provide insight into what they do that could increase their cultural capital. Hence it is a <b>qualitative</b> research question.
Research question 3c - Do governors perceive that being a governor has any effect on the opportunities available for their families?	Again, this is a yes or no answer which suggests measurement and hence <b>quantitative</b> analysis. It is hoped that if it does that it will provide insight into what opportunities governors see their work has had on their families. Hence it is a <b>qualitative</b> research question.

*Table 4.2: Are the research questions qualitative or quantitative in nature?*

As can be seen from Table 4.2 above the majority of research questions are qualitative in nature or have qualitative elements. The exception to this is Research question 2c “How many governors use the training and how frequently?”. The question could be considered in different ways: for

example a local authority could be approached to provide information about such training but they could only do this for the schools signing up to its training and this does not always occur. The alternative could be to create a question or series of questions that would provide an insight into the governors who took part in the study and their training habits.

#### **4.2.2 Research methodologies available**

Cohen, et al., (2018) suggest that there are a number of methodologies which are used within educational research. The research methodologies considered are: “Historical and documentary research” (Cohen, et al., 2018, p. 323); “Surveys, longitudinal, cross-sectional and trend studies” (Cohen, et al., 2018, p. 334); “Internet surveys” (Cohen, et al., 2018, p. 361); “Case studies” (Cohen, et al., 2018 p. 375); “Experiments” (Cohen, et al., 2018, p. 391); “Meta-analysis, systematic reviews and research syntheses” (Cohen, et al., 2018, p. 427); “Action research” (Cohen, et al., 2018, p. 440); and “Virtual worlds, social network software and netography in educational research” (Cohen, et al., 2018, p. 457).

Some of these areas can be dismissed very quickly. Historical and documentary research could be used for some of the research, but it would not provide information about the governors to answer the research questions. Although the researcher was capable of undertaking internet-based research such as internet surveys and virtual worlds both were dismissed but for different reasons. Internet surveys would make checking

general data (e.g. whether someone was a governor) more difficult. Virtual worlds do exist, and the researcher has previously been involved in creating such sites but quite often anonymity is provided not only through the use of avatars but by anonymity. The researcher knows of no virtual world with school governors as a specific client base. Websites such as Padlet may have provided the opportunity for governors to share ideas but may have the problem of anonymity and also the requirement of computer literacy which may exclude individuals from taking part in the research.

Experiments can be excluded because of their predominantly quantitative nature. Action research can also be excluded because while it is appropriate in almost any setting (Cohen, et al., 2018) this research is not about how governors may improve their practice but about the governors and their views. Meta-analysis, systematic reviews and research syntheses (Cohen, et al., 2018) are also excluded because this is not a study where a plethora of research has already been undertaken which may be combined.

Surveys (such as that conducted by Booth (1897)) were excluded because they tend to be quantitative in nature and because of the need for a large sample (Cohen, et al., 2018). This meant that the researcher was effectively choosing a case study approach (Cohen, et al., 2018).

Cohen, et al. (2018) state that the definition of a case study is elusive but provide three alternative types. The first type of case study is exploratory

(Cohen, et al., 2018). This research explored a particular situation; a particular local authority area in the north east of England and considered how individuals within that location may have been affected by taking up the role. This type of case study allows the creation of hypotheses and the findings section will cause some hypotheses to be created that may be tested by future researchers.

The second type of case study was descriptive (Cohen, et al., 2018). Some of the research questions do lead to narrative accounts but this is not the focus of this research.

The third type of case study mentioned by Cohen, et al., (2018) was Yin's explanatory case study (which tested theories) (ibid, 2018, p. 377) or Merriam's interpretative (which examines initial assumptions) (ibid, 2018, p. 377). This research does not have previous theories to consider and hence is not of this type. Cohen, et al., (2018) would place this case study as "interpretive" because the views of participants are used to make the case rather than quantitative data.

Stake's (1995) definition would place the research conducted within this thesis as instrumental because the case is used to "gain insight into an issue or a theory" (Cohen, et al., 2018, p. 378).



Cohen, et al., (2018) point to several strengths of case studies including accessibility to a wide audience. A second strength is that unique features are found because each case is different, and they are based on reality. A very important strength is that case studies can be undertaken by a single researcher without vast resources at their disposal.

Three disadvantages are mentioned by Cohen, et al., (2018). First, the results of case studies cannot easily be generalised because they refer to one situation and quite often for a specific period. In this case study, the use of one geographical area means that it may not be reflective of governors outside this area, however, the findings may resonate with governors in other geographical locations. Secondly, observer bias may be problematic even where attempts are made to address it. This is recognised within positionality but attempts have been made to remove it from the findings – although it is recognised that memos and research notes may be less neutral (Cohen, et al., 2018). Finally, case studies are difficult to cross-check and this may lead to bias or subjectivity not being obvious (Cohen, et al., 2018).

This thesis considers those who serve as school governors within a particular geographical location. While Burgess (1993) would indicate that to be generalisable throughout the UK a survey or other method would need to be used, other researchers (e.g. Yin (2018)) do argue that it is possible to generalise to a wider population (e.g. if the case study is relatively

homogeneous and the wider population is also similar). Some writers (eg Simons (2015)) simply seek to employ a more general truth – that we learn in one situation and then apply something more widely.

It is not the intention of the case study research within this thesis to provide generalisable material and there are weaknesses in attempting to do so.

The major reason for this is that the sample size is small which means that results cannot be statistically significant (Cohen, et al., 2018). Even if the sample size is larger, it could not be generalisable, due to changing circumstances (in this case educational change). Nevertheless, the nature of the sample will be discussed in section 4.3.3.

In summary, the case study methodology allowing as it does for the utilisation of mixed methods seems to be the best fit for this research because research questions do not need to be altered to meet the methodology. The utilisation of the case study methodology in this situation means that the research questions can be answered in suitable ways including low level quantitative analysis where this is appropriate.

## **4.3 Research design**

### **4.3.1 Settings**

The settings of the research were previously discussed: a geographical area in the north east of England with high levels of deprivation and low levels of educational achievement. Governors were recruited from a wide

range of schools and had much more overlap in terms of categories than expected.

#### **4.3.2 Why were interviews used as the main source of data?**

The research questions suggested that a qualitative research design was appropriate.

Qualitative methods do not aim to replace quantitative techniques but have different aims: rather than seeking to gain a picture of the real world based on science, they aim to research areas where numbers may not be useful.

This case study research within this thesis, because it is small-scale in nature, cannot provide mathematically significant results, but it can aim to investigate an area in detail, and to look for richness and depth within the responses provided.

What is qualitative research? Strauss and Corbin (1998) define qualitative research as meaning "... any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification."

(Strauss and Corbin, 1998, pp. 10-11). The problem with this definition is that it identifies the method by what it is not, rather than by identifying what it is.

Qualitative researchers recognise that numbers may prove things but sometimes that their research questions are not suitable for analysis by

numerical techniques. If a researcher is considering meaning or importance or making sense of findings, for example, numbers may be of little use (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Many research techniques may be employed using quantitative techniques, but some techniques may be employed in either a qualitative or quantitative way depending upon the situation. Some interviews are conducted with the aim of extracting numerical data from them (e.g. many structured interviews), while others seek to investigate a particular area and fine detail and nuances within the responses. The type of method utilised is dependent on the research question and the situation. At the heart of this research was a qualitative methodology with the words used within the interviews being particularly important. Hence, although both quantitative techniques and qualitative techniques were used (i.e. this is a mixed methodology), the main focus of the findings were qualitative in nature.

It is difficult to consider research methodologies without contextualising some of the research techniques which may be available. Hence the review of techniques will be limited to a better understanding of the technique rather than considering its use within a larger methodology.

Some studies of governors do use questionnaires with quantitative data (see for example Lynn and Davis Smith (1990) where governors received a questionnaire as part of their study of voluntary activity and Holland (2017)) Questionnaires did not allow governors to express themselves in the way

that an interview with follow up questions could do and there is a chance that governors would misunderstand questions when using the questionnaire technique. Such publications were often based on funded research. This leads to the question of whether their methodologies were influenced by a need to verify the views of the funders rather than seeking to find out more using a variety of research methods (see section 4.8).

In this case study it was decided to avoid questionnaires as there would be difficulties checking whether respondents were actually governors. The research questions also guided towards a more qualitative approach to the research and questionnaires may be discarded where the questions they employ are too open ended and take too long to answer.

It is easy to confuse structured interviews with interviews where some of the questions are prepared in advance. A true structured interview could be equated to a questionnaire where an individual is helped to complete a form (e.g. where people are asked about a particular topic and the interviewer uses their answers to complete a form). The interviews in this case aim to elicit information in numerical form. The problem with structured interviews is that they need all of the questions to be asked in a particular way to participants and all of the answers must be measurable. Such restrictions within interviews may aid the process of data analysis and aid comparison but will not allow rich data to be collected.

In structured interviews the interviewer has a script which they must follow. Such interviews take place using questions which lend themselves to a numeric response e.g. "How frequently do you use the Internet? The answers here may be "Never", "Very Rarely", "Rarely", "Sometimes", "Frequently", "Very Frequently" and "At least once per Day"". A researcher could compare the information with data about the person responding to the survey and find patterns in the data.

Sometimes questions may be posed which contain a more open-ended response. The difficulty with this is that the person conducting the interview cannot ask for supplementary information, and the person who is being interviewed may find the process lengthier (which is known to reduce response rates). This leads to a recognition that these structured interviews are very restrictive: there are two other forms of interviews which could be used: Semi-structured and Unstructured.

Semi-Structured Interviews occur where some of the questions are asked in a particular way to everyone, while others may be asked to follow up what has been said or only asked to particular individuals. The advantage of this type of interview is that the interviewer can alter the questions to help explain what is meant or to avoid assumptions being made. There is a list of questions (and potentially supplementary questions) but they can be varied slightly. The decision to use this format was due to the lack of focus of unstructured interviews (the researcher felt she was too inexperienced as

an interviewer in the context of research to make up the questions on the spot) and the restrictions of structured interviews.

Unstructured interviews occur where the questions asked may be prepared in advance but may be asked in a different way to particular individuals according to how the interviewer feels, or how the respondent replies to the first question. In preparing for interviews of any kind it is crucial to ensure that the interview questions do not mislead, lead the respondent to a particular answer or be phrased in a way that the respondent does not understand. Where an interview is unstructured this may be much more difficult than would be the case in semi-structured interviews where some of the questions are prepared in advance and can be carefully considered.

Interviews can suffer from problems such as interruptions (Cohen et al., 2018) (this did occur in one of these interviews) and distractions. In conducting the interview, the researcher tried to ensure that the interview focussed on the questions and responses to questions ensuring that both the researcher and the interviewee felt comfortable. Cohen et al. (2018, p. 506) describe interviews as allowing “participants ... to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view”. Given that the research is about the world of a school governor this is a very useful insight.

### 4.3.3 Participants

It is recognised that the form of sampling used was an opportunity sample often called a convenience sample (Cohen, et. al., 2018, p.218). This may normally occur where a governor is based at a particular school and uses the other governors or involved in a governors association and uses the people from that association. However, in this case the participants were recruited using a range of methods and some were recruited through a gatekeeper for a particular Academy Chain. Cohen, et al (2018) note that the use of an opportunity sample does cause problems in terms of generalisability but is valid for researchers utilising a case study approach where generalisability was not a required feature. At the outset of the research a more structured approach was planned using the cooperation of the local authority however, in practice, as noted below this did not prove possible.

The participants were school governors in the local authority area at the time they were interviewed in 2016. At first sight there may appear to be few sampling problems but two primary questions needed to be considered – how many school governors served within the local authority area and should those who lived within the local authority area and served in another authority be included in the sample

The number of school governors within the local authority area is difficult to judge at any time. The first reason for the difficulty in identifying the number



of governors is that governors may serve in more than one school. The potential number of governors who could be interviewed therefore does not equate to the number of actual people who serve as governors. The second reason is the growth of academy schools which are independent of the local authority. Schools maintained by the local authority have members who sit on a governing board and hence aggregated data about such schools is relatively straightforward. However, academies report directly to the Department for Education and have a two-tier governance system (Department for Education, n.d.f). At the top tier are Directors who sit on the board of the trust and underneath are local governing bodies. Because they are independent of the local authority (and under the model regulations, which are provided for trusts in an .odt file and hence not capable of having page numbers recorded, must report if they believe they are “subject to the influence of a local authority” (Department for Education, n.d.f) and less than 20% of members may be “Local Authority Associated Persons” (Department for Education, n.d.f)) restricted information is available directly from the local authority about these schools. In the case of multi-academy trusts, the organisation may be national and have no governors located within the local area. A third reason being that the location of the school does not always equate to where a school governor lives. The governor may live outside the local authority area. The decision was made that if the school governing body was located within the local authority area then they would be a potential governor for the purposes of the research. A governor living within the local authority but who served in

a school outside that area would be considered to be outside the sample although those who served in this capacity could be used within the pilot study.

#### **4.3.3.1 How the Governors were recruited**

At the outset of the research it was expected that governors for these interviews would be recruited through the local authority. Between the initial stages of this research and the time that the research was conducted, local authority influence over governing bodies had reduced markedly due to the growth in the number of academy schools. The number of individuals working in the area of school governance within the local authority diminished and it was recognised during the preparation for the research that the local authority could no longer be the gatekeepers in the way that had been initially envisaged. This meant that an opportunity sample was necessary. This leads to the question of how, in fact, governors were recruited for the interviews.

One source of governors for the study was an opportunity provided by a school governors' conference in the region. This enabled the researcher to access individuals she did not know at all. Some governors declined to take part in the research, but two governors did agree.

A second source of governors was going through school websites looking for individuals who could be approached. In order to access individuals,

some contact details were required. In the case of some governors, this was facilitated by their identification with a particular occupation, which linked them to contact details (e.g. ministers or councillors).

Some governors were recruited as the result of conversations which revealed that an individual was a school governor or being told by acquaintances that they were school governors (this was followed up by confirmation on the school website before they were approached to take part). School websites were used to identify individuals who were school governors and telephone numbers were reconciled where available.

Finally, governors were recruited to the study through a contact at a multi academy trust which had schools situated within the local authority area. The contact sent out a communication to people they knew, and a number of individuals volunteered to be contacted for the research and subsequently took part. These volunteers served on a range of school governing bodies including maintained schools.

More governors verbally agreed to take part in the research than actually took part in practice. One of those who agreed to take part resigned as a governor due to ill health (and subsequently died) before the research was completed or were on holiday late in the research period meaning that alternate governors were used.

In determining which individuals should be used it was decided that the sample should include as many schools as possible (three governors came from one governing body but some of these individuals also served on other school governing bodies.).

Governors determined where the interview should take place and it was almost always a place away from their home (two governors did request that their home be used, and these requests were acceded to). At times governors travelled a small distance to the meeting point. Some local authority areas in the region are very large and the cost of the travel to a central point such as the university may be impracticable for interviews. Locations suggested were usually places where the discussion could take place informally. Travel costs for interviewees were not reimbursed.

#### **4.3.3.2 Sampling theory**

When considering sampling (i.e. how many people to question) the researcher must briefly consider how many people should be interviewed (Robson, 2007). Cohen et al. (2007) assure readers that when researchers use a large sample, they are assured of a low error rate "... a sample size of 30 is held to be the minimum number of cases if researchers plan to use some form of statistical analysis on their data, though this is a very small number and we would advise considerably more" (ibid, 2007, p. 101).

Qualitative studies are about meaning; about real people and their experiences and this produces a large quantity of data to be analysed after

each interview (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). For this reason and the fact that statistical analysis would take the form of only very basic tabular analysis (Cohen, 2007) the decision was made to limit the number to 20 interviewees.

Robson (2007) also considers different types of sampling, both probability and non-probability sampling. Each type of sampling may be sub-divided. Probability sampling is considered to be more representative and is based upon statistical techniques. At its simplest, a simple random sample may be established where any member of the population group being researched has an equal opportunity to participate. In this case the researcher may simply draw items using a lottery type system or use randomising tables. A further method of random sampling is to undertake systematic sampling where a list of individuals is drawn up and every 100th or 10th or 5th (indeed any number) name will be selected (Robson, 2007). A researcher may also employ a stratified random sample in which the group are divided into strata in order to ensure that all members of a group which share a particular characteristic have the same random chance of selection. This can be more efficient according to Robson (2007) than random sampling. There are a number of other types of sampling including cluster and multistage sampling which are also random in nature but utilise a stratified sample type framework. Where representative sampling is not possible, quota sampling will often be used which will allow the inclusion of representatives of various elements of a population usually in proportion to

the population being sampled, these individuals may be chosen for their characteristics.

#### **4.3.3.3 Some problems in practice with quota sampling**

The problem for this research was that many of the lines which the researcher would have utilised to determine quotas were not capable of being used in practice. For example, if there were to be 5 female primary school governors and 5 male primary school governors, and 5 female secondary school governors and 5 male secondary school governors would this quota work?

The number of schools in the primary sector is larger than the number of schools in the secondary sector (for example in 2019 there were 16769 state funded primary schools and only 3,448 state funded secondary schools (Department for Education, n.d.m, p. 5)). Hence there are likely to be more primary school governors than secondary school governors (allowing for the provisions of the regulations surrounding the composition of school governing bodies, (Department for Education, n.d.e) This leads to the question of whether there should be 12 primary governors interviewed and 8 secondary school governors. But schools can choose a range of governance structures and the number may vary. The local authority was unable to provide the numbers of governors in primary schools or secondary schools. Hence creating a quota was difficult.

Another problem which needs to be considered in quota sampling for these interviews is who is a primary and who is a secondary governor. What happens if an individual is a governor of a middle school or an all age school? What happens if they are a governor of two schools, one primary, and the other secondary?

This problem is not confined to age phases. Where a governor serves on an academy school governing body and on a maintained school primary governing body would they be regarded as a governor coming from an academy or from the maintained sector? One governor was a member of an academy governing body and a primary maintained school (see section 1.3.3.2. Hence the lines were blurred. Even the type of governors can be blurred: a number of governors changed from being parent governors (to LEA or Co-opted governors) when their child left the school, or their governing body was changing to a new structure. It was decided that these problems were best overcome by recognising that the sample needed to be heterogeneous but to include particular groups such as chairs of governors.

#### **4.3.3.4 The sample**

Attempts were made to ensure that the sample included a spread of governors – to ensure that not all were chairs of governors, or governors of the same age or gender. Equally, care was taken to ensure that not all were from maintained schools or were of a particular governor group (e.g. parents or co-opted). Using a heterogeneous sample did assist in the

investigation, as it allowed some patterns to emerge that may not otherwise have been possible.

Over 50 schools were situated within the local authority area (the exact number is not used to protect anonymity). Care was taken, to ensure that individuals were from different schools as far as practicable –this was to ensure that the sample was not clustered around one or two schools and individuals were not precluded on the basis that one other interviewee was based at a particular school. The 20 governors served on: one special school, two infant schools (one an academy), one junior school, 15 primary schools (two were academies) and eight secondary schools (one non-federated school, two federated schools which were not academies and five academies). One school was mentioned by three governors – hence although the summary table may suggest that there were more, only eight secondary schools had a governor interviewed (it transpired that this is a large percentage of secondary schools within the area).

Twenty-six individual schools were mentioned. No participant was informed of any other individual's participation, although one of the governors did mention in the interview that she knew someone else who was taking part. Where the governor met the researcher subsequent to the research being undertaken, their participation in the research was not disclosed to others. There was only one school where more than one interviewee was involved. One of these governors served as a director for the multi-academy trust



rather than the local governing body. The others served on the local governing body.

The table below shows the number of governors by gender and by their position on the governing body (i.e. whether they were the chair of governors).

Gender	Chair of governors in at least one school	Not chair
Female	2	9
Male	3	6

*Table 4.3: Chairs of governors by gender*

It can be seen from Table 4.3 that there were sufficient chairs of governors (25% of the sample) to cover their perspective but sufficient other governors that they were also represented. More women took part in this research than men, but men were more likely to be chairs of governors (this pattern is similar to Holland's (2017) sample). Holland's (2017) figures for the numbers of Chairs were higher than found within this research (although only marginally). Government regulations for the composition of governing bodies only cover maintained Schools but they state that the smallest governing body is to contain seven members including the Chair (Department for Education, n.d.k; Department for Education, n.d.e) and governing bodies may be larger. This suggests that chairs of governors are overrepresented within the sample (one seventh of the sample would be three governors rather than five) but it is recognised that Holland (2017) found a similar pattern in her data.

At the outset of the investigation the researcher considered it possible to divide governors into secondary and primary, and into maintained and academy school governors. As can be seen in Table 4.4 below, Edward, Janice, Louis and Nicholas all served on both secondary and primary school governing bodies while Kenneth served on both the governing body of a primary school and on an all age special school. Nor was it easy to distinguish between maintained and academy governors. At least three governors: Edward, Janice and Louis were members of both academy governing bodies and those of maintained schools.

Six governors had experience of serving on primary school and secondary school governing bodies. Kenneth was a governor of a special school (covering all ages) and also a member of a primary school governing body but had previous experience on a secondary school governing body. This caused the researcher to question the categories supplied by governors in Holland's (2017) publication. Categories may be chosen by a participant, but the category chosen may disguise the fact that governors may work within maintained schools and academies or primary and secondary schools at the same time.

The group of governors interviewed provided basic information in Table 4.4 below and seemed disparate enough to provide a range of views on the areas covered within this thesis.

Name	Age group	Gender	Ethnicity	Age at leaving school	Schools served	Type of governor (if stated)	Length of Service
Anna	36-45	Female	White British	18	1 infant school	Parent (later Associate)	8 years
Barbara	46-55	Female	White British	18	1 primary school	Co-opted	1 year
Christopher	46-55	Male	White British	16	2 secondary schools (federated)	Parent	1 year
Deborah	46-55	Female	White British	16	1 primary school	LEA	1 year
Edward	56-65	Male	White British	16	1 primary school 1 secondary school (academy) (previously 1 primary)	LEA LEA	25 years Not stated Around 30 years
Fiona	56-65	Female	White British	16	2 secondary academies (part of same trust) (previously a primary school governor)	On overall trust but not local board for one academy. Parent then co-opted, now a director	Between schools estimated at around 20 years
Graham	Over 65	Male	White British	18	1 secondary school (has held other governorships)	Foundation	Estimated 40 years
Hugh	46-55	Male	White British	Not stated	1 primary school	Co-opted	2 years
Inese	36-45	Female	White European	Not stated	2 primary schools	Not stated	1 year and 1 year
Janice	46-55	Female	White British	Not stated	2 primary and 1 secondary academy	LEA LEA LEA	24 years 6 years 20 years
Kenneth	Not stated	Male	White British	Not stated	1 primary school 1 special school (previously secondary school)	Not stated Co-opted Not stated	Not stated 6 years 8 years

Name	Age group	Gender	Ethnicity	Age at leaving school	Schools served	Type of governor (if stated)	Length of Service
Louis	65+	Male	White British	18	2 primary schools 1 secondary school previously 1 secondary 1 not stated)	Community Teacher now community	Served as a governor for about 30 years
Michael	46-55	Male	White British	18	1 primary school	Not stated but now co-opted	Over 25 years
Nicholas	36-45	Male	White British	18	1 primary academy 1 secondary academy (previously 1 secondary academy and 1 primary school)	Community Headteacher Staff Parent	2 years 1 year (8 years as a governor)
Olivia	65+	Female	White British	16	1 primary school (previously 1 primary school 1 secondary school)	Not stated Not stated LEA	Over 20 years ago Over 20 years ago 4 years
Philip	36-46	Male	White British	18	1 primary school	Foundation	11 years
Rebecca	65+	Female	White British	18	1 infant school academy (previously 1 primary school)	Member Not stated	17 years in total
Sarah	46-55	Female	White British	18	1 junior school (previously other primary schools)	Not stated Not stated	Under a year 8 years in total
Teresa	46-55	Female	White British	16	2 primary schools	Community	25
Vivian	65+	Female	White British	16	1 secondary academy	Co-opted	25

Table 4.4: Overall information re background of governors interviewed

Table 4.4 also shows the overall answers to the general preliminary questions with quantifiable answers (Schools Served: Type of Governor and length of service), missing items were due to data not being given or to the item not being asked during the interview at all due to an error made by the researcher. Analysing these basic characteristics of the group did cause the researcher to question whether the participants characteristics were similar to those of governors more generally?

In commencing the analysis of background, the starting point was the gender of the participants, the analysis went on to look at length of service, the age at which they left school. The school leaving age was considered because Putnam (1995) indicated that the longer someone has been in education, the greater level of civic engagement is likely to be. In other words, if civic engagement includes school governance (which is asserted by the researcher) then school governors are more likely to have stayed in education for longer periods of time. It is noted that some of those who left school at 16 did not leave education but went to a college (e.g. Edward) while others subsequently undertook degrees (Teresa and Christopher) so it is recognised a question about when governors left school can only provide an indication of length of time in education. Table 4.5 below summarises the gender data for the governors and indicates the age range the governors belonged to at the time of the interview and the age at which they had left school.

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age range</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Not Stated</b>
Male	36-45		2	
	46-55	1	1	1
	56-65	1		
	Over 65	1		
	Not stated	1		1
Female	36-45		1	1
	46-55	2	2	1
	56-65	1		
	Over 65	2	1	

*Table 4.5: Age at leaving school by age and gender*

Although many governors in Table 4.5 indicated they had left school at 16 (with O Levels), in hindsight, given the age of some of the governors, they should have directly been asked about the age at which they left school rather than qualifications they obtained at school. However, all of the interviewees who indicated their school leaving age indicated that they remained in education to at least 16. The raising of the school leaving age in 1972 (Cowan, et al., 2012) means that the eldest children with a school leaving age of 16 would now be at least 60 (which falls within the 56-65 age group). This means that of the 16 interviewees stating their school leaving age, seven stayed on to 18. Of the remainder, at least three (aged over 65) who stayed on until 16 also did not leave school at the first opportunity. Hence over 60% of the sample remained in school past the statutory leaving age. This suggests that many of these school governors may have acquired human capital due to their education while Bourdieu (1993) links educational attainment to the cultural capital within their family. Many of the group held degrees (e.g. Anna, Barbara, Christopher, Graham, Michael, Nicholas, Philip, Sarah and Teresa) including some of those who did not stay on in school past the statutory leaving age. For some interviewees it was likely but not stated, that they held a degree (e.g. Rebecca and Louis who were

qualified teachers but given their age may have qualified at a time when a degree was unnecessary). Edward, Olivia and Fiona indicated they had undertaken a number of vocational courses after leaving school at 16, the latter indicating she held a Level 7 diploma (postgraduate level) although she did not state she held a degree. Some governors (e.g. Deborah and Vivian) did not state that they had obtained academic qualifications after school.

Analysis of Census data for the North East region from the 2011 Census Nomis (n.d.b) indicates that 34% of the 25 to 34 age group had Level 4 qualifications and this fell to 28% for the 35-49 age group, 23% for the 50 to 64 age group and 14% for the over 65 age group (59% of the over 65 age group indicated that they had no qualifications). This compares to over 50% in this group of governors who held at least Level 4 qualifications and 50% of who said they held at least Level 6 qualifications.

The generally high level of qualification of these governors (nine with degrees, three with vocational courses and others with courses leading to teaching) would tend to support Putnam's (1995) contention that civic engagement (i.e. involvement in governance) is more likely to be from those who spent longer in education.

As outlined in the methodology, interviewees were not asked direct questions re their age, but were asked relatively straightforward questions re their background. These questions were mainly preliminary to the study. Questions included their age, gender, the type of governor they were, and they were asked about the school in which they served as a governor.

Men seemed slightly more likely to serve on secondary school governing bodies than women: five men and three women reported serving on the governing bodies of secondary schools. Only two interviewees (Christopher and Graham), reported that they had only served on a secondary school governing body.

The age ranges of governors who were interviewed is shown below in Table 4.6.

Age Range	Male	Female	Total	Total %
Under 36	0	0	0	0
36-45	1	1	2	10
46-55	3	4	7	35
56-65	2	1	3	15
Over 65	2	3	5	25
Not stated	1		1	5

*Table 4.6: Age range of governors by gender*

Table 4.6 shows that 50% of the governors interviewed were aged between 46 and 65 with no obvious differences between males and females – both groups having a spread of ages. There were no ‘young’ governors interviewed. Only one person did not state their age (due to them not being asked).

These figures do not suggest great disparity from the national survey conducted by Holland (2017) which used different age groups. For example, 25% of the sample of this research were over 65 compared to 22% in the Holland study (Holland, 2017).



Given their ages (at least 25% are over 65), the question arises as to how long they had served as school governors. Table 4.7 shows the length of service of governors by gender.

Length of service	Male	Female	Total	Total%
Under 5 years	2	4	6	30
5 to 9 years	2	2	4	20
10 to 19 years	1	1	2	10
20 to 35 years	3	4	7	35
36 years and over	1	0	1	5

*Table 4.7: Length of service as a school governor*

This data shows that this group of governors had been in post a long time (10 years and over). Olivia had served as a school governor many years previously but had a long break in service (over 10 years) and was unsure of how long she had been a governor at her previous schools. Hence only the later service (she had just completed a four-year term) was considered here. Other governors (e.g. Sarah) did have much shorter breaks in service as they moved between work roles and these were treated as continuous.

These statistics can be compared to Holland's (2017) findings where 39% had been involved in school governance for under five years compared to 30% in this study. The statistics for the percentage of governors serving over 8 years was higher in this research (50%) than in Holland's (2017) (43%). This difference may simply be due to the fact that the sample of governors in this research was slightly older than in Holland's research.

Since what was being considered within this thesis was changes in the lives of governors, within much of this analysis the length of service may have made analysis more difficult. The reason for this was that individuals had many things going on in their lives which shaped their development and

isolating the effects of governorship from those other elements proved to be difficult for many governors of long standing to quantify. It was beneficial to consider the effects on these governors because they showed that what was learned in one activity, applied almost seamlessly to another.

One governor interviewed came from an ethnic minority background (White European), however, the aim of the background information was simply to confirm whether the group was exclusively white British – which it was not. It is not known how representative this group of governors is of those within the local authority. Compared to Holland's (2017) sample this is a more homogeneous group. Holland (2017) reported that responses to her survey showed 94% of respondents indicated they were white (Holland, 2017, p. 10), while, in this research all respondents were white. Holland (2017) acknowledged that non-white ethnic minority groups were underrepresented in her study compared to census data (Holland, 2017). Data from the Office of National Statistics (n.d.m), Table A shows that the north east is the region with the highest percentage of white British residents 2,470,000 out of 2,637,000 or over 93% being reported as white British (Office for National Statistics, n.d.m). This research was conducted in a local authority in the north east of England and hence the number of white governors would be expected to be higher than in Holland's (2017) study which covered the whole of England. Holland found that governor demographics did not reflect the local population and this was confirmed by Dean, et al., (2007) who found they were disproportionately women, white, old, from professional backgrounds and did not necessarily live locally (Dean, et al., 2007). If the role of governors were to bring local knowledge to their governing body then

they were not particularly representative of those who lived within the community served by the school.

Without having the comparison of the Holland (2017) study this small group of governors may have appeared skewed in terms of age, experience, occupation (see section 5.1), ethnicity (Office for National Statistics, n.d.m; Nomis, n.d.a) compared to the characteristics of the region. It is acknowledged that they are not a representative group. However, the evidence suggests that the sample of governors who took part in the interviews are similar in nature to the samples found in other research on school governors (Dean, et al., 2007; Holland 2017) although their samples were much larger.

In terms of age, gender and experience this small sample stands generally in line with the statistics produced in much larger studies. Having considered the sample of governors, the research instrument used needs to be justified.

#### **4.3.4 Instrumentation**

In practice it was determined to undertake interviews with participants. In order to ensure that the interviews worked in practice it was decided to compare question design with the design used to create questionnaires.

The design of the consent form and the design of the interview schedule were based on university templates in order to ensure compliance with university expectations, checked by colleagues and submitted to the

supervisors for an additional check. The individual interview schedule is to be found in Appendix B. The blank consent form is to be found in Appendix C.

#### **4.3.4.1 Design of interview questions**

The design of the questions within the interview were discussed with the research supervisors, particularly after the pilot study. A copy of the interview questions is to be found in Appendix A.

The benefits of open-ended questions within the interview seemed obvious. The problem with interview questions is that the individual is talking which requires less time than writing a response. Hence the researcher is left with more words to consider and a richness of data. The danger is that the question responses take longer than expected which may extend the interview. One very focused governor completed the interview in just over half an hour while others took nearly an hour.

If the interview is to elicit meaning, then the questions should lead from the research question and provide sufficient information to answer it. Some questions about individuals are very sensitive and they may choose to answer them only if the survey is anonymised. These questions may include areas such as disclosure of criminal activities (Cohen, et. al., 2007). It is not proposed to ask any questions within this study in which any undesirable behaviour may be disclosed. However, sensitive issues include areas such as employment and unemployment and family details which Cohen et al. (2018) state are also sensitive. The strategies suggested to reduce the problems inherent in asking sensitive questions will be considered and

adopted where feasible. At times data was provided which would, had it been disclosed, have identified the individual sufficiently that assurances of anonymity would have been worthless. An individual working as a priest may have disclosed their parish or diocese. This may have more closely identified the local authority within the north east region.

The starting point in developing the interview questions were the research questions. Had the questions been asked in the order of the research questions there may have been some lack of continuity, but it was decided to utilise the research questions to help determine which questions should be asked. The order did not differ greatly from the research questions outlined in practice. There was some overlap between research questions and some questions would be used to provide insight into more than one question. One research question had no direct interview question based on it but insight into the response would be provided by multiple questions.

Researchers creating questions must ensure that they carefully consider the questions they are using because it is very easy to mislead, build in bias, or mislead the respondent on what the question is actually asking for. In order to test for this, it is important to pilot the test with individuals. A pilot test was undertaken (see section 4.6) with the interview questions and the requisite consent and interview schedule documents.

Thirty-one separate questions were asked within the interview, ignoring questions on personal data, some follow up questions were also present so that detail could be obtained where an individual made a positive response.

This had the advantage of ensuring that the governors did not feel that they had to provide detail unless they could. The questions were given to the interviewees in advance, (particularly where a telephone interview was undertaken) and it was notable that some had written down what they would say to some questions before the interview commenced.

#### **4.3.4.1.1 Background information**

The first element that was necessary in order to provide some context was information about the school they were governor of and whether they were also governors of other schools or had previously held appointment in another school. Interview question 1 asked “Which school or schools are you governor of?”. The question also allowed triangulation with school websites to confirm that they were a governor (in most cases this had been done).

It was felt that it would be useful to see length of service as a governor as this may be relevant to their motivation and this led to interview question 4 “Is this the first time that you have been a governor?”. If interview question 4a “If no, I will ask about other governorships that have been undertaken.”. If the answer had been yes, then there was no need to inquire further. School websites show how long a governor has served in their current term of office but not how long someone has been a governor overall.

In order to gain an understanding of the type of school in which they served, the question was asked about the age range of pupils in the school. Having established that they are governors interview question 2 “Please tell me the

age range of pupils within the school(s)". This allowed further triangulation with the website of the school to ensure that the data was accurate.

A further piece of background information (although useful in terms of identifying whether an individual had existing levels of capital and relevant to volunteering) was interview question 3 "How did you become a governor at X School (For X the school names they disclosed in Question 1 were used)?" This was asked about each school mentioned in the interviewee's response to the question 1.

The first few interview questions provide a background utilised in section 4.3.3. to help understand the nature of the sample of governors such as their age, educational background, gender and whether their schools(s) were, for example, academy or maintained schools.

At the end of the interview, participants were asked interview question 31 "Are there any areas you feel have not been discussed but which you feel are important?". It was decided that this would be a good concluding question for anyone who may have thought of something during the interview but had not used it within their responses. The question does not relate directly to any of the research questions, although responses sometimes did.

#### **4.3.4.1.2 Research question 1a - What skills to governors bring to the role?**

In creating questions relevant to this research question, the potential areas of sources of skills were considered. Although the actual aim of this research

question was to find skills that governors brought, sometimes they responded in terms of experience.

The first type of skill governors might believe they brought was a background knowledge of the school or education more widely. This was partially covered by interview question 8 “Were you involved in the work of the school before you became a governor?” and interview question 8a If yes, “How were you involved?”. This was a very general question and was used bring out things like helping a child in a classroom, involvement in the Parent teacher Association or talking to a group about the job they did. A similar question, although about education more generally was interview question 12, “Before being appointed as a school governor had you been involved in education other than as a pupil at school?” and interview question 12a, “If yes, what involvement did you have?. This question aimed to identify those who are or where teachers or served on an education committee.

A second area where people could have acquired skills was through a work setting. Analysing every post, a governor may have held from the age of 16 would have been intrusive so it was decided to focus on the point at which they became a governor. This led to interview question 9 “At the time you first became a governor, were you involved in any paid work?” and interview question 9a “If yes, what type of work were you doing and what types of things did you do within your work?”. The use of ‘types of things’ aimed to give an insight into some of the skills and experience that governors may have brought to the role.



Another way that governors could have acquired skills was through voluntary work and this led to interview question 10, “At the time you first became a governor, were you involved in any voluntary work?” and 10a, “If yes, what type of voluntary work were you doing and what types of things did you do within your voluntary work?”. Although it was recognised the question was general, further focus was brought through supplementary questions.

The next question asked was more general. Interview question 11, “Had you been involved in community activities before becoming a school governor?” and interview question 11a, If yes, “What were they?”. This was different from the questions about voluntary work or paid employment because it was not being asked about skills, they were using at the time they became a school governor. They individual may have been involved in such activities many years previously but precluded from continuing. The purpose of this question was to see whether they were involved in the community and particularly the community in which the school was situated.

Governors were asked in interview question 16, “What do you feel you bring to the work of the governing body?” This question was wider than skills and was from the governor perspective, but some degree of triangulation was sought with the answers to the other questions asked within the interview. The question was asked from the perspective of what they brought to school governance at the point in time that they were interviewed.

The final interview question (17) related to research question 1a was “Do you think that what you bring to the governing body has changed since you

became a governor?” The aim of this question was to see whether they felt that they had changed during their tenure as a governor. It was recognised that this did not mean that changes occurred because they were school governors but was asked to allow governors to consider how skills may have developed in other areas of their lives (e.g. due to changes in work role).

#### **4.3.4.1.3 Research question 1b - What skills do governors believe they apply within their roles as school governors.**

The first area considered was the identification of skills and experience governors believed they had prior to becoming a school governor, skills that had helped them. Interview question 13, “As a school governor have you found that any skills or experience you had prior to becoming a school governor have helped you in the role?” and interview question 13a, If yes, “Which skills or experience helped you?”. This triangulated with the responses to Research question 1a in that it was about what governors brought to the role.

The next area which needed to be considered was what the governors thought they actually did on the governing body. Interview question 14, “What does your role as a school governor involve?” was designed to be very general. Specific strategic management skills or occasions when they acted as a critical friend were not sought due to time constraints.

Governing bodies do differ quite substantially and so do their sub-committees. This led to interview question 15, “Are you involved in any sub-committees?” and interview question 15a, If yes, “Which sub-committees and what do they do?”. The aim of sub questions was to prevent assumptions

that individuals served on sub committees (which would have been inherent had the question asked been “Which sub-committees do you serve on?”).

#### **4.3.4.1.4 Research question 2a - What training opportunities are made available to governors within the local authority?**

In contrast to the previous research question, this was investigated using only interview question 18, “Have you been offered any training as a school governor? and interview question 18a, If yes, “What type of training and who offered it?”. In separating this out the decision was made to confirm that governors were aware of training before being asked for details.

#### **4.3.4.1.5 Research question 2b - Who uses the training opportunities that are available?**

This research question was again investigated under a single interview question 19, “Have you undertaken any training as a school governor?” and 19a, If yes, “When was the last time you received training?” Perhaps this could have been a sub element of Question 18 and not asked if governors said they were unaware of training opportunities. It was decided that it was important to try to identify frequency of training and hence interview question 19b asked, If yes (to interview question 19a), “How frequently do you attend training? (e.g. more than once a term, at least termly, two or more times per year, at least once per year, less than once a year)” while interview question 19c asked those responding if they undertook training If no, “Why haven’t you undertaken training?”. The aim of the final question was not to confront people who do not undertake training but to find out why they do not.

The analysis for these research questions needed to be done on the basis of governor type which was background information provided by governors.

#### **4.3.4.1.6 Research question 2c - How many governors use the training and how frequently?**

This research question was based on the interview question 19 but analysed as a whole group rather than seeing who attended, the important element in this research question was the quantity of governors using the training.

#### **4.3.4.1.7 Research question 2d - What is the training used for?**

Interview questions 20, 21 and 22 which considered the use of training were used both here and in responses to research question 2e and in research question 2g.

#### **4.3.4.1.8 Research question 2e - What effect do school governors feel the training they undertake has on them?**

Interview questions 20, 21 and 22 were also analysed in research questions 2d and 2g because they deal with training and experience.

Interview question 20 asked, "Have you used any of the training or experience you have received as a school governor within your paid work?" and interview question 20a, If yes, "What did you use?" were analysed for the purposes of research question 2e only to consider whether governors had used training within their paid employment. Interview question 21 "Have you used any of the training or experience you have received as a school governor within any voluntary work you have undertaken" and interview

question 21a If yes, “What did you use?” also received restricted analysis under this research question by being restricted to areas of training.

The question of use of training within community work was considered in interview question 22 “Have you used any of the training or experience you have received as a school governor in any community work you have undertaken?” and interview question 22a If yes, “What did you use?”. Only the aspects dealing with training were considered within the analysis of this research question.

#### **4.3.4.1.9 Research question 2f - What benefits do governors believe the experience of being a governor has provided to them.**

No question directly considered this. The results for this research question were considered in light of the responses to research questions 2c and 2d

It is important to recognise that the questions set did not aim to get governors to say that an item was a benefit but to consider changes since becoming a governor: interview question 25 asked “Has your work situation changed since becoming a governor? If so, how has it changed?”. This does not mention job role but the work situation and allowed governors slightly more freedom with their response than if they had been asked whether they had been promoted. Interview question 23 asked about voluntary activities undertaken before and after they became a school governor. Again, the purpose was to determine whether there had been any changes. Interview question 24 dealt with changes to community activities “We talked earlier about the types of community activities you did before you

became a governor. Have your activities changed since you became a governor?”.

#### **4.3.4.1.10 Research question 2g - Do governors use skills and experience that they feel they have learnt from being a governor in a work or community context?**

Interview questions 20, 21 and 22 were also analysed in research questions 2c and 2d because they deal with training and experience. They are also analysed in Research question 2g because they deal with training and experience.

Interview question 20 “Have you used any of the training or experience you have received as a school governor within your paid work?” and interview question 20a If yes, “What did you use?” were analysed for the purposes of answering research question 2g in terms of considering whether governors had used skills and experience they had acquired within their paid employment or to benefit the community. Interview question 21, “Have you used any of the training or experience you have received as a school governor within any voluntary work you have undertaken” and interview question 21a, If yes, “What did you use?” also received restricted analysis under this Research question by being restricted to areas of training.

The question of use of training within community work was considered in interview question 22 “Have you used any of the training or experience you have received as a school governor in any community work you have undertaken?” and interview question 22a If yes, “What did you use?”. Only

the aspects dealing with training were considered within the analysis of this research question.

#### **4.3.4.1.11 Research question 3a - Do governors increase their social capital as a result of their work within the school governing body?**

In contrast to some of the research questions, this had a large number of interview questions based on it: Firstly, interview question 5, “What did you know about the school before you became a governor?” which at first appears to have nothing to do with social capital. The insight it may provide is about any existing link to the school: about any emotional tie to the school or previous link (e.g. a child attending the school may provide information to a parent).

Interview question 6 considered “Why did you decide to become a school governor?”. At first sight this, too may appear remote from social capital but the purpose of this was to consider whether an insight could be provided into the social capital within the individual governor prior to taking on the role.

The length of service of school governors was identified, and their reasons for continuing were requested in interview question 7 “How long have you been a school governor?” and interview question 7a (asked to governors with a service length of over a year), “Why do you continue to be a school governor?”. The question was designed to provide insight into motivation but was primarily concerned to provide insight into any bonds they may feel to the community, to other governors, to the teachers, to pupils or to the school more generally.

Interview question 26 was more direct in its link to social capital but its purpose may have been less obvious to participants “Do you socialise with any of the other school governors at your school?”. This could provide insight into links between governors, but it was not expected that many governors would say that they did.

Interview question 27 aimed to consider whether governor networks did exist outside the governing body. It asked, “Do you keep in contact with other school governors at the school outside school governing body meetings?”.

Question 23 was concerned with the number of voluntary activities undertaken by governors and whether they had changed, “We talked earlier about the types of voluntary activities you did before you became a governor. Have your activities changed since you became a governor?”. The purpose of interview question 24 was to see any changes to the community activities governors were involved in “We talked earlier about the types of community activities you did before you became a governor. Have your activities changed since you became a governor?”.

Interview question 30 was designed to capture information which could include social capital, “Have you undertaken any education or training which is not connected to your role as a school governor since you became a governor?” and Question 30a, If yes, “What type have you undertaken?”. The education or training during a school governorship may indicate a change to levels of social capital.



#### **4.3.4.1.12 Research question 3b - Do governors increase their cultural capital as a result of their work within the school?**

Cultural capital includes areas which would be difficult to justify asking to governors (e.g. “has your taste in music changed” or “do you go round more museums as a result of being a school governor”). For this reason, it was decided to approach it more tangentially through answers to other questions. For example, interview question 26, “Do you socialise with any of the other school governors at your school?” could indicate some acquisition of cultural capital.

One of the areas which may indicate cultural capital was in the area of community activities and interview question 24 indicated this – a change in this may indicate a change in cultural capital. Interview question 24 stated “We talked earlier about the types of community activities you did before you became a governor. Have your activities changed since you became a governor?”. It was not expected that many changes would be found to the cultural capital of individuals as a result of serving on a school governing body although the role does involve access to cultural activities put on by the school.

#### **4.3.4.1.13 Research question 3c - Do governors perceive that their being a governor has any effect on the opportunities available for their families?**

Two questions (28 and 29) within the interview sought to investigate this: Interview question 28 stated “Has being a school governor made you more

interested in the education of children within your family?” and interview question 29 asked “Has your work as a school governor affected the educational or work based aspirations of children within your family?”. There is little research on either of these areas and hence while it would be expected that a school governor would become more interested in the education of their children and potentially affected the aspirations of their children the questions were designed to investigate the situation rather than to assume that they did or did not. This question is related to question 3a as it affects bonding social capital and also whether some emotional capital may have been created.

#### **4.4 Issues of trustworthiness**

Before commencing an examination of research techniques, it is important to consider three concepts at the heart of research design: reliability, validity, and representativeness. (McNeill, 1990). It is also important to consider triangulation and how it relates to these concepts. At first sight the question of trustworthiness will be similar regardless of the type of research being undertaken. McNeill’s criteria reflect the approach used in the quantitative research but as far back as 1981 it was recognised that the requirements for qualitative researchers were slightly different (Guba, 1981; Malterud, 2001;). Anney (2014) frames the problem slightly differently to those who challenge trustworthiness in qualitative research: quantitative techniques for confirming trustworthiness “do not ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative findings” (Anney, 2014, p. 272). This research follows a mixed methodology but is predominantly qualitative in nature and hence there is a need to address the need for trustworthiness in both types of research. Malterud (2001) suggests

that qualitative and quantitative studies are often done sequentially but, in this research, some quantitative data was created from qualitative questions.

#### **4.4.1 Trustworthiness in the qualitative tradition**

Trustworthiness is not about 'truth' even in the natural sciences the answers are often less definite than they are presented (e.g. water does not always boil at 100° despite the false assertion that it does, rather it depends on factors such as pressure which is used by Magee (1974) in his biography of Karl Popper to illustrate that scientific truth is more complex than is sometimes presented (also see Popper (2002)). Trustworthiness is about rigour. Sandelowski (1993) makes a robust defence of qualitative research when she says that some qualitative researchers are preoccupied with attacks on their rigour than concentrating on the research they are undertaking "... creating the evocative, true-to-life, and meaningful portraits, stories, and landscapes of human experience that constitute the best test of rigour in qualitative work." (Sandelowski, 1993, p. 1)

One of the areas where qualitative research comes under attack from many quantitative researchers is in terms of "rigour" (Mays and Pope, 1995, p. 109) and this was briefly mentioned in section 4.2. There are three main criticisms in this area: firstly that qualitative research amounts to no more than storytelling and bias (Mays and Pope, 1995; Malterud, 2001); secondly that the findings can't be reproduced (Mays and Pope, 1995) or they could be interpreted in another way by future researchers; thirdly, that they are not generalisable (Mays and Pope, 1995). May and Pope (1995) refute these supposed weaknesses by pointing out that it is the "...judgment and skill of

the researcher and the appropriateness to the questions answered of the data collected” (Mays and Pope, 1995) which confers trustworthiness and rigour in both quantitative and qualitative research.

Guba (1981) noted that there was a changing pattern in articles presented in “leading professional journals” (Guba, 1981, p. 75) due to the use of case studies which he presented as a novel paradigm (the general theory on the paradigm shifts can be further explored in Kuhn’s (2012) “essay” on the structure of scientific revolutions).

Guba argued that there were four criteria by which trustworthiness should be addressed: “internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity” (Guba, 1981, p. 76). One of the important features of Guba’s (1981) article is that it recognises that qualitative research methods are not homogenous and cannot be dealt with as though ‘one size fitted’ every technique. Guba (1981) recognised that these scientific terms could be translated into naturalistic terms: internal validity can be translated into credibility, external validity into transferability, reliability for dependability and objectivity for confirmability (Guba, 1981, p. 80). This framework has been utilised by other researchers including Rolfe(2006) and Anney (2014)

#### **4.4.1.1 Credibility**

Anney (2014) states credibility concerns plausibility of the research. Guba (1981) stated that “The testing of credibility is often referred to as member checks” (Guba, 1981, p. 80). Anney (2014) provides greater detail about what these checks may involve:

“A qualitative researcher establishes rigour of the inquiry by adopting the following credibility strategies: prolonged and varied field experience, time sampling, reflexivity (field journal), triangulation, member checking, peer examination, interview technique, establishing authority of researcher and structural coherence” (Anney, 2014, p. 276)

Anney’s list is very helpful to researchers as it goes into more detail than the simpler list provided by Guba (1981). However, member checking is not universally considered helpful. Sandelowski (1993) suggests it may “undermine the trustworthiness of a project” (Sandelowski, 1993, p. 4) because each researcher has their own reflexivity.

As stated earlier the researcher has been a school governor for about 30 years and hence had good knowledge of the context. Transcripts were discussed with supervisors and presentations surrounding the thesis were made at Research Seminars held within the University of Sunderland. The interview technique is to be found in section 4.3.4 and should be considered alongside Appendix A and Appendix B. Extracts from the transcripts may be found in Appendix D.

#### **4.4.1.2 Transferability**

Transferability concerns the “range and limitations for the application of the study findings” (Malterud, 2001, p. 484). Guba argues that just because situations change that the findings will not be replicated: there may be “essential similarities” between contexts (Guba, 1981, p. 81). The qualitative researcher will not suggest that “hold at all times and in all places” but form a working hypothesis that may be transferred from one context to another depending upon the degree of fit between contexts” (Guba, 1981, p. 81). Anney (2014) suggests that, in order to meet transferability researchers

could use “thick descriptions” (ibid, 2014, p. 278) (how well does this research fit into other contexts and how detailed is the researcher when explaining the processes they have undertaken, when carrying out the research). This research may be replicable to similar contexts but in line with Magee (see section 4.4.1) recognises that the findings may differ where contexts are different (eg where governors in an affluent area in the south east of England are interviewed, where new regulations for school governor recruitment have come into force; perhaps in some multi-academy trusts)

#### **4.4.1.3 Dependability**

Anney (2014) suggests researchers utilise an audit trail, strategies for coding and re-coding, and peer examination (note that this differs slightly from Guba’s (1981) member checks). Anney (2014) states that if misinformation is suspected then the researcher needs to be sceptical. Each interview within this thesis took place with an individual on a particular date and time. In a few areas of the findings, areas of scepticism are identified not because of a feeling that a particular individual was providing misinformation but that the aggregate data within the interviews did not align to information suggested by the local authority (see section 5.3.3). Human beings change “because of evolving insights and sensitivities” (Guba, 1981, p. 81), hence an interview may be free from error but still not produce the same results when replicated even on the same governor on the same day. This does not mean that it cannot be depended upon but that the researcher needs to accommodate this within the discussion of findings. It is recognised that these governors took part in interviews at a particular time but may have provided slightly different insights at other times. However, the consistency

of the research instrument employed within this thesis (see section 4.3.4) did mean that this data was dependable, although it is recognised that the analysis of the data may differ due to reflexive positionality of researchers.

#### **4.4.1.4 Confirmability**

As mentioned in section 4.4.1.3, the predisposition of the investigator influences the type of research undertaken (Guba, 1981; Malterud, 2001). It is whether the data can be confirmed in future which matters as the predisposition of the investigator will be obvious from their disclosure of their positionality. The researcher should also be aware that themes derived from the data may not be consistent if created by either respondents or expert researchers (Gunawan, 2015). Sandalowski sees that data reduction should show the essence of the data, and the essence should not be hidden by lots of detail.

#### **4.4.2 Reliability**

Reliability means that anyone could repeat the research (even in a different time or place) and get similar results. It is easier to find patterns in large data sets than in small ones as anomalous items may distort the result. Reliability may be harder to achieve in a qualitative study because we are not dealing with data in the same way as in the quantitative equivalent and differences may arise on the basis of items such as the choice of respondents (Cohen, et.al., 2007). On the one hand this was an opportunity sample and hence its reliability is limited but efforts were made to ensure that governors interviewed were relatively heterogeneous and in the findings the sample will be compared to a survey which covers much larger numbers of governors on

a national scale. A clearer result may have been obtained from new governors since any effects due to becoming a school governor would have been more obviously attributable to them taking on the role. The decision to utilise governors with varying lengths of service had the advantage of seeing governors develop beyond their starting point and, while the data may be less clearly attributable to the governor role, all the effects of being a school governor are unlikely to be obvious within a few months of taking up the role.

#### **4.4.3 Validity**

Validity is crucial to any research study because it comes down to the question of whether the data provides a true picture of what is being studied? For example, if we do a survey to see how often people use the cinema, it does not tell us that they really do, only that they answered the survey to say they do. Cohen, et. al. (2007) stated that there were several different types of validity. They also tell us that it is through sampling that we may demonstrate validity, although we must take care because it is impossible for any researcher to state 100% accuracy (Cohen, et. al., 2007). On the one hand interviewing governors from one school may actually provide a valid reflection of that school but may be untypical of governors generally. The decision to use a local authority area was made at the outset of the research when data was available through local authority governor units. At that point data from the area was to be made available to the researcher. Some data relating to governor training was provided by the local authority. The problem with this data was that not all schools opted into the training offered by the local authority (some schools used another other local authority for training) although this was not known before the research commenced.



When identifying and locating school governors the websites of schools were checked to confirm that they served as governors within the school in the local authority area. While at the other end of the research process, in terms of validity of the results the researcher was aware of her positionality within the context of the study and sought to ensure that this did not affect the validity of her interpretation.

#### **4.4.4 Representativeness**

The final issue is one of representativeness. Are the chosen participants the group typical of the people the research wishes to survey? One of the aspects that were considered was the spread of governors. No figures are available within the local authority area because of the number of academies. However, care was taken to ensure that councillors who agreed to take part were not from only one political party, that not all of the governors served on primary or secondary schools and that the governors were not of only one gender. These factors will be considered within the findings chapter in section 5.1.

#### **4.4.5 Triangulation**

Triangulation is defined by Cohen, et. al. (2007, p. 141) as "... the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour". It allows the study of human behaviour from more than one standpoint in order that concurrent validity can be demonstrated. The greater the contrast in the methods, and the closer the data, the greater assurance the researcher may have that their findings are valid. The loss of

the local authority gatekeeper meant that other methods which would have been utilised to provide triangulation were not possible (e.g. document analysis). In some cases the researcher knew facts about the individual and these were used (e.g. the school website provided details of individual governors, or their publicly available “LinkedIn” (Linkedin, n.d.) profile (although it is recognised that the profile is created by the individual)) for triangulation of responses. No disparities were found between what was stated by governors and the details checked.

#### **4.4.6 Conclusion**

This section has considered the issues of trustworthiness that arise from the design of piece of research from both qualitative (section 4.4.1) and quantitative (see sections 4.4.2., 4.4.3, 4.4.4. and 4.4.5) methodological perspectives. It is not asserted that the data could be replicated, but qualitative research rarely is. The issues of triangulation were reduced with the use of some evidence which was available on public websites which was then used to validate data.

Having considered the issues of trustworthiness, it is time to consider how data was collected.

#### **4.5 Data collection process**

As with any researcher there is an impatience to get to the primary research stage of the process, but it was necessary to ensure that the relevant instruments were created, and the ethical considerations considered. The main method of data collection utilised was interviews.

### **4.5.1 Interviews**

The utilisation of semi-structured interviews as the research technique had the advantage of personal interaction, in terms of face to face involvement with the interviewee. It also provided the opportunity to follow up any items where more or different detail could be helpful. More specific detail on the interviews may be found in section 4.3.3.

Although not directly on the topic of academic research, Rohman and Rita (2013) suggest that witness statements may be undertaken in different ways. The first way is for an individual to take notes which they then pass on to the interviewee for checking or don't (ibid, 2013). A further way is to have a second person take the notes while the first conducts the interview (ibid, 2013). An alternative way is for tape (now electronic) recording (ibid, 2013). There is also the mention within their paper of 'preparing a declaration for the witness to sign' (ibid, 2013) but it is recognised it would be inappropriate within the context of this research.

In undertaking the interviews, the researcher was mindful of the words of Barney Glaser to his researchers that skills in writing interview notes were crucial and that electronic recording of interviews was to be discouraged (Chamvez, 2015). The taking of physical interview notes may be an excellent skill (Rohman and Rita, 2013) but may also lead to a number of difficulties for the researcher, particularly in the age of computers where writing is less frequently undertaken than in the past.

The decision to record interviews and to transcribe them was made in light of the concern that the researcher's handwriting may have been unintelligible and hence transcription of the notes may have been extremely inaccurate. One option was to type in the interview notes as the interview was occurring, but this was dismissed on two grounds. The first reason was that interviewees may feel uncomfortable where the interviewer was focussed on typing into a computer (and hence making noise as their keys touched the keyboard) or appeared distracted as they stared at a note pad. The second reason was to make the interviewee feel as relaxed as possible. It is recognised that this isn't always the case and that recording may make the interviewee more nervous (Rohman and Rita, 2013). Many of the interviews were undertaken using a Dictaphone, but the quality of the output was not always very good. Later interviews utilised computer voice recording as this was found to give very good quality results using only the built-in microphone of a laptop. There were a couple of incidents where the microphone was switched off and then restarted – including a situation where someone arrived at the room to do some unscheduled testing of the alarmed fire doors! Having the recording held on the computer had the added benefit of allowing it to be transcribed relatively easily. Some of the recordings were not as clear as would have been hoped and this led to the use of a mobile phone to carry out later interviews as the quality of the recording was much better – even when there was background noise.

The benefit of the doubt has been given to governors within the transcriptions with pauses and words like “erm” removed from the transcripts shown within the thesis. The language used within the north east does vary

and sometimes particular dialects are more difficult to transcribe. Where any doubt arose as to the apparent word used, colleagues were used to help ensure that what was transcribed reflected the words used by governors. In most cases the transcription was agreed to be accurate by the colleague. Where it was not, discussions took place after reviewing the recording and, if necessary, changes were made.

#### **4.6 Pilot study**

In grounded theory, pilot studies should not be conducted because the instruments may change if they are found to need alteration but data collected during the early stages can be incorporated in the thesis (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). This thesis didn't follow every aspect of grounded theory and hence before being utilised, the interview questions asked of governors within the research were tested on a small group of governors who either served in a different local authority, who had recently given up their governorship or were about to resign as governors. For these reasons these governors were not going to form part of the sample. Although they were not entirely representative of likely interviewees (as they were all male and were no longer governors) they could provide insight into the suitability of the interview questions.

##### **4.6.1 The theory of pilot studies**

Cohen, et al. (2018) indicate that piloting of research instruments is of "paramount importance" in questionnaires. Interviews are similar to questionnaires in that questions which are posed need to be clear,

understandable and suitable to the people answering the questions. A structured interview is very similar to a questionnaire in that the same questions are asked to all participants. In this research, a semi-structured interview format was used, and this allowed the interviewer to have some flexibility in the questions asked.

#### **4.6.2 Why does the research need to be piloted?**

Before getting to the stage of piloting, the information and consent forms alongside the questions to be asked had been carefully considered, tested on friends, advice sought from experienced researchers and reviewed in light of the research questions. The researcher was aware that this did not equate to a pilot study. There are a number of issues that require testing in a pilot study: the researcher as an interviewer; the questions to be asked within the interview; the means of transcribing the interview, and the means of identifying participants within the research (e.g. participant A and participant B). Malmqvist et al. (2019) stressed the importance of piloting within qualitative studies in educational settings. They tried to ensure that there were similarities in the people participating in the pilot compared to the research sample, the way that they undertook data collection, the way that they rehearsed data analysis and the way the interviewer conducted the interviews (ibid, 2019). .

The first area for consideration was the researcher as interviewer (Chenail, 2011). The researcher was aware of the dangers of interviewer bias (ibid, 2011) and, as a relatively inexperienced interviewer within research (although not in other areas) wanted to ensure that these were reduced. It

was felt important to ensure that interviewees were not distracted in their answers to questions and that they could answer questions freely in their own words without the interviewer intervening.

The second consideration was the questions to be asked during the interview. The questions needed to flow through the interview in a logical manner. The questions also needed to be unambiguous (Malmqvist et al (2019) required that the instruments be translated between languages, but this was not necessary in this case). There was some question about duplication and ambiguity within the questions as they related to voluntary and community activities before the pilot study. The question arose of whether this needed to be changed for the actual research.

The pilot study allowed the researcher to consider the means of capturing the thoughts of governors. Should she use research notes or record the interview using a device? Recording an interview could cause an interviewee to become more tense and concerned (Rohman and Rita, 2013) about what would happen to their words, but it would also ensure accurate transcription (Halcomb and Davidson, 2006). Using research notes could cause lack of eye contact between interviewer and interviewee but have the benefit of immediacy. It was decided to try recording of interviews because the researcher wanted to put the interviewee at ease and maintain eye contact as though they were having a more natural conversation and because research notes compared to the recording provided felt uncomfortable for the researcher.

Finally, consideration was given to how to identify participants within the research (e.g. participant A and participant B). Without data this was difficult to test. In writing up findings how easy would it be to identify the participants. It was decided to give a pseudonym to each participant to make them seem more real to those reading the thesis. The names given were based on the letter of the alphabet which accorded to the number of the interview. The name used was also based on their gender. Hence Anna was the first interviewee and was female while Edward was the fifth person to be interviewed and was male. The pilot participants were labelled Participant A, B, and C as their comments are not directly used within the thesis. The actual names of participants could not be used due to the agreement re anonymity (see Appendix C). Anonymity is important because it links to ethics (Wiles et al., 2009) and while the details of the pilot study transcripts do not appear in the data used for this study considerations about anonymity did take place at the time of the pilot study.

#### **4.6.3 What was learnt from pilot**

There were some useful insights provided to the research as a result of the pilot study. Firstly, findings related to the researcher as an interviewer. The observation of research participants during the pilot interviews indicated that they were put at ease and did not feel uncomfortable within the research or questions posed by the interviewer (this contrasts with Rohman and Rita (2013) where recording was suggested to cause discomfort). In contrast, the researcher felt very uncomfortable undertaking the interviews but this did not appear to have been transmitted to the research participants. The effect of the discomfort was that the researcher felt



unable to go beyond the list of questions on the sheet for the first interview. (this is something mentioned by Chenail (2011) and could have led to researcher bias) The discomfort reduced with each interview until, by the end of the pilot study the researcher felt more relaxed and capable of undertaking the interviews. Had no pilot study been undertaken the quality of the early interviews in the actual research would have been reduced.

Secondly, relating to the questions to be asked within the interview.

Malmqvist et al (2019) note the importance of clarity in questions and most questions were easily answered but as predicted, the interviewees had problems distinguishing voluntary and community activities as they so frequently overlap. The most common answer was that the role of a governor was voluntary and served the community so there was overlap. The reason for the difference was that some voluntary service may be outside a community or that service to the community could be paid. The rationale for using these items was that undertaking voluntary and or community service indicated social capital because it developed bonds to other individuals the interviewees served within such organisations.

Alterations to these questions were considered. For example the questions could be changed to consider whether the governor undertook “voluntary or community work” but this potentially could lead to problems as the governor would just look for voluntary work which did not serve the community or community work they were paid for. Hence it was decided to keep the questions as they were but to have prompts to help governors identify the types of activities which fell under each.

Thirdly, insight into the best means of transcribing the interview. Halscomb and Davidson (2006) question whether verbatim transcription is helpful given the time expended on the process. In contrast, Kowal and O'Connell judge transcription as 'crucial step' in the data analysis process. It was determined that it was helpful for this Ph.D. and the use of a recording device did help to ensure that words could be replayed and transcribed. The use of a computer to record the interview was tried within the pilot study but it was found that the best recording quality came from the use of 'Voice recorder' on an iPhone. The researcher did consider using paid transcription services but was concerned that the regional accents of some governors may be intelligible without too much effort by someone situated in the region may not be to external transcribers. The importance of transcribing what was said in a very careful way by listening 5 or even 10 times to a few words which may have been unclear was shown from transcriptions of the pilot interviews. It had been hoped to use speech to text applications within Microsoft software, however, it was decided that this was not practicable due to the inaccuracy of the software. The researcher types relatively quickly and eventually determined that the best way for her was to utilise Excel or Word to provide a table into which the recordings could be transcribed since only one interviewer and one interviewee were present in the individual interviews.

Fourthly, the researcher found when interviewing the governor from the multi-academy trust during the pilot interviews that she had very little idea of the internal workings of such an organisation and had to ask additional questions so that she would be less ignorant in the actual interviews.

Fortunately, this was not the first pilot interview conducted so she felt more able to do them. Finally, the means of identifying participants within the research (e.g. participant A and participant B). When comparing participant,A to participant B the researcher felt that a connection was lost between the person and their words. This meant that the researcher needed to repeatedly check which interviewee was participant A. She then decided to try to assist the process and reduce errors by providing names for the participants which acted like a code. Although participants remained anonymous for the purpose of the research it meant accessing data was rather easier).

#### **4.7 Data Analysis**

Just as the researcher is not value free and has a political ideological character (Chenail, 2011; Cutliffe, 2000), so does the way they perceive their findings. As a relatively inexperienced qualitative researcher, there were concerns about putting categories against particular items of text but reassurance was provided by Strauss' statement: "Don't worry, almost any option will yield useful results" (Strauss, 1987, p. 63). In analysing data, the researcher was constantly questioning whether evidence provided by the interview really provided simply affirmation of what she wanted to discover or whether there were items present that could be regarded as 'real data'. The problem was that the data provided by governors was not tangible or numeric in nature but required interpretation. In the first few cycles of coding, the data itself was used to provide categories. The theoretical expositions of human capital, social capital, cultural capital were used to help consider the statements made by individuals to bring them under more

general headings. The purpose of this was to allow items to be structured to allow consideration of governor responses to the research questions but was not ideal because some categories had to be determined before the interviews were undertaken. These categories were based on the research questions.

The first step was to divide up the interview into research questions. This separation was not ideal because some of the links between data were lost. An example would be a parent who was motivated to become a school governor to improve the prospects of their child. This would be covered under one interview question but would also be relevant to another which dealt with emotional capital. Governors expressed a great deal of empathy at times but the division into questions meant that some links were lost.

#### **4.7.1 Method and process of analysis,**

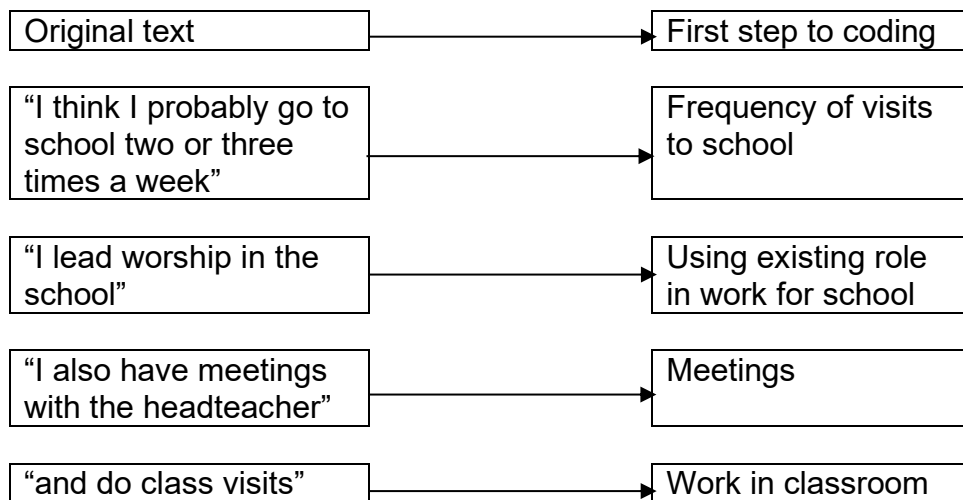
The use of Nvivo to analyse the data was problematic due to the researcher being very unfamiliar with it at the outset of the research.

The first stage of analysis used open coding in which data was split into discrete parts. Research questions were set as nodes with Interview questions below them. The interview question nodes were duplicated where necessary to allow additional research questions to access the data from a single interview question.

It was only after this had been done for an individual interview that actual open coding took place. Interview questions were analysed to provide

conceptual categories, for, example Philip made a statement about his involvement in school life “Yeah. I think I probably go to school two or three times a week, I lead worship in the school but I also have meetings with the headteacher and do class visits” was divided up and coded at this stage very simply as shown in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Extract from Stage 1 coding



The content of this short statement provided four elements to consider and the researcher, on considering the data further was left with questions that were put into the research diary and into a memo.

The second step was to find relationships between categories (Punch, 2009). The first element of frequency of visits was not directly linked to any of the others but could be linked to other interviews where governors mentioned school visits and link to the frequency of their visits to see if any pattern emerged (for the purposes of this thesis it is not shown). Similar analysis would be undertaken on the topic of links between paid employment – elsewhere in his interview Philip had mentioned some elements which could be linked to this such as why he became a governor and that the church was

concerned about its priests being chairs of governors (due to the fact that they had to make some difficult decisions in that role).

The third and fourth categories are related. Philip is in contact with the headteacher, with teachers and with children through his visits into school as shown in Figure 4.2.

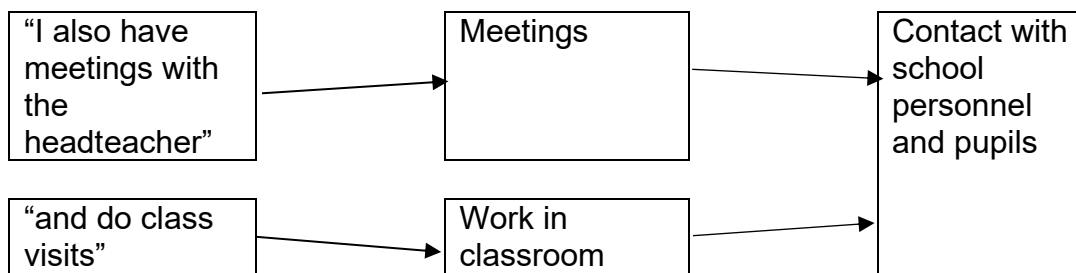


Figure 4.2: Relationships between categories

The problem with this is that it links to other research about governors meeting people at school events. It is narrower than that category because it does not include parents.

The final stage of coding used Selective coding where the researcher chooses one aspect to be the core category which is based on axial coding. The aspect chosen in this case for these items was 'Bond between governor and school personnel'.

The words utilised by the governor are very neutral about his positionality with the headteacher in this section. Other governors were less neutral (e.g. Olivia who was very positive about her headteacher) but there was still a link. This led the researcher to consider whether the link between school and governor could be linked to the bond between governors and their schools

and to their attitude towards teachers. Could the frequency and nature of contact by governors with school personnel in school increase the strength of link experienced by governors toward the school, its teachers and its parents?

The problem now is that the picture is far from complete – there are themes which have been drawn from the words used and they have been linked to words expressed by other governors but these themes still needed to be linked to capital. The links between schools and governors are due to social capital. Other categories were developed such as governor links to the community which also linked to a governor’s social capital. Figure 4.3 below shows the process of identifying themes for two simple comments within Phillip’s interview.

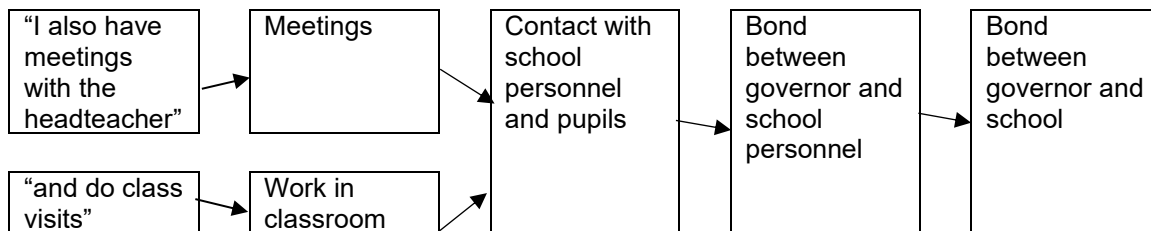


Figure 4.3: Process of identifying themes

It was in this way that the words of the governor were translated into the categories used within the particular areas of the findings.

The creation of categories linked to other elements was used to provide a link between small elements of the interview and the final themes. The strengthening of bonds for governors (i.e. increased social capital) took many forms, hence the illustration of how the data came into the form it took has been used instead of using the entire coding map. Although some categories of volunteer motivation were used to provide structure to the

findings on the topic, the ABCE categories (Butt et al, 2017) considered earlier (in section 3.10.1.2), were adapted to meet the categories found by using this data analysis technique.

Although attempts were made to follow grounded theory analysis techniques in order to provide theories that could later be tested, this was not a grounded theory study because of the nature of this Ph.D. which meant that the research required research aims and questions rather than purely arising from the situation. Data saturation probably came undetected before the end of the research as new sub-categories were being created but the researcher's inexperience prevented acknowledgement as she sought greater ranges of categories to explain things.

#### **4.7.2 What the researcher learned**

One of the lessons learned by the researcher from undertaking the research was how difficult it proved to be. The main difficulty arose due to the loss of personnel within the relevant local authority who dealt with governors as the number of schools becoming academies grew. Strauss and Corbin (1998) tell us that:

“... as any experienced researcher will tell you if pressed to think about the matter, research really is a rather “messy affair”. This does not mean that the results are dubious or useless; rather, it means that research rarely proceeds completely as planned.”  
(Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 32)

One of the things it was hoped would be straightforward was the use of software. That did not go to plan because the software failed to code some



items and at times it was difficult to extricate data where an item was miscoded.

## **4.8 Ethics**

The ethical boundaries considered within the research were those identified within the British Educational Research Association's (BERA) Ethical Guidelines (BERA, 2018). The guidelines outline the need for researchers to attend to their responsibilities to participants, to sponsors or clients, to the research community, for publication and dissemination and to their own wellbeing and development. The focus of this section will be the responsibilities of researchers to participants. There are no sponsors or clients for this research, the section on responsibilities to the community go outside the remit of the study although areas such as recognising the authors of digital content could be very appropriate in some studies.

### **4.8.1 Responsibilities to participants**

The areas to be considered within this section relate to consent; transparency, the right to withdraw, incentives, harms arising from participation in research, privacy, and data storage and disclosure.

The responsibilities to participants can be related to Appendices A and B which provide an information sheet for participants and a consent form for them to complete if they were willing to participate (British Educational Research Association (BERA), 2019) and an interview schedule read to participants before the interviews took place. Participants (including those for the pilot study) received information sheets which provided them with

information concerning what the purpose of the study was and what their role would be \*including its use within the thesis) which had been outlined to them when they were approached to take part in the research. If they wished to take part they then signed consent forms in line with the BERA guidelines (see Appendices A and B). No participant indicated at any stage that they wanted to withdraw from the interview or that they wanted the data they provided to be destroyed. Had they made such a request to withdraw from the project, BERA guidelines to comply with their request would have been followed. No ethical issues arose from an inability to provide consent as those who were interviewed were making informed decisions in their role as school governors and therefore had the mental capacity to consent and were all over the age of eighteen so could make the decision for themselves. While it was recognised that some participants may have been unfamiliar with research the use of information sheets and discussions surrounding the research suggested full, informed consent. Some of the individuals who were interviewed were not seen face to face (usually due to scheduling constraints) and were interviewed using the telephone. Consent forms in these cases were provided electronically using the same forms utilised by those interviewed face to face.

It was noted earlier (in the section of the pilot study) that potential participants may not be in a position to give unrestrained informed consent where a participant was a family member of the researcher (Brooks et al., 2014). For this reason, no friends or family members were used within the interviews from which the data for this research was drawn.

Gatekeeper consent was not sought because governors came from different schools. At the outset of the research the governors' section of the local authority were approached and agreement to assist with the research was provided. – they would act as a gatekeeper to the participants. By the time the practical research was undertaken the context had changed and the governor support area did not exist in the form it had some years previously. It was also notable that the number of academy schools increased during this time (which had the effect of more schools outside local authority influence). Some interviewees were recruited due to the assistance of an academy trust (some of the interviewees served in academies and others in local authority-controlled schools). The question arises as to whether the headteachers should have been approached for permission to interview? This was a difficult decision and there is little doubt that had the sample come from a single school that the gatekeepers would have been the headteacher and the chair of governors. However, if either should have been approached it was the chair of governors for the school since this was not about the school but about school governors. Had the research taken place in school (e.g. observation of a school governor meeting) then permission would have been sought from the headteacher and the chair of governors. Because this was an opportunity sample and was about governor views it was decided that gatekeeper permission was not necessary.

The second area within the British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines is transparency (British Educational Research Association, 2018). The information sheet provided participants with the

understanding of how data was to be collected (see Appendices A and B). Before the interview began participants were provided with the list of questions which would be asked in order that they better understood what they were consenting to. No participant was put in jeopardy by the research – although personal information was provided it was anonymised. Where the researcher felt that information provided within an interview would identify an individual (e.g. a range of very specific work roles or specific posts of responsibility for a councillor) it was removed from the thesis as far as possible but notes of its removal were present. The data was not used for any commercial purpose and only anonymised data was shared within the findings. Appendix A states that “You will be identified only by an identifying code (your name will not be used)”. Although names are used these are connected to the interviewee only in terms of gender. The individuals who were interviewed were given a pseudonym as described in section 4.6.3. Participants were told verbally that they would be given a pseudonym for the research and how they system would work although this information was not on the information sheet.

A third area under the BERA guidelines was the right to withdraw (British Educational Research Association (BERA), 2018). This was made clear at the beginning fo the audio recordings by the interviewer (it was also clear in the information sheet and consent forms – Appendices A and B).

Participants were given the contact details of the researcher, but no participant withdrew during or after the interviews. As indicated earlier, no participant was in a contractual relationship with the researcher or obligated to take part in the research.

A fourth area under the BERA guidelines was the use of incentives. It is accepted that the researcher did sometimes pay for coffee or tea prior to the interview but did not pay travel or other expenses for participants. The reason for provision of coffee, tea, or soft drink was simply to ensure that the individual felt at ease during the interview and was not offered anything during the initial setting up of the meeting.

The fifth area to consider was whether harm may arise from participation in the research (British Educational Research Association (BERA), 2018). In this research the main area considered was the importance of anonymising the data. No other harm to participants was anticipated unless participation in this research was disclosed. The questions within the interview were designed to allow the interviewee to outline their perspectives and were not confrontational in nature.

The next area within the guidelines was to consider privacy and data storage (British Educational Research Association (BERA), 2018). The content of the interviews has been treated in confidence and any item which could lead to identification of an individual has been removed. In some cases, the aggregation of items about an individual may identify them and this has also been carefully considered when anonymising participants and utilising the data they provided. Data has been held securely in compliance with the Data Protection Act and the General Data Protection Regulation (2018). The information sheet sought to provide details to participants about the research

and the purposes in which the data may be used. The privacy and storage aspects of the research were considered in Appendices A and B.

A further issue under the guidelines is disclosure (British Educational Research Association (BERA), 2018). No disclosure about illegal behaviour came to light during the research and hence no disclosure was necessary.

#### **4.8.2 Responsibilities to sponsors and clients**

BERA suggests that these be considered where appropriate (British Educational Research Association (BERA), 2018) but this research had no sponsors and hence this can be dismissed on the whole.

#### **4.8.3 Responsibilities to the research community**

The importance of maintaining scholarly integrity has been maintained within the thesis. Plagiarism detection has been used on the thesis. Were results to be found within study that did not correlate to those hoped for they were reported and given equal weight as BERA (2018) state.

#### **4.8.4 Responsibilities for publication and dissemination**

No area of this thesis has yet been published. When published BERA guidelines (2018) re communicating findings; including the use of open access journals, will be utilised.

#### **4.8.5 Responsibilities for researcher's wellbeing and development**

The researcher has been registered for a Ph.D. at the same University in which she worked as a full time member of staff. Within the thesis the

researcher has been mindful of issues such as personal safety as required by the BERA (2018) guidelines. The thesis was undertaken during research and scholarly activity and in holiday time which prevented any exploitation as outlined in the guidelines.

#### **4.9 Uniqueness and limitations of the research**

The aim of this section is to make links to section 1.4 and section 6.4 as well as to provide an insight into the limitations of the research and what made it unique and valuable.

##### **4.9.1 Uniqueness**

As a qualitative study, the perspectives offered by these governors, from this location in terms of their service as governors are unique.

The researcher is not aware of any research which discusses how and where social and human capital may be acquired by school governors within their role, nor of where knowledge gained as a school governor has been deployed outside the school context. The researcher is also not aware of any research suggesting that human capital developed in the context of school governance may be utilised by an individual within another context, and then, after further development in the second context re-deployed to their school governance.

Most of the research conducted into school governorship is about how governors do their job and how to improve their effectiveness. The findings of this research echoed in part the results mentioned in Helen Young's

(2016) paper about school governing bodies as apolitical organisations.

Governors in this research did express political views but in a limited way.

There have been research studies into school governors in the past which have included interviews, but they have not sought to identify the effects which school governing may have upon the lives of governors. The consideration of networks created by individuals is not new (e.g. Ball's (2012a and 2012b) investigation of networks of educational philanthropists in neoliberal times looks at global links between organisations and individuals that give insight into the power structures and areas of globalisation). This research is about much less powerful individuals, and it considers more mundane but equally important links to communities and to schools.

The research took place within changing times. As already explained, some of the school governors were working in academies; others were serving in maintained schools. In future years the question may arise as to whether maintained schools in their current form will exist (particularly after Educational Excellence Everywhere (Secretary of State for Education, 2016) was published towards the end of the research period.).

The research also took place at a time when governor recruitment for maintained schools was changing. Given the long service of many of the governors who took part in the research, it may be difficult to identify the changes caused by the change to skills-based recruitment for governors for a number of years but it is research that will be worth undertaking in the years ahead.



#### **4.9.2 Limitations of the research**

All research has limitations as well as uniqueness. As a case study it is recognised that it is geographical in nature and the results are not generalisable. What this research can provide is an insight into the situation governors face and how strong bonds are formed to the school and to the community. These bonds may not be present for all governors because they may not live or work within the community; they may work within it or become connected to the community through their governorship. This area could be considered in future research which could compare the bonds between school and individual governors with their links to the community served by the school.

The researcher has never been a governor of an academy or multi-academy trust and this meant that although the researcher was a participant observer, they did not have the same insights into those organisations as they had into governing maintained schools.

Governors participating in the research knew what the research involved and at times may have changed their behaviour or even failed to tell the truth in the interview to improve the impressions of the researcher toward them.

Because there was no power relation position with any of the governors this should not have been a factor, but the researcher recognises that this may have been the case. For example, a governor undertaking a training session between the initial approach for participation and the interview taking place may have done so because it was planned, or because the request reminded

them to undertake it or because they wanted to show that they undertook training. It is difficult to discern how frequently this took place although material was provided by the local authority on the numbers of governors undertaking training.

The research cannot stop the neoliberal agenda and will not stop the skills-based recruitment of governors. Communities will lose out on the acquisition of new skills as people from outside the area are brought in to run schools (the recruitment of governors on the basis of their skills may cause lower participation from some communities). The research cannot stop the removal of local accountability from school governance in some academy chains (multi-academy trusts may have no local school governing body). The research can point out the effects this may have on communities.

#### **4.10 Conclusions**

In considering the methodology employed the question arises of whether the research conducted was useful. This chapter considered the ways in which it was made fit for purpose and the literature that underpinned the decisions made was identified. As qualitative research the tests for robustness were considered in section 4.4 but the robustness of the quantitative research was also considered (in sections 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 4.4.4 and 4.4.5).

The positionality of the researcher within qualitative research is crucial. Wherever possible the research has been checked for bias. The problem with checking for bias is that it invades all aspects of the research including secondary source material. The question of the sample and potential bias

(e.g. only recruiting councillors from one party was addressed as can be seen in section 5.1). The research methodology was fit for purpose because the small scale of the research, the location within a geographical area and the nature of the research as an exploratory study meant that a case study approach could be deployed.

The participants undertook the interviews voluntarily and without payment. They provided insights about their lives and their roles as a governor. Anonymity was assured and has been respected in practice.

The chapter began by considering the research context and the positionality of the researcher as a participant observer. The second section in the chapter considered the types of research methodologies that could be deployed, and it was determined that a case study approach would be suitable. Section 4.3 considered research design including details of the participants, and the research instrument used. Many areas of trustworthiness had already been examined but section 4 sought to expand on some aspects. It is recognised that triangulation was difficult, but some questions were triangulated, and this assured the researcher, to some extent, that the governors were providing reliable answers. The issue of the pilot study was considered. Much was learned from the study and the interviews conducted for the main research benefitted from the small number of interviews conducted within the piloting process.

The next area considered was data analysis. A qualitative approach was used for the analysis which included putting items into codes. The

researcher used NVivo to assist the process and Appendix F shows the coding of three interview extracts. It was very difficult to re-code using callouts because NVivo relates what is coded to a node but the link to the participant comes through the node. Some elements were coded multiple times and it was simply not practicable to show this within the appendix. Section 4.8 concerned ethics and the research was compared to the British Educational Research Association (BERA) ethical guidelines. The final section considered the uniqueness and limitations of the research. The use of qualitative techniques to this group of governors within this timescale makes it unique but it is also about the link between working as a governor and considering how capital may be accumulated from it that makes it different from other research. The limitations of the research include the limitations found when deploying a case study approach: one of generalisability of results. There were many benefits to adopting a case study approach and the research is capable of being replicated with the instruments utilised in this research.

The methodology chapter provides insights into the findings which follow. The research was timely in that it provided a useful insight into the old recruitment system which was ending and into the attitudes of governors towards the new system. This research employs a case study approach which provides an insight into the governors who took part and those within the local authority area more generally. The way that the research was conducted meant that it was fit for purpose in investigating how governors can change from undertaking the role. That is not to say that all governors change in the same way or that the results are generalisable. However, this

is what this group of governors reported and is representative of their perspectives at that particular point. The findings raise some very interesting perspectives about how membership of a school governing body may alter lives and provide new insights into the impact of being a school governor.

## Chapter 5 – Findings

Having outlined the methodology that was utilised and how the research questions related to the questions asked of governors it is time to consider the findings. Some extracts from transcripts are contained in the appendices in Appendix D.

At this point it is useful to reiterate how the coding was undertaken and what was involved in the process. The method of analysis is found in section 4.7.1. Figure 4.1 shows the governors original words which were firstly divided up and then coded into categories such as moving from the number of visits to school to frequency of visits. This was the open coding stage. The second step involved finding relationship between categories. This was done after each interview and the categories were coded. The important thing is that the categories are driven by the interviews. After relationships were found core categories were sought based on the axial coding

The diagram on the next page (Figure 5.1) shows the initial coding diagram restricted to the points shown in Appendix D (to prevent it becoming unwieldy). There are some simplifications in the diagram due to the reduced quantity of data and to focus on links to entities in the early stages of coding such as school and community.

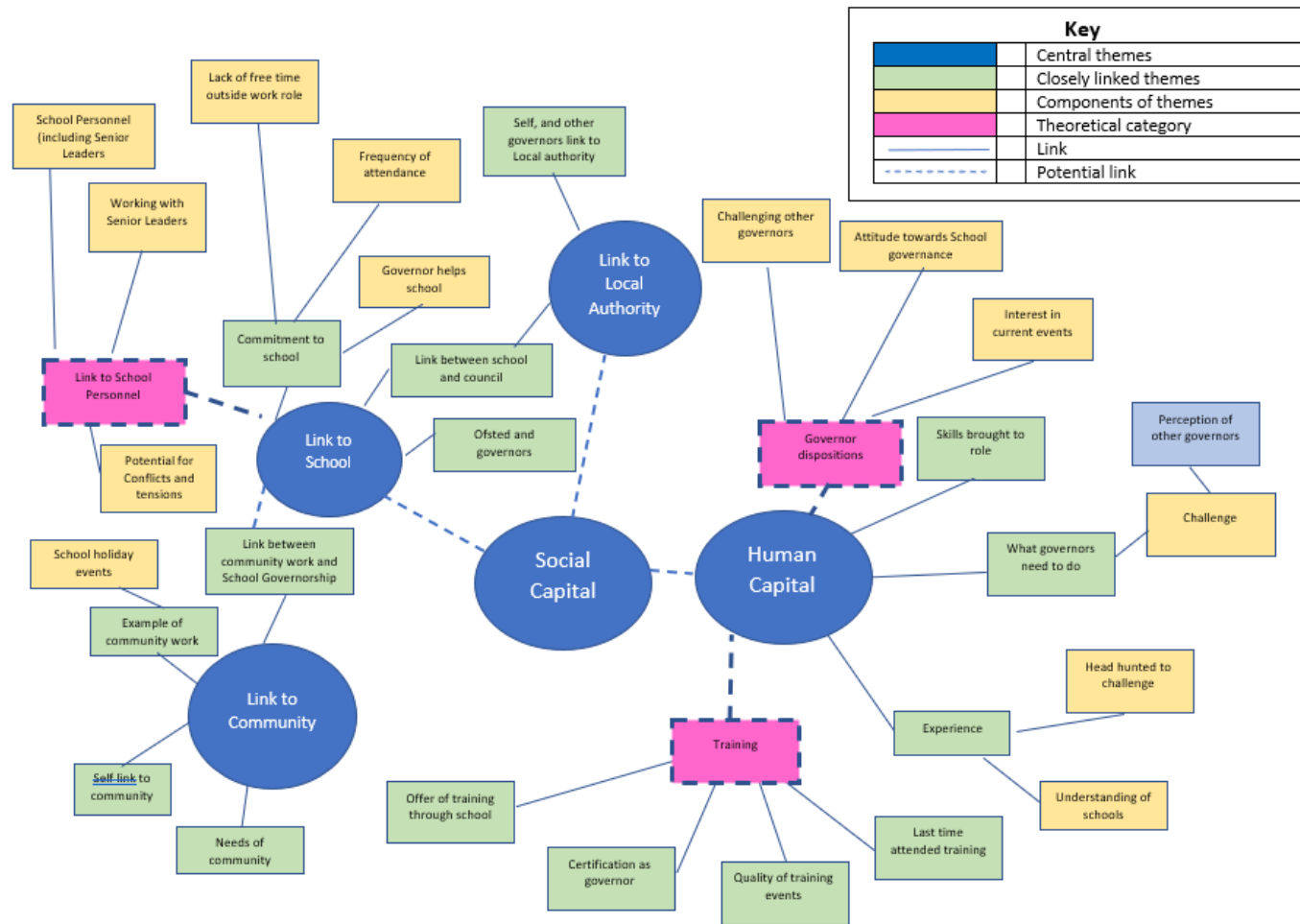


Figure 5.1- Diagram showing initial stages of the coding process with restricted data to promote readability

After coding it was decided to link the codes to the research aims and questions. The final coding diagram is shown below.

<p><b>Research Aim 1</b> - To reconsider the proposition that school governors should and do simply apply pre-existing skills to the role</p>	<p>Research question 1a: What skills do governors bring to the role?</p>	<p><b>Skills surrounding employment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational knowledge (shown in initial diagram as knowledge of the education system). Former job roles relating to education and the skills they provided</li> <li>• Knowledge of work generally (e.g. managerial, organisational skills and soft skills)</li> <li>• Other areas including health and safety</li> </ul> <p><b>Skills around parent governors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talking to their own children</li> <li>• Obtaining parental perspectives</li> <li>• Perception that parent governors may be quiet, unskilled and lack meeting experience so providing additional support to them by asking questions</li> </ul> <p>(note that that governors said that there was no formal mechanism for collecting parent's views but that informal mechanisms were often deployed by other parents)</p> <p><b>Skills from earlier governorships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some governors were not in employment when they became school governors but indicated that they had gained skills through taking up the role</li> </ul> <p><b>Skills from voluntary work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previous work on committees</li> <li>• Knowing how meetings should be chaired</li> <li>• Asking questions</li> <li>• Chairing meetings</li> <li>• Managing roles</li> <li>• Talking at meetings</li> </ul> <p><b>Skills from governor training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training in areas like safeguarding</li> </ul> <p><b>Understanding of the environment and language of education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a background in education helps due to jargon</li> <li>• Training makes things governors don't know 'clearer'</li> </ul>
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		<p><b>Challenging staff and other governors.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feeling that it is good to challenge the school</li> </ul>
	<p>Research question 1b: What skills do governors believe they apply within their roles as school governors?</p>	<p><b>Language of education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning the language of education allows you understand the information</li> </ul> <p><b>Encouraging others to become school governors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shortage of school governors but confidence from being a governor allowed a governor to approach others to take up the role</li> </ul> <p><b>Transfer experience to new area (local authority or age range)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experience in one part of the education system does not mean easy translation to a different setting even though there are similarities. Skills can be applied</li> </ul> <p><b>Dealing with Ofsted</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dealing with Ofsted as a governor</li> <li>Disposition to dealing with Ofsted</li> <li>Challenging staff and the school</li> </ul>
<p><b>Research Aim 2-</b> To investigate what people gain in terms of training and experience from the role of school governor.</p>	<p>Research question 2a: What training opportunities are made available to governors within the local authority?</p>	<p><b>Training provision</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular training mailings</li> <li>Training from multiple sources (including another local authority)</li> <li>Some training provided by headteacher (for Ofsted or where governor training isn't paid for)</li> </ul> <p><b>Types of training undertaken</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complaints procedures</li> <li>Looked after children</li> <li>RAISEonline</li> <li>Pupil premium</li> <li>Safeguarding</li> <li>Cancelled training</li> </ul> <p><b>Attitudes of governors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Like to keep up to date</li> <li>Positive attitude</li> <li>Positive experiences of training</li> <li>Don't want to repeat the same courses</li> </ul>
	<p>Research question 2b: Who uses the training opportunities that are available?</p>	<p><b>Who uses training?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New governors – induction</li> <li>Experienced governors</li> <li>Some councillors used training for councillors provided by the local authority rather than governor</li> </ul>

		<p>training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online training</li> </ul> <p><b>Which topics were the most popular?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safeguarding</li> <li>• RAISE online</li> <li>• Induction</li> </ul>
	<p>Research question 2c: How many governors use the training and how frequently?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequency of training</li> <li>• Reasons for non-attendance</li> </ul>
	<p>Research question 2d: What is the training used for?</p>	<p><b>Work context</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used different courses to gain a work role</li> <li>• Refresh existing skills and knowledge</li> <li>• Able to talk more about responsibilities of governors</li> <li>• RAISEonline provided context to discussions at work</li> <li>• Preparing for Ofsted</li> <li>• Getting up to speed</li> </ul>
	<p>Research question 2e: What effect do school governors feel the training they undertake has on them?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perception that some governors had no training</li> <li>• Use of governor meetings for training</li> <li>• Ask questions within work</li> <li>• Able to draw on experiences at work</li> </ul>
	<p>Research question 2f: What benefits do governors believe the experience of being a governor has provided to them?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training makes you a better person</li> <li>• Being able to challenge the headteacher</li> <li>• Linking with other schools</li> <li>• Being prepared for Ofsted.</li> </ul>
	<p>Research question 2g: Do governors use skills and experience that they feel they have learnt from being a governor in a work or community context?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training others</li> <li>• Speed reading</li> <li>• As a teacher</li> </ul>
<p><b>Research Aim 3</b> - - To identify whether some governors gain real benefits as a result of becoming a</p>	<p>Research question 3a: Do governors increase their social capital as a result of their work within the school governing body?</p>	<p><b>Motivation to volunteer to become a school governor</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affinity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Schoolchildren</li> <li>○ Work in or linked to school</li> <li>○ Involved in school life</li> <li>○ Community</li> <li>○ Link to headteacher</li> <li>○ Needs of pupils</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Beliefs and Values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Governorship would help the</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

school governor.	<p>school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Children and families matter</li> <li>○ Obligation of job or success in life</li> <li>○ Standing up for others</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career progression <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Church link to School</li> <li>○ Future Career</li> <li>○ Using existing experience</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ego <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Learning about schools and interest in education</li> <li>○ Other</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Time to undertake the role</li> </ul> <p><b>Courses taken by Governors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Degrees and University courses</li> <li>• Vocational courses</li> <li>• Courses for job role</li> <li>• Other courses (e.g. for fun)</li> </ul> <p><b>Voluntary and Community work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The overlap (school governorship is both voluntary and community based)</li> <li>• Volunteering before governorship</li> <li>• Types of volunteering and activities</li> <li>• Volunteering to help school link to community</li> <li>• Extension of voluntary activities due to school governorship</li> <li>• Volunteered due to additional confidence</li> <li>• Voluntary work within church</li> <li>• Volunteering of family member in school</li> </ul> <p><b>Councillors, Communities and Governors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The link between being a councillor and a governor</li> <li>• Living in the community</li> <li>• Running a church in a deprived area</li> <li>• The community centre</li> <li>• Community activities strengthening bonds between school and community</li> <li>• Increased confidence</li> <li>• Political effects on school bring empathy and sympathy</li> <li>• Involvement in PTAs</li> <li>• School assemblies</li> <li>• Networking through socialisation</li> <li>• Giving lifts to other governors</li> <li>• Socialising with other governors</li> </ul>
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	Research question 3b: Do governors increase their cultural capital as a result of their work within the school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending musical shows and exhibitions</li> <li>• Taking a language course</li> </ul>
	Research question 3c: Do governors perceive that being a governor has any effect on the opportunities available for their families?	<p><b>Interest in the education of their children</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interested anyway</li> <li>• Information from being a governor helped them understand the education of their child</li> <li>• Interest in education of new generation</li> <li>• Education as an agent of social mobility for other people's children</li> </ul> <p><b>School governorship didn't affect the aspirations for their own or other people's children</b></p>
Other	Pressure put on governors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School governors are not paid</li> <li>• Ofsted assessing governor professional skills</li> <li>• Increasing challenge of school governorship</li> </ul>

Figure 5.2 – This is the final coding diagram used to prepare the order of the chapter

Before considering the findings in detail it is important to consider what should be expected based on the literature. The first thing to recognise is the difference between the population at large in the area and those chosen to be school governors). These are the individuals selected to be school governors and, in contrast with the population within the region in which they serve(see Nomis, n.d.a, Office for National Statistics, n.d.b; House of Commons Library, n.d.,) they are older and well educated which is in line with Ellis (2003). The voices of those who would like to serve as governors but are unable to do so, due to childcare commitments, uncertain employment, confidence levels or those deemed not to have the skills to undertake the role (Ellis, 2003), are not heard..

Being a school governor involves working within the neoliberal, market driven education system where the political aspects are hidden. It would be good to see governors recognising the neoliberal agenda operating in the schools they work in. It is not included within the research aims but evidence may be found within the words of the governors within the interview questions.

Where political opinions were expressed, they were usually measured and neoliberalism did not seem to be the issue with many governors. Issues where came where they mentioned pressure on school governors and the expectation that they would use their professional skills in the role .No governor overtly what challenged they were asked to do re publicising the school or the merits of academies. Perhaps Chitty (1989) was right that the neoliberals have won the battle of ideas in the field of education. Governors did question recruitment of new governors on the basis of skills, but this was certainly not the view of every governor.

School governors are not required to take on the role but there are opportunities available to governors to gain training (this is in line with Banwell, 1996 although the findings do not always concur), but there were instances where there was concurrence with Thoddy (1999) where it was noted that governors could obtain training and experience and potentially these could be deployed in new contexts. In contrast to members of corporate boards school governors are volunteers and not paid (although directors of some academy schools may be paid) but the work of school governors is inspected by Ofsted in a way that corporate boards are usually not checked.

Class cannot now be easily derived from occupational statistics (see the Office of National Statistics investigation into class in light of labour casualisation. Class has become increasingly difficult to measure due to labour casualisation (see Payne,(2013)) and the growth of self-employment (ibid, 2002). For this reason, insights into different forms of capital are utilised within the thesis rather than occupational categories to see whether governors gain anything through taking up the role..

Six types of capital were considered within the literature review including human capital, social capital, emotional capital (Nowotny, 1981), economic capital, cultural capital and governance capital. Because there was a link between economic capital and human capital (Office for National Statistics, n.d.a; Dinda, 2008) it was decided that human capital would be used as a guide to economic capital. Human capital could also provide insight into cultural capital as Bourdieu (1993) said that there was a correlation between human capital and educational achievement (which is an element of human capital) Governance capital James, et al. (2010) was not considered because it concerned the aggregate levels of capital in each governing body and hence may be distinguished. This thesis only considered individual governors and the governors interviewed came from different governing bodies.

Human capital will be a focus for the analysis because training provides human capital (although much of the literature suggests human capital is primarily built through education. See for example Becker 1960 who deals with College Education), the ability to discuss and debate signifies human

capital, and the question arises of whether human capital is created through school governorship. The findings clearly show that human capital (Becker, 1964) is created which was expected. One of the areas that will be considered is whether governors took courses after they became governors to invest in themselves. Links have been found between those who educate themselves (human capital is developed through education (Becker, 1964)) and those who belong to clubs and societies. Informal learning can also provide human capital and hence experience within school governorship may also lead to human capital being created.

School governors usually have what is described by Coleman (1988) as social capital through links to other individuals before they take up the role although they may not have high levels of it. Social capital is about links between individuals (family members usually have bonds which could be binding social capital (Woolcock, 2001) or even emotional capital (Reay, 2004)); an individual may have friends which usually leads to having shared interests and associating with people at similar levels which is bridging social capital (Field, 2008); while school governorship may cause an individual to obtain bridging social capital if the governing body are relatively heterogeneous (Field, 2008). These new links were noted by interviewees. The literature (Bryant, et al., 2003) suggests that there was a link between volunteering and the levels of social and human capital that individual possesses. Philips (2005) tells us that educational achievement is linked to self confidence that in turn may led to involvement in organisations. Lack of confidence may be overcome if an individual is asked to take up a volunteer role with 80% of people taking up the role after being asked to do so (Bryant,

et al, 2003). This research found little evidence that most individuals were directly approached. There were two governors were directly approached to be governors, Louis who was 'headhunted' while already serving as a governor and Christopher who was asked to become a governor by the headteacher. Both governors reported increased confidence which is in line with Phillips (2005) view that self-confidence may lead to involvement in organisations.

Some of the research questions were related to both social capital and to emotional capital. For example, the desire of a parent to help their child could be an example of bonding social capital or of emotional capital. The only way to distinguish the two, comes in the location of the activity. A woman investing in her family to help them face the world outside is creating emotional capital (Reay, 2004) while bonding social capital is about the links which bind very similar individuals to create groups of very similar people (Field, 2008; Woolcock, 2001).

The chapter has the following order:

Section 5.0 reviews the research aims and research questions which are used in the chapter. Section 5.1 considers who volunteers to be a school governor Section 5.2 considers data which answers research aim 1 with subsections to consider the data addressing two research questions (1a and 1b). Section 5.3 deals with data with reference to research aim 2 which has seven research questions (2a-2g). Section 5.4 deals with data concerning research aim 3 which has three parts (3a, 3b and 3c) and Section 5.5 covers an area was not part of the original research aims but the data from



governors indicated that it was an important new factor that came out of the research: the pressures on school governors.

## **5.0 Using research aims and research questions**

The following items were the research aims (indicated by a number prefix) and research questions (indicated by a letter prefix) which were at the centre of the research.

- 1 Do school governors simply apply pre-existing skills to their role and if so, should it be the case?
  - a. What skills do governors already possess before appointment?
  - b. What skills they utilise within their role?
  - c. What opportunities for training are made available to individuals as a result of them taking on the role of being a school governor?
- 2 What do people gain in terms of training and experience from being a school governor?
  - a. How many governors use the training?
  - b. What training is used for?
  - c. What effects governors feel the training has on them?
  - d. Have they learned anything from their work as a school governor?
- 3 The final research area is in whether the skills and experience gained (if any) as a result of being a school governor has benefited them?
  - a. How may the experience of being a governor lead to benefits for governors from their perspective?
  - b. Have school governors utilised the skills and experiences in a work or community context?

- c. Have some governors gained real benefits in terms of social, economic or cultural capital as a result of undertaking the role and do they believe that their being a governor has had any effect on the opportunities available for their families?

The findings will be considered by research aim and then research question.

### 5.1 Who volunteers to be a governor?

Having considered the background to the investigation and the framework through which many of the findings will be analysed, the question of who volunteers arises. Much of the data about the governors (e.g. the type of school they work with, their age group, how long they have served as governors was considered in section 4.3.3) and it was found that the characteristics of the governors interviewed did match fairly closely to those who returned questionnaires within Holland's (2017) research. The names of governors used within this research are, as indicated in sections 4.3.3. and 4.6.2, different from the actual names of the interviewees to ensure anonymity (Wiles et al., 2009).

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Number</b>
Teacher or lecturer	3
Work in educational setting (pre-school)	1
Clergy	4
Local authority (Education department)	1
Local authority (Other)	1
Work for charity	2
National health service	1
Work for training company	1
Retired teacher or lecturer	3
Retired civil service	1
Not stated	2

*Table 5.1: Occupations of governors who were interviewed*

The research undertaken on volunteering suggested that middle class people are most likely to volunteer (Field, 2005), and that volunteering is most likely to be found amongst those who work in public sector settings. The literature surrounding the employment patterns of volunteering suggested that volunteers who worked for government were more likely to volunteer to work in organisations like schools. Analysis shows that 30% of the volunteers were present or former teachers or lecturers and, of the remainder, many had previously worked in situations linked to government or currently did so – over 60% had worked in the public sector.

The paid work undertaken by governors was disparate. A larger proportion of the governors involved in the research were presently in jobs (or had worked in posts) within the public sector as shown in Table 5.1 below:

Table 5.1 shows that there are some occupations mentioned that have clear links to education (e.g. teacher, or clergy or working in the education department of another local authority) but some do not e.g. the Civil Servant did not work for the Department of Education. This prevalence of governor volunteers from public sector backgrounds concurs with Ertas (2014). It was only when writing up the thesis that this pattern became clear. While not an ideal spread of occupations, it is the complexion of this group of governors and it is in line with studies that show people who work in public sector occupations are more likely to volunteer than those who do not (Ertas, 2014).

Although there is some question of the representative nature of these occupations, the Holland (2017) study found similar results with 65% working and 51% of those working were in professional posts (Holland, 2017, p. 11)

(note that this is also in line with Dean, et al.'s (2007) assertion that governors were disproportionately likely to be professionals). Twenty eight percent of Holland's (2017) survey was retired (Holland, 2017, p. 11) compared to 25% within this research.

## **5.2 Research aim 1 – Do school governors simply apply pre-existing skills to their role and, if so, should it be the case?**

The aim is important because it links directly to Coleman's (1998) perspective on the creation of human capital. In the literature review it was related that "... human capital is created by changes in persons that bring about skills and capabilities that make them able to work in new ways" (Coleman 1988, p. S100). He is, by implication, stating that human capital is the skills and capabilities individuals bring to a task. Its aggregation could be described within a school governing body context as being what James, et al. (2010) describes as governance capital. Governance capital is not investigated here because only one or two members of a specific governing body may be found in the sample (see section 4.3.3.4) which would not be sufficient to gauge the levels of capital possessed by all members of a governing body. The Department for Education (n.d.n) document outlining the skills and behaviour expected from school governors could be seen as outlining the human and social capital requirements for school governors.

Governor recruitment is based on the skills individuals already hold (Department for Education, n.d.e), not on the basis of any skills they may develop by undertaking the role and therefore it links to the area considered later in this chapter about motivation to become a governor where human

and social capital were identified as helping to motivate some governors to volunteer for the role (section 5.5). Where the skills held by a potential governor are not those the school governing body thinks they need, the potential governor will not to be recruited.

The answers provided by governors are based on self-reflection and provide individual perspectives. Similarly, when seeking recruitment to the governing body individuals state what skills they have, and this is matched to the skills audits for existing governors. Vivian mentioned this:

“I would never have said that I’m on the school governing body because I can do this. Now you have to. Now you have to be able to I won’t to say prove it but you have to write it down in the skills analysis... .”

While no evidence for the skills stated is required (which seems strange given the list of skills), the statements about the skills possessed by individual governors are placed on record. At the outset of this study this was not normal practice and Vivian, a governor of long standing, is acknowledging the change.

The question arises of what skills they brought that were human capital. Some governors brought knowledge; others brought skills. Having identified that these governors brought skills to the governing body, what type of work where they involved in within the school? Having analysed the work that these governors do within school ( it was found that their involvement did vary but included: being involved in committees, being a link governor, questioning and making decisions, teacher accountability, strategic direction/leadership of the school. Each of these is considered.

Firstly, governors said they were involved in committees. A few mentioned directors' meetings where they were part of the overall trust board (e.g. Fiona), but most mentioned termly (or more frequent) meetings such as Christopher and Deborah. As a group they mentioned involvement in a wide variety of sub-committees – although the names of the committees do vary, they have similar themes, as shown below in Table 5.2 below:

General category	Committee Name	Number
Finance, premises and resources	Finance	8
	Finance and buildings	1
	Premises	3
	Resources	1
Staffing	Personnel	7
	Personnel appeals	1
	Staff discipline	1
	Staff recruitment	1
	Selection of Teachers	1
Teaching and learning	Curriculum	6
	Teaching and learning	1
School standards	School improvement	1
	Scrutiny	1
	Standards	1
Other committees (N.B. although disciplinary and pupil discipline may be the same thing)	Safeguarding	3
	Appeals	1
	Complaints	1
	Disciplinary	1
	Pupil discipline	1
	Wellbeing	1
All or virtually all	Every committee	4

*Table 5.2: Committees on which governors served*

Table 5.2 shows that the most popular committees were Finance, Personnel and Curriculum. Why those three? There is no particular committee structure that is necessary within schools and hence it was fortunate that most committee names mentioned were relatively uniform. Chairs of governors sometime stated that they were on either all committees or virtually all. This meant that they didn't name the individual committees they

served on which made analysis difficult. It was decided that by treating them as a specific group, their response is noted, recognised and given a voice.

There were some areas which were difficult to categorise – was ‘Discipline’ about pupil or staff discipline or both? What was meant by ‘Wellbeing’ – was it connected to safeguarding or to pupil health? What was the ‘Appeals committee’, was it connected to personnel or to school admissions or something else? Three governors mentioned being on a ‘Safeguarding’ committee, but it could be linked to areas of the curriculum, to attendance or to wellbeing. In such cases, they were put into a general category.

Given the skills they said they possessed it is clear that many of the governors served on committees which were relevant to the skills they held before taking up their role on the governing body. For example, Christopher worked in a role which involved visiting schools in an engineering capacity looking at premises and indicated that he served on the Premises committee within the governing body. This is clearly a skill transferred from his paid employment. Deborah’s only committee at the time of the interview was ‘Personnel appeals’ which did not meet very frequently but this had only limited applicability to the soft skills she felt she brought from her work role.

Secondly, many were ‘link governors’ (a role where a governor acts as a link to a particular department or topic) – some were linked to interests such as Anna’s interest in disadvantaged groups in education (Anna was a Special Educational Needs and Disability governor at one point). Christopher linked to music and technology in his school – the former had no apparent links to

the skills he said he brought to the role, the latter does seem related because engineering is likely to fall under that department. Hugh stated that he linked to foundation subjects for science and for looked after children. Given his teaching background in science this links to science allows transfer of existing skills (although he was a secondary school teacher rather than a primary school teacher) while his work with looked after children could bring in skills from his Ministry. Inese was an English specialist teacher in secondary and was the link governor for the subject at her school(s).

There did not seem to be a link between Kenneth's prior skills (in business) and the design technology or science link governor roles he took up. Louis had been a teacher but there was also little linkage between his previous skills and his link governor roles for special educational needs (SEN) and the early years. Michael's role as lead governor for maths is not at first sight related to the skills he identified he obtained from employment (although they may be linked to past roles). It is unclear how directly Nicholas's skills as a teacher related to his link governorships for literacy and modern foreign languages as no question relating to his teaching area was sought in the interview. Janice volunteered in the textiles department – she was not a link governor, but she volunteered to go in for days to help out. What is clear is that by taking on this link governor' role is that they are working directly with teachers (acquiring social capital) and building up a knowledge of what teachers do within the school (acquiring human capital). The skills and knowledge they acquire build the governor's human capital while their work with teachers may develop relationships which build their linking social capital with teachers within the school. The involvement with teachers and



the operational side of the school is likely to create strong bonds because they feel that they are doing a shared activity (in this case bridging social capital) with the teachers.

Asking questions is a skill and therefore human capital. Both Barbara and Louis stated that they asked questions. Louis did mention this as an existing skill while Barbara did not (although as a new governor it is not clear that she would have acquired it in a short time).

Some governors mentioned scrutinising books (e.g. Janice, Michael and Hugh), doing learning walks (Anna and Olivia), challenging the headteacher and teachers (e.g. Fiona insisting on action plans for staff reporting back to committees), ensuring the school is excellent (Barbara) and working to improve the school (Christopher). These are activities that aim to help the school but which these individuals are doing within in a voluntary role. Book scrutiny involves an individual (usually a teacher) looking at the work of pupils (usually in exercise books) and checking that they are consistently marked, and that learning is taking place. Hugh was a teacher and hence book scrutiny may have been part of his role but Janice and Michael were not and must have required guidance on what books were expected to be like and this provided both the skill of doing the scrutiny and information about the work done by children in the school at different ages (the skill of doing the scrutiny and the learning about the school represents human capital). While this is not an easily transferable skill, it is something which could lead to more understanding of the teacher's role and to a greater bond

between teacher and governor (this link could increase social capital in line with Coleman (1988)).

Barbara was not alone in feeling that governors were part of the management and leadership team (Philip, Inese and Nicholas also mentioned it). Some mentioned previous experience of this but Barbara did not even though preliminary information identified that she held a Postgraduate Diploma in Management Studies. Hence the governors mentioning the management and leadership team did have human capital in the area whether through education or through experience.

The final area considered was more general items that governors felt they did - Hugh and Nicholas felt they brought an ethical and spiritual dimension to the school – this is about skills and knowledge they held through their work role. However, other areas such as supporting the school (Barbara and Hugh) reflected an opportunity to utilise skills, an attitude that passing exams is not the only thing that matters (Graham) were also mentioned.

Hence it can be seen that, as anticipated, governors do bring a range of existing skills into the role, however, some of the governors gain skills. Janice is not a qualified teacher and hence had to learn about book scrutiny which she said she undertook. Olivia mentioned that she undertook learning walks, but these were not connected to her previous skills within a work role.

The conclusion must be that many governors do utilise skills they already possess once recruited to a governing body. It is also clear that some

individuals utilise skills undertaken for work within their governor role. However, it has also become clear that this is not the end of the story. Governors learn new skills and gain new experiences within their governorship role and these represent the acquisition of human capital. In addition, the role of link governor may develop relationships with staff and departments and this could be seen to be a form of bridging or linking social capital – the linking of teachers and departments to the school governing body.

### **5.2.1 Research question 1a - What skills do governors bring to the role?**

Governors reported a range of skills they brought to governance, but one governor noted that at the time of appointment he did not have what would now be required. At the time Michael came to be a school governor he reflected he would not have had the skill sets sought from school governors. He noted that this restricted the number of young governors available to be governors and governors from working class backgrounds. Michael stated that he developed:

“... them over a period of years and to some degree the governing body and its committees help you do that because you are meeting other people from other backgrounds and you learn to be part of discussions about things you probably never dreamt of and you get to develop interests.”

What makes this quotation so apt is the recognition of the learning which governors within these interviews have repeatedly stated that they derive from the role; and his honesty that his skillset at the time of appointment was not what would now be sought. The age of governors has usually been

found as in this sample of governors to be older than the population generally

Figure 5.3 below shows Michael's perspective on how he developed relevant skills once appointed as a governor. For someone in his early 20s, Michael would have had good human capital for someone of his age (he was an undergraduate at a time that relatively few people went to University) and his interest in the community indicated that he wanted to create social capital (his motivation to become a school governor was mentioned in section 5.4 but the reasons why he had an interest in the community were not stated.

There is a lot to unpack here about to capital acquisition. The first point to mention is time. A governor does not start from a position of no skills and then attend a governor meeting and suddenly change their interest in education or the community; nor do they suddenly acquire skills. By the time of the interview Michael had been a governor for over 25 years (see Table 4.4) and this time gave him experience in the role (experience is a form of human capital). Being part of the governing body meant that he met people from different backgrounds (this suggests a heterogeneous composition and since school governorship has a relatively flat hierarchical structure Michael seems to be forming social capital bonds here. The first type is bridging social capital bonds where he joins the governing body of a school and he is meeting people who also have an interest in education (Woolcock, 2001; Field, 2008). The second type of bond he is forming is linking and this is

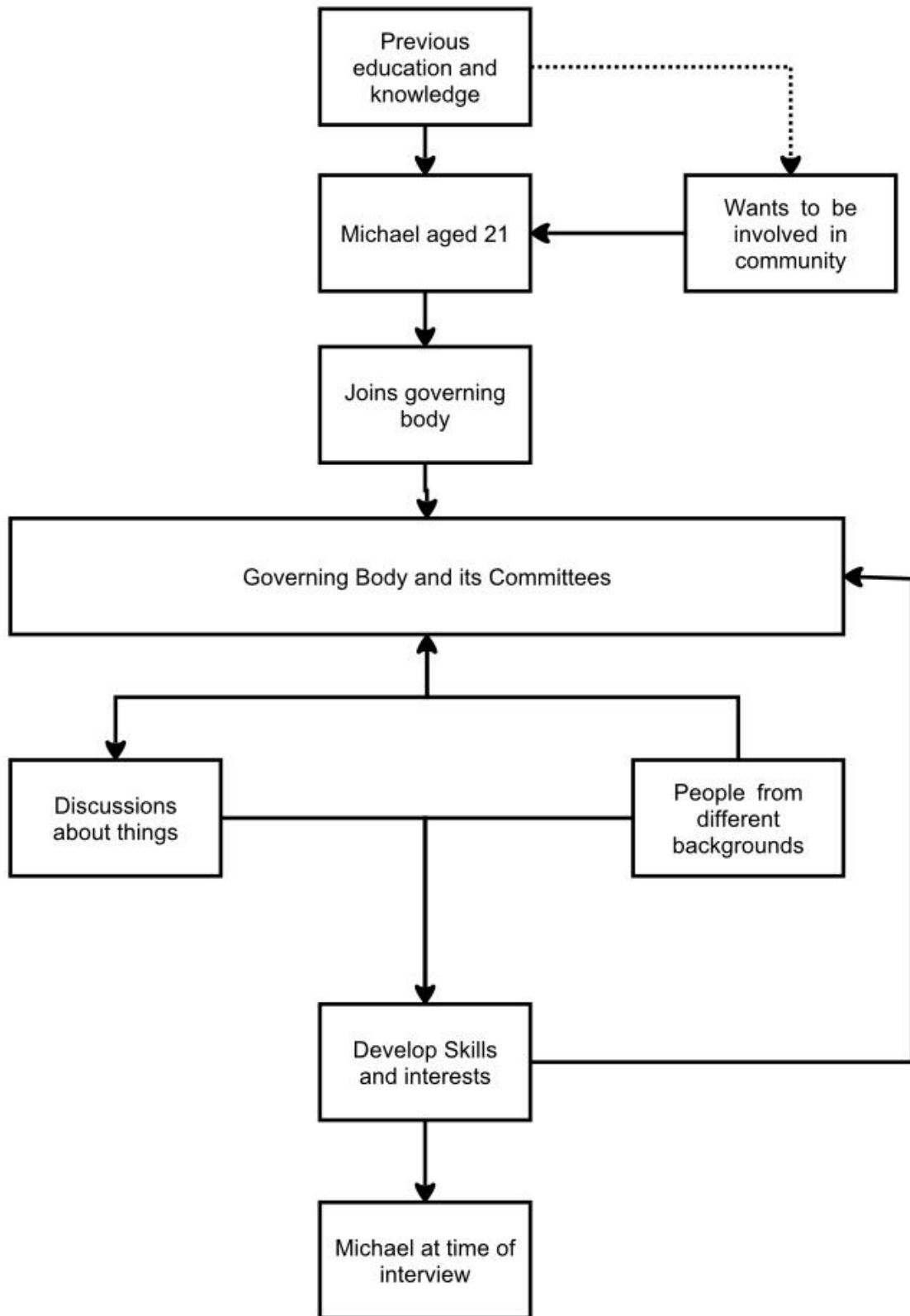


Figure 5.3: How Michael developed his skills

evidenced by his words of “meeting people from other backgrounds” which he relates to work within the governing body and its committees (Woolcock,2001). By making this link with the work of the governing body, he is talking about experiences which seem also to develop his human capital (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961a). When Michael refers to new interests, this could also refer to developing his human capital (if he developed an interest in learning something new) but could also refer to developing aspects of cultural capital such as an interest in literature or painting (Bourdieu, 1966).

His initial involvement with the community had been a school governorship – taken up at a young age (he recognised however, that he would now be very unlikely to be recruited because at such a young age he would not have the type of skills now required). What made Michael decide that the school was the right way to become involved? Michael lived within the community (Michael had good human capital given his education (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961a) and sought bridging social capital (Woolcock, 2001) through volunteering in the community) but he had not attended the school where he later became governor. It is notable that Michael stated he was involved in “discussions about things you probably never dreamt of” through his membership and this suggests that he further developed soft skills (which is a disposition and hence human capital (Becker, 1964)) which would help him to create social capital bonds in the future.

He was also concerned about the difficulties of recruiting governors within his working-class community and his comment that “It was hard then but it is

even harder now” demonstrates his concern that by focussing on skills many individuals will no longer be able to become governors, even if they have the time and the interest.

Governors identified several strengths they felt that they brought to the school governing body both at the outset and at the time they were interviewed. Their responses varied and in order to provide greater cohesion, their answers have been divided up into three areas corresponding to themes identified in the data. The first area to be considered are skills surrounding employment: educational knowledge, knowledge of work generally and other areas such as health and safety. The second area is about having children at the school and the community that the schools serve. The third area is about committee work (this will be covered in more detail elsewhere such as 5.3.4) and there are then more general areas of other skills that were mentioned by governors.

#### **5.2.1.1 Skills around employment**

The reasons for economists considering human capital is not their concern for the individual but their consideration of economic results of not investing sufficiently in people (Schultz, 1961a). Training and working with people as a governor may increase human capital reason. Skills may be acquired in employment and then transferred to the work undertaken as a school governor or they may be learned as a governor and transferred into work. The first skill considered is knowledge of the education system through working in an educational role. Anna indicated that she had applied skills she already knew into the governor context: “Being an infant school teacher

and being a governor at an infant school helps extremely well, especially, I've done early years and Year 1 teaching". It would be expected that a teacher would be used to educational terms, to the curriculum, to the standards expected of the children and would know about school life. Being a teacher ensured that Anna knew what went on in classrooms – particularly in the year groups covered by the infant school – even though her job role had changed by the time she became a governor. She instituted learning walks and detailed feedback reports during her governorship. As will be noted in 5.4, Hugh had been a teacher and indicated that while his governorship was at primary school and he had worked as a teacher in secondary, he was recruited because the headteacher wanted to gain a teacher perspective.

Barbara worked with young children but taught adults. She said that

“Yes. I can sit and listen to the teachers in their report, and I can empathise with them, even though mine's adult teaching and theirs is children. It's different, but there are some similarities as well and it's probably easy to understand some of the words.”.

Barbara's experience was similar to Hugh's where the age phase was different, but the setting was relatively familiar. One of the terms used by Barbara was “empathise” and this suggests some link with the teachers in terms of the work they undertake – empathy suggests a link or bond which is not tangible but is about relationships. It suggests a bond with the teachers (which may or may not be reciprocal). Working as teachers in whichever age phase led to familiarity with educational contexts even if the governance and the age phase worked in were different. This knowledge could be applied to their work as governors.



A second area considered with employment was work which was applicable in a number of contexts which had an impact on schools. For example, Christopher had employed his engineering skills within schools. As a governor he indicated that he conducted an annual site survey, and he was seeking to be more involved in the Health and Safety areas of the school. Sophia had worked in financial services and this had been utilised in her previous governance:

“Well massively. The insurance background ... In my previous school I was safeguarding governor and health and safety and all the things that go with insurance. So, I'd be the one who did the walk around with the headteacher to make sure that we were complying with this and that and the other. So, insurance that a was a big help.”

Health and Safety is closely linked to insurance, but safeguarding may not be considered so obvious until the concept of risk is considered. Safeguarding is about minimising the risks faced by children and in this context, an insurance background could be very helpful.

Janice said she had experience of working in a bank “and you know it's very much about keeping things in order and that's the way I am, so it is useful from that perspective”. In other words, she felt her organisational skills, developed through her work had helped her as a governor.

Fiona worked for a charity which focused on young people but noted that her contribution to the governing body was in terms of the skills she had gained through her work as a manager:

“Also, because of being a manager I had done a lot of

work. I was quite involved in operational management stuff which included all the finance, the human resources. So, you know, I did everything. So, yes. So, I got in involved in recruitment of staff at [name withheld] and I have at [name withheld] as well. And finance, so I was ... sitting on finance committees and I've continued to do that.

Fiona made a clear link between the work she had done and the committees she served on. She mentioned skills and translated them into work she did for the governing body.

Other skills were less obviously directly applicable. Deborah indicated that she had to deal with people as part of her work – these are soft skills but could be useful to her in the governorship role as she formed relationships with other governors (social capital).

Rebecca had gained experience of working with children who had “lots of different disabilities” within her classroom. This led her to begin to understand other professions who work with children, “where they come from and how they fit into the whole picture”. She continued to work in Special Education until she retired. This experience may have influenced her ‘vision’ for the school where she was chair of governors because she knew where the services were provided, and their range before she became a governor and was well placed to consider service delivery for these areas.

Every governor brought a skill from their working life into the role. Teresa and Janice were not working at the time they became governors, but Teresa was doing voluntary work which involved using people skills while Janice was helping out with the nursery at the school. Voluntary work leads to

social capital and takes place where individuals work for the common good (Ertas, 2014). It is notable that volunteering makes an individual more likely to volunteer again (Forbes and Zempelli (2014)).

### **5.2.1.2 Children**

The second area for consideration concerned children. Christopher indicated that having children at the school helped him:

“I think just knowing the school, really. I think that helps a lot. And obviously, with having children at the school I'm able to talk to them. And the ones that have left are quite honest, and I do find that useful”.

The question is whether this is a skill or simply something which assists a governor. Fiona noted that as a parent governor she had lacked a mechanism which allowed her to gain the views of other parents and this was echoed by Michael (who saw creating Cooperative schools as providing this opportunity). In contrast Nicholas mentioned being a parent governor and having parents approach him at children's birthday parties to bring up issues. Whether this could be something which could be considered a skill for a non-parent governor is questionable, perhaps it is an experience? However, Janice, who was a chair of governors felt that this parental perspective was important “...sometimes when you do not have your own children there you do not see that element of it but as well that can be a good sign ... ”

Michael, as a chair of governors was concerned about the skills of parents and stated that:

“... it's how you talk about and mention the sorts of skills sets and so forth, you need to be tactful in regards

to that because often, in particular, the school I am involved in, the skills sets of the parents concerned are often not obvious and you need to dig down into them. Often the skills are there but just in different settings, they might not have been in employment, but the skills might be because they have been involved in the toddler group and so forth. So it's to try and unpick them and give them some confidence."

Hence, a parent governor on Michael's governing body would be found to have skills (i.e. human capital (Becker, 1964)). This increases that capacity of individuals who live in the community and provides the opportunity for them to develop human and social capital through their school governorship.

Louis who was a chair of governors (like Michael) stated that

"I also ask a daft question for parent governors because sometimes they are quite reticent. They are there for their own child and they do not ask questions, so I always ask a question to make the headteacher explain. So, I think being part of meetings helped me understand how schools should do it. A lot of parents had never been to a meeting before in their lives and did not know what they had to present or how to present it to governing bodies."

This concern for recognising the skills of parents is not universal with some governors criticising them for simply nodding or 'thinking they rule the school'. Fiona who was a former parent governor and was a Director in an Academy at the time of the interviews said that while parents need to be involved, they need to be "the right parents". Although the opportunity was present to press her on what she meant by this, it was felt by the interviewer at the time to be clear that it was aligned to the skills audit and they were expected to have skills to contribute.

Having considered skills to help parent governors take a full part, some governors provided evidence of skills being acquired through earlier school governorships. This is discussed in the next section.

### **5.2.1.3 Skills brought from earlier governorships**

Janice (who had previously worked in a bank and had obtained skills from that) and Teresa who did not have paid work at the time they became governors but developed their skills through governorship and then used them outside the governing body.

### **5.2.1.4 Skills from voluntary work**

A few governors mentioned previous work on committees. For example,

Louis had skills from being involved in a union representing teachers:

“I would say yes. Being part of the [teacher Union Name removed] and going to a lot of meetings I knew how meetings should be chaired and the appropriateness of asking questions and always asking a daft question. “

Some governors mentioned their work in the community (e.g. Kenneth set up a community group) but did not necessarily identify how that affected their work on the governing body. Michael stated that he was involved in the community centre and related this to groups within his community. This implied a link between children using the centre and those within his school.

### **5.2.1.5 Skills from governor training**

Hugh, a minister of religion, noted that within his work he had training on areas like safeguarding (this was particularly mentioned by those who were in religious occupations) but stated that he did use some from the governor

training as part of his work. In other words, he gained training in both areas on the same topic but that governor training had proved to be useful within his work context.

#### **5.2.1.6 The environment and language of education**

Barbara seemed to be very confident about the governor role during the interview and had been motivated to become a governor as she felt she had much to contribute. She had an education background and knew the school quite well. Nevertheless, she found her first few months as a governor quite difficult:

“... when you first start as a governor you get thrown in at the deep end and you do not know your role or your responsibilities or whatever. And it is sort of, trying to get through mud really. I felt that way. It felt as though I was catching up with everybody else, or things that, some things I have heard in my own work environment, to me, it helped, having that bit of background. There is a lot of jargonistic stuff going on and I think -- but now I have been on training, and everything's starting to become a lot clearer. So, I think it's easier now”.

Barbara had attended a lot of training during her short time as a school governor and perhaps this quotation gives insight into her reasons for doing so much. She stated here that she had a background in education and that the training provided to her as a governor had helped her. The feeling that she was being “thrown in at the deep end” uses a swimming analogy which is appropriate for someone who volunteered as a swimming instructor. To Barbara governing was initially very opaque, and perhaps energy sapping as indicated by her phrase “trying to get through mud” would indicate. The other governors seemed to know everything, and the new governor seemed to know nothing.

### **5.2.1.7 Being a parent**

Janice and Teresa had children at the school when they were first appointed. Teresa stated that her experience was limited to that of a parent whose child had gone through infant school. Janice had been more involved in the school through playgroup and said that her governorship had initially been “very much about my family ... and a little wider than that” but that this had changed over time.

### **5.2.1.8. Challenging**

Louis had been headhunted as a governor because “I can understand how to challenge”. He said that governors needed a real depth of understanding and linked this to:

“When Ofsted come in you get challenged and they ask what is a good ... school and why is it good, what are the areas for development and why do they need developing. “

In other words, it is about challenging staff so that the school and its governors are prepared for the questions that Ofsted will ask. Challenging is a skill that governing bodies and senior leadership teams require.

### **5.2.1.9 Conclusions**

Governors brought disparate skills to the role. The first skill they mentioned were work related skills which often focussed on knowledge of, and experience in, the education system. Other skills mentioned included non-educational business skills and soft skills (working with people and making links is a crucial element of social capital acquisition).

Some governors mentioned gaining insight into the school from their children but some governors in their responses mentioned their skills helping parent governors to play a full part in the work of the governing body. A couple of former parent governors had undertaken roles over a number of years and the skills they had previously learned were mentioned.

Voluntary work had led some governors to develop useful skills including how meetings worked and how they should be chaired.

Governor training was also brought into the role as a skill they could bring to governing (this is considered further in research aim 2). One of the things governors brought was the language of education although some found that their knowledge in this area was weaker than they expected due to the use of jargon. The final two areas were being a parent (which provided some insight into children and the environment of the school) and challenging Headteachers and other governors (which is an increasingly useful skill). These are both human capital (learning the new language and challenging staff and other governors (Becker, 1964)) and were concerned with the bond between a parent and their child(ren) (Coleman, 1964).

### **5.2.2 Research question 1b - What skills do governors believe they apply within their roles as school governors?**

The skills that the governors applied included items acquired through being school governors including the language of education, encouraging others to



take up school governorship, learning about new age phases and areas of education, and dealing with Ofsted.

### **5.2.2.1 The language of education**

For new governors, the language of education can be very confusing.

Learning this skill means that governors can engage in the practice of being a governor. Philip was very honest in his appraisal of his early years as a governor. He had no background of working in an education context and found the transition to governorship difficult:

“... when I became a governor, I was totally mystified by what went on and we were given, I remember, we were given a page with acronyms on and their interpretation and then I had this list in one governor's meeting and then more acronyms that were used that weren't on that list (laughs) so it was you're kind of aware of this mysterious situation. And I felt that one point that it was deliberate obfuscation so that actually only the people that knew what was going on would really sort of make informed choices. We were like the Supreme Soviet everyone was just kind of at one with what was said at the top.”

Philip as a new governor was baffled by the acronyms used – even though attempts were made to help him and his fellow governors. As a vicar he had a high level of human capital – he was well educated but he found the process of getting tuned in to being a governor and understanding what was being said very difficult. If Philip and Barbara – who were both educated to degree level - found it difficult to get past the jargon used in governors meetings, other governors, particularly those who had less positive educational experiences, may find it even more difficult.

### **5.2.2.2 Encouraging others to take up school governorship**

Kenneth and Christopher indicated that they encouraged people to become school governors (this can expand community capacity according to Beyerlein and Bergstrand (2016)) because the role was often misunderstood:

“I think some people think, well you know you got to be clever to be a school governor, or you got to do this or you got to do that but you do not! You know, you just want normal people who lead normal lives too, who've got an interest in running the school and in the education of children.”

Since governor recruitment is now skills based, potential school governors will need to provide details of the skills they hold before appointment.

Kenneth stated that governors from different groups (e.g. parents and LEA) could learn from one another. It has been seen from the comments of Philip and Barbara that they found the transition to becoming a governor difficult and both possessed high levels of educational attainment. This is also a danger of a skills-based recruitment system: individuals may be excluded because they do not have skills that are considered desirable. In practice, some schools may seek to reduce the impact of the system of recruiting governors: Michael indicated that he tried to look at the skills individuals had when recruiting them to the governing body rather than excluding them.

### **5.2.2.3 New age phases and areas**

Even experienced teachers can find changes to the age phase difficult. The skills required to govern in one age phase may be slightly different from another. Louis, at the time of the interview, was a retired teacher and a very experienced governor. He seems to have been confident in taking up appointment as a governor in a comprehensive school and to a primary

school within a community he was familiar with. However, he indicated that the first time he was a governor of a primary school he felt less confident:

“[name withheld] was the first primary school I had been a governor of and I felt a bit intimidated by the little ones running about but I soon learnt and yeah, I went from there.”

What was different? He was a governor of a secondary school at the time. He suggests that it was the age of the children which he found intimidating. For a secondary school teacher and moving into a primary setting Louis would have needed to know new things about an age phase he was less familiar with.

Christopher was a relatively new governor (he had been in post about a year) and did not come from an educational background:

“I look upon myself as being a laymen in education terms, but I'm learning all the time with that... . I think it is a gradual process, but I am developing a lot more understanding of curriculums and that sort of thing. And also, being inside, ... just to see how the thing works is, you know my skills have certainly improved. I think I do bring a lot more, I'm willing to speak a lot more at the meetings that we have, so yes.”

If we look at his statement it clearly shows that he perceived himself to have changed and to have learned things. He stated that he was “learning all the time” and that his “understanding of curriculums” and that his “skills have improved”. One of the points which Louis raised was that parent governors often remained quiet. It is apparent that Christopher believes that he is making more contributions and hence that he was making fewer when he was first appointed.

Sophia who had previously been a governor had just been appointed to be a governor in a school in her new parish and contrasted the two:

“I mean I think what I'm aware of is that it is a whole new ball game even though it's still all the same age group of kids it is a different local authority it's a different it's a junior school rather than a primary school its say a school of nearly four hundred as opposed to school just over a hundred so it's just I'm starting from scratch again really I think. “

In Sophia's case, the age phase was similar to her previous governorship (there were no Key Stage 1 or Reception pupils) but the size of the school and local authority were different. In other words, for Sophia the setting was unfamiliar, and she recognised that that she had much to learn about the school and its setting during her tenure.

#### **5.2.2.4 Dealing with Ofsted**

Nicholas was headteacher at a school that had recently been through Ofsted:

“ . . the Ofsted framework. ...has absolutely increased the scrutiny and the focus on the governing body. ... I know for a fact that governors are called in and are grilled for up to 2 hours: do you know the current performance of the school, do you know the areas for development, what's the impact of the changes, what progress, where is the school now, pupil premium, how does it work, where's the money gone, who raises the governor link in terms of how often are you going in and speaking to students for the students voice, how long are you meeting with the core subjects and are you aware of the development plans. So, there's certainly an increased level of challenge and for a position where you do not get paid for it and it's all voluntary the level of scrutiny you come under an inspection is actually quite high in the sector.”

Knowing all of the details about the school may be listed in the Ofsted framework but, for a governor having the answers to these questions is daunting.

Nicholas had been involved in an Ofsted inspection as a parent governor. He was one of five governors and found himself answering the first question because of his professional experience:

“... the first question was on the action plan and the chair said ‘Nicholas can I hand it over to you’. The lead inspector I knew professionally and he knew I was a secondary teacher there, he knew I was a headteacher and he knew it was a text book answer because I was in a position to know what answer I would give if someone was sitting in my... if you were a lead inspector.”

Graham, an experienced governor seemed to take Ofsted quite philosophically and to focus on the governor role in addressing the issues found by Ofsted:

Ofsted of course doesn't always give your school the best of ratings and there are always particular problems that are highlighted that you need to address and as a governor I think it's important you get stuck in in helping to address those issues. Some are easy to deal with because you have got good staff and you are working with a good Head and senior management; you are all working together. A problem would arise, however, if there are conflicts there and tensions which I have been fortunate enough not to experience.”

Graham had served as a governor for a significant period of time. He uses the word “good” to describe the leadership team as well as the staff and this suggests a strong relationship with the school.

### **5.2.2.5 Conclusions**

Several elements were raised by governors which included skills such as learning the language of education, encouraging others to take up school governorship, learning about new age phases and areas, and dealing with Ofsted.

The language employed by educators can obfuscate their meanings as they employ jargon that confuses new governors. This means that new governors are forced to learn a new language, often composed of abbreviations and acronyms before they can really work effectively on their governing body.

Encouraging people to take up positions as school governors may not appear to be a skill. However, it is a people skill and, at a time of school governor shortage, is worthy.

Even experienced governors learned skills when they changed school phase or moved local authority area. The skills required for school governance do change between areas and age phases. For this reason, it is important to recognise that this means that governors learn new skills.

The final skill which was mentioned by a few governors was one of dealing with Ofsted. This was not always mentioned within the expected questions, but Ofsted was not expected to arise when looking at capital in any form within this research. Essentially governors need to learn the skills to deal with Ofsted questions and this meant a great deal of learning.

### **5.2.3 Conclusions**

It was decided to summarise the results of the questions using a diagram.

The research aim was designed to elicit the additional skills learned as a governor. The problem was that some governors had been doing the role for a long time and that some of the skills had been gained from, for example, previous governorships.

The first diagram, Figure 5.4 below, shows the skills brought from employment to the role of school governor which help to contextualise the themes found when coding the area of skills brought to governorship.

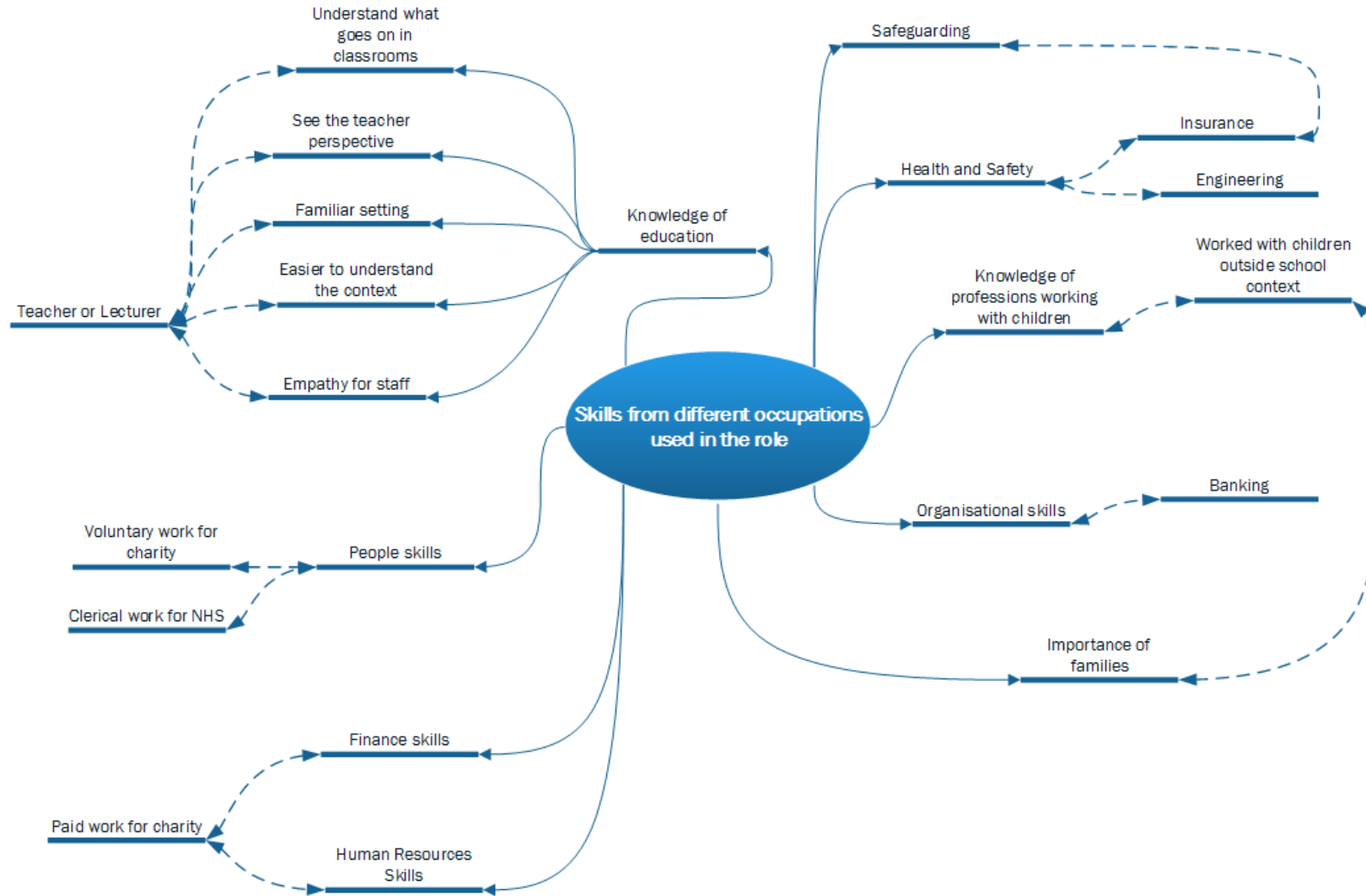


Figure 5.4: The skills governors see themselves bringing from employment to governorship



74 Header removed

In Figure 5.4 the associations between employment role and the skills and knowledge governors thought that it provided are shown by the dashed lines. The surprising area was where some of the skills came from. Banking would suggest finance rather than organisational skills while the link between safeguarding and insurance is present but not necessarily expected.

The skills obtained from employment were not the only things governors brought to or applied to the role. Figure 5.5 below shows areas they apply from other activities:

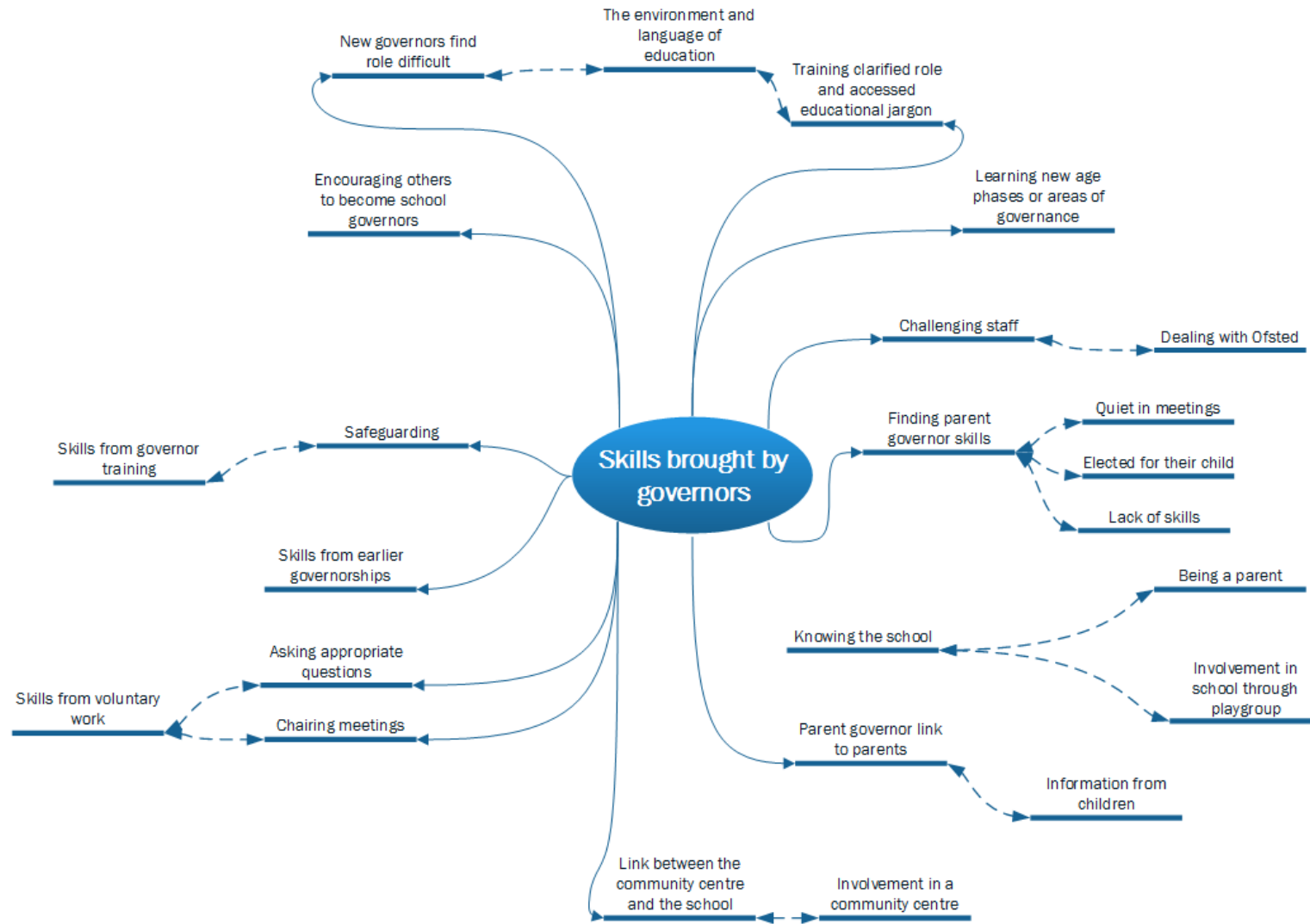


Figure 5.5: Skills brought by governors to their role (non-work related)

As can be seen from Figure 5.5 above, the skills brought by governors from outside work varied quite widely. Some of the interviewees saw what they brought to the role as including experience, helping others to do the role, linking to the community, challenging staff, the ability to adapt to new age phases or locations of schools, learning the language of school governance, and skills from voluntary work.

The research aim sought to discover whether the governors simply brought existing skills to their role. Some did but others developed skills during their school governorship.

### **5.3 Research aim 2 – To investigate what people gain in terms of training and experience from the role of school governor**

One way in which governors may benefit from taking up the role is through increases to their human capital. One of the main ways that this was investigated was through governor training although some questions led to insights into the experience that may also provide governors with new skills through informal learning (Curniffe, 2010). Governor training is supposed to be offered to governors, although there is a difference between training being offered and it being utilised. The first question that arises is of whether it is offered in practice. Thody (1999) suggested that the amount invested in governor training had been small “compared to that spent on headteacher training” (Thody, 1999, pp. 127-128). Seven areas are considered relevant to this research aim. The first area considers the

availability of training to governors, the second area examines whether the training is used by governors, and the third considers who uses training and how often. The fourth area considers what the training is used for and the next area examines whether school governors feel the training has any influence on them. The sixth and seventh areas do not consider training. The sixth area examines the benefits the experience of being a governor has had on these interviewees, and the final area considers whether they have utilised what they have learned outside of their work as governors.

### **5.3.1 Research question 2a - What training opportunities are made available to governors within the local authority?**

It was apparent that governors had been offered training. It is notable that all governors were aware of training opportunities which were made available to them.

Barbara thought the training was "... through [local authority name withheld] Governors Association ... . we get emails just about every week". The actual source was probably the local authority itself or a different authority.

Christopher was offered training by a different governor support service. "I know there are frequent courses both in [the different local authority, name withheld] and [the local authority where governors served, name withheld]." He had attended one session and was booked on another. Christopher was a new governor (having been in post for around a year)

with little educational background and this contrasted with Barbara's training experience. He did talk about how he was learning new things, but this appears to have been using informal learning techniques.

Barbara had already undertaken training in complaints procedures, looked after children, RAISEonline, pupil premium and safeguarding by the time of the interview.

What had governors learned? The most detailed answer was provided by Barbara who talked about a recent course:

“... I learned a lot about looked after children and how that's broken down, and how that's spent, and how the money is put back, and the school is not given the full amount.”

Barbara mentions what she learned within a session about looked after children: she may have had some insight into the topic but where money comes from and goes to was obviously explained and remained in her mind.

Barbara seemed to be motivated to undertake the training by the proximity of a likely Ofsted inspection:

“Especially we've got Ofsted looming, so I do not want to be a governor who is sitting around the table who cannot answer any questions, or support the school, and challenge the Ofsted inspector.”

She complained that a lot of training was cancelled due to low numbers and said she was “...very shocked personally, I am shocked at the lack of numbers at training.” Many governors indicated that they had attended

training on particular topics and that they felt much of the training they undertook was a refresher course.

In line with Banwell (1996), many experienced governors indicated that they saw training in a similar way to Edward “I do not repeat going back to the same course over and over again. So, when there’s something new, I’ll attend the training”. Olivia attended regularly but wanted to ensure it was relevant (although she has served only four years at her current school, she was previously a governor). Many experienced governors did attend sessions more than yearly.

Overall, the findings of this research suggest that even many experienced governors interviewed did attend training this contradicts Banwell’s (1996) research. For example, Rebecca had a very positive attitude towards governor training. She mentioned that:

“... keeping up to date and learning. You know you ...should never stop learning because it's always something else to be learning.”

Rebecca is well educated, and a qualified teacher with many years of experience working within the education sector. She, given her background, may be someone who would feel governor training unnecessary. This indicates a disposition toward lifelong learning.

Similarly, as a retired teacher it may be expected that Louis would attend relatively few training sessions if Banwell’s perspective is to be supported, but this was not the case:

“... some local authorities actually do an awful lot of training for school governors. I think it is very, very good. I go to as many as I can, I was at one last week and that was excellent.”

If we look at what Louis is saying he attended a session recently (he attends training regularly), a lot of training was available (this was echoed by almost every governor interviewed) and it was of good quality, most of the sample governors used the terms ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ when describing the training they had undertaken.

Vivian also commented positively on governor training, but she noted that working people find it difficult to get the time to undertake training but indicated that she wished she had been able to attend more regularly: “I wouldn’t say I had all the training I need but it was there”. Hence there was a desire for training by almost all governors.

Olivia had served a four-year term as a governor in her present school and felt that the headteacher had prepared governors well for their role:

“... we had a recent Ofsted inspection as well and he prepared us for that, and we learnt a lot through that. It was useful to know that and it certainly is proving useful to me now having that knowledge for this new role.”

What Olivia is describing within this passage is training conducted by the headteacher. It may be informal training but it is learning which has taken place which has developed Olivia’s human capital (the words ‘it certainly is proving useful to me now’ indicate that it is still being applied.

There were clearly a large number of training opportunities available to governors. The question now arises as to whether governors take advantage of these opportunities.

### **5.3.2 Research question 2b - Who uses the training opportunities that are available?**

The evidence from these governors suggests that training is undertaken, although not by every governor. Some respondents utilise the training regularly (e.g. Barbara) while other respondents use it less frequently (e.g. Christopher and Deborah) or almost never (Anna). New governors were most likely to undertake training – at least attending induction sessions.

So, what type of training had these governors undertaken? Areas of training are listed in Table 5.3 below.

Topic of training	Governor	Council
Safeguarding	9	1
RAISEonline	5	0
Induction	3	0
Attendance	2	0
Ofsted	2	0
Online session	2	0
Pupil premium	2	0
Safer recruitment	2	0
Prevent	1	1
Chairs briefings	1	0
Chair of governors	1	0
Curriculum changes	1	0
Internet	1	0
Looked after children	1	0
Mental health	1	0
Parental involvement	1	0
Risk assessment	1	0
SEN	1	0
Specific training for four schools	1	0



Unspecified	1	0
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*Table 5.3: Training courses undertaken by governors interviewed*

Table 5.3 shows that there are some clear, popular courses:

safeguarding, Induction and RAISEonline. Most governors attended training of some kind – including two governors who undertook online training.

Where few governors utilise training, it appears less cost effective to the Governing Body (as in the case of Anna) and hence the cost of training sessions increases. However, Hugh indicated that he did attend training although his school had opted out of the service level agreement. If governors are to perform the role then they need to have the training to do it. Saving money by opting out of governor training to pay for more books sounds a good alternative but the demands on governors today means that this is, potentially, a false economy. Training for these governors could be linked in some cases to aspects of their role on the governing body – it did provide some of the knowledge that they used within school.

### **5.3.3 Research question 2c - How many governors use the training and how frequently?**

There was a concern that not all governors attended training, as noted by Barbara, and this leads to the question of numbers: Michael’s idea of having bespoke training for four schools (in line with James et al. (2010) confirmation that this was becoming more popular) may increase uptake as attendance at training courses will be more obvious within the

governing body and non-attendance may affect the social capital of the individual within the group.

It is clear that many governors use training, but with the reduction in size of the local authority training services and competition from other providers it is not always undertaken within the local authority in which the school is situated. However, as was noted in Table 5.4, some governors do not attend training regularly.

Given the uptake of governor training (outlined by Jonathan, a member staff for the local authority whose governors were the interviewees in this research, who indicated that schools sign up but sometimes they do not send people), the quantity of governors in each section saying that they had attended training in the past year was quite high. Most governors interviewed had undertaken training within the last six months – although only half indicated they had done so within the last term, as shown in Table 5.4.

When was the last time you received training as a governor?	Number of Governors
In the last month	2
Termly training	8
Within the last six months	6
In the last year	1
Less recently than a year or not stated	3

*Table 5.4: Last time governors received training*

The results shown in Table 5.4 were based on an open-ended question which did not suggest any answer or guide and hence some answered in

terms of when they last took training or their pattern of training. Kenneth, an LEA governor, indicated that he obtained training as a councillor and did not state his most recent attendance at governor training (this confirms what Banwell (1996) found when looking at LEA governors, but it is not contended that Kenneth was “only interested in political machinations” (1996, p. 31) as Banwell suggested some councillors were. The results do indicate a very high uptake – 80% of the governors had attended governor training less than six months before the interview with them took place.

Anna provided a reason for not attending training for over three years and this was that her school did not buy into the local authority training scheme. The cost of a single course was “£60, which I felt excessive for an hour and a half ... I did not feel that was a good use of school funds.”:

So instead, I just went and had a meeting with the headteacher, and we looked at some data and did other things, because. And we continue to get sent, kind of, invites from the governor team, but it's all very expensive and I'd rather the school spent that money on other things. Because I know I can get the training myself, or I can find out these things. Other governors it might not be the same.”

The governing body Anna was part of could have received as much training as they wanted for a set fee. However, few governors were regularly attending training sessions (although Anna had been) when the school decided to opt out. Seeing the cost of each training session led to a conflicting duty between going on the course or retaining the money within the school. However, it was notable that she thought it very expensive.

The training Anna received was from the headteacher – who would not be paid to deliver it, but she noted that other governors may not be in a position to find things out as easily as Anna. One area which should be noted is the cost which Anna mentions. Thody (1999), unlike Banwell, did see this as a barrier to governor training as the initial training budget was originally earmarked for governor training but subsequently was incorporated into the school budget. Governors in schools were then faced with the choice of paying for their own training or providing resources for the school and some chose to do the latter.

Why was training not undertaken regularly? In retrospect this is a question which could have been asked but was not within the interview. Of the three governors who did not receive training within the past year, one had been a governor for eleven years (whose last training had been 18 months before), a second for eight years and the third for about 20 years. At first sight this may appear to be the experienced governors, but responses to this question need to be contextualised. New governors had not necessarily been in post long enough for the time lapse to be over a year and there were many governors who had served for over 10 years who had attended training. The governor who had served for eleven years indicated he needed to be more proactive as training was offered. The governor who had been in post for 8 years was Anna whose situation has already been mentioned (i.e. the school did not opt in to training) was not attending training (although she had received training from the

headteacher), while the longest serving of these governors stated they were utilising Council training on relevant topics.

#### **5.3.4 Research question 2d - What is the training used for?**

Training was provided by the local authority and taken up by governors. However, no question was asked directly on how the training is used but it is used by governors in a variety of ways. The main ways identified were within a work context and for the work individuals did as governors.

The clearest example of governor training being used within a work context came from Teresa:

“... I took on the training that was required. And then I guess through all the different courses I went on and gained information on becoming an SEN Parent supporter gave me a whole lot of knowledge but then I became an [name of occupation withheld but education related]

Teresa was not working at the time she became a governor – she was doing voluntary work unconnected to education. Through her governorship she went on training courses which led her to become a parent supporter (this may have been done on a voluntary basis or may have been paid work). However, the occupation which has been removed (as it could lead to identification of the individual governor) was a post within an educational context which would require Teresa to undertake qualifications and which was paid. Teresa did not mention experiences as a governor leading to this change, it was the training courses she went on as a governor which had provided the knowledge and skills which she

applied firstly in her work helping parents and secondly within her educational role (although knowledge and experience she gained through the parental role may have helped within that second role). The important element mentioned by Teresa was the training she had received as a governor.

Barbara was clear that she wanted to “get up to speed” and was attending courses very regularly.

“Well the safeguarding one, definitely. Because I work in early intervention, and I do work at Children's Services. That was great. It was a good refresher and more. But it also gave us the insight of a governor, and what the governor's role is within that, within the school. So yeah.”.

She indicated that she had used one of the courses in her work.

Anna's desire to gain knowledge on the pupil premium may have been to better understand the area where it is discussed in school meetings – the interviews were less clear on this point of the use training is put to.

However, some insight was provided in other questions. Anna did state that she may have used some training within her work:

“Um, possibly a few years ago -- but it was that long ago now -- I think when I possibly did the SEND training, that did tie in with my role. I was able to talk more about governors' responsibilities.”

It should be noted that Barbara was working in an educational role, and she translated what she had learned from training into her work life. She was not alone in this.

Michael indicated that he had used his knowledge of RAISEonline (which he gained through governor training) to provide an insight into the schools he worked with and that safeguarding had also been very helpful.

Although Michael worked in a human resources capacity, he had found that his training as a governor helped to provide a context to discussions within schools around areas such as performance – which is where RAISEonline would be very helpful.

Kenneth did not say he received training as a governor (he received a lot of training as a councillor), but he did say that he had used both safeguarding and prevent training in his work for a charity. This training is not governor training and hence, while it is relevant, it is so only in that it supports the comments made by Barbara and Hugh, that they used governor training outside their role as a governor. This is important because it suggests that their human capital is being increased through training.

Although not absolutely relevant to the thesis (as it is about the quality of the training rather than the benefits of training) the starting point should be the impressions of the training received. Consideration is then undertaken about the benefits received as a result of the training.

When statements were made about the quality of the training, they were uniformly positive (this does not concur with Thody's (1999) suggestion about the majority of courses being less well received). Barbara stated

about one of the sessions she had attended “That was great. It was a good refresher and more”. Deborah was also very positive when she stated her views about the training course she attended: “I thought it was really, really good. I was very impressed with it”. Vivian (a governor in academy) mentioned her training: “It’s usually the local authority’s governor training and that training is good”. These comments are very positive about governor training within the local authority despite the reduced resources available for governor training.

The quantity of governor training available was noted to be high by most governors. Graham noted that he started with a “degree of expertise” and that he was offered and took up courses over an extensive period of time.

So why is attendance at training relatively low? The major reason for not undertaking more training was simply time constraints. This was particularly mentioned by Deborah

“It was on the 11th of June of this year, and it was the attendance training, which I thought was really, really good. I was very impressed with it. And unfortunately, I haven't been on any other yet, but I keep looking to see if I can. Because it depends on the dates and times with all of, you know, work and other commitments.”.

These time constraints were particularly important to her as she had a full-time job role, and she had recently been elected as a councillor: they were also mentioned by other governors such as Vivian and Graham.



The second reason for non-attendance was that some governors receive training from other sources whether as a headteacher or clergy or councillors (this corresponds with Banwell's (1996) explanation for councillors being unwilling to attend governor-specific sessions). This was the reason given by Kenneth for attending courses offered to councillors rather than governors. Those who worked for the church (e.g. Teresa) had been offered similar courses within that setting but most had also utilised governor safeguarding training. Nicholas did not state that he did not attend governor training but did state he had received similar training as a headteacher.

A third reason identified was that governors had done similar courses before and looked to areas which had changed and on which they needed updating or an area which had not been offered in the past. This sentiment was mainly mentioned by longer serving governors such as Edward "I do not repeat going back to the same course over and over again. So, when there is something new, I'll attend the training." – although the context provided was in response to a question (a supplementary one) about whether Edward undertook training frequently or just when he could. This is similar to Banwell's (1996) point about long serving governors not attending training as they had seen it all before. These governors were going to training, however.

If attendance is low, what can be done about it? Nicholas received training as a headteacher in areas such as child protection, safer

recruitment and prevent. Almost all headteachers are governors and undertaking this training this aligns with Banwell's (1996) suggestion for specific sessions for headteachers. He stated that he felt every governor on his local governing body should receive training and having undertaken training on the new governance framework, Nicholas indicated he would be creating a program of training for the governing body and would attend each session himself. He indicated that the training was important because "a number of members of the governing body are not from an educational background". This is important because Nicholas recognises that training is important. It is also important because he is noting that training may be particularly necessary where someone comes from a non-educational background and may therefore need more training. However, it should be recalled that some of the governors who undertook a great deal of training were from occupations within an educational context (such as Barbara and Louis).

This leads to the question of how do governors utilise the training? The answer would seem to be that some of the training is used for the benefit of the governing body as it links to committees and other areas of work they undertake within their governor role (this is the most obvious application of the human capital (Becker, 1964)received). Some of the training is, however, transferable and provides skills and knowledge which may be used outside of the governor context and provides benefits to the governor at work or in other voluntary groups. This is not what James et al. (2010) described as governance capital because the term governance

capital describes the total amount of capital available to the whole governing body and this is the benefit of training received by only one governor. Rather it is human capital because an individual can employ it in a range of situations.

Barbara had experience of going through the Ofsted process and used it to explain why she had attended so much training since being appointed as a new governor (i.e. she was preparing for an Ofsted inspection) "... I do not want to be a governor ... [who] cannot answer any questions, ... and challenge the Ofsted inspector.". Barbara knows she can do this only if she is trained and knows as much as possible about the school.

Michael, a chair of governors mentioned the content of a number of the courses he had been on:

"The RAISEonline one was good in being able to understand and unpick the important sections, again it was all about performance. I would never have been able to do that without attending the training course. The training on risk assessments was again helpful in understanding the school's responsibility and the governing bodies responsibility with regards to risk assessments and from that I'm assured that risk assessments were required come into the governing body where previously they weren't. So you do learn things like that what are helpful, and you can use those skills as a governor."

What Michael does in his statements is twofold. Firstly, he recognises that his capabilities as a governor in understanding RAISEonline and risk assessments have improved. Secondly, he relates the training directly back to work he undertook on the governing body. The use of

RAISEonline (now called Analyse School Performance (The Key, n.d.b)) was also mentioned by Fiona “we’ve done quite a bit of looking at RAISEonline as well.” (although this was in terms of her work as a governor rather than the training she had received). Governors use the training in a wide variety of ways and not all are within the context of the school.

### **5.3.5 Research question 2e - What effect do school governors feel the training they undertake has on them?**

Although these governors utilise training relatively frequently, not all governors do and there was a perceived need for increased governor training, and this does align to Banwell (1996).

Louis saw the need for more governor training and suggested a model rather like that suggested by Nicholas:

I think every governor meeting there should be an aspect of training governors because most of these people do not go to any other training outside of the school. They need to learn and develop as governors. That’s where I feel we have a problem.

The perspective he provides here is that most governors do not go to training, but they need to if they are to be better governors so the way to do this is to do training within governor meetings. It is hard to reconcile the information from Nicholas with the training suggested to be undertaken by the governors who took part in the interviews. That is not to say that Nicholas was wrong, only that these governors said they did more.

A similar approach was mentioned by Michael:

“What we are thinking about doing as a group of four schools is going back to governor services and saying rather than our governors attending ... we use the four schools and agree a programme of training and ask governor services to come into the four sets of governors all in one go. So we are thinking about that as a proposal rather than just buying into the general SLA. I think that will be more meaningful.”

Michael and Nicholas’ ideas correspond with Banwell, et al.’s (1996) suggestion that governor training be based around the needs of a governing body. Michael’s school and three others had developed close links and did a lot of activities together. The suggestion Michael made here had not been implemented at the time of the interview. Michael did not state whether this was to encourage all governors to take part (which would be in line with Nicholas’ comment) or whether it was that he felt more bespoke training would be necessary, but it was clear that he envisaged a higher uptake or training when delivered in this way. Louis indicated that he used governor training almost exclusively within his governorship “to challenge the headteacher and other governors”. This suggests that it will not develop his human capital outside the school governance context.

One of the areas which Fiona covered was how she used the training to ask different questions at work and in her governorship about Special Needs pupils. The example she used was RAISEonline:

“Yeah. It’s just it is so good, and I think particularly for it to be able to highlight SEN children and ... it

enabled me to actually ... be able to say as a governor, what about the SEN children? But to enable to take back it to my own paid work to say one of the areas that ... if you've got an issue around in a particular school in ... the authority you can use ... RAISEonline to say what do you know about those children in that school."

This is not a two-way process. In this case Fiona is utilising the training within her work context: it does demonstrate that human capital developed through her training is transferred outside the governing body to her work. Figure 5.6 below attempts to visualise the process.

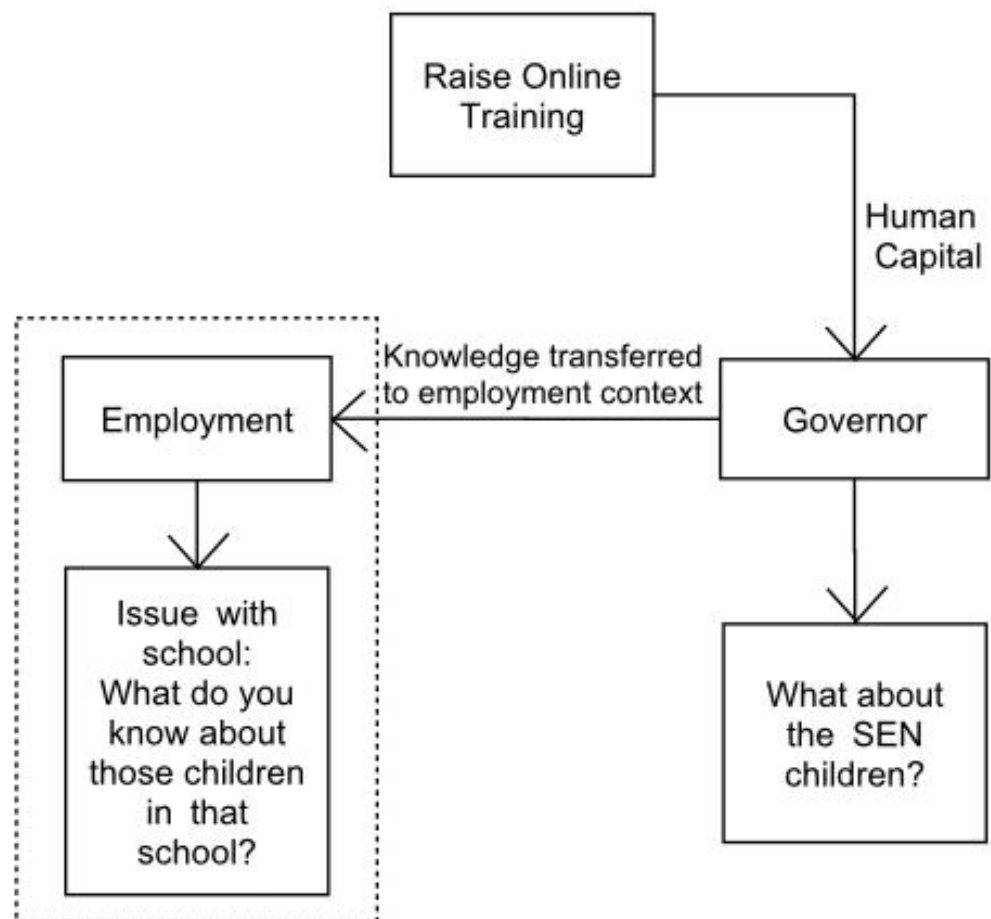


Figure 5.6: How human capital can be deployed in different contexts

In the case of human capital, it is created for investment, but some may be consumed: this training seems to have been an investment-oriented form

of training. She seeks to utilise the knowledge as a governor and in her work. to ask questions of schools in different ways. She is adapting what she has learned from the course. The knowledge is the same but the questions she asks (the way she applies it in school) are different. This strengthens her work position as well as making her able to meet the competency framework (Department for Education, n.d.n)

Fiona worked for a charity where her role included trying to improve policy and practice for a group of children who had Special Educational Needs:

“... because of my work; while I am working to try and improve policy and practice for [SEN name removed] children. The knowledge that I gained around academies, where governors sit within academies, progress, levelling, Sixth Form development, RAISEonline, I am able to actually draw on that experience when I'm actually working on issues for [type of child removed] children and in the local authorities. So, yes. I think it is quite a big two-way thing for me.”

Fiona was quite clear that there is a symbiotic relationship between her governorship and her work. The school benefited from what she knew through her job (her human capital (Becker, 1964)) while her charity benefited from what she knew as a governor (also human capital (Becker, 1964)) - where she is involved in shaping policy and practice (Department for Education, n.d.n). Hence Fiona is involved as an employee and as a governor. The diagram, Figure 5.7 below seeks to show this in a visual form.

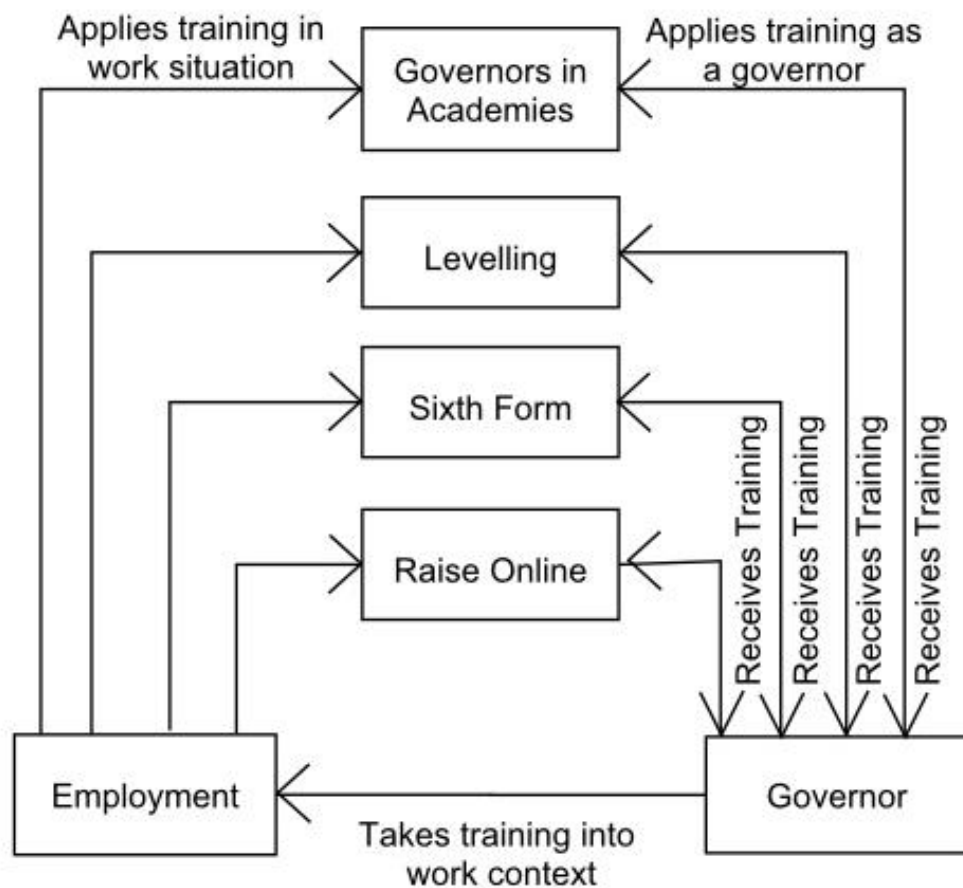


Figure 5.7: The transfer of human capital from governance to work

Figure 5.77 shows items mentioned by Fiona which she did not explain (explanation was not necessary as it was not which items arose but that items arose at all). New items may arise (e.g. progress) and Fiona will utilise her training and experience within her governorship to inform her work. Fiona's work will then inform her governorship as the knowledge is applied. This may lead to increased knowledge and experience which she then transfers into her work role – it is a continuing cycle. What is disappointing with many responses is that the governor did not challenge why things were as they are: they accepted the system as it was at the time of the interviews. They didn't question why academies should exist.



They did not question why the school always found that they had areas of weakness with RAISEonline. They did not question the reduction in size of local authorities. They did not ask why they should be enforcing performance related pay. If they did ask themselves the questions, they did not mention them in the interviews. Where disagreement with the system existed, (e.g. Michael trying to recruit governors) then they tried to work around and within the system rather than challenge it. Again, this concurs with Chitty (1989) about the agenda of neoliberalism being accepted within education even though his analysis was written over 30 years ago.

Hence some governors feel that they need more training, others that they could use the training within new contexts.

### **5.3.6 Research question 2f - What benefits do governors believe the experience of being a governor has provided to them**

Many of the governors who took part in the research were well educated and had taken advantage of the opportunities presented to them. Some had undertaken education and training late in life such as Teresa. Field (2005) pointed to the importance of lifelong learning and how it related to the acquisition of capital. The latest statistics on the numbers of people employed in Further Education where adult learning often takes place showed that between 2015/6 and 2018/9 the number of lecturers had fallen by almost a sixth from just over 60000 to 50700 (Gov.uk, n.d.c.) while the Institute for Fiscal Studies reported a 7% fall in Further Education

spending between 2010 and 2019 (Britton, J. et al., 2019). This disguised the actual fall in further education spending outside apprenticeships.

“Total spending on adult education (excluding apprenticeships) has fallen by nearly two-thirds since 2003–04. This combines cuts of 32% up to 2009–10 and 47% between 2009–10 and 2018–19.” (Britton, J. et al., 2019, p9). This reflects the number of adult learners falling by almost two thirds (Britton, J. et al., 2019). The fall in the number of adult learners is particularly difficult if we want to see an increase in human capital. The focus of funding is now on the young (Britton, J. et al., 2019) and on supporting businesses through apprenticeships. Hence governor training may be the only opportunity that individuals have to improve their life chances, but the recruitment of governors on the basis of skills may preclude the very people who would benefit most.

Graham also made a point relating to his perspective of governor training:

“I think the training for example makes you a better person as well as a better governor; it widens your horizons and your understanding and knowledge so I think in that sense but not otherwise I do not think.”

This was not a statement which was expected within the research. These statements are often used about education more generally but not about governor training. Other governors have mentioned increased understanding and knowledge (both of which fall within definitions of human capital (Becker, 1964)) but Graham is talking about something more personal. The phrase “... makes you a better person” suggests that it leads to a shift in attitudes for an individual while the phrase “... it widens

your horizons” is also about personal change. Neither of these statements are about relationships; rather they are about dispositions. The former could help an individual to create more and stronger relationships (if social capital is about trust as is suggested within Coleman (1988), Putnam’s (1995) and Field (2008) literature, then becoming a better person would make someone more worthy of trust and hence people would be more likely to establish and maintain bonds). The disposition toward widening horizons has been found in some of the responses by the interviewees whether it be becoming a councillor (Deborah) or taking a course (Teresa) or learning a language (Philip). Graham was not explicit about how these changes had affected him, hence the illustration of potential effects from other governors.

Michael talked about the procedures he had put in place to challenge the headteacher (in line with Department of Education (n.d.c) which involved meetings about pupil performance, special educational needs, pupil premium:

“It seems to work well, what it does do is give us the confidence that the governors involved (3 of us) the confidence that if Ofsted did come back in that we would be confident that we had the answers in relation to pretty much any question they threw at us with regards to pupils performance side of things. I think it gave the headteacher some confidence as well!”

This was not a one-off questioning of the headteacher and senior leadership but appeared to be an ongoing process to help ensure that the governors who would meet Ofsted would be suitably prepared:

“What we have to ensure is the termly assessment of each of the teachers with regards to their performance, so we look at classroom observation, book scrutiny and the moderated position in relation to pupils set achievement. We have links with the other schools as well so each school ... all tend to moderate each other’s so there’s competence there in relation to the data. It’s interesting there because I work in [name of local authority withheld] and some of the schools there ...there is that competence and I say, “Do you talk to your school next door and have some moderation there?” But it doesn’t seem to go on as much as it does here anyway. So that’s the help from our point of having the confidence the way we have that it is correct so if we are challenged by Ofsted. It’s a case of saying that’s our view that’s the view of the school, and that the external moderation from our partner schools over here. That helps.”

In this section, what Michael is talking about is a very time-consuming process. It is unclear how much of this is done by governors and how much by staff.

There is moderation of standards between schools within the area surrounding this school and that this is something which they can use if asked by Ofsted. This goes against what Creese and Bradley (1997) stated – that governors depend too much on the headteacher and do not have systematic processes in place and certainly contradicts Grace’s findings. Both human and social capital are clearly seen here. Governors are obtaining knowledge and new skills – which Michael states he has applied to his working role - and hence have increased their human capital. However, the links between schools are to do with the relationships between individuals and those who serve on other governing bodies. There is a trust – which while not explicit – is implicit in sharing

information about your school with another school. This relationship with the other schools could be seen as part of Coleman's (1988) multiplex of relationships – as governing bodies and schools become linked.

### **5.3.7 Research question 2g - Do governors use skills and experience that they feel they have learnt from being a governor in a work or community context?**

It is recognised that skills and experience are both elements of human capital (Becker, 1964). Although this does not necessarily include voluntary activities, they have been included. Hugh and Kenneth had both transferred the safeguarding training they received into their work context. Hugh said that he received a lot of safeguarding training within his work, but that he utilised the governor training. Kenneth felt that the safeguarding training he received on safeguarding and prevent (this took place within his role as a councillor rather than as a governor) was very relevant to his working life because he was working for a charity.

Michael had received training as a councillor and mentioned that the courses had included one on speed reading (which is likely to be transferable to all areas he is involved in) and that he had also trained schools in areas surrounding Human Resources. For long serving governors some of this training may have been a natural part of their careers, for others it may have helped in their work role.

Michael's experience, alongside that of Barbara (who had undertaken many governor training courses since appointment but was also a trainer for adults) suggest that many of the governors not only attended education and training but also provided courses to others.

Nicholas, had experience of education through his teaching but his comments demonstrated great enthusiasm to become very involved:

“When I started ... I was much younger, and I wanted to learn so I wanted to get on every panel, but I found out that I was not allowed on every panel and that was my Head at the time saying ‘do not spread yourself too thin’. However, as a parent governor I try to get to everything, the challenge was if I had a parents evening here and it clashed.

The reason Nicholas could not be at every meeting is that regulations do not permit staff members to be on certain committees. However, when he became a governor at his children's school, he could be as involved as he wished and the regulations which restricted him as a teacher governor did not apply to his new role

### **5.3.8 Conclusions**

It was clear from the responses that governors knew about training and that where a service level agreement is in place with a local authority that they are more likely to attend.

The range of governor courses attended seemed very wide for such a small group of governors but reflected the type of activities that were offered by local authorities within the north east.

The number of governors attending training did not seem to match up with evidence available from the local authority and this may have simply been due to the fact that some of the governors knew they would be asked about the topic and went on a training course before the interview. However, the responses to governor training were very positive for most governors. Questions arose about the need to ensure all governors received training by organising groups of schools where all governors would be trained on particular topics. Training had been used to provide skills individuals needed to help them make the first step into the educational system which resulted in life changing opportunities. The training is not used exclusively within school governorship. The researcher was not surprised by that as her experience suggested that this would be the case, but governors suggested that they used their training within work situations (for example in charities, church, and schools). It was surprising that one governor talked about training as being a way to ensure that she could be informed when Ofsted arrived at the school because Ofsted were due.

Ideas for changing patterns to training did come out of the research but some concern about the level of involvement of Michael's governing body in the area of standardisation between schools should be expressed as it is operational rather than strategic management and very resource intensive. The problem is not that it is done, but that it is done by governors.

**5.4 Research aim 3 - Have some governors gained real benefits in terms of human and social capital as a result of undertaking the role and do they believe that their being a governor has had any effect on the opportunities available for their families.**

Social capital was discussed extensively in the literature review, but the question is whether those words match the social capital governors say they possess.

**5.4.1 Research question 3a - Do governors increase their social capital as a result of their work within the school governing body?**

This section considers only why the interviewees became school governors and continue to remain in the role. It may also provide insight into social capital as volunteering causes an increase in the social capital of individuals but those who volunteer often possess high levels of social capital and other forms of capital (Field, 2005). The desire to volunteer suggests that an individual has strong social capital bonds. Access to volunteering opportunities can help individuals to obtain linking capital (Field, 2005) and to therefore gain advantages for their future. However, if an organisation is dominated by middle class volunteers, this may deter working class people from involvement and reduce their opportunities to develop human capital and further social capital. The results clearly suggest that governors do develop social capital within their role within the school governing body.



### **5.4.1.1 Motivation to volunteer as a school governor**

To analyse the data, the use of Butt, et al.'s (2017) ABCE framework was the starting point. However, affinity for the purposes of this analysis was expanded to include affinity to the community, to the school, having children at the school, a link to the headteacher or simply involvement in the school. Similarly, career is expanded to include the expectations of a career already being undertaken or employment links to the school. Ego is used to indicate what an individual wants to gain.

#### **5.4.1.1.0 Introduction**

It is recognised that school governors may have more than one reason for volunteering. However, there seemed to be very large numbers of governors from a public sector background. Research (Ertas, 2014) tells us that public sector workers are more likely to volunteer and are more likely to volunteer in the area of education. Many of the governors who volunteered had children and this may lead to an interest in education (Roth (2011) indicates that interest and motivation are linked) and hence may explain their decision to be a school governor.

None of the motivations mentioned suggested individuals were being forced into the role by employers or others but sometimes (particularly for councillors and those employed by churches) it was expected that they would serve the community and that school governorship may be part of this. Table 5.5 below indicates the type of response made by governors using the ABCE framework.

Affinity	Beliefs and Values
<p><i>Schoolchildren</i>  Child at the school x11  Attended the school as a child x2  To ensure 'my children' got the best education possible</p> <p><i>Work in school or linked to school</i>  Former teacher  teacher governor  teacher at school  Worked at school  Work link to school</p> <p><i>Involved in school life</i>  Treasurer of PTA  Director of multi-academy trust which took over a school  New chair "made me stay on"</p> <p><i>Community</i>  Work link to community  Link to community  Wanted to help community  Link to community as councillor  Demonstrates commitment to community  Wanted to contribute to community she serves as priest  Wants to enable pupils in the community to be the best they can be.</p> <p><i>Link to headteacher</i>  headteacher wanted challenge from educational standpoint  Approached by headteacher who is respected</p> <p><i>Needs of pupils</i>  Ensure that teachers give pupils all they need  School really good to children  Wanted to support school and the children who went there</p>	<p><i>Governorship would help the school</i>  Helping school x2  Wanted to make the schools as good as they possibly could be  Want to make a difference x3  Want to bring something to the table</p> <p><i>Children and families matter</i>  Ensure that children have the best chance in life  Families are important not just the children  Provide something back to support our children</p> <p><i>Obligation of job or success in life</i>  Ensure that children have the same opportunities governor did  Wanted to put something back  It was the right thing to do given job  Lucky in life leads to desire to put something back</p> <p><i>Standing up for others</i>  Felt that headteacher was intimidating lots of parents (suggested she could stand up for them)</p>

Career progression	Ego
<p><i>Church link to school x2</i> Link between church and faith school Spiritual direction of community means involvement</p> <p><i>Future Career</i> Intended to become headteacher Extend expertise to leadership</p> <p><i>Use existing experience</i> Long service in education</p>	<p><i>Learning about and interest in education and schools</i> Interest in education x2 Wanted to develop governance and finance Self-development Need to see what is happening beyond child's positive view of school See how things worked Wanted to learn what happened in school and community Wanted to know what was happening</p> <p><i>Other</i> Wanted to represent the community without being elected Honoured to be asked Something I had not done before Likes challenging headteacher</p>
Time to undertake the role	
Additional time due to age of children More time available by becoming self employed Increased time due to retirement	

Table 5.5: Why did these governors take up the role?

Table 5.5 does not exactly follow the ABC module because 'Time' has been added to the ABCE model as governance takes time and governors need to have time available to fulfil the commitments of taking up the role.

#### 5.4.1.1.1 Affinity

Forbes and Zempelli (2014) contend that being with friends, family and community as well as the opportunity for socialising make some people volunteer. This suggests that volunteers increase their social capital bonds (Coleman, 1988). Many reasons for affinity motivation were found and could be grouped into: schoolchildren; work in school or linked to

school; involved in school life; community; link to headteacher; and the needs of pupils

Many of the governors interviewed started off as parent governors and then became different types of governors. One example of this was Fiona (who by the time of the interviews was no longer a parent governor but a Director of a multi-academy trust) who mentioned that her children were at the school and she therefore received the advert to become a school governor. Governors with children at the school did not always take up roles as parent governors. Hugh mentioned that his children had gone to the school but that he was a co-opted governor, Janice became a governor because her children were at the school, but she became an LEA governor.

Some governors referred to their links to the school having been a pupil there. Deborah's words betray a close affinity to the school: "Just that obviously I went through the school. All my young years were spent there, so it's very close to my heart". The use of the word "heart" suggests how closely she feels the bond with the school. She was not alone in finding her school special, Edward also mentioned the school he first became a governor of "... that was my favourite school, I was an ex pupil from there". His use of the word "favourite" betrays his link to the school.

The second form of affinity found within the research was that governors sometimes worked at the school or had direct work links to the school (e.g.

Barbara). Barbara was nominated to become a governor because of her work role and the social capital links she could bring to the school. She worked at, but not for the school. Some school governors (e.g. Nicholas) worked for the school as well as serving as school governors.

Rebecca mentioned that her decision to become a governor was also work related – although in her case about using her experience:

“I ... had been in education my life. I felt that it was natural: So, I made enquiries with the local authority and was pointed towards [name of school withheld].

Rebecca had been a teacher and later worked in a senior position within the local education authority. Her decision was about how she could apply her experience after she retired which involved the use of existing skills.

The third form of affinity found within the research was through connections with the life of the school. Paid employment at a school or in education is not the only way for people to become involved in school life. Many parent or former parent governors had been involved in the school in some way, but some indicated that they were involved in Parent Teachers Associations prior to becoming governors (e.g. Fiona, Nicholas, and Teresa). This could have established links between them and other members of the school community before they took up their governorships. Parent teacher Associations are formed of parents who have children at the school and some teachers who give up their time to help the school (often through activities such as fund raising).

Affinity may be more than to children, or to the school or to employers. The governor may be volunteering to help the community. This can happen if they have strong work links to the community or live in the community. In Barbara's case she indicated her knowledge of the local community would be a great asset to the school in establishing its own links.

Not all governors had work links to the community. Some governors lived within the community (e.g. Michael) and wanted to get involved in it.

Michael clearly linked the community and the school:

“I was interested in getting involved in the local community where I was living, and an obvious route was the school. It is seen as the centre / the focus of the community and trying to put something back. I got a lot out through my own education and I felt that it was important to pay that back somehow”

He was also expressing a duty to 'put something back' for the opportunities he had received personally through his own education. At the time of the interview Michael lived within the local community he had grown up in. Michael is clearly evidencing a multiplex (Coleman, 1988) relationship with very strong social capital bonds to the community. Serving the community does not always mean living there, working within the community as Barbara and Sophia did could also establish links which were multiplex (Coleman, 1988) in nature. Hence it is clear that some of the governors had existing knowledge they could apply to the role. For some governors the decision was related to their experience rather than knowledge. Nevertheless, being a governor seems to be part of a

multiplex relationship (Coleman, 1988) where bonds with the school and community as well as other governors are established or strengthened.

Another way that governors were motivated by communities was where they were a councillor. Many of those mentioning the community were councillors with Olivia saying that being a school governor demonstrated a commitment to the community and to public service describing how useful it was to know about the schools in their ward. Edward saw his role as being to represent the community. Graham provided a slightly different insight into his motivation (the school governing body he served may not have been where he served as a councillor). A vacancy arose near where Graham lived “and it seemed to make sense to volunteer for that”. He subsequently indicated that it was “appropriate” and “almost expected” – which suggests coercion (as Taylor, 2006) indicated may happen) but Graham indicated that he was “happy to do it”.

The community may not be geographical; in Graham’s case it was a group of councillors who were placing the expectation on him. Graham’s value system (the idea of beliefs and values will be dealt with in Section 5.1.1.2) meant that Graham volunteered. Graham was not alone in mentioning “duty” (although, as has been noted, he did not use the phrase himself), other governors felt similarly.

A fourth way that affinity was found to link with motivation to volunteer as a school governor was where a governor had a link to the headteacher.

One example of this was Christopher's decision to take up the role after he was approached by the headteacher who asked him to consider becoming a school governor (Christopher had done some work at the school as part of his job and had come to know the headteacher well). This personal touch causing individuals to volunteer accords with the work of Bryant (2003) where 80% of people volunteered after being personally approached. The bond with the headteacher is shown by Christopher's view of him:

“...I look upon the headteacher, I have a lot of respect for him. And if he saw something in me that could help out, ... I will do, you know. “

This link to the headteacher (which suggests Christopher trusted him) links to the work of Coleman (1988) where personal trust is a key to strong bonds) certainly influenced Christopher in his decision to become a school governor (this aligns with Bayerlein and Bergstrand (2016)). He discussed his decision with his wife and children before agreeing to undertake the role (which shows the importance of relationships to his decision).

Barbara also felt an affinity to the headteacher when describing why she volunteered to be a school governor. Affinity bonds to the school, to teachers, etc were found within answers to other research questions.

Despite Grace's (1995) assertion that Headteachers thought of governors rather dismissively, this was not the view of governors towards the headteacher of 'their' school.



The final area links pupils more generally with affinity. A governor who seeks to ensure that teachers give all pupils a good education would be an example of this affinity.

#### **5.4.1.1.2. Beliefs**

A second area which may cause governors to volunteer are beliefs and personal values held by the individual. This area includes perspectives governors may hold and they have been broken down into: governorship would help the school; children and families matter; obligation of job or success in life; and standing up for others.

The first area re value systems is that the individual wishes to help the school. This suggests that an individual has something to contribute. In the case of Christopher, it was either his experience as an engineer or of being a parent of children at the school. Another example came in the desire of many of the governors interviewed to “make a difference”.

Barbara mentioned it in the context of actions “If you're going to be in it, then you're going to have to do something to make that difference”, in other words utilising the skills and experience and possibly relationships to take action.

The second area in this section is one of children and families. Rebecca indicated that her value system included a belief that education was not only about children but about their families. Other governors wanted other

children to have the same opportunities provided to them, for example,

Deborah:

“...I just wanted to make a difference, and make sure that the kids are getting all what they're entitled to, ... and the best education they can possibly get. Just to make sure that the staff are doing ... the best for the kids.”

This was said in response to the question on motivation. Deborah's children were not at the school and hence were not affected by the education provided by it.

The third area in this section is one of obligation by job role or success in life. Philip said: “I got the job being a governor by virtue of being the vicar of the parish” but then expressed the duty aspect “I did think it was the right thing to do given the role that I have”. It was not an obligation he had to take on, it was his value system that made him agree rather like Graham when he became a school governor because it was expected. Similarly, Nicholas took on a governorship of a local primary school (prior to becoming a headteacher). He assumed a governorship from his predecessor who was retiring although the word volunteering may not be appropriate as in this case Taylor's (2006) power relations came into play. It was part of his job and there was little choice had he opposed it. He used the term “networking” to describe the link to the other school which is indicative of social capital.

The final area of this section came from Janice's perspective on what motivated her to become a governor. She described the headteacher as a

“real horror” who intimidated lots of parents. The implication was that Janice felt that she would not be intimidated and would stand up for other parents and their children.

Some of the governors mentioned areas which were difficult to fit into groups relating to capital very easily. One of these areas was the desire of many of the governors interviewed to “make a difference”. Barbara mentioned it in the context of actions “If you're going to be in it, then you're going to have to do something to make that difference”, in other words utilising the skills and experience and possibly relationships to take action. Other governors were rather less specific about what they meant but Deborah’s statement probably summarises the sentiment:

“And I just wanted to make a difference, and make sure that the kids are getting all what they're entitled to, ... and the best education they can possibly get. Just to make sure that the staff are doing ... the best for the kids.”

In order to make a difference you need to have some skills, or relationship or knowledge to help you achieve this. As has been shown earlier, Deborah has a close tie to the school as a result of her previous experience as a pupil there. Other governors expressed similar sentiments but also wanted to help children get a good education.

A further area mentioned by Barbara was time. She realised the time commitment involved in being a governor but felt that she had the time to do the role now that her children were grown up. This isn’t either human or

social capital. It is about something which facilitates the deployment of those areas of capital.

#### **5.4.1.1.3 Career progression**

Butt, et al. (2017) describe career progression as the opportunity to learn things volunteers would not do with their employment (Butt, et al., 2017).

This section is divided into three areas: a link between a church and the school, career aspirations, and the use of existing experience.

A few the governors worked for churches (either Anglican or Methodist). It was apparent in many contributions that there was a link between the church and the school even where it was not a faith school. Faith schools require foundation governors, and the paid member of the church staff (the vicar or priest) may be obligated to take on the role. However, it may be that the need to take up the post is simply part of the duty of the clergy within the community. Some of the governors interviewed (e.g. Philip and Hugh) worked in churches and made it clear that providing a spiritual direction within the community was expected from them as part of the role and that being a school governor allowed them to apply their expertise in this area.

The second area for consideration was those who intended to progress within their educational career, and this had two main perspectives.

Firstly, an intention to expand their experience to leadership within schools (Inese) and secondly, an ambition to become a headteacher (Nicholas).

The final area within this section is long service in education. Rebecca indicated that she had a lot of experience in education and wanted to use it to help a school when she retired. She was not seeking career progression in terms of promotion but of passing on her skills.

#### **5.4.1.1.4 Ego enhancement**

Although Butt, et al. (2017) use this category for areas of praise and recognition, the term has been used in a wider way to represent what governors got out of it (e.g. fulfilling an interest or wanting to know things). These items could have been addressed under career progression, but they are not related to career; they rather represent personal interest. The decision to place them here was due to them being personal needs, wants and interests.

An example of personal interest was that several governors mentioned their interest in education. An interest suggests that they had some knowledge of the area. Those espousing this interest had usually worked in education (e.g. Anna and Graham) and hence they would have some knowledge.

Wanting to learn about what was happening, see how things worked and develop new skills were further motivations. One governor who was approached by the headteacher felt “honoured”. Another governor indicated they wanted to try something new. However, one area that came

unexpectedly was enjoying challenging the headteacher: it is ego centric due to “enjoyment” but it is part of a governor role to challenge the senior leaders of the school.

#### **5.4.1.1.5 Time commitment**

This was a new category as one of the items often forgotten is that governors need time. Where do they find it? Three governors mentioned the time commitment involved in volunteering. For Barbara, the fact her children had grown up provided the time, for Rebecca it was retirement and for Kenneth it was self-employment. This is a new category for the ABCE model but one which is an important element of volunteering.

#### **5.4.1.1.6 Other factors**

Vivian said she volunteered as a school governor after two Youth Training Service trainees came to work under her guidance at work. It is not known whether she volunteered because they were weak or strong, only that this motivated her to become a school governor.

One of the things that was noticeable from the responses of some governors were items that could be linked to the recognition that they had been fortunate in life. For example, “I have been very lucky” or “I felt I had a duty” or wanting others to have “the same opportunities I did” could all be seen to place them on the side of the fortunate “better off” element.

#### **5.4.1.1.7 Conclusion**

Governors mentioned a range of items which indicated an affinity motivation for taking up or continuing in the role. Strong links were found where they had a child who attended the school or where they had attended it themselves. A second way that the governors were connected to the school was through their work role whether working for the school or work closely aligned to it. A third way of governor linking with the school was being involved in the life of the school (e.g. Kenneth who helped organise a large event or Fiona who was treasurer of the parent teacher association). A fourth way of governor linking with the school was through the community whether they lived in the community, worked in the community, were a councillor for the community or were a governor in the community. A final way of governor having an affinity motivation was where they knew the headteacher and respected them (Christopher was explicit about this but others mentioned this including Barbara).

The second form of motivation was belief – where governors wanted to help the school or, to share their vision for children (in the case of these governors it was a way of seeing children in families or ensuring children had a good education).

Some governors indicated that they were motivated by obligations of a work or a council role to be a school governor. Had they not wanted to be a school governor their job was at risk. A final governor wanted to stand up to the Headteacher on behalf of parents. Some governors were open

that their motivation was to do with their careers, but it was not always due to career advancement (although it was for some governors). Governors who worked for a church had a mission re “providing a spiritual direction” within the community. For one governor it was about using her experience after she retired. Ego related emotions really concerned ‘wanting to do things’ for themselves. Finding out what was happening was an example because it is about the individual wanting to know and being curious. Time was important for three governors while some responses needed greater explanation and others betrayed feelings of good fortune compared to others.

There is a link between social capital and being willing to undertake training and education. Eleven of the 20 governors indicated undertaking a course of some kind after becoming school governors. Of those that did not, Barbara, Christopher, Deborah and Inese were relatively recent appointed governors (they had been in post a year or so). Anna had just completed a degree before becoming a governor. Within their interviews both Barbara and Christopher indicated that they had undertaken courses after leaving school but not since becoming a governor.

#### **5.4.1.2 Courses taken by governors**

As will be seen below, governors took a range of courses after they became governors. Using courses requires human capital but can develop social capital (there are often other people learning with you). In order to undertake courses, individuals require good social capital (Field,



2005). Coleman (1988) similarly alluded to human capital being linked to social capital. The evidence suggests that these governors had relatively high levels of social capital.

#### **5.4.1.2.1 Degrees and University courses**

Three of the governors who had undertaken a course had undertaken a university degree or an educational course. Michael was a student at the time of his appointment as a school governor and continued until he obtained his degree. Teresa had undertaken a degree (which she mentioned) and probably other qualifications between first becoming a governor and the time of being interviewed. Her career path, as has been noted in section 5.3, was initially greatly influenced by her initial governor training. Janice had taken a course leading to a certificate for elected councillors which was provided by a regional university. Other than in the case with Michael it is not known whether the courses would have been undertaken had the individuals not become school governors, but in the case of Teresa the training undertaken as a governor did seem to have been influential in her decision to study further.

#### **5.4.1.2.2 Vocational courses**

Other governors had taken courses which were more vocational in nature. Fiona stated that she undertook a Chartered Management Institute Level 7 Diploma in Leadership and Management. This is a vocational course but is at Postgraduate Level. Kenneth indicated he had undertaken an NVQ Level 4 which is at Undergraduate level – these were easy to place in

comparison to some of the education and training undertaken by these governors after they took up the role.

#### **5.4.1.2.3 Courses for job role**

Hugh indicated that he undertook a year-long course relevant to his work “I’ve just finished a ... . course looking at how ministry can be focused on community involvement ...”. Olivia also indicated that, before she retired, she had undertaken some professional courses. Neither Hugh nor Olivia compared the courses to educational and vocational equivalency levels.

#### **5.4.1.2.4 Other courses**

Some governors had undertaken educational courses either for fun (Philip took a language course) or within voluntary organisations (Rebecca mentioned Aids training). Additionally and presumably for employment purposes, Edward indicated that he had trained young people and had taken Training and Development Lead Body (TDLB) units for training (TDLB allowed an individual to assess or verify Vocational Qualifications) – he felt that this had helped him be a governor. He is likely to have found these units dealt with assessment of vocational qualifications. Sophia mentioned that she had undertaken leadership training but was not explicit about the level or type of training received. There is evidence within these governors that training was occurring and that this may have increased their human capital (Becker, 1964)

The conclusion that must be drawn on the basis of the training and courses being undertaken is that these governors have improved their human capital (Becker during their service as a school governor. That is not to say that they did the courses because they were a school governor. What can be said is that they showed that they had the social capital to invest in acquiring human capital (Field, 2008). Hence, we can say that many of these governors possessed and possess good levels of social capital.

#### **5.4.1.3 Voluntary and community work undertaken**

This section will consider different areas of work individuals undertake outside their paid employment. Forbes and Zempelli (2014) indicate that the more heterogeneous our friendship groups the more likely an individual is to volunteer.

##### **5.4.1.3.0 The overlap between voluntary and community work**

The reason for using the two terms was that some areas of community work may be paid (e.g. a councillor). If I volunteer to help with a community fair is it a volunteering or a community role? Some of the governors were explicit that voluntary and community activities were similar, for example, Edward who said: "I think it's a kind of voluntary work. community work and voluntary work is quite the same thing, aren't they?". Many of the governors undertook activities which could be seen as both community and voluntary. Graham talked about his voluntary work being a member of a political party and a councillor stating, "I think council work

in a way can be described as being voluntary". Although the questions addressed to governors were divided up into voluntary and community activities it became clear that governors were focussing more on the division and that there was an element of confusion. In order to ameliorate this, they were asked about voluntary and community activities together (both questions were put but they were asked together); this did remove some of the confusion.

#### **5.4.1.3.1 Volunteering before becoming a governor**

It was clear that many (although not all) of the governors had been involved in doing some type of voluntary or community work prior to becoming a governor. For example, Kenneth was involved in setting up a community group at a school and worked for a charity as a volunteer. Teresa was a volunteer for a charity and Inese stated that she volunteered for a lot of charities and did things with the school she worked in (this did not change due to her recent appointment as a school governor). These existing links to voluntary and community activities suggest that these individuals had the capacity to acquire human and social capital prior to their school governorships and had a relatively high level of existing social capital linking many of them to their community. Vivian and Rebecca knew each other through the same voluntary organisation and their membership pre-dated their becoming school governors. This organisation was very community involved (e.g. having a rota at a local mental hospital). The question arose of what voluntary and community activities they did now

and whether school governance may have been a factor where there was a change.

#### **5.4.1.3.2 What type of activities did the group participate in?**

This group of governors volunteered prior to becoming a school governor. The range of activities they were involved in did vary quite considerably. Graham mentioned being a “church attendee” and Teresa mentioned being involved in “...the life of the church which was attached to the school”, Janice mentioned her involvement in a school playgroup, while Edward mentioned that he was on the management committee of a youth centre and had been “... involved in the setting up of an organization called [name withheld] Community Development Trust which got their grant from government”. Barbara had been a voluntary swimming instructor and raised money for her son’s football team although neither was immediately preceding her appointment as a school governor.

Olivia and Louis had been involved in a Youth Charity (it is not known whether they knew each other). Louis said, “I just loved it and it was a lovely community”. This shows an affinity with working with young people— and he is likely to have built up some social capital as a result of being involved there as well as working as a teacher in the area for almost 20 years.

#### **5.4.1.3.3 Volunteering to help school link to the community**

Louis pointed to his school not being linked sufficiently to the community it served. However, Michael sought to help the school not only through his involvement as a governor but by volunteering to help the school at events such as a jumble sale. However, he noted that the car boot sale he volunteered to help at was about “the school trying to be involved in the community and getting the community to come along and it has been quite successful”. Michael was a councillor and hence it could be seen that this link to the school is also reinforcing his relationship to the community (i.e. his multiplex social capital bond (Coleman, 1988) to the community

#### **5.4.1.3.4 Extension of voluntary activities due to retirement**

Rebecca used retirement to extend her voluntary activities. She served on the adoption panel as a lay member. Retirement allowed her to chair the governing bodies and she also pointed to skills gained at the local flower club, being a church warden. She said that the roles allowed her to work with and manage people. She indicated a theme mentioned by Fiona – although not to do with school governorship – learning and experience in a voluntary organisation helped her in her work role in managing, chairing, and talking at meetings. Interestingly the voluntary activities did not take place in only one geographical location but there was a symbiotic relationship found in other areas of the interviews with governors about transferring skills between organisations and other parts of life (see Figure 5.8). In this case she was bringing in experiences from other voluntary work into her school governorship.

She had some experience of managing people from a separate organisation but learning about chairing meetings helped her both in her work role and her voluntary role. As a teacher it would probably be expected that she would be “able to talk at meetings” but she did mention elsewhere in the interview that she had become more confident as a result of being a school governor. Perhaps this links to the points made by other governors about the difficulties they found when becoming a governor, of not feeling able to contribute effectively.

Graham did not suggest that his voluntary activity had been changed by his school governorship. He no longer simply attended church; he was more involved and was a reader at church services. He was also involved with a community transport provider but stated that while he did “quite a bit of voluntary activity” that “school governing is one of the main ones”.

Graham’s employment situation had changed since he became a governor (he was retired) and he could now devote more time to voluntary activities although he did not state this. Hence, even had governorship been a factor in his decision to volunteer it would be difficult to identify.

#### **5.4.1.3.5 Volunteered due to greater confidence**

Christopher had not previously undertaken voluntary work but had decided to manage his daughter’s football team. He indicated that becoming a school governor had increased his confidence and he doubted he would have undertaken the role without being a governor:

“Well, I have actually, because I've taken over another voluntary role, which is my daughter's football team was going to fold, and I have taken that on board. They play, obviously she's 13, they play under-13's at the [name withheld] League. And there are twelve of them in the team, and I look after them now. I possibly may not have had the confidence to take that on board if I had not done the governor role, you know.”

Christopher does not say that he would not have taken on this voluntary role – he has a bond with his daughter. This is social capital leading to increased emotional capital (the public network bringing confidence and then being applied to the private sphere to help his daughter). He stated that the governor role provided him with the confidence to take on this additional responsibility. The link between the two activities is indirect but his governorship does appear to have a knock on effect on his daughter.

#### **5.4.1.3.6 Voluntary work as part of role within church**

Philip was expected to undertake voluntary work as part of his vocation.

However, Philip suggested that being a school governor influenced him:

“... I have a greater awareness of the importance of people giving their time in order for the common good and I'm also aware that I have to give my time for the common good too”

What changed here was not an increase in time spent – Philip does not state that although it is implied. Rather he states that it provided greater awareness of the importance volunteering within society to help others and the need for him to do likewise. This is about Philip's relationship with the community that he works and lives within (forging stronger social capital links), it is about bridging the gap between the church (embodied in him)



and others and working together for “the common good”. This is also about community although the term is not articulated because the church serves a geographic community.

#### **5.4.1.3.7 Family member volunteers**

Hugh’s involvement in the school as a governor had prompted his wife “to go into the school to read on a weekly basis, ... with three groups of children”. On one hand the link to Hugh suggests emotional capital but Hugh is already involved in the school and this is not helping him to be a better governor. This is an example of bonding social capital being employed. Hugh already donates time for the school which developed on the link of having children at the school and this may have influenced Hugh’s wife’s decision to volunteer at the school. An alternative explanation could be that since their children attended the school she had an affinity to it before Hugh became a governor (Bode, 2017). However, the involvement of his wife may increase Hugh’s social capital bonds to the school as it may be seen as a sign of his commitment to the school.

#### **5.4.1.4 Councillors, Communities and Governors**

Several the governors interviewed were also councillors. The question arises of why councillors would become governors. There is little in the volunteering literature about communities. Yet it is at the centre of Hanifan’s (1916) example of social capital where community resources were employed to shape a school. James et al., (2010) does mention that being a chair of governors is a position of “community leadership” (James

et al., 2010, p. 5). This section is about the multiplex relationships (Coleman, 1988) which exist between the school, the communities and their councillors and the governors who work in the school. The nature of these relationship rather than the simplex relationship of a governor to the school ten

#### **5.4.1.4.1 The link between being a councillor and a governor**

The similarity between school governing and being a councillor was mentioned by a number of interviewees who were councillors who made explicit links between the two roles. Janice compared the two roles and their similarity: “I suppose it's to what I do now, it's sort of similar. It's noting where you're supporting and challenge and doing it the right way.” Janice had not been a councillor at the time she became a school governor. Just as she was expected to support the local authority, she was expected to support the school. She also had to deal with complaints from people who lived in the ward and as a chair of governors she had to deal with complaints against the school. It is not only the link that is important here. She also shows a degree of social capital. Challenging the school had to be done the “right way” which suggests that there is a “right way” to behave (i.e. a social norm (Lin 2002)) which is indicative of social capital being used within both roles.

Edward also mentioned the Council and again compared the work he did for the schools to the work he did there:

“Yeah of course, I mean and vice versa. I mean I sat

on the council's Personnel committee. So I've been involved in appointment of Chief Officers and going to the school. I'm involved in the appointment of Headteachers of senior management teams, Head of department et cetera. I've used that in the council and training and experience in the council in the schools".

This is a recognition that, in Edward's view, there is some linkage between roles which is often not considered by those who do not serve on the local authority. These links could be seen to have been mutually beneficial – Edward sees his experience in that light.

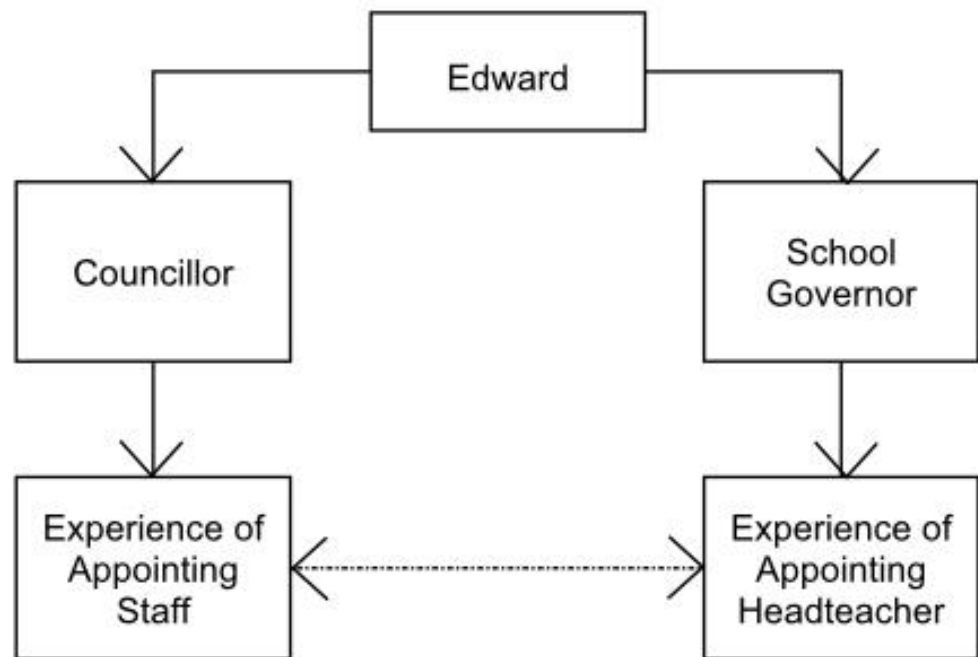


Figure 5.8: Edward's mutual reinforcement of skills in different contexts

Figure 5.8 represents what Edward is saying about his skills being used in different contexts. He had experience in council (this is human capital because the experience is his) and he used it in school (this furthered his experience and hence enhanced his human capital) and then used what he knew from being a governor through training or experience within his Council role (the council benefits from Edward as a school governor

because his human capital in appointments has been increased) but the human capital cannot be seen in isolation. Social capital is also relevant here: Edward links the school as a governor and also links to the council which increases Edward's social capital (Rege, 2008) due to increase in status (Fershtman, et al., 1998) (being a councillor provides status and this often causes approaches to volunteer (Byerlein and Bergratran, 2016)).

Michael also made explicit links between the two roles. Like Edward he was a long serving governor. Michael did note that he had developed skills in other areas from his work for a second local authority and being a councillor:

“I have chairing skills, the work I have done as a councillor, chairing committees and ensuring all points of views are heard, those skills have been very helpful as the chair of governors to ensure that the other members of the governing body have the opportunity to put their views forward to ensure that they still feel part of the process and decision making that takes place.”

Michael does not leave it with the skill, he mentions relationships to ensure that all views get heard and governors “feel[ing] part of the process and decision making”. This is about forming a community of governors who all have the chance to have their views heard: in other words, it is about the bonds of social capital between governors. This does align with expectations of governors (Department for Education, n.d.n) and of Chairs of Governors. Being a councillor may be seen in this case to cause individuals to bring to the governing body several human capital skills as well as the social capital link to the local authority.

Graham mentioned how the role of the councillor had changed over the years and how it forged social capital between different groups (he did not specifically call it that but his statement is about links and relationships within the community). He talked about links to residents' associations (bringing together residents, councillors, police and council officers), friends of the local parks being examples of his community involvement: "I certainly try to get involved in the local community". A number of governors indicated that they wanted to link to the community (note section 5.6.2.1.3 where it was the school rather than the individual seeking the link). The link between being a councillor and a school governor and between being a councillor and creating links to the local community were evident in the interviews for almost every councillor interviewed.

#### **5.4.1.4.2 Living in the community**

Living in a community creates social capital links which are multiplex (Coleman, 1988) in nature. Links between individuals may be formed due to where a governor lives as they may "... bump into the vice chair or one or two of the parents and you have a conversation because I live in the community "as Michael noted. To Michael the community was important, and his school governance came out of a desire to help the community.

#### **5.4.1.4.3 Running a church in a deprived area**

One of those who mentioned governorship having a strong influence over her work within the community was Teresa:

“... every school holiday, we provide free activities and free lunch because I’m aware through my school governance work that there is a large proportion of the children in this community who are on free school meals and because of the high deprivation in this area people struggle with the school holidays”.

This is about school governance informing activities and causing Teresa to use her role to help children in her community. Many of these children will attend the schools where she is a governor. In this case Teresa is using knowledge about the demographical position of children in her area (tie human capital per Becker (1964) and applying it to create bonds with the children and parents within the community (Coleman, 1988). It is contended that Teresa was trying to meet a need within the community rather than to necessarily form additional social capital bonds. In November 2020, a £220m increase in activities and food for disadvantaged families was announced by government (Whittaker, n.d.) after Marcus Rashford’s repeated calls for the end of holiday hunger (which Teresa refers to when she talks about people struggling with the school holidays).

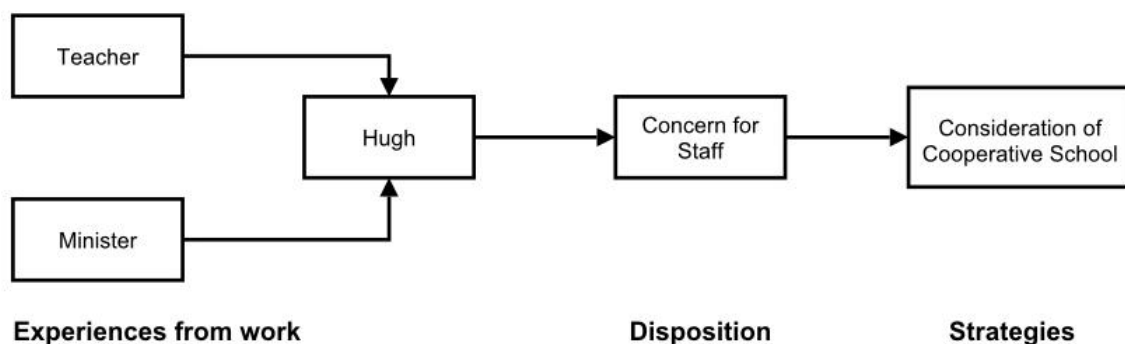
#### **5.4.1.4.4 The school at the heart of the community**

Graham sees the school as an intrinsic part of his community but mentions that it is located in the ward he represents and that the school is part of the community and he is a governor of the school “I think it is bringing them all together, locking us in a way” (which demonstrates a multiplex relationship in his social capital. Michael similarly thought that the school seemed a good way to become involved in the community.

#### 5.4.1.4.5 The community centre

As has been stated in Section 5.4.1.4.4, Michael wanted to become a school governor because he wanted to be more involved in the community. He stated that he had long standing links with the community centre and its groups. Groups spring up and disappear, but the centre remains.

Hugh felt he was part of a very community-oriented school and that his teaching experience and his ministerial work had been utilised within the school, as depicted in Figure 5.9 below.



*Figure 5.9: How Hugh's disposition influenced his actions as a governor*

Figure 5.9 shows the link between disposition and action as a governor. Hugh mentioned that he wanted to protect all staff, including the cleaners (this suggests social capital because it is an empathetic link – it is not emotional capital because it is not within the private domain (Reay, 1996). It is a general disposition (part of his disposition and human capital) towards schools and may have features which go well beyond work

including links to the school through his children, and that this was leading his school to consider becoming a Co-operative school (a form of school structure which seems to reflect his disposition). This links to the disposition of individuals who become governors (see Section 5.6.1.1).

#### **5.4.1.4.6 Community activities strengthening bonds between school and community**

This section also considers how social capital may be deployed on behalf of the school. Similarly, Barbara who had already been very involved in community activities within her job role had expanded this and said:

“... as a governor I’m doing some with the school, as well, in my own time. So next week we are doing the street parade, lighting lanterns around [area name removed], around [name removed] park and back to the school.”

It should be noted that this is something Barbara sees as part of her governor role but was not found generally in responses provided by governors.

The disposition of governors seems to be predicated on empathy and service to the community. There were a number of ways in which school governors exhibited links to the school or things they felt had changed as a result of school governorship.

#### **5.4.1.4.7 Increasing confidence due to school governorship**

Giddens (1999) suggested that volunteering may increase confidence of those who undertake roles. Christopher, Michael and Rebecca all



mentioned that becoming a governor had increased their confidence (the process through which Michael developed this is considered in the discussion of what it was like when these individuals first became school governors). For Christopher this had led him to take up leadership of his daughter's football team and he also felt that what he had learned from the "managerial capacity" work of a governor had affected other people's perceptions: "I think that your kind of skills and knowledge definitely come across in your peer group, as well". Although this is about skills and knowledge it is also about status (Fershtman, et al., 1998). Although it is unlikely that this was his primary motivation for taking up the role, Christopher stated that he was better regarded by his peers (an increase in status leads to volunteering (Fershtman, et al., 1998)) because of what he has gained through his work as a governor.

#### **5.4.1.4.8 Empathy towards school and its personnel**

Deborah stated elsewhere that the school was "close to her heart". It is not known whether Deborah became more aware of this after becoming a governor or whether it was through governorship (her answers suggested that it was through governorship). Empathy may be linked to emotional capital where it is within the private sphere (Nowotny, 1981). It is about helping families to be resilient and to gain capital in other ways. This form of empathy is not within the private sphere and hence the bond must be one of social capital. However, the strength of the bond is apparent from her words.

Barbara also stated that she was empathetic towards teachers because she had training in the further education sector and there were similarities to the teachers' role. Hugh had taught both in secondary education and in higher education so felt he brought in experience from his teaching and he mentioned words suggesting that he could relate to them " ... the Head, ... the leadership team are very good, very strong ...

One of the things which came across in the interviews with governors who had not been teachers (particularly Christopher, Deborah, Philip, and Vivian) was that they were very sympathetic towards teachers and the school. Sympathy does not equate to emotional capital in this context because it is also not related to families. It is about emotional linking (usually binding social capital (Coleman)). Christopher talked about it being "... easy to have a go at schools and teachers but I think they have quite a lot on their plate ... I think they are doing a great job". Deborah talked about "... I would say it has made us more aware of just how hard teachers work". Vivian said

" ... we are working hard and the staff are and I think they feel demoralised at times but now we have to ask all these questions ... to be honest I wouldn't like to be a teacher now because they are not there just for teaching, its everything else they have got to have".

This is a sign of a relationship – it may be only one way from governors toward teachers and the school but there is a definite bond in the minds of these governors with teachers at their schools. Cooper (2011) would describe this as empathy because if "selfish individualism is the antithesis

of empathy” (Cooper, 2011, p. 252) then thinking of others is empathetic. Philip talked about “... providing a critical eye but we trust the teachers.”. It was also noted earlier that Barbara had empathised with teachers due to her work as a teacher of Adults. Governors exhibit empathy toward the school and its personnel. Philip’s trust in the teachers is a social capital link (Field, 2008).

How is this bond formed? There are a number of possibilities. It could be a view that pre-existed governorship, such as Deborah’s. It could be through activities undertaken in school (e.g. seeing reports to the governing body or its subcommittees or through being a link governor) which lead to bridging social capital. Alternatively, it could part of a multiplex of relationships with the school through the governing body where teachers are identified as part of the school community in the same way that they see pupils. That there is a link was evident from the responses of these governors (although not by all governors).

#### **5.4.1.4.9 Political effects on school bring empathy**

The governors also established relationships with the “school”. Evidence of this came from a range of governors. For Deborah it was a political (not party political) problem. She found “the criticism” and “the way they change the curriculum ... really bad ... quite shocking.”: If school governance is to become non-political (and governors are encouraged to think of it in those terms) then the strong affinity of governors to the school needs to be broken in order that they fulfil the role government envisages

for them in documents such as Department for Education (n.d.n) rather than challenging government decisions.

Two methods of involvement were noted (outside Nicholas and Louis' teacher governor roles): involvement in the PTA and school assemblies.

#### **5.4.1.4.10 Involvement in Parent teacher Associations**

The disposition for volunteering was clear in Nicholas and Fiona's involvement in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) of their respective children's schools. Nicholas mentioned raising funds for the PTA, but he also made it clear that his job included representing the school within the community. Fiona's motives were different. Fiona said she was Treasurer of the PTA at one point and that "I suppose my skills have always lain in that sort of business administration" and mentioned that she had been instrumental in ensuring that the PTA obtained charitable status utilising skills she had obtained from her employment working for a charity. What is notable particularly about Fiona's skills is that she saw the transferability of what she did in her work to a voluntary role before she became a school governor.

#### **5.4.1.4.11 School Assemblies and other human capital available**

Sophia had utilised her knowledge to undertake assemblies at school and had also done curriculum work (the content was not stated but it was implicit that this was related to Religious Education in other words she deployed her human capital for the benefit of the school). This is the

application of Sophia's human capital into the school environment. This is not the only way that Sophia is linked to the school, but it is one where she is volunteering her time and skills for the benefit of the school (and is linked to Research question 1a)

Barbara had obtained her "Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector" (PTTLS) qualification (a teaching qualification of teaching in the post compulsory learning sector) and was going to do a PGCE but "that's on hold at the moment". She said she used it within her work as "... I do a lot of training". Barbara did not complete her PTTLS qualification as a result of being a school governor, but she does use it in her work. It is a resource she could deploy to train staff if required on particular aspects of the community.

#### **5.4.1.4.12. Networking through socialisation and contact outside meetings**

The literature surrounding social capital suggests that bonds may be strengthened where there is a multiplex of links (Coleman, 1988). One way this could be achieved was through socialisation because governors would see others in different situations. Some governors did note that they socialised with other governors while others said that their position meant they needed to have distance (e.g. Nicholas). For example, Christopher mentioned attending school productions where he sat and talked with other governors. Michael saw this type of activity as being "...

part of your role anyway. There is an expectation as a governor that you attend some of these things". While it was not mentioned by all governors.

Edward mentioned the community aspect as being something that could lead to other things:

"Just that being active at the schools and spending time in there and going to various events in the schools, you meet ... the young people, the pupils themselves and sometimes their parents and ... you come across them, out in the community and ... it helps you ... relate to them, to discuss other things in the community with them, when you've founded the relationship in the school."

This is a clear link between Edward's involvement in the school and his work in the community. This suggests that he is developing his existing multiplex relationship with his community and strengthening his bond to them as well as the school.

Although little evidence was sought about parent governors and links to other parents, Nicholas mentioned school events at his children's school when he served as a governor:

"But I found when we used to go to school events, Christmas performances, fundraisers, summer fairs or mainly birthday parties there are members of the body who I know there"

He mentioned birthday parties (his children would go to two or three a week) as being events where other parents would raise points with him as a parent governor. Nicholas knew these individuals – he had existing social capital with members of the governing body and these links continued and were potentially strengthened by school events. Fiona also

mentioned that governors did meet at the Christmas Concert and some other events. Vivian mentioned that she and other governors met parents at events such as Open Days.

Louis had informal contacts with other governors outside meetings:

“There is a group of governors anywhere between eight and twelve who contact me on a regular basis asking questions about what is going on in the school, or what they think is going on in their school and what they could be doing as governors. So rather than me contacting them, they contact me, because of the union I think or maybe my reputation, but they ask me”

It is not known who these governors are, or their connection to Louis.

However, the suggestion that it is because of the Union suggests that some are teacher governors (Louis had been involved in a teacher Union and was previously a teacher governor). This is Louis providing support to other governors at their request, it is not Louis offering support (this is denoted by “they contact me” and “they ask me”). It is a relationship, but the support is not mutual. It is about a link between the individuals and hence, Louis is describing the relationship not as being one way but where he is regarded as having a high level of social capital and the other governors want to link to him.

Similarly, Fiona reported that she kept in touch with other governors by email. As Vice Chair she did have more formal meetings with the chair of governors to discuss some items outside the governing body meeting “... or I have missed a meeting and [Chair’s name withheld] will update me”.

Some governors like Olivia did not normally socialise with other governors but she had been invited to an “evening celebration for the staff” after Ofsted by the headteacher and other governors had also attended. This was not a normal event for the school or for governors.

Kenneth, Louis and Rebecca all had stronger links with some governors, governors mentioned strong links with one or two governors – Kenneth mentioned socialising with the chair of governors at one of his schools and Louis also mentioned having coffee with the chair of governors at one of his schools. However, he describes some of the other governors as “friends” even though he does not socialise with them. Rebecca sometimes met the headteacher outside school for coffee but did not mention doing so with other governors.

Governors indicating more regular links included Inese and Janice. Inese said “Yes, as we know each other quite a lot”. Janice talked about having nights out with friends who were governors or sometimes going to staff nights out. Hence, we can say that although governors do not regularly socialise as a group, some governors do socialise together while others have more informal dialogue through meetings, telephone calls and accidental contact.

The evidence from these governors suggest that school governance can help governors form a multiplex of relationships with other governors both



within their own governing body and outside it and this multiplex of relationships makes social capital bonds stronger. This strongly aligns to Coleman's 1988 paper about multiplex relationships and the length of service for these governors (70% of the governors had served for over 5 years and 40% for over 20 years, see Table 4.7) may be linked to this.

#### **5.4.2 Research question 3b - Do governors increase their cultural capital as a result of their work within the school?**

Bourdieu's (1986) cultural capital is linked with the economic sociologist's human capital, but it is about the behaviour of individuals and their ability to maintain good manners and enjoy music of a particular type. The competency framework for governance does allude to the need for governors to behave appropriately (Department for Education, n.d.n, p. 11). Little evidence of any change to cultural capital was found. However, governors did attend events at the school that would have potentially affected their cultural capital (but is more likely to have improved social capital bonds). Examples of events reported included musical shows and exhibitions of pupil work. Other areas of increasing human capital were found including the language course taken by Philip. If undertaking this research again, more forthright questions would to be formulated to answer this question.

### **5.4.3 Research question 3c - Do governors perceive that their being a governor has any effect on the opportunities available for their families?**

Interview questions 28 and 29 sought to identify the answers to this research question. So, did being a school governor increase the interest of these governors in the education of their children? Overall, yes it did. However, most of the governors seemed to have been interested anyway. Even if they indicated that their interest had increased, the governors had information which they could utilise to understand what was happening in school.

Having considered other types of capital, areas of social and emotional capital must be examined. In the case of the questions asked, the interest of governors in the opportunities available for their child may be regarded as a question on the topic of emotional capital because it is about the private realm inhabited by emotional capital (Nowotny, 1981): parents provide emotional capital to other members of their families to help them withstand the problems they may find in the outside world.

The results in this section were mixed. Although the question was about enhancing opportunities for their children, but the interview responses did not keep to that. Sometimes responses were expanded to discuss the ability to use knowledge, which school governorship had provided for them in order to help their child.

### **5.6.3.1 Interest in their own child's education**

This concerns the link between parent and child and while not equal to an increased in binding social capital (Field, 2008) it is about the welfare of the child and could be seen in light of increased emotional capital (Reay, 2000). Some governors responded positively that they had been more interested in the education of their own children, of relations or of other people's children. This suggests that there had been an increase in both binding social capital and in the emotional capital links between parent and child. A final area came where a governor talked about the opportunities, she was aware of due to being a school governor. This is an area which future researchers on emotional capital may seek to explore. It aligns with Reay's definition of "resources passed on ... by parental involvement (Reay, 2000, p569) although it can also be distinguished because this research only mentioned interest rather than involvement.

Fiona was one of relatively few governors questioned who said that she had become more interested in the education of their children as a result of being a school governor. Her rationale was about the insight school governorship provided about the ways schools work (this is human capital (Becker, 1961a) which is being exploited within a binding social capital context (Field, 2008)).

Nicholas (a headteacher) did indicate that his interest in the education of his children had been "heightened" (i.e. increased). He suggested that he

would have had an interest as he was a teacher anyway. Being a governor “gave me insights into the day-to-day strategic angle within the school of my children.”. This is information coming from outside the family being utilised in the private sphere (Nowotny, 1981) and may be activated should the need arise (as Michael felt more able to navigate through the system for his children) and could be seen as an increase in emotional capital.

Not all governors had children and those that did had children who were no longer in school or other educational settings and it was helpful for that reason that other children were included in the question posed. Vivian’s interest in the education of children included her Great-Nephew. She related how this interest had led her to encourage him and, when he struggled with a subject, to help arrange tuition for him. She knew a tutor through another voluntary organisation and linked the tutor to her Great-Nephew. It seemed that this interest was something developed since becoming a school governor and she did not mention similar interest for her niece (her Great-Nephew’s mother). This may still be binding social capital, but it is also emotional capital because the scope of the bond it is restricted to the private sphere despite social capital expended through participation in a voluntary association.

Some interviewees distinguished their how they felt from the word “interest”. Although mentioning increased insight Sophia did not feel that she was more interested – she just had greater insight. Insight links to the

human capital (Becker, 1964) she holds about the system and the social capital bonds she has with her children.

As a Lecturer, it is likely that Graham had an interest in the education of his own children, but he said that being a governor had led to him taking an interest in the education of family members who had been to schools where he served as a governor (this is emotional capital where it takes place in the private sphere (Nowotny, 1981) but it is also strengthening the social capital bonds between Graham and family members but given that the family members were not specified it is hard to state that the form of social capital engaged was binding in the way the Field, 2008 meant it to be used. In contrast, Louis and Olivia were grandparents and noted their interest in the education of their grandchildren.

Louis indicated that he had become more interested in the education of his grandchild, but in his case, it was in the primary school and the education of very young children. Louis, who was a retired secondary school teacher at the time of the interview, was looking after his granddaughter on specific days each week and being a school governor had led him to become more interested in her education “I’m trying to bring [name removed] on (my granddaughter) to understanding numbers and the shapes so being a governor has helped”. This is clearly emotional capital (Reay, 2000) (the investment in the bond to his Granddaughter in a private sphere) to develop the human capital of Louis’s Granddaughter. Hence there is some evidence that this type of capital being deployed within this sample

of governors. We must, however, question whether Louis would have had a similar interest simply because he had the time to be involved in her life (he had retired) and he had a close tie to her due to familial relationships. He was deploying his human capital from school governorship, but we do not know what he would have done had that not been available (eg would he simply have read books)

Olivia made a similar point that being a School governor had given her increased understanding of the education system "... so it has helped; it has given me that interest and that knowledge." She could talk to her daughters about the education of her grandchildren. This also implies a link to the deployment of human capital (Becker, 1964) for the benefit of the family (binding social capital) – an investment in the private sphere which would also concur with emotional capital (Reay, 2000).

Where specific family members were not named, interest in other children was mentioned. Barbara said she was in a better position to support other children because she was a school governor (this is not emotional capital as it isn't in the private sphere (Reay, 2000) but is clearly deploying human capital to assist the children) while Deborah provided some examples of what she had learned as a school governor:

"...I did not know about People Premium, until I became a governor, and ... about different grants. You know, there is all sorts of stuff out there which I did not realise. So obviously it's made me sort of check with friends or family members. Oh, did you know that you can do this, or get that?. So yes, I would say definitely."

She used the experience she had as a governor to talk to other parents and to try to utilise what she had learned to help others in her community (this shows social capital bonds to the community as well as young people). This was about ensuring that the children within the community got the help and support they were entitled to. It indicates that she was using her experience and knowledge (which is human capital, Becker (1964)) within her existing social network and potentially leading to an improved education for the children of her friends and family although the improvements will require investments by those friends and family through emotional capital.

Philip's perspective was also for children more generally:

“... where I live there are pockets of trouble and poverty and problems and I can see that education is the best way of children changing that situation ...”

What Philip is mentioning here is education as a tool of social mobility something which is not universally acknowledged as the best way to provide equal chances (see for example Reay, 2013). However, in his defence he has acknowledged that there is a problem of poverty and that this is of long standing (Booth's (1901) survey helps us to see that). Social mobility is not easy. In the Introduction to the thesis the Office of National Statistics, n.d.b) publication on deprivation was referred to and this showed that there were many very poor areas and a smaller number of affluent areas. If we are aware of pockets of poverty, then a different means to attack the problem would be to reduce the poverty through policy

changes such as support to the communities (Apple, 2014) which do not blame the victim.

Michael's response focused on the way that knowledge he had gained as a school governor helped to ensure that his child's needs were met. This did not match the question posed but is clearly shows human capital being deployed and invested in his child (this is emotional capital (Reay, 2000)). It is useful, however, in that it shows interest in the education of his child. Michael spoke about how his school governorship had impacted on his son. He said that knowing the education system had helped him to ensure his son received the support he needed. Michael worked in an Education Department and would have been aware of services etc available from them (which is human capital (Becker, 1964)), but as a governor he had an insight into schools and how they worked as well as having the opportunity to learn about Special Educational Needs (it is not known how far he did this, but his comment suggests that he did). What is clear here is that Michael is deploying human capital (Becker, 1964) gained from school governorship into the realm of his family and binding social capital to his child (Field, 2008) and emotional capital (Reay, 2000) were deployed.

Inese provided a response which at first sight was typical for the governors who were also teachers:

"I was interested in the educational system before anyway so I do not think being a governor has changed me or my interests in any way, if you have



got the passions then you have the passion. It was something that I wanted to do but the passion was there so it hasn't decreased or increased".

However, it differs because her response does not relate to her children, instead she responds to a question which is more general (and which was not asked) – about her interest in the education system. The interest in the education system may be utilised as social capital (developing links to people with a similar interest, which is bridging social capital (Field, 2008))

Sophia mentioned insight into the system "...you look at it with a slightly different eye when you realise what goes on ... I won't say it made me more interested it's probably made me more informed."

Similarly, Rebecca (whose children were adults by the time she became a school governor) also said that she had an interest in the education of children in her family: "I've always been interested in it, yes." This does not suggest an increase in interest but a continuing high level of interest.

For most governors, the answer was clearly no. The reason for this seemed mainly to be due to having high aspirations for their children before becoming a school governor.

### **5.6.3.2 Did governors believe it affected the aspirations of their children or other children?**

This is closely tied to emotional capital and binding social capital. Binding social capital between parent and child (Field, 2008) would be expected to lead to aspirations for their children. Hence it may be expected that the result of being a school governor may cause the children to aspire more as they come to know more about how the education system works.

In many cases governors said taking up the role had not affected the aspirations for their children. Anna, Michael, Olivia, Sophia, and Teresa all indicated they did not believe that being a school governor had affected the aspirations of their children.

Teachers or former teachers (Anna, Hugh, Louis, Michael, Nicholas) mentioned their job role and felt that children realised education was important (although Nicholas noted that his aspirations for his son and those of his son did not yet match).

Graham was equivocal about whether being a governor had affected the aspirations of his children “I do not think it has particularly”. Only Edward said he “would like to think” that his work as a school governor had affected the educational aspirations of his son. However, he was not explicit about how this would work in practice and his son was being educated in an education system outside England.

This type of connection, that there is a link between school governorship and the aspirations of children, would be very difficult to identify even if it were obviously present. There is a little evidence that school governorship did lead these governors to have higher levels of aspirations of their children. This may simply be due to the sample having high levels of interest in the education of their children even had they not been school governors. This does not refute a proposition that emotional capital and binding social capital may increase due to school governorship, only that the type of effect is unlikely to include increased aspirations for their child or children.

### **5.5 Pressure put on governors**

Coding of responses to interview questions was informed by the governor responses and at the end of the interview governors were asked whether there were any areas that “you feel have not been discussed but which you feel are important” (see Appendix A). One of the themes which came out was the pressure put on governors when undertaking the governor role at no cost to the school. Government is putting pressure onto school governors, and particularly chairs of governors as can be seen in the Competency Framework (Department for Education, n.d.n). Chairs of governors were most likely to complain about the workload, but other governors found the strain difficult. The workload complained about was not only the quantity of work but the nature of it.

### **5.5.1 Need to remember that school governance does not replace paid employment**

Rebecca was a chair of governors within an Academy. She said that in that role she would be "... judged by Ofsted on the senior leadership team level so you have to know every single thing about the school". It was clear that Rebecca took the role seriously and that she wanted Ofsted to judge the school as being good or outstanding but stated that "as chair of governors I sometimes think I've got a full time job". Similar points were made by Kenneth and Nicholas who mentioned the need to remember that governors were performing the role without cost to the school. This is in sharp contrast to Shearn's (1995) comment that the governing body just sits and does nothing and to Grace's discussions with School Leaders about Governors (1995). Their feeling of the need to know everything is in line with the Department for Education (2017) competency framework

### **5.5.2 Governor professional skills assessed by Ofsted**

Being a school governor is not designed to replace a job: if it were governors would be paid. Vivian points out the problem faced by governors who are recruited on the basis of their skills:

"... but now we've got to have financial skills, budgets, HR skills and it puts a lot of people off. And to me being in the business world you've got people are employed that have the skills. And it seems to me that "Right, now go into a school and do that voluntarily and we'll inspect you and judge you".

Vivian had been a governor for some years and had been employed in business throughout her working life. People are being encouraged to

become school governors, particularly people from business (Inspiring Governance, n.d.c) – for which they are not paid. Their reward for giving up their time to become school governors is to have their professional skills (a similar point is made by Young (2016) but in that case the skills are being used by the school) examined by Ofsted. Some individuals may be deterred from taking up the role by the fear of Ofsted. Other individuals may feel obligated to continue because the power relation which exists between them and their employer is too strong to do otherwise but who cannot be said to be volunteers (which supports Taylor’s (2006) statement view).

There are two views on whether deterring individuals is a good idea. The first is Fiona’s position of wanting the ‘right parents’ i.e. people with skills that could be utilised (however Grace (1995) does make the point that many governors were seen as obedient and leaving things to the professionals when skills were not required). If an individual has no skills, then they should be deterred. The second is Michael’s view that everyone has skills if you look deeply enough for them and both Michael and Louis mentioned that they tried to encourage new governors– particularly parent governors – within their governing bodies. Encouragement suggests that they are trying to form bonds with them which potentially could lead the parent to obtain greater levels of social capital. The Department for Education Competency framework for governors (n.d.n) would suggest that the Fiona’s is the correct perspective. However looking at some of the statements in that document (such as “Everyone on the board ... advises

on how risks should be managed or mitigated to reduce the likelihood or impact of the risk and on how to achieve the right balance of risk”

(Department for Education, n.d.n, p12)), the question arises of whether a newly appointed governor with human relations knowledge would immediately be able to contribute to this immediately.

What is clear is that governors need knowledge and experience to prepare for Ofsted and to manage the school (i.e. human capital) that they can apply during and after an Ofsted inspection. However, it is clear that some of this knowledge can be applied outside the governing body context (Olivia). It is noted that some of the comments made are about time rather than knowledge and experience – school governance is increasingly time consuming according to these governors and increasingly demanding (reading the Department for Education (n.d.n) competency framework for governors it is easy to see how governors spend so much time performing their role) and some of these governors attribute this to Ofsted. There is relatively little literature on the transferability of skills from school governance, but this group of governors does suggest that they utilise skills in other areas of their lives including in work and in voluntary organisations.

### **5.5.3 Increasing challenge of school governors**

Vivian perceived that the Ofsted framework (a recent Ofsted framework may be found at Ofsted (n.d.a)) as onerous for governors. It is recognised that Vivian was referring to a previous document, but the recent document

shows that they are accountable) had led to a change in the work of her governing body:

“You just cannot be a governor and just go along to termly meetings. Ah yes I will go to the next meeting and we got to have reports on teaching and learning. There is now a committee looking at that. Everything attendance, behaviour we’ve always had them but now it’s all about targets and challenges and, if we as governors now, are not challenging the headteacher and the staff we’re in trouble.

Vivian’s school had recently been judged as requiring improvement and this had led to interventions. While there are resources to help governors such as questions to challenge the school which provided by the NGA (National Governors Association, n.d.a; National Governors Association, n.d.b), Vivian is complaining that the attitude towards staff and their work is changing. There is a suggestion here that Vivian feels that the environment of school government is changing due to Ofsted. Note the words “we’re in trouble”: It is contended that “we” refers to the school governing body and this statement suggests that she feels a link to it which is quite strong, perhaps that she feels an obligation to it (Coleman, 1988) and this in turn suggests social capital links have developed with other governors. The link to staff is less obvious but she seems uncomfortable with the new framework (Ofsted, n.d.a). Shearn (1995) suggested that governors did not do anything, and this is sharply contrasted by Vivian’s statement. Having read the Department for Education (n.d.n) guidance re governor competency statements (which uses the word challenge 16 times) it is clear that challenge is at the heart

of what government seek governors to do and that Ofsted are not the only drivers of challenging staff and the school.

#### **5.5.4 Conclusions**

Governors do a very hard, complex job and one which seems to involve (particularly chairs of governors) great commitment to the school in school. The government have placed increasing emphasis on governors (many of whom work full time) taking on responsibility for the school since 1988 with the Education Reform Act and they are now assessed by Ofsted as part of the leadership group.

There were concerns that some governors were asked to work long hours in school. Philip's two or three days in school seems a great deal but Rebecca also mentioned the time commitment as a chair of governors as being like a full-time job. This is hardly surprising given the competency framework for school governors (Department for Education, n.d.n) which contains sections of almost all aspects of school governance and lists many items that are a chair's responsibility. Having read the framework, the decision of these chairs to spend so long in school is understandable.

For some governors it was an extension of their normal work activities as they were expected to use their skills to help the school (whilst being a volunteer without pay). For some (like Christopher who had done this as part of his normal role anyway) it was not too great a burden, but for others the governorship could lead to quite expensive professional and legal



skills being employed without cost. It was pointed out that these skills could then be assessed by Ofsted.

Finally, governors felt that they were being asked to challenge the school and its personnel and that this led to much greater pressure being placed on governors.

## **5.6 Conclusions**

The research questioned whether school governors obtained human and social capital from undertaking the role. Other types of capital were considered and sought but primarily the research focussed on changes to the governors and changes to their networks.

The first research aim was to question whether governors simply deployed existing skills to the role. It was found that many governors brought skills from employment, from voluntary work and from working within their community and these were applied to the governing body. At first sight this may appear to provide evidence that a skills-based recruitment would bring the skills that the governing body required. However, the process was not one way. Governors learned new skills (this is human capital (Becker, 1964)) which they applied to their work or to their other activities. It is not contended that this applied to all governors interviewed. Some governors said they applied things they already knew. At the outset of the research it was expected that the challenge of finding any skills being transferred to new contexts outside school governance would be much

more difficult than it was in practice. Some of the skills mentioned were relatively weak, for example having children at the school is not really a skill, it is social capital (Coleman, 1988) because it provides a link the school. Equally, 'skills from governor training' is weak because governor training rarely provides skills, but it can provide information on which to base a skill. School governors who came from an educational background, and people who had previously served on governing bodies seemed to have an advantage at the outset in understanding the school and educational context. The skills they applied in the role were often based on past experiences and again an educational link was apparent. It was an advantage to have an educational background because governors then knew the language of education and sometime knew how to deal with Ofsted. Knowing about one phase of education made it easier to learn about another but the confidence obtained from becoming a school governor meant that one of the interviewees mentioned his involvement in governor recruitment. The transfer of human capital skills from employment and from both voluntary and community work was expected, and it was hoped but not expected to find that such skills could be and were employed outside the school governor role. Indeed, this was one of the themes that interested me in undertaking the research in the first place.

The second research aim was about training. There was clear awareness about training opportunities. These governors undertook training, but some considered that others did not (perhaps this was due to the initial

approach to participants where training was mentioned). The fact that some governor training sessions were cancelled due to small numbers of attendees suggests that many governors do not attend. At its best, training can be the first step to transform lives and these governors showed what Dweck (2007) described as a growth mindset. The question arises of what can be done for those who do not attend training but need to do so. The answer provided by some of these governors was to get a bespoke program of training, held in school for the whole governing body rather than allowing individuals to attend at a time of their choice, or not attend at all. Training was used within the governing body for the purposes of challenging the headteacher and staff and to aid understanding. However, training was also used outside the governing body, particularly where there was an educational element to the individual's employment. While this is recognised by those trying to recruit governors through businesses, more instances of employment in educational settings were found than was anticipated in a study with only 20 participants but it does align to Ertas (2014). What was interesting about one of the participants who transferred training into a work context was that they used training paid for via the school to challenge other schools about their work in particular areas. This is not an outcome that would be anticipated by those providing the training.

The final research aim concerned the benefits of being a governor and these results may be particularly interesting for those seeking to recruit new governors. The motivations for volunteering to be a school governor

were considered using the ABCE framework with the addition of time. The theme providing the greatest number of responses was affinity and this is strongly related to social capital. After becoming governors, these individuals sometimes took new courses which have the effect of increasing their social capital as well as their human capital (this agrees with the findings of Field (2005)). When setting interview questions, the researcher sought to remind governors within the interview of some contexts where they may have acquired new skills. One of these contexts was voluntary work and another was community work (this is because some voluntary work may not be tied to the community and some community work is not unpaid (e.g. serving as a councillor). The results of these interviews tie in closely at times with the literature surrounding volunteering (including Lovell et al. (2015), Bode (2017), Phillips (2005) and Rege (2000)) but should be seen as providing insights into how school governorship fits into the existing literature on the subject rather than general literature on motivation which seems to fit less well into why governors continue to serve in the role for extended periods of time.. Some governors did report that since taking up the role they had developed new voluntary activities (this concurs with Forbes and Zempelli (2014), while others saw school governorship as their voluntary activity. One of the clearest messages of these governors was about the place of school within the community (this agrees with Lovell et al (2015)) and the importance of community. Affinity was not only found as a motivation to become a governor, but it was also found when governors described their relationship to the school. Political attitudes were rarely shown (this aligns

to Young (2016)) in the interviews but were shown when discussing perceived attacks on school personnel or schools or general or the additional work placed on teachers by educational change. There were many areas where social capital was clearly evidenced but not expected that some governors would report increased confidence due to taking up the role (this aligns to Philips, 2005). The range of activities reported and the complex and multifaceted links between governors seems to establish that, due to the nature of school governing bodies (in terms of the number of layers within the governance structure) and the range of activities they are involved in, that school governors can acquire strong but relatively numerous social capital bonds (including linking social capital) which may help them within many aspects of their lives, not simply school governance. Literature on volunteering and the acquisition of social capital bonds has proven informative in analysing the responses of the interviewees. The perspective of Coleman (1988) about multiplex relationships is confirmed by this research. Continuing motivation is affected by person, situation and person-situation interaction (Maehr, 1976). The length of service of the governors interviewed suggests accordance with Maehr (1976) with the person-situation interaction allowing the development of social capital by governors. These governors may also have volunteered due to their existing social capital (Rege, 2008).

Relatively few conclusions, in contrast, may be made about cultural capital since the results were not very numerous. At a time when cultural capital

is an issue schools are required to teach children, it may be interesting for future researchers to investigate the quantity of cultural capital possessed by teachers and governors. There was evidence that governors took part in events that encouraged the development of cultural capital. This is another area of bonds being created between governors when they attend events.

The final question aimed to find out about the effect of school governorship on the lives of children in their families. It was anticipated that there may be some effect on aspirations of children (after all they had social capital links (Coleman, 1988) with them), but governors reported that they did not have higher aspirations of their children due to school governance because they already had high expectations. This was disappointing it was hoped at the outset that this would be found. In contrast some governors did feel that school governorship had provided insights into schools and the way they worked and that this led to greater interest in the interest of children in their own families. This seems to suggest that governors developed greater binding social capital (Field, 2008) with children in their families, and perhaps they also utilised their experience to utilise emotional capital (Reay, 2000). In line with the literature, human capital (in this case information about schooling) is deployed to develop social capital.

The pressure on governors is intense at times (you only need to read Department for Education (n.d.n) to see how much work is required). This

research may be contrasted with Ranson (2011) who questioned whether governors could run a secondary school. The pressure on governors as volunteers suggests that they are. Some governors indicated that they were spending long hours undertaking the role (two or three days for some chairs of governors). It is not suggested that governors be paid or replaced by paid officials. However, if the role of a governor is a voluntary one, we cannot expect governors to spend days in school every week. The findings refute Shearn's (1996) and Grace's (1995) findings about governors doing almost nothing: these governors sought to contribute to the school and some were doing more than could reasonably be expected of volunteers.

Having considered the expected outcomes from the literature and related it to the findings, the next chapter considers what was found within the research, and why it is both important and relevant to governors in 2020.

## **Chapter 6 – Conclusions**

The lives of individual governors are complex and, when considering the responses of the individual participants in this study we need to place them within a complex multifaceted structure of life experiences. School governorship is only one of the experiences these governors had during their tenure and separating out single experiences from the whole is difficult. It would be impractical to investigate every aspect of an individual's life and hence the focus of the interview questions was on areas where links to social (Coleman, 1997a; Putnam, 1994 ; Bourdieu, 1980) and human capital (Schultz, 1961a; Becker, 1964) might be found. Nevertheless, what was found in this research was that being a school governor had impacted on the lives of respondents and in the case of some individuals it had empowered them by giving them new skills and confidence.

### **6.1 A summary of what was found**

In order to summarise what was discovered, the findings will be set out by research aim and research question before a more general discussion in section 6.2.

#### **6.1.1 Research aim 1: Did governors simply bring existing skills and knowledge to the role?**

This aim considered human capital and was investigated using the to two research questions which sought to identify what skills a governor



had on appointment to their governorship and what they applied at the point when they were interviewed. In seeking to find causation the investigator must show that they have considered how far backwards in time to investigate (Cohen, et al., 2018) and how many circumstances to investigate (Cohen, et al., 2018). Cause and effect in social science research is very difficult to prove (Cohen, et al., 2018). Where a governor has been in place for 25 years or more the identification of causation will be almost impossible. The issue of time is significant because it makes attribution more difficult (Cohen, et al., 2018) but skills and experiences rarely change immediately and to choose a very short timescale would mean that potentially significant data would be lost. For this reason, only times when a respondent had been a school governor were considered. Hence the research questions were considered in light of governor responses. and used to inform the conclusion as to whether governors simply applied their existing skills and knowledge.

#### **6.1.1.1 Research question 1a**

This question aimed to discover the skills governors brought to the role. The result of this was rather surprising to the researcher because while responses were expected only in particular interview questions, it was sometimes answered in other questions.

Governors stated that they used work related skills including experience in the education system, business skills, and soft skills (including dealing with people).

The second area governors reported was gaining insight into the school sometimes from involvement with their child. Some of the governors mentioned the low skill set of some parent governors and said they had skills that they used to help them. One former parent governor mentioned skills they had gained from being a governor. Voluntary work had allowed some governors to develop skills prior to joining their governor body.

One of the skills governors brought to the role was governor training (this was because they had the training and then used it). Even where governors knew about education, they were sometimes prevented from taking a full role by the language and acronyms used. However, once they learned educational language and acronyms, they could apply educational terminology to their role as a governor and sometimes outside the role. Governor training was offered to help governors better understand finance and value added and some governors reported attending (e.g. RAISEonline was utilised by Fiona within her work see 5.3.5 and mentioned by Michael in section 5.3.4. See Section 5.3.2 for more details of courses undertaken). Training provided helped to empower governors within the governing body and also provided the opportunity to utilise the training in other areas of their lives including paid employment. It was not surprising that governors utilised their training within the governing body. It was unexpected that so many governors reported using training within their work.

### **6.1.1.2 Research question 1b**

Research questions 1a and 1b were closely linked. Research question 1a aimed to find out skills that were in existence and could be applied to school governorship while research question 1b sought to identify skills that governors applied in their role. This meant that there was overlap between the two questions. Governors reported that they applied several skills within the role. The first was applying their knowledge of educational language which they developed during school governorship which provided access to the work of the governing body. This is clearly human capital (Becker, 1964) because it is about a skill, they have utilised resources (e.g. time) to acquire.

People skills such as encouraging others to take up positions as school governors were mentioned and, at a time of school governor shortage, is a skill which is needed. Working on a governing body requires soft skills of working with people, challenging the head and teachers, and in the case of chairs of governors, leading meetings. Many of these soft skills will develop social capital (because they are working with others which concurs with Coleman) and human capital (because they are developing skills that will help them in other situations (Becker, 1964)). Some of these skills were developed through work roles or other voluntary groups but others were developed as governors.

Even experienced governors and educators sometimes found that they joined a school governing body in a different context. In such situations,

whether changing context due to a different educational phase or a new local authority, governors felt they learned new skills. The skills mentioned were often related to experience rather than training. In one case a governor moved from a primary school in one local authority to a junior school in a second local authority and mentioned that this had provided new experiences.

The role of governors in Ofsted inspections (section 2.6.3) was raised as a way they applied skills. Essentially governors needed to learn the skills to deal with Ofsted questions (for example about the school development plan) and this means a great deal of learning but the training was sometimes provided by the headteacher or from a job role within the education system rather than from governor training. This informal training may not appear in the responses given by governors to questions about training they have undertaken but was mentioned when other data was considered.

On this basis, it may be concluded that governors do indeed bring in human (e.g. skills learned in employment or from membership of a voluntary activity or from being a councillor) and social capital (this was evidenced by the need for governors to adapt when facing governorship in an unfamiliar age range or new local authority) as a result of their experiences outside the governing body and apply them to their work within the school. What was surprising and became evident during the interviews was that a relatively high number of governors mentioned

applying what they did as governors or learned as governors outside school. The researcher did expect to see some of this from personal experience but the fact that there were so many ways and situations that what they had learned within the role (from either training or experience) applied outside the role. This was particularly found where the school governor was employed in organisations connected to schools or education more generally and it was found that a large percentage of governors interviewed for this research worked or had retired from public sector employment.

### **6.1.2 Research aim 2: What people gain from training and experience as a governor.**

Training is an important way that human capital may be developed. The focus of this research aim is what, if anything governors learn from the training they receive and from their experience as a governor. In other words, it is about the investment the governor puts into the role to acquire new knowledge and skills (Schultz, 1961a). Working as a governor should cause an improvement in their skill at being a school governor and contribute to their level of human capital.

#### **6.1.2.1 Research question 2a**

This research question considered the training opportunities available to governors. Awareness of training was universal although not all training was provided by the local authority and not all of it was face to face. However, the cancellation of sessions by the local authority may cause

alternative training sources to be found and the question arises of what can be done to increase the number of governors being trained. This is not a new question

#### **6.1.2.2 Research question 2b**

The second research question in the area of training dealt with who used the training opportunities. The governors who were interviewed generally did use the training. Some councillors seemed less likely to use governor training courses due to alternative provision for councillors (this suggests that Banwell and Woodhouse (1996) call for central training for councillors was implemented) but some councillors did attend governor training sessions. Many governors received the same training from work and other voluntary work as well as from their governor role particularly in areas such as safeguarding. Some said they transferred the governor training to these roles. This suggests that the training was perceived to be of good quality (this contrasts with Thody's (1999)) criticism of governor training and that they had learned something from the session and it suggests the development of human capital (Becker, 1964).

#### **6.1.2.3 Research question 2c**

Governors used the training but not as frequently as would be regarded by some governors as desirable. However, this group of governors did use training more frequently than governors generally within the local authority area.

Low attendance was sometimes due to cost or availability at the time of governor training sessions. Where the school did not opt into governor training this did act as a deterrence for some governors. Many governors may feel reluctant to have the school pay for a course when the school has a limited budget but and the money can be spent on educating children rather than on educating the school governor. The decision to put governor training into the main school budget (Thody, 1999) was a political one which placed governors in a difficult, almost impossible position. Paying for training for governors takes away money from the education of children. Not paying for training means that governors are unlikely to have the skills required to supervise the running of the school. If the governors pay for training that isn't used, then it is money that is wasted. Two governors indicated that the reason that training was not paid for out of the budget for every event was that governors were not attending training.

#### **6.1.2.4 Research question 2d**

It was clear from the interview responses that governors were using governor training within voluntary work and within paid employment. At times training courses led to the creation of new knowledge which was applied in different ways within paid employment and as governors. This links clearly to the development of human capital held by the individual.

#### **6.1.2.5 Research question 2e**

Governors were positive about the governor training they received. Some governors were concerned about the lack of training of other governors

(this could be seen in terms of a failure in an obligation (such as Coleman (1988) describes) and the opportunity for a number of schools to offer training to all governors was felt to be a solution. This expectation that the governors would attend training could be seen as part of their existing social capital and the training utilised is to ensure they receive the important knowledge to be effective school governors(in other words to increase their human capital) they obtain human capital (the training).

#### **6.1.2.6 Research question 2f**

Governors were not directly asked an interview question on this topic. This question was quite open ended because was asked about it. Two areas were mentioned by governors: changes to their disposition (e.g. making them a 'better person') and improved ways to challenge the headteacher and prepare for Ofsted.

#### **6.1.2.7 Research question 2g**

To conclude, governors gained human capital from the training and experiences they received within their work as a school governor. It may not have been intended that these skills be transferable to new situations but in a number of cases they were clearly being transferred to new contexts and this may have increased both their human capital and their social capital (it may be that their status increased due to the application of their skills).



### **6.1.3 Research aim 3 Benefits of being a school governor**

This was about how governors might obtain other types of capital. With human capital it seemed relatively straightforward but with social, cultural, and emotional capital it was not. What was found was that school governance is an element in a series of multiplex relationships (Coleman, 1988) where human capital and social capital gained as a school governor may be deployed in other contexts. This could be the deployment to the community, or deployment to the school itself or in their work or for the benefit of their children. It was hoped that evidence would be found that this deployment would occur and the evidence within this thesis is that it did occur.

#### **6.1.3.1 Research question 3a**

This question considered social capital. Social capital was involved in the motivation of individuals to take up the role and this aligns with the proposition that social capital is required to activate social capital (Field, 2008). The affinity of governors to their children (binding social capital (Coleman, 1988) emotional capital (Reay, 2000) or the school mattered. Governors seemed to have dispositions which tended to be about public service (in other words being “civically engaged” Bayerlein and Bergstrand (2016) which is line with what would be expected of volunteers) and putting things back into the community (which concurs with Forbes and Zempelli, 2014). Some governors sought career progression or to utilise their experience to help the school. Some governors were motivated by ego enhancement but for many it was about their desire to be informed

rather than to feel important (governors did not mention and were not asked about ego or status driven motivations). One area not mentioned in the ABCE analysis is time. In order to do voluntary work people, need time and additional time to devote to school governorship could be provided as children became adults, or the job role of a governor changed or ended due to retirement.

One-way governors could gain social capital is through participating in courses and there were examples of courses being utilised by individuals after they became governors. The link between human capital and social capital has been noted. Some courses provided human capital but some courses would have led individuals to increase their networks (particularly where the course was undertaken with others) and it where this increase in networks occurs that they may gain social capital.

Governors undertook voluntary and community work which could be seen to have improved their range of contacts. It seemed that for some being a school governor had led them to take on further voluntary work whether through the school or indirectly due to greater confidence provided by becoming a school governor.

The empathetic link between schools and governors was mentioned by governors. Governors seemed to have a bond with school staff and those who attacked teachers or other school personnel (as opposed to questioning them or holding them to account) made governors very

sympathetic. Similarly, when school funding was cut this was sometimes seen as attacking the school. Governors mentioned terms like “a lot on their plate” and “it has made us more aware of just how hard teachers work” to show both sympathy and empathy toward them. This is social capital because it shows an emotional bond (Field, 2008) but it is not emotional capital because it isn’t in the private domain (Reay, 2000). It is political in nature, but governors are perhaps less overtly political in the statements they make unless dealing with something which affects the school.

Councillors often referred to their community but there were other ways of linking to it such as living there or running a church in a deprived area or through community activities. Sometimes activities were undertaken by governors in their job role to establish links with schools (e.g. clergy often took assemblies in schools). For some individuals, the networking developed through membership of the PTA or organising activities in schools had led them to become a school governor. As governors some formed social bonds with other governors.

### **6.1.3.2 Research question 3b**

Some evidence of cultural capital was found. Governors had a high level of education compared to the population as a whole and did attend events at school which involved music and art. However, the evidence was weak because no direct question was asked on this topic. If the research were repeated the question would be asked.

It is clear that governors have utilised skills and experience at work and in the community, but have they benefitted, or have their families benefitted?

### **6.1.3.3 Research question 3c**

Governors were generally very interested in education and particularly as it affected their families even before becoming governors. While some governors did indicate increased interest, this was mainly connected to having increased knowledge of what the school did rather than a greater interest in the child.

Aspirations for children were equally unchanged by school governorship. Responses in this section indicated that while the aspirations of children and their parents may have been different, the parents already had high expectations. Having considered the conclusions in light of the research questions it seems pertinent to discuss the findings.

## **6.2 Revisiting concepts of human and social capital**

Human capital is about investment in ourselves and our future earnings. It is not necessarily about education or training: the experience we obtain may also cause us to become more productive. This thesis has adopted an economic sociologist approach to human capital seeing where the data takes it. It is recognised that the data is not value free; the questions asked aimed to elicit answers to allow consideration of whether governors simply applied the skills they had prior to joining the governing body or

whether they acquired and applied new skills. The way that the new skills were thought to be identified was through training which is formal learning, but some skills were thought to be acquired through experience (e.g. when someone informally explains an educational acronym). Because economists use economic theory, they create models to test with data, but informal learning is almost impossible to quantify and an individual may not realise the source of their learning minutes after they are asked. For this reason, the term 'experience' was taken to cover informal learning and the actual experience which may come from school governorship although it is recognised that, conceptually, the two are different in nature.

There are clear links between human and social capital (Field, 2008) and this is recognised within this thesis. It has been argued that social capital is necessary to activate human capital (Field, 2008). If an individual is an accountant but has no social skills, then they may not be trusted to use their skills by other members of the governing body. Volunteering can lead to human capital being developed as people learn about finance, or personnel or working with other people. However, volunteering is mainly said to be associated with social capital. In theory there are divisions but in practice this is a much greyer area and distinguishing elements of human and social capital can be difficult.

Social capital is about our networks and our links with other people or organisations. One of the areas Coleman (1988) suggested would increase our bonds is where we meet people within different contexts (a

multiplex relationship (Coleman, 1988)). For example, if individuals knew each other as governors but also knew each other as neighbours and parents of children who attend the school then they have a multiplex relationship. Those who possess social capital are more likely to undertake courses than those who do not: the governors in this research had undertaken a range of courses. Given that many individuals learn informally, they may simply regard something as a hobby and not consider they are learning anything.

Governing bodies are part of the leadership structure of schools. Individuals who serve on them are linked to the school through the governing body (other than personnel at the school and parents). In other words, the governor is not connected directly to the school but to the governing body. The governing body is made up of individuals that a governor may further link to. The school has teachers that governors could work with and they may see children during school visits and school events.

Although social capital is not vested in a particular individual, the links to individuals within the network may be particularly strong because of trust, particularly in some communities. How can it be applied? The forms of social capital include obligations, information flow and trust. In the case of school governors, the information is provided to them by the school leaders and they need to trust that the information is accurate. In turn the school staff have an obligation to ensure that they provide suitable and

accurate information to governors and trust them to keep information secure. These are bonds of social capital: linking social capital (Field, 2005). Those who go into school to do work may establish stronger links (e.g. a Human Resource Officer from a local authority who is a governor at a different school because they have something in common (e.g. appointing staff)).

Levels of social capital in this group of governors seemed high and there were examples of organisations that they were involved in (including some political organisations). Attempts have been made to quantify social capital and Coleman (1988) does similarly when he stated that social capital is declining (something cannot decline unless you have some idea of a level before). For the purposes of this thesis no measurements were taken of levels of social capital and the researcher is less sure that such measures may ever be accurate.

Because the findings of this research align with the literature around human and social capital more generally it suggests that many of the findings may be more generalisable than expected at the outset of the research. Having considered the research aims and research questions it is time to discuss human and social capital in light of the findings of this research.

### 6.3 Discussion

The recruitment of individuals to the role of school governor is based on election, appointment, or co-option on the basis of existing skills. One governor mentioned being 'headhunted' to take up the role.

In the case of election, parent governors received most focus although four of these governors had been parent governors themselves in the past (Anna, Christopher, Fiona, and Nicholas). The criticisms of such governors was sometimes that you needed the 'right parent' (Fiona) (which may mean someone with high levels of capital already), that if governors came in with low levels of skills that they needed support to be involved (Michael), that some parent governors may 'just nod along and agree' (Hugh), or that parents were too focused on their own child (Louis). Examples of strategies used to develop and involve governors were to work with the governor to identify skills they already had (Michael), to help improve the confidence of parents (Michael) and to ask questions the governor already knew the answer to just in case the other governor was afraid to ask any (Louis).

Appointment as a governor could be about appointment as a headteacher (Headteachers can decline to be school governors but have the right to be governors due to their position (School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations, 2012)) or appointment by the local authority. Headteacher governors should already have high quantities of capital but it was noted that involvement as a governor prior to appointment was very



helpful. Appointment by the local authority could be due to political expectations (e.g. being a councillor) but did not necessarily mean particularly high levels of skills to bring to governorship.

Co-option of people due to existing skills may be expected to have had some effect although it was not as great within this group of governors as may have been expected. Barbara, for example, was recruited because she had skills relating to the community rather than her management qualification. Relatively few recently appointed governors were found in the interviewees but schools may try to adapt categories and skills to accommodate the individual (Michael) or what the school would like to develop (as happened in the case of Barbara). Some governors such as Michael pointed out that they had developed skills as a governor but had almost no skills currently sought for governorship at the time of first appointment and some resentment was felt about the pressure placed on governors to list their skills (although in practice the skills governors state they hold are taken on trust).

Human capital does seem to be developed through school governorship but mainly through training or work on the governing body. The closeness of social capital and human capital was evidenced within some governors' contributions. They gained human capital through experience of working with a diverse group of people on their governing body who shared ideas and discussed a very wide range of topics with them. The effect of

working with the group meant that governors also created linking social capital (Field, 2008; Woolcock, 2001).

At a time of school governor shortage, money is being spent by government to recruit them. In some cases, employers are approached (Governors for Schools, n.d.; Inspiring Governance, n.d.c) by government to get them to encourage their employees to become governors. This leads to questions about how far such employees are volunteers.

However, the best way to recruit is by face to face approach: being invited to volunteer increases the likelihood of an individual volunteering in practice to 80% (Bryant, et al., 2003). Those who volunteer by themselves were likely to have high levels of existing human capital (the confidence to believe they have something to contribute). Where a governor is elected or approached to be a governor they may find that their confidence improves (as happened with Christopher) and their social capital is developed (Christopher embarked on something he said he would not normally have done as a result of the extra confidence). The motivation of the recruiter is often to ensure that the individual will contribute something of value to the organisation or governing body (Bryant, et al., 2003)

Although newly appointed governors are not always placed on the more prestigious committees, they are likely to do work within the school. Example of this work include attending meetings and sub committees, attending events and acting as a link governor. Research in this area is needed as governors clearly link to the school community including

teachers and it is unclear how this bond is formed. It is not known whether acting as a link governor strengthens the bond between governors and teaching staff. This research suggests that acting as a link governor is something the governors who took up the role enjoyed doing. It is also unclear how the link between governor and “the school” develops but there many governors stated either empathy or sympathy towards the school or the staff.

Governors attend events at the school such as school productions (Christopher), awards evenings (Keir), awards ceremonies (Louis), coffee morning (Keir), sports day (Olivia) and open days (Vivian) and meet other governors as well as the school community. This was mentioned by many governors. This leads to the question of whether this attendance at the school strengthens the social capital that the governor has invested in the school by taking up the role. The question arises of whether attendance at events causes greater identification with some staff and pupils of the school leading to increased social capital. Evidence was found that attendance at school events was regarded as a part of a governors’ role and it was one mentioned positively by many governors.

Some of the governors indicated very strong links to the community. The question arises of whether they volunteer as they are part of the community or whether they become a governor and see the role of the community. Some of the governors indicated that they had links to the community first and their involvement in school was part of this. However,

the way governors spoke about their schools suggests that they felt part of the school community and some felt part of the community it served.

Some overt political statements were made during the interview in defence of teachers and schools and one governor clearly stated that becoming a governor had made her become more political. This links to Putnam's (1995) view of civic engagement where political participation is led by involvement in civic associations and the participation increases social capital.

#### **6.4 Methodological issues**

There were a number of challenges to overcome within the case study. Coding in qualitative studies is difficult in any research but in this research the quantity of data made it very difficult and very time consuming. In order to code data, each transcript was reviewed, and basic codes created (see Appendix D). At times extracts from the data were linked to the basic codes, codes were reviewed and reconsidered and then linked to other items. Rather than attempting to link the codes to the research questions immediately, codes were linked to themes such as 'link to school' before subsequent categorisation into more general areas such as motivation, social capital and human capital. These were subsequently utilised by linking further to the research questions. The danger of immediately coding to the research questions was felt to be that data could be lost if it did not deal directly with the question. Dealing with the data was messy but the data was rich and extremely interesting. The coding was arduous but robust and time consuming.

The first was the software used for analysis. Codes would be created but the item would not be coded correctly. If a code was created, it could not be removed easily. The initial coding took longer than anticipated and where interviews were taking place within a week, transcribing and coding interviews was intense. My recommendation is that where researcher has a full time job, they should leave at least two weeks between interviews (two days to transcribe a half hour interview and the rest to do coding).

The second challenge was how to recruit governors to take part. Personal approaches were always best (e.g. by telephone) and a high percentage of respondents agreed to take part after being asked. The hardest part of the research was picking up the telephone to ask people to participate. I was having problems recruiting the final few governors within the geographical area and it was suggested that a second local authority could be used. However, this problem was removed when a contact from a multi-academy trust circulated a request to take part in the research to members of his governing bodies.

Another challenge was to be bolder in the interview questions asked. The focus of the questions provided little opportunity to governors to express political views or to comment about how it felt to administer neoliberal ideas, and this could be seen as a weakness. There was a weakness in the interview schedule surrounding the consideration of the research question involving cultural capital. It should not have involved looking at

answers to other questions: it is recognised there should have been a specific question on that topic and that it was due to lack of ease about asking the question. Governors could have been asked whether their leisure pursuits had changed since becoming a governor, but researcher reticence prevented it. The research did lead to consideration of social norms (Lin, 2002) and knowing procedures and the right way to act is linked to human and social capital. If I were to undertake the research again some questions would be much more direct in places (although the questions would remain very neutral).

Future research will contain greater triangulation of data. This was intended at the outset of the programme, but conditions changed within local authorities and the subject I taught changed (from IT to computing) making the use of more than one instrument impracticable. The latter reason for time delay perhaps needs further explanation: when teaching IT, I was mainly dealing with multimedia, video, simple visual basic and applying them to the classroom but when teaching Computing I needed to re-skill myself in electronic logic, search trees, programming, computational thinking and many more things. Not only did I need to reskill generally in the type of activities undertaken in school, but I taught more technical degree-level computing modules such as networking which demanded me to engage in detail with relatively unfamiliar technical material (I had learned the basics 15 years before but had to recall it due to the time laps and then develop my knowledge and skills further). It is recognised that it would have been preferable to have undertaken

research using additional instruments such as focus groups. Where practicable triangulation of data has occurred but in other areas triangulation was not practicable (e.g. governor socialisation with other governors outside school had to be taken on trust). There is no reason to believe that governors were untruthful or trying to mislead the interviewer, although they may have attempted to show themselves in the best possible light (e.g. taking training courses before the interview because they knew it would be discussed)

## **6.5 Areas for further research**

The research is replicable, and it would be interesting to see whether similar results were obtained from other governors. Six areas of further research were identified: another local authority with different demographics; a further local authority in an area of deprivation; to repeat the research in the same local authority area; to investigate whether school governors who are initially silent could and do contribute to the work of the governing body; whether accountability to Ofsted for the use of professional skills deters volunteers; and the question of how to recruit younger governors.

The first area for further research would be to find out what would happen were this investigation to be carried out in another local authority dissimilar in nature from the case study in terms of demographics or geographical location: would it yield similar results? The strong link to community may be geographically centred as may the opportunity to undertake voluntary work. It is not known whether the huge percentage of individuals who undertake public sector posts would be replicated in other areas of the country or even in another sample of governors. The research on volunteering (Ertas, 2014) suggests high levels of public sector volunteering, particularly from those employed in education. What is known is the responses to the research instrument utilised with this group of governors provided insights into what could be predicted from other groups.



A second area (for further research) would investigate areas of deprivation where attracting school governors has been found to be particularly difficult. What would be the best way to recruit and retain new governors within the confines of the skills agenda. Were the governor strategies suggested (identifying skills of people in the community and developing them) those that would work in practice? The question also arises of whether there is a need to recruit a small number of governors from outside the community to ensure governing bodies are more heterogeneous in those areas.

The third area for research is to repeat the interviews with a further sample of governors within the same local authority area to see whether the movement to recruitment by existing skills, would yield similar responses from governors.

A further area that researchers may investigate is the effect that school governorship has for governors who join governing bodies and who are initially silent. What happens if they are encouraged by the other governors to contribute and what happens if they are ignored? This would be difficult to research because silence may be due to hidden barriers such as lack of knowledge about education more generally or the language used within the governing body.

Some of the governors mentioned their problems as new governors. This leads to an idea for further research on whether a governor mentorship

scheme could be put in place to help individuals make the adjustment in the first year of the governorship.

School governors are being sought from professions and one of the interviewees who was from business noted this and suggested that the accountability for the utilisation of professional skills may deter some individuals from becoming governors. This may need further research as governors are still volunteers. Are potential governors aware that Ofsted would look at their work as a governor.

All the governors interviewed were over 30 and this does lead to the question of what is being done to recruit young governors and to question whether the skills agenda may exclude them from undertaking the role. No statistics were kept within the local authority for the numbers of governors by age and it could be that, at a time where school governors are not easy to recruit, that younger people are not being recruited to governing bodies. It was always the case that younger governors were in the minority. Do young people have skills that are relevant to school governing? Yes, they have insight into schools and pupils within them from recent experience: can they learn the other skills?

In considering who may not be sufficiently represented on governing bodies it would be greatly beneficial for a survey like Ellis (2003) considering barriers to school governors for under-represented groups. If human and social capital may be acquired from school governorship as

this thesis suggests, why should groups be excluded from the role and what could be done to hear their voice. It is recognised that confidence is one of the main reasons that many people don't stand for election or approach anyone re appointment and this can be overcome by approaching them (Bayerlein and Bergstrand, 2016; Bryant, et al. (2003)

## **6.6 Policy Implications**

It was clear from the findings that governors gained human capital and social capital from undertaking the role and this research aims to provide an insight into how this was achieved. Although many questions are left for future research, the findings suggest that there are policy implications which need to be addressed.

The movement towards a skills agenda was in its early stages at the outset of the thesis, and inspection of governors by Ofsted was less rigorous. It is not contended that anyone can be a governor: it was apparent from the interviewees that before taking up the role they had relatively high levels of capital (see 4.3.3.4). It was found that becoming a school governor increases human and social capital and this leads to the question of why those with relatively high quantities of human and social capital are those who are receiving the benefits of capital acquisition through school governorship rather than those with lower levels of capital, particularly in areas of economic deprivation. However, it is recognised that the increasing casualisation of the workforce has potentially made volunteering more difficult for members of deprived communities.

It is not contended that school governorship provides the answer to deprivation or that all governors should come from their local community but there should be representation from the community in order to better understand the context of the school. Governors in areas of deprivation need to be aware of the benefits of intra-community integration if they are to help develop the community and this means that they do not need extensive extra-community linkages in the early stages (Woolcock, 1998 applying to development more generally). Intra-community development can involve developing the human and social capital of individuals within the community. Hence efforts could be made to develop this capacity through school governorship – although it is recognised that, due to the nature of the role, certain skills such as the ability to read, numeracy, an ability to communicate in a group setting, an interest in education and the ability to pass a Disclosure and Barring Service check are prerequisites.

Although the sample did not include young governors, this seemed in part due to the small numbers involved – although it may be that some parent governors fall into this category. The reasons for non-involvement could be linked to the movement of young people for work or education. The school governors One Stop Shop (SGOSS) and other recruiters do not seem to make an effort to get young people involved, and the skills audit does not lend itself to the type of skills young people may possess. Many of these governors had taken up the role when relatively young and had continued in post.

School governorship may not have increased the aspirations of the children of governors but it did increase the interest of some governors in the education of their children; or at least ensure that they knew more about the education system. This resulted in them being able to ensure that their children were able to take advantage of opportunities and support which were available.

Governors appeared to be more involved in the community and in voluntary work as a result of their governorship. In some cases, this was simply due to them not having done any voluntary work previously or to having more time due to retirement. However, in other cases it was evident that voluntary activity was taken up as a result of becoming a governor. Whether taken up as a result of governance (in which case it marks an increase in relationships and therefore links) or as a result of other factors, it was clear that skills learned in governance were employed within these organisations.

At a time when wellbeing is being considered by government, the pressure on governors at times seems very high. Some governors are devoting a great deal of time to schools (one or more days a week) but some are undertaking work which is professional in nature. Some school governors who are not qualified teachers are undertaking book scrutiny and comparing books from their school with books from others. From an Ofsted standpoint this may be good. However, the role of a governor may

be to ensure that book scrutiny takes place or that levels can be assured but some of this work seems to be removed from management and strategy and to be concerned with the minutiae of school life. This is not to decry governor efforts to ensure high standards in their school, but rather to suggest that teachers within schools could be utilised to undertake this process.

School governors gain a great deal from taking up the role that they can apply in other areas of their lives. The changing nature of schools due to policy decisions means being a school governor leads to new learning for almost every governor. They also benefit from increases in their social capital. The bond between the governor and school may not be present prior to appointment but there was clear evidence that it was present subsequently. Governors create networks, sometimes a bond is only within a governor's Head (e.g. governor and the school) as the school itself has no bond to them. They meet other governors, they work with them, they discuss ideas, and they learn alongside other governors and together this shapes the social bonds with individuals. They may also benefit from increased links to the community through meeting people at open days or school events but this community element may be declining with the advent of large multi-academy trusts which have no concern for the local context and no local governing bodies.

School governors are school managers, but they are also people who are often regarded as non-educationalists. This cohort of governors suggests

that many do have very good knowledge of the education system and that some are challenging the neoliberal agenda (although not necessarily questioning its assumptions) by looking at alternative forms of school governance.

The policy debate is unlikely to be shifted into a focus on social justice by either this research or this researcher (Brooks, et al., 2014 point to individual researchers having little influence on government) but this research does provide an insight into the fact that many governors have a disposition of empathy with the school, its people and its community.

## **6.7 Contributions to new knowledge**

The role of volunteers and the use of human and social capital is well established within the research, but this study considers how school governance can alter an individual and their family. The link between capital and school governorship is rarely made but the question of social class and other demographic characteristics is often attributed to governors. Hence in line with the literature surrounding volunteering, human and social capital were seen to increase. No other research which considers the use of capital (other than governance capital) within school governing is known.

The position of governors on many things was known but the findings of this research suggest that while some governors are happy to see a reduction in governors who are unable to make contributions to meetings,

that some governors do have problems with the concept of a skills audit (both for themselves and others). The references of some governors to their early days as a governor indicated why some governors would be reticent about putting forward opinions within large meetings of individuals who know more than they do. However, these governors did develop the relevant skills and dispositions so that they could contribute.

The research found evidence that some individuals did meet or have contact outside governor meetings. However, there was little evidence that this was frequent: the main link between governors seems to be via the governing body and the school.

Community was central to rationale that many governor's provided for involvement in school governance. The community of the school was important to these governors. The community (which is ephemeral) was seen to be linked to the school (which is more tangible) and the governors viewed the school as a way they could contribute to the community. This community focus would not have been unexpected in other times but in a time of large academy chains with little community connection (none of these governors worked in this type of structure) it was expected to be found less frequently in responses. It may be reflective of the situated nature of the study and the values of these governors, many of whom work in traditionally public sector areas or who, as councillors and clergy have views about their community and its needs. Coleman (1987b) wrote about the importance of communities but there is little in the volunteering



literature which mentions “community”. One piece of literature where school governors are acknowledged to be volunteers does refer to the community and that is James, et.al.’s (2010) publication on the Hidden Givers.

In almost every area of the findings chapter, when the present research is aligned to research conducted of governors by other authors, there is a strong correlation between studies and this suggests that some of the findings will be generalisable despite the small numbers. Nevertheless, It is important that the research be repeated before any claims to generalisability may be asserted.

## **6.8 Conclusions**

At the end of the research, the findings showed much greater social and economic capital being created that was anticipated at the outset. The research about school government is too often about governors as managers and too infrequently about the people who serve. The use of human and social capital provided a good framework to analyse data although at times the overlap made decisions in analysis very difficult in practice. Social capital proved particularly useful in suggesting connections between items and the situated nature of school governance

Governing a school in times of school cuts, a market dominated recruitment of pupils and criticism of schools is not easy for governors. They continue to do the role because they think it is something valuable,

they can do for their community and for the children who live within it.

Some individuals may become school governors because it is expected or part of their job or for social status but the message that most governors provided was that it was because they wanted to help schools. It is important to remember those excluded from school governance due to poverty, zero hours contracts and shift work; as well as those who do not have the skills mentioned on a skills audit. In a world where laissez-faire individualism is valued, it was good to see that altruism and community spirit remains the focus of some individuals.

The question arises of whether school governors are needed. As the researcher has been a school governor for almost her entire adult life, her answer cannot be entirely objective. The researcher is still a school governor and still enforces policies she finds personally distasteful and politically objectionable. Regardless of the powers of the governors or the challenge they set, the place of the school within the community is extremely important but the place of the community within the school should also not be ignored. School governance provides an opportunity for the community to speak to the school, not as consumers but as critical friends of the school. The move away from community governance in some multi academy trusts is disturbing and potentially damages the communities served by the schools. The community become cheerleaders rather than having the ability to hold the school to account. The interests of business, the creation of markets and commodification (Apple, 2014) are the driving forces in education in 2020. If they are

simply to be cheerleaders, then they are not needed. If they are to help the school, then they have a role.

Why are school governors needed? The initial idea for school governorship (prior to the Education Reform Act (1988)) was to ensure consistency in the way schools were supervised by the community in which they were located (Department of Education, 1977). The current role of school governors is somewhat different and involves accountability for the school as part of the leadership team Ofsted (n.d.a; Ofsted, n.d.b). The primary reason school governors are needed was voiced by the interviewees when they discussed the school being at the centre of community life or the school binding different parts of the community together (see section 5.4.1.4). In light of this research, if social capital bonds are created between individuals and the school (evidence of this has been found within the findings section particularly in section 5.4.1.4) and human capital is developed through training and experience as a governor (which is also evidenced in responses in section 5.3) then their communities in which the school governor lives may also benefit. The reduction of community involvement in school governance (which is the likely result of a skills-based recruitment for governors) may reduce human and social capital acquisition for the people and communities who would most benefit from it.

The effect of this research on other governors has been considered but there has also been an effect on the researcher. It has not changed my

positionality, but it has made me question how long I can continue to undertake the role because of increasing difficulties reconciling my work as a school governor to my own ideological beliefs. The process of undertaking this research has been extremely personally challenging in ways that I could not have conceived at the outset. Being a school governor within a neoliberal context means enforcing measures I find personally difficult. For example, payment by results for teachers is a concept I do not wish to enforce but reconcile myself to the process by telling myself that it will be done and may not be done so sympathetically by others. In this research it is not my voice but the voices of other school governors that needed to be considered. The results of the interviews provide much more evidence that school governorship changes lives than I expected. Although I have long recognised that being a school governor has changed my life, I did not expect to find such overt statements from governors about the effects that being a governor had on them. Their voices provide insights for future researchers that becoming a school governor can change lives and benefit the community more widely.

## Chapter 7 - Reference List

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## Chapter 8 Appendices

### Appendix A – Questions asked within the Interview

#### Questions

During the interview you will be asked the questions below, however, while these questions are common to each interview, other supplementary questions may be asked either to clarify my understanding of your answer or to gain more detail about the answer you provide. There are no right answers to these questions and it is important that if you feel that you need me to explain the question asked or to rephrase it that you tell me.

Forename

Surname

Gender

Ethnic Origin

Schools attended/Educational Achievement at school

Post School Education/Training and Achievement

Age Range

18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	Over 65
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1. Which school or schools are you governor of?
2. Please tell me the age range of pupils within the school(s)
3. How did you become a Governor at X School? (This will be asked about each school mentioned in the responses to the initial question)
4. Is this the first time that you have been a governor?

- a. If no, I will ask about other governorships that have been undertaken
5. What did you know about the school before you became a governor?
  6. Why did you decide to become a school governor?
  7. How long have you been a school governor?
    - a. (If over a year), Why do you continue to be a school governor?
  8. Were you involved in the work of the school before you became a governor?
    - a. If yes, how were you involved?
  9. At the time you first became a governor, were you involved in any paid work?
    - a. If yes, what type of work were you doing and what types of things did you do within your work?
  10. At the time you first became a governor, were you involved in any voluntary work?
    - a. If yes, what type of voluntary work were you doing and what types of things did you do within your voluntary work?
  11. Had you been involved in community activities before becoming a school governor?
    - a. If yes, what were they?
  12. Before being appointed as a school governor had you been involved in education other than a pupil at school?
    - a. If yes, what involvement did you have?



13. As a school governor have you found that any skills or experience you had prior to becoming a school governor have helped you in the role?
  - a. If yes, which skills or experience helped you?
14. What does your role as a school governor involve?
15. Are you involved in any sub-committees?
  - a. If yes, which sub-committees and what do they do?
16. What do you feel you bring to the work of the governing body?
17. Do you think that what you bring to the governing body has changed since you became a governor?
18. Have you been offered any training as a school governor?
  - a. If yes, what type of training and who offered it?
19. Have you undertaken any training as a school governor.
  - a. If yes, when was the last time you received training?
  - b. If yes, how frequently do you attend training? (e.g. more than once a term, at least termly, two or more times per year, at least once per year, less than once a year)
  - c. If no, why haven't you undertaken training?
20. Have you used any of the training or experience you have received as a school governor within your paid work?
  - a. If yes, what did you use?
21. Have you used any of the training or experience you have received as a school governor within any voluntary work you have undertaken?
  - a. If yes, what did you use?

22. Have you used any of the training or experience you have received as a school governor in any community work you have undertaken?
  - a. If yes, what did you use?
23. We talked earlier about the types of voluntary activities you did before you became a governor. Have your activities changed since you became a governor?
24. We talked earlier about the types of community activities you did before you became a governor. Have your activities changed since you became a governor?
25. Has your work situation changed since becoming a governor? If so, how has it changed?
26. Do you socialise with any of the other school governors at your school?
27. Do you keep in contact with other school governors at the school outside school governing body meetings?
28. Has being a school governor made you more interested in the education of children within your family?
29. Has your work as a school governor affected the educational or work based aspirations of children within your family?
30. Have you undertaken any education or training which is not connected to your role as a school governor since you became a governor?
  - a. If yes, what type have you undertaken?
31. Are there any areas you feel have not been discussed but which

you feel are important?

## **Appendix B – Individual interview schedule**

Each interview will take place either by telephone or (preferably) in a private room. The interviews should take no longer than 30 minutes.

The interview participant will be welcomed and thanked for agreeing to participate in the interview. I will introduce myself (although I may be known to some participants) and explain what I am trying to do, as follows:

“Before we start can you confirm that you have read the information on the consent form about taking part in the interview and that you have signed the consent form?”

My name is Lynne Dagg and I am a Ph.D. student at the University of Sunderland undertaking research about school governors. My research will look at a number of areas but will focus on how school governors are recruited, what they do as school governors, what training is provided for them, why they remain school governors and whether being a school governor may have effects outside of the role.

As I have outlined in the Consent form, I will not keep any information that may identify you within the research including your name, any school or employer. I do not intend even to name which local authority area you are situated within. Your interview will be recorded using digital media as outlined in the information sheet. The reason for this is that your words

are a very important part of my research and were I to take written notes I would not be able to record your words exactly. The recording will be used to create a transcript. You will be identified only by an identifying code (your name will not be used) on the transcript of your interview.

Your consent form includes your name and will be annotated with the identifying code but these forms will be kept secure and will not be disclosed.

I have given you a list of the questions I am going to ask. The reason for me doing so is that they provide the framework for the interview and it allows you to think about the questions before I ask them. I will ask additional questions to obtain further information based upon your answers. Some of the information I will ask you for is confidential in nature (e.g. I will ask you to state an age group and ethnic origin) but this is in order to ensure that I am obtaining interviews from a range of governors rather than providing evidence to identify you.

Please feel free to stop me at any time should you need clarification about a question or should you want to make an additional comment. I can assure you that there are no right or wrong answers and I am only seeking your honest answers. If you do not want to answer a question, just tell me or if you no longer wish to take part in the interview, you may withdraw at any time.

## **Appendix C – Consent form for participation in interviews:**

school governors

Dear

I am writing to ask you if you would be willing to help me carry out some research as part of a Ph.D. I am studying at the University of Sunderland. The research will aim to find out whether being a governor may lead to changes in your life and if there are changes, how this is caused. The research also aims to find out more about school governors, why people become governors and why they remain governors as well as identifying what they do as governors.

I would be grateful if you would be willing to take part in an interview to assist me in my research. The aim of the interview is to find out information from you as an individual who is a school governor, you are not asked to provide information on behalf of the school or other school governors. It is about collecting the personal perspectives of governors.

The interview will be tape recorded in order to ensure that your words are used within the research and in order that an accurate and detailed record is kept about what is said. The transcription will be kept separately from this consent form and will not include any identifying information (e.g. your name or the school name).

Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. If you do so the data will be destroyed.

The findings of the research will be presented back to you individually should you wish to see it and may be presented at a conference or published in a journal. Any research articles will be shared with you.

Please feel free to ask any question you would like about the project before you sign the consent form.

I have read the information above relating to the research in which I have been asked to participate and I understand what I am being asked to do	Yes/No
I consent to taking part in an interview for this study	Yes/No
I consent to the interview being audio recorded	Yes/No
I consent to the contents of the interview being transcribed	Yes/No
I consent to notes being taken during the interview	Yes/No
I understand that the contents of the interview will be confidential to the research team	Yes/No
I consent to my words being quoted anonymously in any presentations, reports or publications arising from the	Yes/No

research unless I specifically agree

otherwise

I understand that all data collected from and about me will be kept safely and securely and will be destroyed within five years. Yes/No

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time and that all information collected about and from me will be destroyed at that point Yes/No

I understand that data will be archived Yes/No

Your Name (BLOCK CAPITALS) \_\_\_\_\_

Your Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's name (BLOCK CAPITALS) LYNNE DAGG

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix D – Extracts from transcripts

### D1 Extract from the interview with Louis

Interviewer Have you used any of your training or experience in any voluntary work?

Louis The answer is yes, that is definitely the way I use information that I have gained from governor training to other members as part of their education. There's different ways of behaving with children, different ways of teaching, different ways of relating to parents, different ways of relating to SLTs. So yes I think I have used it in my voluntary work and I am certain when I was a youth worker for the YMCA I would have used some of that training to deal with some instances I had in there.

Interviewer Have you used any of your training or experience in any community work?

Louis I've done a lot, I do not do any now. The interesting thing is, the training I did last week on parent involvement, it was asking us to think outside the box and whilst there is very little parent involvement, the reason why in my opinion is because Headteachers and governors do not know their

community and do not watch where they are. So for instance in [name withheld] we have a parent forum and we get the same kind of people all the time, we will never get anything else until we go into the community because that school is right on the outskirts of the village, it's not central, you need a car to get there and on dark nights its very frightening and no one is going to want to walk there. [name withheld] again is very difficult. ... What we need to do is take our school into the pubs, into the churches if that's where they need to be, into the gyms etc. where ever we think our community is and have our parents evenings there. Do not expect the parents to come to us, we should go there and talk to them. If we want to engage parents we need to go to where they will be to engage them. So... I can't remember what the question was now

Interviewer That's ok – it was about community work

Louis Ah community work I would like to do more, I do not do any but I need to get out there and do it. I am a church goer and I have the same argument with my church, I'm about the youngest at 60 but we do not take the church out anymore into the community. We have 4/5/6 different families who turn up and as they are dying off the congregation is dying and we need to do more if we want to survive.

Interviewer You had not mentioned the church

Louis No I had not, I forgot about that

Interviewer Have your voluntary activities changed since before you became a governor?

Louis I am still involved in the [teacher Union Name removed] but not as much now because I have retired but I still follow Education. My main interest now is I do human resources for an academy chain, a standalone academy at [School Name Withheld] and [School Name Withheld] in [Location removed] which is a state school. I love that part of working with the community, it keeps me involved especially in education so I know what is happening so I can get a bigger picture. So seeing the academy chain and the state school give me a wider picture of what is going on. The differences in the changes to the community which I think your question was is our church many, many years ago was our Sunday school teacher died so we do not do anything on a Sunday and I see a lot of ? In the community, everyone wants something immediately and they are not prepared to listen or wait or whatever. The community is now said, they do not go to their neighbours, in the old days we would have

street parties. The areas where I am governor I do not think there would be many street parties because people want to lock themselves away and they do not want to do their share, that's the biggest change I have seen of a community as a governor over time, the lack of sharing.

## D2 Extract from the interview with Barbara

Interviewer: So do you think that what you do now as a governor has changed from the time you became a governor?

Barbara: For me it has, because when you first start as a governor you get thrown in at the deep end and you do not know your role or your responsibilities or whatever. and it's sort of, trying to get through mud really. I felt that way. It felt as though I was catching up with everybody else, or things that, some things I've heard in my own work environment, to me, it helped, having that bit of background. There's a lot of jargonistic stuff going on and I think -- but now I've been on training, and everything's starting to become a lot clearer. So I think it's easier now.

Interviewer: Okay. Have you been offered any training as a school governor? I think you've alluded to it, anyway, but.

Barbara: Loads of it.

Interviewer; Yeah?

Barbara: Through, I think it's through [Name Withheld] Governors Association. The school is still a part of that, so we get

emails just about every week, the different -- and I just and fit it in with my diary as much as I can, because I want to be up to speed. Especially we've got Ofsted looming, so I do not want to be a governor who is sitting around the table who can't answer any questions, or support the school, and challenge the Ofsted inspector. Because I've been through Ofsted myself a number of times, and it's not a very nice, pleasurable experience. So I think if you're brave enough to challenge them, then.

Interviewer: Okay. So what kind of courses have you attended?

Barbara: I've done the complaints procedures. I did Looked After Children yesterday. I've done RAISEonline training with [Provider Name withheld] a few weeks ago, and People Premium. That was, to me, it had not really been explained properly. But I learned a lot about looked after children and how that's broken down, and how that's spent, and how the money is put back, and the school is not give the full amount. That was interesting.

Interviewer: So when was the last time you had any training?

Barbara: Yesterday.

Interviewer: Yesterday. All right. Okay. So, how frequently do you attend training? You said you've been to a lot of training.

Barbara: I try to go -- a lot of it has been cancelled due to the numbers. Which is surprising, because when you consider the amount of schools in [local authority name withheld], and if you've got ten governors around each school, and you've got 100 schools in [local authority name withheld], that's a lot of people. But I know people have gone into academies and have opted out of the [local authority name withheld] governors training. and so it's cost to the academy and things. But I'm very shocked personally, I am shocked at the lack of numbers at training. I was one in the safeguarding training two months ago on a Saturday morning. It was a Saturday morning. and I think there was only 20-25 people. and I thought there would be a lot more.

### **D3 Extract from the interview with Edward**

Interviewer: What did you know about the schools before you became a governor?

Edward: Well both of them were, one of the primary schools and the secondary school, for the ward that I represent on the council. So I knew over them, it's, I knew a lot I grew up in [name withheld] (district) so I knew a lot of the young people, children who went there, pupils who went there. I knew that [name withheld] as it was, originally [name withheld] secondary modern. And then [name withheld] comprehensive. It was not a great achiever, did not have great, a lot of great achievers going through the school. Did not get high marks for the pupils and hence going on with their careers in the main.

Interviewer: But, what about the, why did you become a governor of the primary school?

Edward: Just because I wanted to represent the community without being elected to serve. I was a member of both of the primary schools in [name withheld], [name withheld] and [name withheld] primary. I was nominated by the local education authority to represent the majority party and I just



wanted to make sure that the schools were as good as I could possibly help them to be.

Interviewer: Okay, I think we've covered the question about which is you know about the school so, why did you decide to become a school governor.

Edward: Well I think it was the, I've touched on that as well.

Interviewer: I think you have.

Edward: I was elected as a representative of the people of that area, their children went to schools, I thought it was incumbent on me to be part of the system to improve the education. Surely education was as good possibly could be for all those children.

Interviewer: Okay, were you involved in the work of the school before you became a governor?

Edward: No.

#### **D4 Extract from the interview with Graham**

Interviewer So what do you think you bring to the role? What do you think you contribute?

Graham Well I think I'm someone who takes an intelligent interest in what happens. I have got to understand the involvement in education so I think there is a commitment there to wanting to see the school succeed. The school itself is in the ward I represent on the council so I am part of the community, the school is part of the community, and I think it is bringing them all together, locking us in in a way. I think taken an intelligent interest and understanding of the issues that derive from education I think it allows you to take a constructive role in being a governor or trust director because there are issues, there are problems. Ofsted of course does not always give your school the best of ratings and there are always particular problems that are highlighted that you need to address and as a governor I think it's important you get stuck in in helping to address those issues. Some are easy to deal with because you have got good staff and you are working with a good Head and senior management, you are all working together. A problem would arise however if there are conflicts there and

tensions which I have been fortunate enough not to experience. Being a governor for quite a long time I have also been chair of governors so I have worked with Heads and appointed Heads. I just think its is frankly a good way of running the schools, getting people involved on a voluntary basis and a wide range of people, some with particular expertise in accountancy, finance, single parents, some who have connections with the local authority, as I do, which again I think is useful. Schools are being taken away from local authorities now so I suppose that link is less important that it was. Certainly for most of the time that I have been a governor of a catholic secondary school we had what was called the dual system where as a voluntary aided school we had a lot of authority power ourselves. We appointed our own Head, for example admissions was our responsibility and not the local authorities but we also worked closely with the authority and that was a policy strongly supported by the bishop and the catholic church.

Interviewer Right ok, so do you think what you bring to the governing body has changed since you became a governor?

Graham That is a good question, I suppose it will have changed gradually over quite a long period of time

Interviewer A significant period of time

Graham Yes you gain experience and a degree of expertise in that respect though of course you have got to prepare to move with the times haven't you. If you did the same things as what you did 40 years ago I do not think that would really be good. Things change and we have got to change with them. Not of course wanting to throw anybody out of the bath water but there are some fundamental essentials that are important to maintain. Discipline is important obviously and I hope we are committed to higher academic standards for example though passing exams and getting through exams is not the be all and end all of education.

## D5 Extract from the interview with Nicholas

Interviewer So we will begin with which school or schools are you a governor of?

Nicholas Presently only one, since becoming deputy Head of [name withheld] Academy, one of our feeder primaries is [name withheld] and I was approached to become a community governor. So I am currently a community governor of [name withheld] Academy and I am also the link governor there for literacy and modern foreign languages.

Interviewer Ok, that was a question I was going to come to so...

Nicholas Previously I have got a lot of governor experience. For the previous 7 years, sort of pre 2015 I was a staff governor in [name withheld] Business and Enterprise College in [name withheld] when I was assistant Head, deputy Head and then acting Head and reasons for that initially were for my own development. I knew I had headship in my own future aspirations and governance was an area that I do not recall when I did my NPQH in 2007. It wasn't covered in any great depth and along with finance, governance that links to finance were areas that I wanted to develop. But then my children came along and started primary school and I had a vested interest in education but then I was a parent and their primary school was [name withheld] primary in [name withheld] where I

live. It was just when governance was becoming harder to fill and I think I applied and the headteacher was quite happy that he had someone in the field of education but my drive there was to have a say and to have an insight into what was happening in my children's education. So I would say for the last 8 years in some aspect I have been a governor.

Interviewer OK, so obviously you said you are a governor of a primary school, is that a 3-11 or 4-11?

Nicholas That was a 4-11

Interviewer The one you are currently a governor of?

Nicholas Oh sorry that one is as well

Interviewer So how did you actually become a governor of [name withheld]?

Nicholas I was approached by a previous deputy headteacher at [name withheld] who retired, the gentleman who I replaced filled that capacity and I think [Name removed] and [Name removed] approached me because I originally came here as a deputy and I was more than happy. We are always keen to strengthen links with our primary feeder schools around transition, the other thing was as I was a head in secondary it's

always good to have an overview of key stage 2 and key stage 1 in some aspects as well.

Interviewer Ok, so it's not the first time you have been a governor. What did you know about [name withheld] or your children's school before you became a governor?

Nicholas With regards to [name withheld] I have to be honest with you and I was brand new to [Name withheld] as an authority so when I came here in September 2015 I was pretty unfamiliar with...I would have to say the educational landscape other than the research I did into [name withheld]. Since then networking and online research into feeder schools linked with the transition from primary have meant that I have found out far more. It was one of the front runners in joining a multi-academy trust, I knew about the links that already exist because although it's not many we have roughly around 13 students a year coming in. A number of the summer school attendees that took place in the summer before I came from [name withheld] but other than that not a lot. In relation to the school I was a primary governor of that was linked to my own children. As a parent I researched the 3 local feeder primary schools, [name withheld] actually turned out to be the closest in location to the family home, obviously I researched the Ofsted report. The headteacher at the time was due to retire so it was a time of change and I thought there was no better time to become a governor than at the start and I knew I also

had a level of educational knowledge for example the system and I was a member of the panel when we were Ofsteded as a governor and I think in some of the panel questions from the lead inspector it was good that myself and another governing body member were teachers on leadership teams and I think it does help you in terms of a story about the school.

Interviewer      Ok, so why did you decide to take on the role? You mentioned your children went to the school were there any other reasons?

Nicholas          I think at [name withheld] it was for self-development reasons and I knew I was rising up the leadership team. It does become a point where you are in every meeting everywhere and when I made deputy in case the head was out or I had to deputise for her I wanted to know everything. I was in charge of the SED document in school, the development plans, monitoring evaluation, the curriculum and it was in my interest to know every nook and cranny.



## Appendix E - Diary reflections

### E1: 6/5/16 Nicholas interview

Took ages to transcribe

Start of the interview

Nicholas had a copy of the questions and this was one I had been nervous about and my performance here probably reflects it - last time I visited a head's office was when I was a union rep. On the one hand the desire is to let the interview flow but on the other there is a lot of information I can't use.

It took a lot of deciphering. But I read what he said as meaning he is a member of two governing bodies:

- a primary feeder school and
- a local academy governing body in the school he leads.

My calculations from the interview suggest he has been a governor for eight years and a headteacher for one of them. He didn't tell me how long he had been a governor at his children's school. At the time of the interview I thought I knew the dates but I think I got confused. **Action Point:** Ensure you ask dates much more carefully

Not sure how to code this:

"I was a staff governor in [name withheld] Business and Enterprise College in [name withheld] when I was assistant head, deputy head and then acting head and reasons for that initially were for my own development. I knew I had headship in my own future aspirations and governance was an area that I do not recall when I did my NPQH in 2007. "

Type of governor mentioned - easy to code

Motivation - "For my own development"

Motivation - "Headship in my own future aspirations"

Promotion links somewhere

Not sure of relevance between NPQH and not recalling governance within it.

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Reading the transcript again there is an overlap with an answer to a previous question:

I think at [name withheld] it was for self-development reasons and I knew I was rising up the leadership team. It does become a point where you are in every meeting everywhere and when I made deputy in case the head was out or I had to deputise for her I wanted to know everything. I was in charge of the SED document in school, the development plans, monitoring evaluation, the curriculum and it was in my interest to know every nook and cranny.

Strong self development motivation. Promotion. Want to know. Responsibilities in work role

## E2 9th September 2016 Philip interview.

Little snippets cause problems for me

There were a number of items which need to be considered but which can't be coded.

- 2-3 days per week suggests that Philip is spending half his working life in the school. Other chairs of governors have reported high levels of involvement (e.g. Michael) but it suggests governors are focused on the operations rather than the strategy. Is this because of enjoyment? Is Philip really doing this much or does the length of visit vary?
- There are clear links here between paid employment and some of the work done in school and this has been found in other governor interviews (e.g. Christopher and Hugh). I have coded it as using existing role. It is unclear what 'lead worship' means: does it just mean leading assemblies from time to time or setting a direction in religious education? I could question whether there needs to be RE in school but that is outside the research area.
- Philip mentions *meetings with the headteacher* but not their format or nature. Doubt they are minuted. Are they for specific purposes (such as exercise of emergency powers or to be briefed on the latest government dictat?). As chair of governors is he keeping abreast of the operational side of the school? I can't investigate them and looking back could have asked more about it. **Action point:** Ask more about meetings with the headteacher if it arises again
- The final area is *visits to classes*. Why do governors do this? Is it because they feel they need to see the operational side of school life or because they enjoy it? It has arisen in other interviews. **Action point**, next time ask them for more detail about why they go into class.

I have just noticed the link between item 1 and item 4.

## Appendix F - Some Coded Transcript extracts

### F1 Louis

Interviewer Ok, so do you feel that what you bring to the school governing body has changed since you first became a governor?

**Louis**

Certainly, in the early days people did not like me in the way I asked questions and challenged questions, they all thought... everybody thought including the governors (we still have got a lot of them now because they have been there donkeys years) that all they have to do is turn up for meetings and agree to everything the headteacher says. As time has gone on, especially these days, the word challenge and being able to understand what goes on in schools it is no longer enough to just turn up at meetings. When Ofsted come in you get challenged and they ask what is good for the school and why is it good, what are the areas for development and why do they need developing. We challenge the governors because governors now need a real depth of understanding and I think that can only be good hence the reason why I have been head hunted to do various things now because I can understand how to challenge.

**Skills brought to role**

**Perception of other governors**

**Challenging other governors**

**Head hunted to challenge**

**What governors need to do**

**What governors need to do**

**What governors need to do**

**Quality of training events**

LD Ok. Have you been offered any training as a school governor?

**Louis**

I have done, some local authorities actually do an awful lot of training for school governors. I think it is very very good. I go as many as I can, I was at one last week and that was excellent. I have [name withheld] primary telling me that they put me through as chair of governors training which the National College of School Leadership used to run but it now run by someone called the [name removed]. Hopefully at the end of that I will come out with a certificate which says you can also go into other governing bodies.

**Frequency of attendance**

**Offer of training through school**

**Certification as governor**

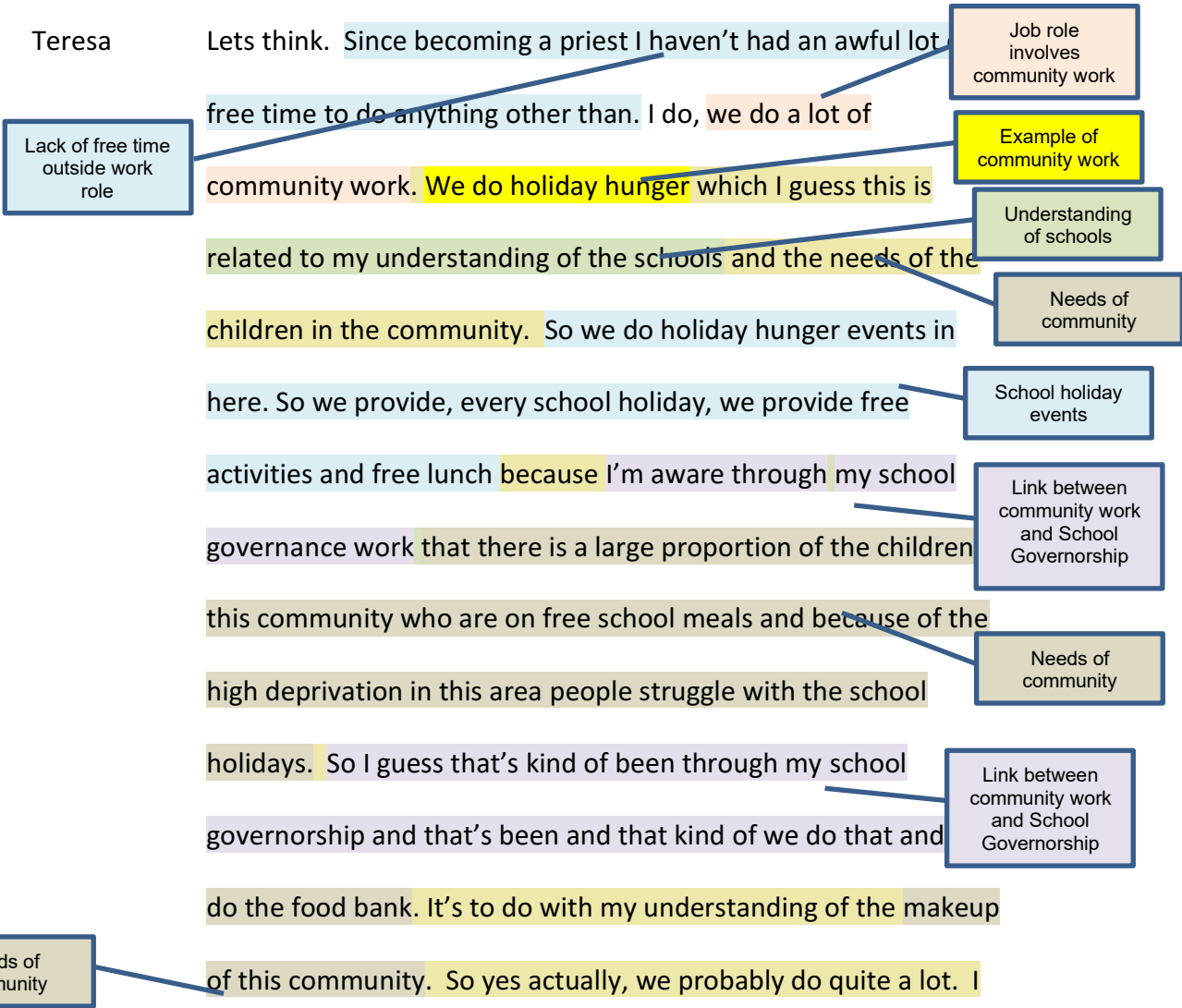
**Last time attended training**

**Quality of training events**

F2 Teresa

Interviewer And what about community work

Teresa Lets think. Since becoming a priest I haven't had an awful lot of free time to do anything other than. I do, we do a lot of community work. We do holiday hunger which I guess this is related to my understanding of the schools and the needs of the children in the community. So we do holiday hunger events in here. So we provide, every school holiday, we provide free activities and free lunch because I'm aware through my school governance work that there is a large proportion of the children in this community who are on free school meals and because of the high deprivation in this area people struggle with the school holidays. So I guess that's kind of been through my school governorship and that's been and that kind of we do that and do the food bank. It's to do with my understanding of the makeup of this community. So yes actually, we probably do quite a lot. I had not really thought of it that way.



**F3 Graham**

Interviewer So what do you think you bring to the role? What do you think you contribute?

