

# Creative Governance in Further Education: the art of the possible?

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## Executive Summary

The research project aims to collect and analyse data in the under researched field of governance in further education colleges. The cognate area of third sector, work and employment based governance is the subject of a further study (LSIS 2009a). A key objective of this study is to contribute to debate about the purpose of college governance at a time when the LSC commissioning era ends and new government bodies responsible for further education and training (including local authorities), arrive. The research methodology associated with this pilot project adopts a case study approach involving six colleges, including a sixth form college, complemented by interviews with respondents from organisations and agencies across the learning and skills sector (see appendix 1). Interview data is supplemented by documentary evidence from Colleges, Parliamentary, Policy, Ofsted and wider research sources.

The notion of creative governance is a complex and controversial concept in the wider context of regulatory reform. As with other familiar concepts such as leadership, professionalism and learning, college governance is best defined in the contexts and situations in which it is located. College governance does not operate in a vacuum: it involves governors, chairs, principals, professionals, senior managers, clerks, community and wider stakeholders. It also acts as a prism through which complex policy-practice imperatives are mediated at local level. While governing bodies are traditionally associated with the business of FE - steering, setting the tone and style, dealing with finance, funding, audit and procedural matters – they are increasingly being challenged to broaden the scope of what they do in the wider society.

The nature and purpose of college governance is currently high on the policy agenda. This has been prompted by recent reforms in the learning and skills sector that are changing the learning and skills landscape in which colleges operate. It also involves greater recognition of the limiting effects that decades of centralism, compliance and micro-management ('new managerialism' audit, inspection and target cultures) have had on the innovative potential of Colleges (Clarke 2004).

Increasingly the locus of FE governance is moving from colleges to the diverse communities that they serve. The project explores key elements involved in this paradigm shift from governors acting as 'guardians' of the college and community to becoming 'partners' in a wider learning and skills environment (Collinson and Collinson 2005). In particular, how do participants understand and interpret their changing role in a fast changing policy-practice dynamic? In addressing this question the study explores the ways in which the transition from 'compliance to creativity' is not a straightforward one, where elements of both operate in tandem.

## Key Findings

- Creative governance is a notion that has produced a positive interest among most participants in this study.
- Creative governance is interpreted more as a *responsive* process – particularly in relation to students and communities.
- There is a ‘leap of faith’ concerning the outcomes of creative governance i.e. creative governance being seen as the *means* and responsive governance as the ends.
- There is recognition that the creative element of college governance often occurs outside the context of formal board meetings.
- Non formal networking is valued alongside normal activities associated with board meetings. Mixing with students, professionals, community and employers ‘on the ground’ is seen as a positive learning experience.
- There is a view that the Learning and Skills Council requires governing bodies to be reactive rather than proactive in the power and control relations between ‘commissioner’ (LSC) and ‘provider’(college).
- There is recognition and expectation among governors that imaginative and creative thinking comes from the principal and senior staff. Their proposals are then tested out to a greater or lesser extent by governors. The Chair of the Corporation Governing Body is seen to play a key role in facilitating this process.
- The impact of an audit culture is believed to dominate college governance to such an extent that it limits or acts as a barrier to more creative discussion and debate.
- The clerk to the corporation is central to the governance process and can act in a valued advisory capacity.
- Governors report satisfaction arising from activities involving college working groups, community and work based ventures.
- Governor involvement in developing college policy, in relation to teaching and learning, is limited.
- Creative governance is not automatically restricted by the Instrument and Articles of Government: restrictions are more related to conventional cultures of practice and external influences.
- The experience and influence of governor training is patchy, including recognition of new governance standards and principles of self-regulation.
- In the main governors value their volunteer status and resent perceptions of them as ‘retirees’. There is no consensus that the introduction of remuneration alone would improve governance

## Main Recommendations

Despite the fast changing period of transition and diverse contexts in which colleges operate a number of recurring themes are discernible across the project, and inform the core recommendations.

- Governance works best when governors, managers and clerks participate in shared activities through training days, workshops and strategy groups/committees. Much good governance practice takes place beyond designated board meetings and often goes unrecognised. Managers and governors need to build on such *non formal learning* cultures.

- The centrality of the core mission of FE governance – improving the quality of teaching and learning – should be at the heart of more *learner centred* college governance.
- Governor *training, development and recruitment* is fragmented and undeveloped. Senior management but also Department of Innovation Universities and Skills (DIUS) and LSIS will need to jointly consider what arrangements are needed to better support college governors in the exercise of their duties in current conditions of practice.
- The role, *status and training of the clerk* requires clarification in relation to the development of effective governance.
- There is no apparent need to change statutory governance requirements: the cultivation of more participative cultures of *reflexive governance* practice is the major requirement.
- Creative or strategic college governance is restricted by invasive audit cultures, changing funding regimes and a proliferation of government agencies and departments that do not operate through a single voice. There is a need for greater *partnership* and consistency in the way external agencies co-ordinate their activities with colleges in improving governance and accountability in the sector.

## Research Framework

### Introduction

The study addresses a growing interest in the nature and purpose of governance in Further Education (FE). Aspects relating to governance in the context of work, employment and third sector governance is the subject of a further review (LSIS 2009;a). Until recently FE governance has been something of a policy afterthought but is now high on the research agenda. While recent research interest has focused on management and leadership, the relationship with governance is now the subject of closer scrutiny. The reasons for this are many and diverse and include recognition of the influence of compliance and regulation on the sector's ability to respond to a fast changing policy-practice dynamic (LSIS 2009;b). In recognising the limiting effects of over regulation and micro management of public services, of which FE is a part, the Prime Minister has advocated self-regulation as a means of facilitating greater freedom and flexibility in the way institutions manage their affairs (Cabinet Office 2008). This lighter touch approach is, among a number of other initiatives (self regulation, single voice and demand- led elements), designed to shape more flexible modes of front line delivery and institutional improvement. In FE this has led to calls for a paradigm shift that will liberate FE from the straitjacket of over regulation to a more outward looking and dynamic service (Murray 2009). To date the nature and purpose of governance in supporting or facilitating this process remains unclear, and is the subject of this initial pilot study.

### Focus of the study

Commencing in October 2008 this six month study is designed to provide insight and analysis of how college governance is understood and practised in an FE college context. The primary focus is on six case study

FE colleges, one of which is a sixth form college, selected on the basis of the diverse cultures and situations in which they operate.

The study aims to explore the nature and purpose of governance through the perspectives and experiences of college governors, chairs, principals, senior managers, officers and clerks that provide illuminative *vignettes* of governance practice. The study is complemented by interviews with lead organisations, agencies and policy bodies in the Learning and Skills Sector Appendix 2). All interviews and narrative data are anonymised in keeping with established ethical research guidelines. In addition to sourcing policy and documentary data the principal researchers interviewed more than forty participants in the colleges, including ten representatives from the wider policy community. The methodology adopts a broadly triangular approach that interconnects three main facets of the study, the college case studies, policy perspectives, research literature and documentary sources relating to the field of governance.

### **Research Questions**

The occasion of the study endorses the Chinese proverb that we live ‘in interesting times.’ A key objective of the research is to contribute to debate concerning the purpose of college governance during a period of rapid transition: at a time when the LSC commissioning period ends and new government bodies responsible for training and skills (including LAs) arrive (Coffield 2008). The research was also undertaken in a period of turbulence surrounding the effects of recession on colleges in their communities including their capital building plans. Though not new to FE the uncertainty surrounding current policy agendas defines the background in which the research was conducted. This also encapsulates the diverse range of responses reported in the study and the bewildering range of external agencies and bodies involved in the reform process (see appendices 3-6).

In this context a key objective of the case study approach is to provide insight into a ‘moving target,’ of how college governance operates in testing times. For this reason the study explores the ways in which issues of context, culture and situation affect the ways in which college governance responds at local level to national policy agendas. In terms of data collection and analysis the project also seeks to identify complementary and contrasting themes emerging from primary case study and secondary sources. This takes different forms including ideas, narratives, models and processes that may restrict or lead to expansive governance. Three key research questions guide the research.

- What is the nature and purpose of college governance in a contemporary context?
- What is meant by the term creative governance and how is it situated and understood in the conditions of college practice?
- What factors and processes limit or enhance creative governance and with what outcomes?

In addressing these questions the study explores various recurring themes and issues arising from the data. The triangular methodology is used as a way of juxtaposing complementary and contrasting perspectives of governance derived from case study material, policy perspectives, documentary and wider research sources. This is not a straightforward process as it reveals obvious tensions and contradictions between policy and practice emerging from within and across different college sites, contexts and situations (James and Biesta 2007).

## Changing policy and practice

In recent years leadership, management and workforce reform has focused mainly on college staff. However, a common characteristic of the most improved colleges visited by OFSTED is the crucial role and influence of an effective governing body in raising achievements and standards. The colleges involved

*“... recognise that governors need to supply high level, constructive challenges, not only in relation to strategic direction and mission, but aimed at assuring achievements and standards, and the quality of provision.” (OFSTED 2008).*

In a wider context Carver (1997) argues that:

*“... framing the governance challenge more effectively can go far beyond merely eliminating common problems; it can provide a clearing in which Boards can be strategic leaders.” (Carver 1997:10)*

Both observations, including recent research by Hill and James (2007) and Ranson (2008), point to the ways in which governance now constitutes a ‘governance field’ in which colleges both co-operate and compete with other key stakeholders (Nuffield Review 2008). Changes in funding that were previously brokered by levies, local authorities and government agencies have been gradually replaced by market levers, direct funding to employers, agencies and third sector engagement (Hodgson and Spours 2008). While FE remains a key player in this process it now operates in a market place among a range of stakeholders, networks and agencies where the ‘rules of the game’ have shifted toward diverse partnership and interagency developments (Ball 2008).

In this changing policy environment the nature and purpose of college governance is under review (LSIS 2009b). There is growing recognition in both policy and practice communities that the impact of regulation and compliance – involving pervasive external audit, funding and inspection cultures – restricts creative thinking in the contexts in which colleges and college governance operates (Clarke 2005). The urgency for change is captured in the interviews with two policy/sector participants, two of whom are college governors (for a synopsis of the range of all their views, see appendix 2).

*“I think we are now in a phase where everything is up for grabs due to market and policy failure... what’s happening is not clear cut. What we are living through now will have an effect on governors and governance... there is a time lag into governance. We face the issue of what form of governance is going to be appropriate for a changing world where many believe the ideology of market forces is discredited. How does FE governance cope with that and three million unemployed?”*

*“If colleges are left alone they know what to do but they have been blown around by different funding and audit streams. They are adept at dealing with it but if they can’t get funding for adult provision or for what they define as their priorities... if it doesn’t meet with funding council or government approval... there’s an issue. What is the governor’s role in such circumstances? In my view governors are expected to challenge what is going on: asking what are we doing about this... supporting the college in defining its curriculum, values and priorities, and being actively engaged and informed about quality and improvement. Governors are charged with this responsibility. Creative governance is about making things happen: it involves working in partnership with communities, generating open working and learning practices... finding ways around problems.”*

These and others’ views that we explore in the course of the study suggest that creativity and compliance are tricky concepts (Grint 2005). Both have different meanings and interpretations. Neither are separate or immune from external regulation and internal practices that range from legal and financial accountability to personalised notions of creative thinking and ‘strategic compliance’ - in the way individuals and institutions accept, challenge or ‘work the system’ (Gleeson 2006). Thus simplistic notions of moving from compliance to creativity in the way FE governance operates is not a straightforward process. It tends to ignore the ways in which college governing bodies are bound by established instruments of governance and procedures that are publicly accountable. A key conclusion of this study is that creative governance is not constrained by formal instruments of governance *per se* but by established cultures of everyday practice. Thus within its existing remit what can be reasonably expected of governance and governors in the changing context of their work?

In considering this question the study addresses ‘the art of the possible’ through the case studies and experiences of the participants involved (Grint 2000). As the evidence suggests, despite the limiting effects of compliance and regulation there is nevertheless room for manoeuvre, innovative thinking and creative governance despite constraint and uncertainty. A key issue concerns how colleges position themselves in an uncertain market place and the strategic role governance plays in its relationship with government. In both anticipating and encouraging such creativity government has initiated various reforms designed to reconfigure the learning and skills sector through ‘demand led’, ‘self regulation’ and ‘single voice,’ including a new inspection framework, designed to streamline funding, governance and self improvement across the sector (Foster 2005; Leitch 2006). However, the proliferation of agencies suggests that this streamlining is some way off (Audit Office 2008; House of Commons 2008, Cabinet Office 2008; See appendices 3-6 pp 43-46)

During the period of this research such reforms are slowly percolating through a sector that is only just recovering from the effects of earlier external regulation, audit, funding and inspection. This according to critics has rendered FE leadership and governance compliance weary and in need of creative and expansive thinking. A problem identified by Coffield et al (2007) is that a significant number of employers, colleges and training providers are not aware of what the key elements of the ‘new’ policy agenda are about. At regional level there remains confusion surrounding the abolition of the Learning and Skills Council and the creation of a new Skills Funding Agency, including the role of local authorities, in driving the emerging reform agenda. According to a recent Parliamentary Report (2009):

*'We conclude that while the Leitch review was produced during a period of economic optimism, the climate has now changed... The current economic situation has raised the stakes: skills policy could be the key factor which determines how and when the economy recovers and grows. Government must accept this and drive the agenda forward.'*

(House of Commons Select Committee: Re- skilling for Recovery. 2009: 3)

This study was conducted during ongoing transitions that have differentially impacted on the colleges involved. Whether in times of economic growth or recession college governance (creative or otherwise) still must adhere to statutory powers of law and instruments of incorporation. At the same time radical shifts such as those identified by Parliament are a catalyst for change for colleges in their communities (DIUS 2008). With challenges come new opportunities and novel ways of understanding old ideas (Sen 2008). While the purpose of college governance is not predefined, and is left to each college governing body to address for themselves, this should in theory be the driving force for creativity and change. However, many governors interviewed in this study are clear that responsiveness tends to mean doing what government wants, whereas creativity is the encouraging of ideas and the selection of strategic ways forward through dialogue and debate. Thus a balance or 'trade off' between the two is required if governance is seen to be successful. In the sections that follow we consider further what is meant by creative governance and leadership.

### **Defining Creativity in Leadership and Governance.**

One of the essential ingredients of high performing individuals, teams and organisations is creativity (Basadur, 2004). To be creative means releasing talent and imagination, the ability to take risks and, in some cases, necessitates standing outside the usual frames of reference (Harris, 2009). Creative people push the boundaries: they seek new ways of seeing, interpreting, understanding and questioning ( Hoyle and Wallace 2005). They thrive in circumstances which others might see as chaotic and disorderly (Montuori and Purser, 1999).

This study seeks to explore the presence of creativity in college governance, with governance being an aspect of the overall leadership culture of a college. Governance does not sit easily with circumstances considered to be chaotic and disorderly. Indeed for some, governance may be considered to be a necessary antidote to such organisational behaviour. It could be considered, indeed expected, that the explorations of creativity within the college should be judged and rationalized through college governance( Hill and James 2008).

However, for colleges to perform successfully requires enterprise and innovative practice. Successful colleges have always been entrepreneurial, even in the pre-incorporation era of local authority of control and block grant funding of colleges. This study seeks to consider the degree to which participating colleges (which exhibit innovation at macro and/or micro level) have governing bodies that are part of the 'mindset' of the college (Schofield 2009).

It is necessary at this stage to seek to define creativity so that examples of governance practice can be assessed in relation to notions of creativity. West-Burnham (2008) suggests the following ways to define creativity:

- (a) the use of imagination, insight and originality;
- (b) the development of a different product, process or outcome;
- (c) the addition of value to an existing product or process;
- (d) the use of higher order skills, knowledge and qualities; and
- (e) the potential to make a difference, to improve, enhance or enrich.

Stoll (2008) emphasises the importance of 'communities of practice' in relation to creativity. Thus, creativity is more likely to be enhanced, developed and supported through collective rather than individual endeavor (Spillane and Diamond 2007). This sense of community is linked to high levels of trust and 'no blame innovation'. Whilst trust between governors and managers is a core aspect of effective governance, the idea of 'no blame innovation' is at first difficult to connect to the necessary accountability and control of college governance. However, the processes of risk management and project evaluation can satisfy governance concerns about innovation e.g. merger with another college or re-location of the college through new build. College governance has never been about avoiding risk taking. The test is the quality of the case presented by the principal/Senior Management Team and the concomitant decision making undertaken by governors.

### **The Context of Creative College Governance**

The context for college governance (creative or otherwise) starts with the statutory framework for the powers of further education corporations (the legal remit of college governing bodies). The Learning and Skills Act 2000, building upon the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, provides the powers of a further education corporation. These powers include the running of an educational institution for the provision of secondary, further and higher education. In support of primary legislation, there are the Instrument and Articles of Government which define the responsibilities and practice of college governing bodies. Specifically, the Articles of Government (DIUS, December 2007) for further education corporations in England state:-

*The Corporation shall be responsible for the following functions:*

- (a) *the determination and periodic review of the educational character and mission of the institution and oversight of its activities;*
- (b) *approving the quality strategy of the institution;*
- (c) *the effective and efficient use of resources, the solvency of the institution and the Corporation and safeguarding their assets;*
- (d) *approving annual estimates of income and expenditure;*
- (e) *the appointment, grading, suspension, dismissal and determination of the pay and conditions of service of the holders of senior posts and the Clerk...*
- (f) *setting a framework for the pay and conditions of service of all other staff.*

It is significant that the 'purpose of college governance' is not pre-defined and is left to each college governing body to address for themselves. So it is only possible to explore creativity in college governance by reference to achievements approved by the governing body rather than use a governance framework for colleges that explicitly espouses and expects creativity. The Learning and Skills Council, in its relatively short existence, has expected colleges to be responsive and, in particular, responsive to the priorities for 'learning and skills' which the LSC considers to be important. 'Responsiveness' and 'creativity' share the theme of change.

However, many governors interviewed in this study are clear that responsiveness tends to mean 'doing as the college is required,' whereas creativity is the encouraging of ideas and the selection of the way forward through dialogue and debate.

It is within this policy climate of Governmental command, control and accountability that college leadership is expected to perform. As the coming sections will show, it is often hard and possibly undesirable for colleges to confront 'established beliefs, mindsets and patterns' (Harris, op cit) in situations of transition and turbulence. However, in spite of rather than because of such a climate colleges are exploring new ideas for the benefits of their learners and communities. The following vignettes in the next section provide more insight into the practice and contribution of governance to college leadership.

## College Case Studies

### Introduction

In this section we report the findings from our field work in 6 case study colleges. The colleges represent a cross section of the sector in terms of size, location and provision. All the colleges are considered to be successful by external OFSTED measures and are able to illustrate elements of good practice. Semi structured interviews were conducted with a range of governors, Chairs, principals, managers and clerks in each of the colleges. The major focus of the interviews was creative governance, but they also provided governors with the opportunity to provide insight and analysis of college governance in practice. Whilst there are many different perspectives a consensus about key issues does emerge. In a sense the interviews enabled governors to talk about the realities of being a college governor and to reflect on college governance procedures. They represent a beginning in the process of developing an authentic governor voice.

### College A

*College A* is a sixth form college with governors who describe their contribution as the general support and encouragement of the Principal but with a clear sense (reinforced by individual governors) that plans and ideas were presented by senior staff for governor scrutiny and challenge to assumptions.

### Key Features

- College formed six years ago because Government concerned regarding lack of 6th provision in the area.
- Governance contribution from the beginning of the life of the College.
- Now, competitive sixth form market place and impacting on enrolment.
- Distraction by building project; a sap on creativity.
- Collaboration with local 14+ planning.
- Standards Committee using an educational audit approach in partnership with staff.
- Achievement driven governing body by not being too tough.
- Cautious governing body.

Seven interviews were carried out with governors and the clerk to the corporation

Staff Governor B

Student Governor F

Chair of the Corporation R

Vice Chair of the Corporation S

Principal K

Governor L

Clerk to the Corporation R

### **Principal**

A limitation on the creativity of the board is the way in which the board's performance objectives for the principal can be 'narrowing' rather than 'releasing' or 'extending'. The employment relationship between the principal and the board through the setting of performance objectives was an underdeveloped area. The process and detail relating to the principal's performance objectives, linked to college improvement, seemed to attract less interest than might be expected. In this aspect of the delivery of their responsibilities boards were often following the principal's lead. Governor (R) at college A described the performance management scheme for the principal and vice-principal as "loose" rather than formal in the way progress and performance information is presented and considered by the board.

### **Creativity and Blue Skies**

Governor (L) did not recognise 'creative governance' but confirmed that the interpretation at College A would be *'asking the Principal to be innovative'*. *We haven't used 'creative' to describe our work as governors, we are more familiar with 'strategic'*.

Governor (S) from college A considered that it was very important to 'distinguish between formal and informal governance time with a more imaginative contribution expected from governors'.

One governor (B) from college A considered the most creative part of governance to be the sharing of local knowledge which community representation on the board was able to achieve.

A governor (K) at college A interpreted creative governance as *'getting the right people as governors and then building around common values and a shared sense of purpose.'* The *'calibre and the chemistry'* were judged to make a difference in the way the board performed and contributed to the leadership of the college. The ideal type of governor was described as someone who had a sense of responsibility, a good intellectual level, personal confidence, very high order communication skills, emotional commitment, strong value position on people/education/community.

Governor (S) at college A made a distinction between macro and micro creativity. He suggested that the macro college governance agenda was a compliance based one. If there was any creativity from governance it was considered to be currently achieved at individual level (micro level) whereby the expertise and perception of governors was shared with senior staff.

Governor (R) at college A considered that the degree of creativity provided by a governing board might vary according to circumstances. He reflected on the development of the college during his period of office as a governor and concluded that there had been creativity in the formative stages of what was a new college and now the relationship with senior staff was a more formal one of *'monitoring college performance through senior staff leadership'*.

### **Position and Disposition**

Governor (L) described the work of the governing body in the following terms: *'checks and balance; challenging the college leadership; forcing college leadership to track performance; lots to get bogged down in regarding key performance indicators and added value'*.

Governor (L) believed the most creative part of college governance was the governors' strategy day. However, it is important for the college to *'get the basics right first. Until this is sorted the college shouldn't be distracted by creative thinking.'*

### **Governor Motivation**

A governor (L) with a business background at college A expressed his prime concern as *'I want more speed'*.

A student governor (F) at college A wanted to make more personal impact but stated *'the agenda is set and there is little room for my issues'*. The student governor went on to say *'I would like more open agendas, more focus on college life, and the encouragement of creativity'*.

A governor (S) at college A considered that reporting to the governing body by senior staff was judged as an inhibitor to creativity rather than an enabler of creative debate. There was a belief by this governor that *'policy defensiveness'* was adding to the paperwork for governors. This position had been encouraged by a narrow audit attitude to college governance.

Another governor (R) at college A stated that he would like to think that the Board had been creative but, in reality, there had been other forces and distractions dominating the Board business agendas. *'But, at the same time, the Board had not been encouraged to be creative and the paperwork does not permit creativity. The Board needed to move away from caution and concern with risk.'*

### **Internal / External**

In contrast to the student governor there was a sense that the governing body of College A had adopted an internal focus for a number of years. The importance of *'getting the college right'* was referred to by a number of governors and it was stated that *'the primary purpose of governance is internal'* (K).

Governor (B) emphasised what he interpreted as an ambassadorial role – he personally *'tried to get people linked to the college'*. Through being a governor he believed he had a license to roam for the good of the college.

## Clerk

The Clerk to the Corporation (R) provided a definition of creative governance as *'thinking round the corners'* and *'blue skies thinking rather than just looking after the housekeeping'*. The Clerk stated that governors wanted more time for the creative part of their role. He drew upon the evidence of the self assessment of governance to explain this view.

The Clerk to the Corporation cautioned that creative i.e. proactive, governance wasn't easy to develop *'as the governing body was forced to be more reactive than proactive.'*

Matching the responses from some governors the Clerk to the Corporation believed the Board's Standards Committee was a good example of innovation in governance. The innovative practice was achieved by the mix of governor personality and educational background/expertise with the motivation and energy to achieve educational improvement in the college. In effect programme managers in the college were expected to account for their contribution to learner performance directly to the Standards Committee. An educational audit approach was used to achieve comprehensive coverage and track action and performance. The success of this approach was recently confirmed by an OFSTED inspection of the college. The Clerk referred to an *'enforcement'* role by the committee but he also emphasized the good style used and the respect for its membership by staff who were invited to account for the quality of teaching and learning in their academic section of the college.

The Clerk to the Corporation believed a good clerk, a good chair and a good principal working together could overcome the limitations of a compliance agenda. If there was a desire to encourage a more proactive approach this could be achieved. The imaginative use of development days was seen to be an important part of this approach.

## Governor Voice

Governor (S) at college A advised that if there was creativity from governance it was achieved at the individual (micro) level whereby the expertise and perceptions of governors were shared with senior staff on a personal basis. Governor (S) emphasized the value of the committees of the governing body as the opportunity for creative thinking from governors. The particular example of the Educational Standards Committee was given where the *'educationalists' on the committee shared their expertise with college senior staff for the benefit of professional development and the college's improvement programme'*.

Governor (B) at college A was clear that *'educationalists should play a bigger part on college boards as they can contribute more in relation to core business.'* He believed business-based governors struggled to understand colleges and their activities.

The governing body was seen as a place of mediation rather than the locus of creativity. It was necessary to recognise the importance of accountability in the purpose of college governance.

A significant limitation to the possibilities of college governance was provided by a governor (B) who defined the board as *'a line of defence'* and *'a line of discipline'*. He considered the behaviour of the Board under these conditions to be restricted rather than expansive.

The governor recognised that it was not a matter of choice between a creative and compliance-based governance agenda. Ideally there would be a place for both and the strength of the board would be the extent to which both functions were contributing to the leadership of the college.

#### **SUMMARY: COLLEGE A**

- Governors do not recognize or describe their practice as creative governance but rather as supportive. The Board is populated with governors who can provide possible solutions to management issues (the governance /management divide is tested through this approach)
- Creativity was (only possibly) achieved at micro-level through (for) the Standards Committee - the case was cited for its approach and confirmed by its outcomes.
- There was debate about the board as mediator of the ideas of others rather than the originator of ideas
- There was discussion of the mix of formal and informal/non-formal governance and the potential for creative governance to be developed through the informal/non-formal practices.

#### **College B**

*College B* is a tertiary college with the operation of four sixth forms in the city, each linked to a cluster of secondary schools. Each sixth form (which is governed by an 'area joint committee' from the partner secondary schools) is able to nominate one governor to serve on the board of the college. The key test for this innovative model was agreement and participation by secondary schools and communities. There was recognition that this form of creative 'structural' governance is high risk and requires strong leadership from the principal and senior team. It was believed that, through recent self-assessment of governance, governors were increasing the nature of challenge to senior staff on the basis of honest reporting. Trust relations between senior staff and governors were described as essential.

#### **Key features**

- College offering vocational and academic provision for a city region.
- Governance is representational and expertise based.
- Operation by the college of a sixth form partnership model with local clusters of secondary schools.
- A board driven by senior staff business interests.
- An increasingly learner centred college.

Seven interviews were carried out with governors and the clerk to the corporation

Chair of the Corporation J

Vice Chair of the Corporation M

Principal Aa

Clerk to the Corporation C

Staff Governor Ab

Governor (Audit Committee Member) K

Governor Ac

### **Principal**

The principal saw his role as *'helping the board do a better job'* – a view shared by governors.

The performance management scheme with the principal (and vice principal) was considered *'loose'*. This was not the locus of creativity and formalising the board's expectations.

### **Creativity**

Participants believed the most obvious opportunity for governors to be creative was at the annual strategic planning event. However, it was described as: *'staff present the route, governors agree it'*.

A key feature of the board was considered to be its connections with the local community.

Governor (Ab) thought the most creative part of governance had been the achievement of a more *'student centred governing body'* through a Student Experience and Student Life Committee (from every centre of the college) which reported to the board.

### **Internal / External (Structural Innovation)**

College B in the study was using a structural approach to extend the influence of the college in its operating community. This college was operating four sixth forms in the city, each linked to a cluster of secondary schools. Each sixth form, which is governed by an area joint committee from the partner secondary schools, is able to nominate one governor to serve on the governing body of the college. There was recognition by governors interviewed that this form of governance is *'high risk'* and requires strong leadership from the principal and senior team to maintain confidence and improve learner performance.

The drive for entering into this structural arrangement with sixth form area/joint committees was viewed as *'reactive and opportunistic'* by Governor (C). Participating governors from college B credited the senior staff and the clerk to the corporation with creativity which the board then considered and approved. A governor (A) at college B expressed the positive view that leadership at governing body meetings was where *'senior staff present good solutions; we can see the end package'*. Governor (K) at college B felt the principal was *'helping the board do a better job'*.

### Position and Disposition

There was criticism by Governor (J) of Government policy as a limiting factor on the expectations and performance of the college governing body; *'the Learning and Skills Council provided what it wanted the college to deliver'*. However, the creation of the sixth form model was seen as reducing risk rather than increasing it by the reduction in competition from local providers.

### Governor Motivation

The Board needed to move away from caution and concern with risk. Governor (M) from college B added *'governors are submissive in the face of voluminous papers and reports that are discussed word by word. The atmosphere works against creativity, we're only reactive'*. Governor (M) added that governors were not given choices or options but directed *'in one direction only'*.

Governor (K) believed the paperwork provided for governance meetings *'prevents not liberates'*. The performance of the board was expressed as *'we're not a passive board, but we're not creative either'*.

### Governor Voice

Governors welcome the opportunity to participate in the committees of the board at college B, to share and to offer advice and expertise.

However, another governor (J) observed *'there's little evidence of the governance agenda we want'* which reflected the reality of governance as *'receiving rather than driving'*.

#### **SUMMARY: COLLEGE B**

- A board driven by senior staff energy and interests e.g. improved learner-informed decision making;
- A board that doesn't consider itself to be creative but feels reactive and has to follow policy;
- A board that has formed a strategic model of sixth form delivery for the city region;
- A board that sees creativity at micro level only and, possibly, at the annual away day.

## College C

*College C* is a further education college in a remote county served by four colleges each with discrete districts.

Governance at College C was described as being in transition but there was a model of governance in operation seen to be comprehensive, combining elements of traditional, Carver and integrated approaches to governance. Thus there was a traditional board and committee structure, plus

- Encouragement to governors to make an individual contribution e.g. meetings with students to resolve learner voice issues;
- Encouragement to act in an ambassadorial role on behalf of the college;
- Governor engagement with strategic planning;
- Governors to act as link governors with curriculum areas

### Key features

- College offering vocational education and training to a discrete area of a remote county.
- College participating in a collaborative project with three other colleges.
- College participating in a company providing services to employers.
- Board wanting to focus on more creative time to be more responsive.

Six interviews were carried out with governors, the clerk to the corporation, and the collaboration officer. In addition a large group of governors contributed to discussion on aspects of governance

Principal C

Chair of the Corporation P

Vice Chair of the Corporation D

Clerk to the Corporation H

Staff Governor Cw

Collaboration Officer J

### Principal

The principal is the prime stimulus of creative governance arrangements at college C.

### Creativity

Principal (C) at college (C) believed that creative governance was about *'embracing and responding to the ideas of others, particularly the ideas of students, communities, employers, funding bodies and agencies'*.

Governor (P) at college (C) defined creative governance as *'the means by which the process of college governance could become more student focused'*.

Another definition of creative governance was offered by governor (D) at college C as *'going beyond statutory requirements (the six responsibilities of the board, the financial memorandum between the LSC and the college) and looking at localized and customized responses to education and training'*.

Creative governance was seen as something that all colleges should exhibit and was not dependent upon building a firm foundation within the college first. Indeed it was considered that creative governance was required to achieve a firm foundation for college performance.

### **Blue Skies Thinking**

Governors expressed a desire to contribute to more blue skies thinking. Whilst it was accepted that some innovative structural arrangements were in place, governors clearly believed that these arrangements were a means to an end. There was a case for further exploration and clarification of the vision.

### **Internal / External (Structural Innovation)**

The governing body of college C had decided to make two structural changes to develop the role of the college. Firstly the governing body had decided to participate in a formally constituted collaboration with three other colleges. The rationale for this collaboration was expressed as addressing three priorities – quality improvement, sustainable operations, county-wide responsiveness. A Collaboration Board had been formed which was comprised of four principals and four governors from the four participating colleges. This Collaboration Board had oversight of the activities of working groups established to deliver the key themes. Each of the four college governing bodies were informed of the progress of the collaborative activities through reports from their respective principal. The principal of the participating college in this research study reported that the four colleges produced real business benefits including quality improvement, financially stable colleges, benchmarking, joint teaching and learning observation and general sharing of expertise.

Governor reflection on these collaboration arrangements was realistic – the arrangements had emerged as alternative to the considerable pressure on the four colleges to merge. The initiative was seen to work because the four principals were positive about the arrangements. There was no identification of governor energy adding value to the collaboration other than participating in the governance structure that supported the collaborative approach.

The governing body had also decided to join with three other colleges locally to form a trading company to assist employer responsiveness through improved services to business. Governors from each of the partner colleges serve on the company's audit committee, with reports being submitted to each college governing body finance committee.

In both cases there were clear operational advantages to these extra-college working arrangements i.e. mechanisms whereby governors extended their influence beyond the college governing body through structural arrangements. However, from the point of view of this study the governor contribution was largely limited to enabling support and oversight. Thus governors were using more of a compliance agenda to ensure effectiveness and improvement through collaboration. Each year there was opportunity for all governors from the partner colleges to come together to look at strategic matters. These events were described as being strongly led by the principals.

## Governor Motivation

A key aspect to the limitations placed on creative governance was considered to be the Government policy and public sector management practices of target setting and inspection/audit. Governor (C) at college C stated that *'target-based Government was taking creativity from college boards. Without a legitimated planning role, governing bodies were struggling to get beyond the dominating compliance agenda issues'*.

An interesting distinction was made by Governor (D) who considered that the board was well informed and aware of the college's business performance but, he added, *'we're not driving'*. The broader question of the degree to which there should be creative governance (to some a contradiction in terms) is tested by the Articles of Government. These can be interpreted as the principal proposes, the board considers and approves; the principal reports, the board monitors. This version of governance does not emphasise creativity on the part of governors.

Governor (D) stated that typical governance meetings agendas were dull and laborious. *'It is frustrating being a governor if you wanted to debate and develop new approaches to college business activities'*.

## Governor Voice

In college C a governor (Cw) believed it was possible for governors to influence the shape of the college and this view was illustrated by the developing learner voice agenda within college which included governor participation. Small groups of governors were invited to attend and participate in student forums which had been established to solve student problems in creative ways. At college C governors were operating outside the governing body and its committees through micro-events within college and county-wide. Yet, there was also a view from governor (C) that the board *'lacked proactivity i.e. the distinction between participating as governors and leading as governors'*.

There were governors at college C who recognized that expectations on existing governors may be inappropriate to drive innovation and to act as leaders rather than mediators or followers. Recognising the opportunities within the revised Instrument of Government to move away from representational governor membership, there were some governors who believed that governors should now be recruited for their expertise (including their ability to provide stimulus to innovate).

### **SUMMARY: COLLEGE C**

- A college trying to involve governors at micro and macro-college and regional levels;
- A recorded frustration with the practice of governance and a strong desire to change;
- Recognition that the principal is leading governance and achieving much for the board
- Recognition of the need to move the governor membership from local to expertise based
- Embarking on a search for a new purpose for governance at the college
- Governance achievements to date have been limited by the system.

## College D

*College D* is a further education college on the cusp of change. A new chair, vice chair and principal have been appointed in quick succession.

- Inner city college
- New build ready for opening
- New Chair and Vice Chair
- New Principal
- Desire for governors to move to a more creative agenda based on community and student priorities

Interviews were carried out with seven governors and the clerk to the corporation

Principal A

Staff Governor R

Staff Governor P

Chair of the Corporation S

Vice Chair of the Corporation J

Chair of the Audit Committee Ad

Student Governor Jm

Clerk to the Corporation M

There was a clear mood reflected by governors for change and to become more involved with ideas for the college. There was also recognition that either the amount of time governors would need to spend on college matters would need to increase to accommodate greater involvement in creative thinking or governance processes would have to change. (A, P).

Governor (S) at college D suggested that '*creative governance is looking at new ways to change the college to reach new levels of performance*'. It was appreciated that this definition implied cultural change in governance and management and a key element of this change would be responsiveness to community priorities.

## Creativity

### Principal A

*'If the board knew what it wanted this could release the principal and senior staff, enable better governor engagement and produce a stronger college'*.

### Blue Skies Thinking

There were differing interpretations of blue skies thinking. Whilst the Chair, Vice Chair, Principal and Clerk to the Corporation wanted to encourage more creative thinking from governors there were differences in interpretation of the opportunities already available to governors and the extent to which working governance practices needed to change. The differences emerged in response to what some believed to be a formal compliance governance agenda with limited contribution from some governors.

### **Internal / External (Structural Innovation)**

One of the key aspects of looking at a more varied agenda for governors would be the opportunity to look at a wider interpretation of further education and to try to connect community themes and priorities to the college. It was firmly believed that 'the board was the best place for creative governance and that strategic committees could be more helpful in supporting the board with this objective' (Governor S). The view was expressed by Governor (Ad) that '*governance was more important than college management because of the linkage with community interests and the accountability for public funds*'. Up to now the view was expressed that governors were '*rubberstamping*' management proposals.

### **Position and Disposition**

The role of the chair was mentioned specifically in college D where a new chair and vice chair were in place. Governor (A) in college D stated, '*the role of the chair of the corporation was considered critical within a setting of cultural change in the college*'. How the chair interpreted the role of the board and the contribution of the principal and the clerk significantly shaped opinion about governors and governance. It was regretted that there was '*insufficient training and development for the chair of the corporation within the further education sector*'.

Two governors (Ad) and (P) suggested that payment for the Chair and possibly other governors might provide additional governor time to go beyond compliance matters. Currently payment of governors is not permitted by the Instrument of Government.

### **Governor Motivation**

Governor (P) at felt that there was insufficient time to be creative as a governing body. '*There isn't enough time to be creative; we don't debate anything*'. This interpretation came with regret that the compliance agenda was so dominating that it left little time for anything else in meetings. There was no intended criticism of senior staff in this analysis, merely a reflection that the system didn't seem to want governors to debate and discuss.

The frustration of governance was expressed by Governor (C) when he said, '*we are short of understanding where we want to go and how to help people understand where we want to go. We want to see options to take us in the direction we have agreed we wish to travel*'.

A newly appointed governor (P) expressed his disappointment with the process of college governance: '*it's one hell of a bureaucracy; when do we talk about the students?*' He continued by expressing the view that the governing body appeared '*to be spending too much time checking the work of the senior staff instead of being more involved with students and community matters*'. Governor (P) said, '*we seem blocked up with procedures*'. Furthermore Governor (P) stated '*management is in charge of the governing body and the purpose of the governing body is to rubberstamp the proposals from college management*'.

Governor (J) expressed the view that '*getting beyond the routine stewardship of the college by the board would be difficult without cultural change and the development of a new governance agenda. The mechanics of governance seem to get in our way*'. Another barrier was seen to be the immense complexity of the further education sector.

## Governor Voice

Governor (S) believed that the board was the best place for creative governance but he accepted that committees could be more helpful in supporting the board with this objective. The student affairs committee at college D was seen as influential as it encouraged discussion of learner matters at board meetings explained Governor (Jm).

However the Principal (A) commented that most challenge from board members occurred in finance, audit, and human resources rather than being related to the core business of teaching and learning, curriculum development, quality improvement and student experience. This would suggest the degree of cultural change required in governance to be considerable. This change could be aided by governors acting outside the college by working with stakeholders and taking a proactive role through chairing community events .

An interesting distinction was developed by Governor (J) between creative governors and creative governance. *'Was creative governance the product of creative governors and, if so, how were governors developed / enabled / encouraged to be more creative? Getting beyond the 'routine stewardship' of the college by the board would be difficult without cultural change and the development of a new governance agenda'.*

## Clerk to the Corporation

The clerk to the corporation (M) at college D emphasized the calibre of governors, clarity of role and direction for the college and the importance of creating opportunities for governor discussion and debate as key elements in improving the contribution of the board to leadership of the college. He also queried the size of the board and suggested reduction might be of advantage. The clerk acknowledged that committees could improve their performance through co-option of particular expertise to improve understanding of specialist areas.

### COLLEGE D: SUMMARY

- There is a movement for cultural change among some members of the board;
- Cultural change would add an outward facing aspect that builds upon efforts to be student centred. This is what creative governance was judged to be able to offer.
- There was a recognition that there was insufficient time within current governance mechanisms to properly add-on or integrate creativity in governance.
- There was recognition that there was insufficient debate or adequate challenge to achieve anything more than endorsing the principal's proposals
- Changing the reporting style to governors would require a change to the audit and accountability expectations of external agencies and bodies associated with further education colleges.

## College E

College E is a large urban Further Education College that has grown considerably through merger and acquisition. It is currently expanding in the 16-19 market with a significant building programme. It has 'taken over' another college and has also acquired parts of a private training provider. Staff comment openly about the 'College group' with 4 business units within the 'group'. The College is considered to be a national provider with a national reputation. The Chair considers the 'group' to be "*far ahead of the sector.*"

Seven interviews were conducted with:

Student governor A

Clerk to the Corporation B

Principal and Chief Executive C

Governor D

Governor E

Chair of Audit Committee F

Chair of Governors G

## Principal

There is strong agreement between the governors interviewed that the Chief Executive is a high performing individual who provides clear leadership to the organisation. The Chief Executive, governor C, explains how the process of making a major decision (merger/takeover) at the College operates: *The original discussion was around the future of the college and what we could do... From conversations with the chair and a strategy development event with governors it became clear they would be interested in my seeking merger opportunities. I then put in place an infrastructure that would enable the college to identify, and to manage those opportunities... I would then go back to governors... and I have the role to advise. There is a consultative stage of those big developments and then a decision making stage that I facilitate.*

The Clerk identifies the key role played by the Chief Executive in developing systems and establishing the direction of the College: *Ever since the principal came there has been a huge amount of business discipline developed in the college, so that manifests itself in two key ways: one we have a very robust and integrated process of business planning, quality review and performance management... whilst maintaining quality, financial control is extremely strong and extremely good. This creates confidence at the governor level, before the principal was appointed the college was struggling financially... Since the principal has brought in these disciplines over several years, that worry has been removed. We have that confidence that we can cope with change... The college has been utterly transformed from the way it was before.*

## Creativity

There is recognition amongst governors that the opportunities for creativity are restricted. The Chief Executive illustrates this: *There are limited opportunities to be creative, it's merely a matter of processing the business and keeping an overview and a handle on everything. It cannot be a uniform pattern. However, across the meeting there is a creative exchange. Other members of the executive attend.*"

However Governor D argues that much creative work takes place outside the formal structure: *“The little working groups have affected policy. They might consist of the chief executive and other member of executive. They’re frank sessions and they’re a way of beating things about.”*

Governor G claims that *“the Chief executive provides the creativity and imagination – the Board considers the merits of the proposals.”*

The Chief executive argues that *“creativity is based on relationships and trust, and mutual respect... There are boundaries and those boundaries are based on the articles and instrument, it’s black and white. There’s no creative process involved at all. This is what governors are responsible for and this is what managers are responsible for. There is then an exchange across that boundary. We call it the rendering unto Caesar principle... and that is based on a clear corporate understanding of a set of rules.”*

### **Blue Skies**

Blue skies thinking is driven by the executive team. The Clerk explains how proposals for new developments are put forward: *The way we tend to work does reflect the articles, that the corporation is responsible for making those high level decisions about strategic direction, but it’s in response to proposals made by the principal and in practice the executive team because the principal and the executive are the experts in the operational side. They’re experts in the running of the college, the markets and business environment, the funding methodology, all of that detail. They’re alert to the big proposals that come along, things like mergers and acquisitions.”*

### **Internal/external**

The Chief Executive explains how the relationship with governors operates: *“It’s not just about policy, it’s an evolving process... The ground we cover is proscribed for us, it’s proscribed by good business practice and it’s also proscribed by the articles and instrument. So we don’t make up our agendas... There are legal rules about what is a governance decision and an executive decision. There is a role for setting strategy and direction.”*

### **Position and Disposition**

Governor D explains how the relationship with the executive operates: *“You need to adopt a two state model. If you are satisfied you have a good executive and they give you all the normal things that they give you that indicate the organisation is working well, you adopt a role that is hopefully helpful and is a way of supporting, but you don’t interfere. They run the organisation. But you have to be prepared, if you think things are going wrong... to adopt a completely different role. It’s your duty to find out if things are running properly or not. Here at college I’ve never had any doubts it’s been run properly.”*

Governor F acknowledges the key importance of the Chief Executive in driving forward change: *“The principal is a get it done person and if something needs to be done it gets done. There’s no business of saying we cannot do that. The combination of governors and the executive is good.”*

Governor D outlined how the relationship between the executive and governors operates: *"We have strategy away days twice a year and they do look at current issues. We throw things around and try to look at where we're going and why. They're partly the executive teaching the governors, because the governors cannot know all the detail around this place. It's not all that different from running a small country. The executive are genuinely open about getting advice from the governors about things."*

Governor F makes a comparison with being a school governor and the benefits of being in a large organisation: *"You've got talented staff here and it's not like a small organisation where as a governor you have to be involved as a specialist."*

Getting things done and improvement is clearly identified as being the priority for the executive. According to Governor E: *"The role of the executive is crucial... the governing body have a role to support the executive. We can act as a sounding board. Sometimes the exec have nowhere else to go to try out these ideas... Occasionally we've changed the direction a tiny bit and less rarer we've changed it fundamentally."*

The role of support from governors is seen as crucial and there is a recognition that it has to be real support: *"it cannot be token support, but it cannot be blind encouragement. Sometimes you have to make tough decisions."* (Governor E)

A number of governors raised the issue of payment for governors. The Chair of the Corporation was strongly in support of this and also for moving closer to a business model with executive and non executive directors. He was supported by the Chief Executive who argued: *"Governors' need to be paid. Certainly for an organisation like this with a large turnover who operate nationally. We've moved a long way from a governance arrangement which is based on good will... it would be advantageous to have something a little harder edged. To get something harder edged is not to do with the rules changing. It's not just true of this organisation. It's nothing like running a school now. It's a commercial environment and we need commercial governance... I think the best corporate governance is based on creativity and partnership."*

## **Policy**

The Chief Executive outlined the policy context and the importance of the central government in determining what can actually be done by the organisation: *I operate in an environment created by government policy. Governors also operate in that environment. We are not an organisation that might decide there is a market in red bottles which might actually be a more cost effective market to be in. We are in the market of skills, education and employability... The choices you make have consequences in terms of what you do."*

## **Governor Motivation/Governor Voice**

Governor D explains that the governors are not really involved in the education that is offered by the College group: *"From my experience what I do is not about education. We tend to think they (the executive) do the education. Most of us are not experts in education; we're not there to tell them how to run the curriculum. We're there to help them run the organization. We come from different places and bring different things."*

Governor D explained how different people are able to offer a range of time and advice: *“Some of the retired people are able to spend loads of time and do all sort of things.*

*It’s about the value of having a different set of minds looking at things. We do come from different places and we can bring other things. I bring a concern about social inclusion and I’m keen on the community education side of things... If the tap came on again for this type of work I’d want to be here making sure we turned it on again. This (the college) is a key part of the city and improving the city is a major part of what I’m concerned within my post.”*

### **Clerk**

According to the Clerk to the Corporation he has a number of roles: *“There are the formal roles that are very important ... There is an awful lot around compliance and inspection that is almost nothing to do with governors even though they are responsible. ... What I try to do is take away that burden from governors... Make sure all the stuff is in place and making sure governors are not burdened or choked. I try to be invisible make the boring, dull bit about strategic corporate governance as invisible as possible. So the governors can get on with thinking about the true strategic issues, about the business development of the college, about the risks associated with that and the things their expertise is there for and different stakeholders can be expressing their views about developments...”*

*I do all sorts of things, I do communications, and I provide ad hoc bits of advice, endless e-mails, arranging meetings. The detail of the job would just go on and on. The heart of it is facilitate governors in what they do.”*

#### **SUMMARY: COLLEGE E**

- Strong and dynamic principal.
- Key role of the Chair.
- Successful College and little pressure for change.
- Compliant/supportive model of governance.
- Chief executive has clear views about an alternative model of governance.
- Both the Chief Executive and Chair support the payment of governors and for a smaller governing body.

### **College F**

College F is a large Further Education College situated in an urban area. The College was established as a result of a merger between two colleges in 2001. It has been involved in the sale of a number of sites resulting in a move to a new purpose built complex that is described as a learning village. The College will be at the centre of this development but there are plans for a primary and secondary school to be located on the site. The secondary school will be an academy with the College as the main sponsor. This is situated in a regeneration area of the city and the College with the Local Authority is leading the regeneration effort. These developments have been driven by the Principal and his senior management team.

Seven interviews were conducted with:

Chair of the Corporation G  
Vice Chair and Chair of Estates H  
Chair of the Audit Committee J  
Chair of Quality and performance Committee K  
College Principal L  
Clerk M  
Former Governor (and previous vice-chair) N

### **Principal**

The governors acknowledged the key role played by the principal in taking the college forward. Governor N commented *“The key figure in the College is the principal. The committee structure can get into the detail of the organisation, but at times the status of the Corporation is marginal. The principal and his senior team are the key to what a college can do.* Governor J explained how the principal was able to initiate strategic developments: *“The principal has a standing paper on the future of the college. He will bring this to the Corporation who will discuss it and big issues will go to the strategy conference. However, it’s the principal and his team who take the lead on things. We can ask is it for the good of the college, but it’s the principal who leads and directs things.... Of course the chair will be involved and the chair and principal meet before each full governor’s meeting and they obviously give a strong steer to where the college is going”.*

The relationship between the principal and chair is an important part of this process, and according to the principal: *“The relationship between the chair and principal is vital. It has to be an open relationship, because who does the principal have to talk to? He has to feel supported. It shouldn’t be a cosy relationship, it has to have an edge, but there has to be support.”*

Governor N supported this: *“The key figures are the principal and the Chair. The role of the Chair is key, because the principal cannot hide things from the Chair.”*

### **Creativity**

Given the huge changes that have taken place in the College over recent years which have involved a significant amount of creativity the role of the governing body was clear according to governor N: *“many members don’t have the breadth of knowledge to challenge what is happening. You have to rely on the principal and the senior managers”*

Governor H: *“The role of governors is to make sure senior management can deliver. There has to be a creative tension between governors and senior management. But the role of governors is to scrutinise and to ask questions.”*

Governor M: *“Governors test the proposal that has been put forward by senior management.”*

Governor J: *“We offer our advice, but managers are paid to make decisions.”*

Governor K: *“The college management will have an idea and the governing body will challenge and question.”* However, this governor goes on to claim that within certain constraints there is an element of creativity: *“You have to remember that we have other jobs and lives and we can only do so much. However, within the limitations set for us we try to be as creative as we can be.”*

### **Blue skies**

Governors did have some involvement in determining future strategy through the strategy days held annually. The strategy days deal with overarching themes related to the future direction of the college and according to the Clerk: *“They are out of hours and provide an opportunity for more informal discussion time. They take an overarching theme with input from senior managers and are directly related to the College’s future direction. The process produces a view for the full corporation. They provide a strategic role and are part of the process of holding the management to account”*. However, the expectation was that the management would bring forward plans for discussion and take the lead in the process. Governor H: *“The strategy days allow us to look in the wider context, but how do you face outwards? We’re not experts and are reliant on senior managers for our understanding of FE.”* Governor K supports the claim that the strategy days enable the governors to maintain a check on the executive: *“At the strategy days what we get is that the College will have an idea and the governing body can challenge, question and find out... The strategy conference brings it all together. It is a driving force to get to know the strategic direction. It provides some openness about the process and allows us to put the bits together.”*

### **Position and Disposition**

Within the governors interviewed there was no support for the payment of governors. A view summed up by governor H who supported the voluntary nature of governance and the success of the current system: *“What’s important is that this works and it has delivered. The voluntary approach works well, I would want anything other than the payment of governors.”* The principal was also opposed to the payment of governors, but would support a smaller governing body.

### **College and its Community**

Despite incorporation and the many changes in funding and control the College has maintained strong links with the Local Authority and has played a key role in supporting the local community. A major part of this process has been through relocation of the college to a deprived urban area that is being regenerated. The College is at the heart of this regeneration through the creation of a learning quarter. Whilst the driving force behind this initiative has been the principal and the executive, the governors have provided considerable support. According to governor H: *“We bring an outside perspective and as governors we have the ability to look at the wider context for the college and its relationship with the wider community. That was certainly the case with the learning quarter, we were able to make sure the college delivered on the wider context and the learning quarter in particular.”* Governor N supported this: *“The learning quarter was an example where we were able to take into account the wider picture and what was important for the City.”*

## Policy

The importance of the management team was stressed when dealing with matters relating to wider educational policy, the curriculum and to relations with outside bodies. A view summed up by Governor K: *Support is the key in terms of skills, we're not involved in the day to day and we cannot know about all the changes. We provide support. Support is giving information, attendance, reading papers.* Governor I added: *The funding criteria limits what a college can do. Governors cannot get to grips with this and have to rely on senior management.* Governor H argues that the governors can help the College deal with wider policy issues: *"An FE college has to be like an ocean liner with stabilisers, to cut through all the changes to policy. We are the stabilisers who can support and check and enable the College to go forward."*

## Governor Motivation/Governor Voice

Whilst there were a number of explanations for the motivation of individuals to become governors there was a strong commitment to providing support, and in many cases expertise to an important local organisation. According to governor K the skills she provided, and the recognition of the importance of the college provided her with the necessary motivation to remain as a governor for 9 years: *"We know how important it is and we feel a commitment to helping out. I see my main role as providing support. Support is the key in terms of skills; it's not being involved in the day to day. Support is giving information, attendance at meetings and just reading the papers you're sent for the meetings."*

According to governor G: *"The role of the governing body is to challenge and to question. We will challenge the situation."*

This view of the role of the Corporation was a strong feature of other Governors, e.g. Governor H: *"The role of governors is to scrutinise and to ask questions, in effect double checking.... Scrutiny in its proper sense. It's not a negative it's about making right decisions.... The role of governors is to make sure senior management deliver. There should be a creative tension between the governing body and senior management. We're not particularly creative; the senior managers have that role."*

Governor N: *"We are not thought of as being proactive, but reactive."*

Governor J: *"We scrutinise what the management team does. We look at procedures and controls. Our role is not to get into detail, but to have a strategic view."*

Governor J also claimed that some members of the Governing body find it difficult to make their voice heard: *"At times it's a bit of a clique – an old boys club. Sometimes people are unwilling to contribute, especially women."*

The importance of the smaller committees rather than the larger governing body was also recognised. Governor H: *"The committee structure allows us to scrutinise and to double check."* This is strongly supported by the Clerk: *"The committee structure provides the opportunity to question, clarify and hold to account."*

## Clerk

The Clerk considers that he has a key role in “*building an open relationship between governors that leads to trust and the maintenance of a culture.*” A key part of this process is the appointment of new governors and the “*importance of a search committee for governors.*” The principal claims that the “*selection process is useful and detailed.*” Governor J explained that she had been through a rigorous interview process before she was invited to join the Governing body.

According to the Clerk he identifies “*proper documentation and a paper trail for each issue, which provides a process for the governors to deal with issues and enables them to test out proposals that have been put forward by senior management.*” This, in turn, leads to the Governing body being able to “*take a strategic role and hold management to account.*” The best summary of the importance of the clerk to governors was provided by governor J who claimed: “*The clerk is very important because he knows all the things you can and cannot do.*”

### **SUMMARY: COLLEGE F**

- Strong leadership from a dynamic and well established principal.
- Effective relationships with the local community.
- Openness in governance which has led the governing body to be willing to embrace change.
- The Corporation has provided the basis for the management to undertake a number of major development projects.
- The Chair is a key role. Who chooses the chair?
- No support for payment of governors, but some support for a smaller governing body.

## Conclusion

The vignettes from the 6 case studies provide a range of evidence on the nature and purpose of college governance. Creative governance is at the heart of the case studies but they also paint a wider and vivid portrait of college governance across a number of diverse cultures and situations. In particular, they give an impression of the real policy dynamic faced by governors in a fast changing environment. The illustrative quotes present a governor or clerk perspective on their role and the realities of being a governor during a period of rapid change and development. Whilst recognising that each college has particular issues and rituals associated with governance we are able to identify a number of key findings emerging from the semi-structured interviews in the section that follows.

## Themes and Issues: synopsis

- Paperwork and bureaucracy

Rather than celebrate creative governance or any sense of a liberated perception of their role, some governors expressed the frustrations of being a college governor. This level of governor frustration varied from the deeply disillusioned to the mildly annoyed. The reported reasons for frustration usually included the amount of paperwork, the formality of meetings and lack of space to contribute, lack of learner-centredness, and the audit conditioning of college governance. At college D governor (C) said 'the internal barriers to creative governance are heavy and including non-sympathetic paperwork, college bureaucracy and procedural interpretations, senior staff attitude, and assumptions about governance by some governors'.

- Statutory responsibilities

It was suggested by Governor (A) at college D that the statutory responsibilities of college governance can encourage governors to look inwardly at the expense of responsiveness, relevance and locality. It is, however, matter of interpretation whether statutory responsibilities encourage parochialism. While the Articles of Governance focus specifically on the college as an institution they are not confined to internal matters only. Custom and conventional practice at board level may be more responsible for an inward-looking approach.

- Students and communities

A number of governors in the participating colleges were able to point to frustrations and limitations that prevented the exploration of ideas and possibilities. This view was often linked to limitations associated with the governance agenda, paperwork and insufficient emphasis given to students and communities.

- Senior managers

Some governors were aware of the influence (though others would say leadership) of senior managers and the lack of opportunity to debate and discuss the 'management line.' There was a strong sense of college bureaucracy and systems preventing access to wider avenues of discussion and exploration in a management led environment.

- Government policy

Government policy, as delivered by the Learning and Skills Council, has produced a sense of disempowerment which marginalized governors' contribution beyond taking responsibility for any inadequacies in the college performance. The acid test of governance seems to be when a college is in trouble.

- Drive from the principal

In the two examples of extending the role of the governor beyond the college governing body i.e. into a company and collaboration board or into a sixth form area committee, governors valued the importance of the principal in proposing, forming and implementing the necessary arrangements to achieve success. There was little sense of any additionality from governor contribution in the formative stages. Clearly governors were making contributions through meetings and agendas but the extent to which creativity was being exercised

seemed limited. Thus whilst the new structures represented an innovative response to local opportunities there was no greater governance creativity than that which was offered and permitted through the prescribed governing body framework. The major gain for governance was the closer connection of members of the college governing body to student and community issues.

### **Oversight rather than creativity**

In summary, there were some examples of innovation which involved governors operating in wider contexts beyond board meetings. The particular contribution of governors was more oversight than creativity. Governors recognized and praised the leadership of principals in achieving wider influence and the development of a more responsive college.

- Non-formal governance and Micro- governance

Examples of non-formal involvement of governors at an individual or micro- level provide significant support to governance at college level. The *personal* contribution of governors is a significant asset at board level. The discipline and everyday activities of governors matters more than perhaps is appreciated even by governors themselves and those who assess governance practice. Again there is no significant barrier to this development within the governance framework provided to colleges by the Department of Universities, Innovation and Skills.

The question for clerks, principals and governors themselves is the degree to which any activity by an individual governor is consistent with the responsibilities of the Board. The view is also taken that principles of good governance and accountability are closely associated with the *agreed* mission of the college in relation to its wider community. While the Articles of Government focus on the college as an institution there is also a need for governors to look beyond Articles and Procedures toward the bigger picture of the communities that the college serves.

- Performance management and governance

There appears to be limited understanding among governors of the relationship between the mission of the college, its strategic plan and the performance management of the principal and senior staff. In reality principals are seen as driving the college with the support of the governing body in achieving improvement and performance . Governors expressed confidence in the leadership provided by their respective principals.

- Clerks

The clerk is one of three parties to the effectiveness of college governance. The clerks were aware of the necessity to demonstrate good governance practice regarding the expenditure of public funds. There was recognition of the expectations of OFSTED and LSC at times of inspection and audit. Clerks were trying to achieve informed governance enabling governors to properly challenge and scrutinize the proposals of the principal and senior staff. Clerks accepted that board agendas were significantly influenced by principals and senior staff reporting. Clerks are strategic in brokering this process. It is however necessary to move beyond the present role of the clerk as both gatekeeper/protector of the board to a more facilitative role in creative governance activities.

- Governor periodisation in a wider policy context.

Colleges and governing bodies are entering a fourth phase of governance since 1 April 1993. The periodisation might be as follows:

- 1993/97 - **de-regulation**, whereby business governors dominated the culture of governing bodies and operated boards on business lines moving from local authority restrictions to market place freedoms;
- 1997/2000 - **re-regulation**, whereby community nominated governors and stakeholder membership returned to the boards of colleges;
- 2000/2008 - **centralised-regulation** or marginalization, whereby the planning role of the board was replaced by the Learning and Skills Council;
- 2008 + - **self-regulation**, whereby boards are encouraged to think of operating within a further education agency framework for and of the sector, and board membership can be formed largely of governors with skills and expertise to contribute to the leadership of the improvement of colleges.

Accepting this periodisation would suggest that the current phase of governance is one where both compliance and creativity can flourish at the same time to the benefit of colleges and their localities. It will be for boards to review their purpose, define the 'group goal' and design working practices that mediate the tensions and trade-offs involved.

- Audit Conditioning of College Governance

Many participants believed that external audit and regulatory expectations on colleges affected the way in which governance agendas were formed and presented. There is a perceived connection between the amount of paper received by governors for board and committee meetings and the assumed requirements of audits. It is certainly the case that the reports into college failure of the 1990s in the early post-incorporation years highlighted inadequacies in governance and, in particular, the accountability, scrutiny and compliance functions of governing bodies. The template for the Learning and Skills Council's audit of financial management and governance of colleges is full of recommendations for governance practice arising from 'failed colleges'. The legacy of these reports - which criticized governance and governors amongst other college failings - still affects the climate of college governance today. However the aspiration from participants in this study suggests that it is time to move toward a more balanced framework that remains some way off.

- Chair of the Corporation

Within the practice of governance some reference is made to the payment of governors (which is currently prevented by the Instrument of Government). There was, in particular, consideration of the possible payment of the chair of the corporation given the time, strategic significance and commitment required of the chair. There were diametrically opposed views expressed during the interviews ranging from the case for payment of the chair because of:

- The workload
- The role and the responsibility
- The possible loss of good chairs to other parts of the public sector where payment is made

to the case for non-payment because

- The motivation of the chair could change to match payment for results
- Professional chairs could become 'presidential' and possibly problematic
- Breach of trust

The extent to which there was any consensus on this matter in the study was not in evidence.

Questions arise from the case studies about the focus of governor development and the assumptions- from the first induction meeting - regarding what makes a good governor. From governor comment and perception, there is a significant amount of 'compliance' in the messages transmitted to governors from the start. This is, of course, a necessary beginning to the development of a governor by laying a firm foundation of important operating principles. However, if the process of encouraging governors to share ideas, exchange informed views and to be more engaged is a priority, as the evidence of this study indicates, greater attention to governor recruitment, retention, training and development is required. To be effective these priorities will have to be included within the approach of the college's search committee and support and development from within the college and at board level.

### **Synopsis and Conclusions**

A key message arising from the study is that the nature and purpose of college governance remains unclear. In a pilot study of this size and scope there are issues of reliability and validity. However, the data draws attention to a number of recurring themes and questions that are pertinent for further discussion.

- If governing bodies did not exist would anyone notice the difference?
- In effective practice there is a need for creative tension to exist between governance and the college executive.
- In the practice of college governance the relationship between chair and principal is crucial. Is the nature of this relationship appropriate and sustainable in terms of the scale, funding, size and influence of modern colleges, in meeting local and national needs?
- Governor training, recruitment and development is fragmented and limited. How can this situation be improved?
- The role and status of the clerk requires clarification in relation to the development of effective governance.
- The evidence suggests that governors and governance are at their best when engaged with students, professionals, community and employment related practice.

- Governors often find formal board meetings boring and bureaucratic. Much good practice goes on beyond the formal rules of governance and should be the subject of further research.
- There appears to be no consensus that payment/ remuneration for chairs and governors should be introduced. Given the retention of existing models and practices, would money make a difference?
- Senior staff would benefit from training that develops understanding of governance as an adjunct to leadership.
- The centrality of the core mission of FE governance – teaching and learning – should be at the heart of college governance.
- There is no need to change statutory governance requirements: the cultivation of innovative and outward thinking is the major requirement.
- The perception of governors as ‘retirees’ or ‘volunteers’ with time on their hands is unhelpful and misplaced.
- Boards need to be more proactive and responsive in deciding their mission and purpose: from there effective leadership and governance potentially follows.
- College governance is weakened by over-regulation and micro-management: according to governors, governance operates in mitigation rather than anything more imaginative in such circumstances.

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# Appendix 1

## **Policy and Agency bodies; interviewees contributing to the Creative Governance Project**

We are grateful to the following colleagues who contributed to the project and whose inputs, along with those of the colleges, are anonymised in the main body of the report.

Tony Alderman	AOC/ Barnet College.
Jim Clifford	BAKER TILLY.
Phil Eames	LSC
Rhys Evans	HMI/OFSTED
Ian Falconer	GRANT THORNTON
Ivor Jones	LLUK
Peter Lavender	NIACE.
Roger McLure	LSIS
John Stone	LSN
Dan Taubman	UCU
Vicky Wood	DIUS

## Appendix 2

### Policy community interviews

The following are a selection of non attributable quotes from policy and other agency participants involved in the project.

‘Governing and Governance in FE has implications within and beyond the college. Good governance is more than regulation and compliance. Yet in some ways that is what college governance has become by responding to constantly changing external agendas and bureaucracy. There is an inside-outside dimension to the limiting effects of compliance and where it comes from. It is easy to blame colleges and governing bodies but that doesn’t mean to say there aren’t issues. At least governance is now on the agenda. Self regulation may be positive in renewing confidence and self improvement but it is an ill defined concept that is already a feature of incorporation. Some of the models of self regulation being promoted from other areas of health, media and commerce do not necessarily inspire confidence.’

‘It’s as if in policy terms FE is being seen as a form of Marks and Spencer. A quality retailer of skills, but is that part of the problem or the solution? FE certainly has the space to creatively exploit the areas where policy is unclear and contradictory at the moment, for example, in relation to funding, local authority influence, 14-19, recession, boom and bust, and so on.’

‘Problems of governance in FE are inbuilt as FE doesn’t have control of its own funding or curriculum even with incorporation. The idea of self regulation holds out the hope of FE returning to the early days of incorporation, but without all the baggage and abuses that followed it. We need a new vehicle that will allow the freedom for Principals and Corporations to move forward through self help and improvement, without the weight of excessive external inspections and audits. The sector must regulate itself, embrace problems and move on. A balance is needed but at the moment there is uncertainty about the role of governance in terms of how FE responds to post LSC funding and LAs changing relationship with the sector. Many of FE’s partners and stakeholders have different governance procedures – another issue.’

‘The government is making a mistake about its view of the mindset of the average governor and governing body, as if it’s governors and governing bodies that are at fault. It’s derogatory: ministers and civil servants haven’t a clue. There are over 8000 highly talented governors around the country who volunteer their services and expertise. The idea of paying and selecting governors would set a precedent that can alter decisions and outcomes in a community context. Since so many young people volunteer to work in their communities so should we as governors.’

‘Of course notions like self-regulation, single voice and demand led reform are important but they are not the be all and end all of improving leadership and governance in FE. Key issues like recruitment, training and retention are also important and a lot of work is going into this area across the sector, including work force reforms. At the moment there is an ageing profile of experienced governors so there is a question of where do new governors come from and how are they recruited from across a range of communities. It’s not clear what the purpose of governance is and you don’t see adverts for recruiting governors. There is a problem about how we move forward on these issues particularly how to involve a wider range of people in the community than we have now.’

'Governors and governance should be about strategy in terms of what the community and business want. This is the link between governance and leadership with Chief Executives and Senior Management Teams driving the agenda with governors support and accountable powers. The biggest challenge on the horizon for colleges now is understanding and interpreting community and policy changes that affect all three. Colleges should be influencing and debating issues in their communities as community leaders alongside other stakeholders. This involves engaging with changing social and economic circumstances and recession where leadership and governance can make a difference.'

'Self regulation is a buzz word. It's a conceptual ideal that is not clarified – a wonderful ideal or another form of regulation? In fact self regulation is a bit of a myth as the balance between central and local powers will remain. Demand led is also a bit of a dream concept when employers often don't know what they want yet demand a voice. Demand is also being led by government priorities when it wants to turn off or on provision through cuts or additional funding'.

'If colleges are left alone they know what to do but they have been blown around by different funding and audit streams. They are adept at dealing with it but if they can't get funding for adult provision or for what they define as their priorities - if it doesn't meet with funding council or government approval – there's an issue. What is the governor's role in such circumstances? In my view governors are expected to challenge what is going on: asking what are we doing about supporting the college in defining its curriculum, values and priorities, and being actively engaged and informed about quality and improvement. Governors are charged with this responsibility. Creative governance is about making things happen: it involves working in partnerships with communities, generating flexible open working and learning practices, finding ways round problems.'

'Creative governance isn't about abandoning compliance as governors have statutory and accountable procedures to work within. What is needed is a balance between compliance and independent thought linked to strategic thinking. This involves governors, Chief Executives and Senior Management Teams working together in setting their own agenda and networks related to college improvement. Whilst risks are involved, an open and participative approach leads to outward rather than inward thinking. This is more likely to achieve balance and improvement. But who regulates or facilitates this process is equally important (government, LAs, funding bodies, agencies, employers and community) in bringing about real change.'

'The role of governors and governance is not well understood in terms of self regulation and single voice good governance constitutes a healthy relationship between the Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team and Chairs, but it is more than that. Clearly there are procedures to be followed but new ideas and strategic thinking are equally important. We need to engage with people in the community if people are made redundant, put on short term or mothballed for a time. FE should be influencing the debate and policy. The biggest change on the horizon is understanding government policy, new funding streams, the role of LAs, the impact of recession. So it's not what's on the horizon that matters rather than working on change and anticipating it, not just reacting to it but being more proactive. Governance now needs to engage with a new climate of recession. Governors of colleges need to truly reflect the community and community values as community leaders.'

'Creative governance? What does good look like and do we have a handle on that? I don't think so. FE is compliance weary and needs a lift. Self-regulation may help but it presumes rather than initiates greater self awareness, trust and self improvement required to effect change.'

There have to be definitions and models of good governance not just guidelines and guiding principles. One way forward is to work from within to establish better understanding of best practice in FE and at the same time to look how other models in health, charities and third sectors operate, and what can be learned from a trustee approach to governance for example. In essence we are back to issues about how FE performs effectively and implements strategy and values in the way the organisation relates to wider forms of community, business and government.'

'I think we are now in a phase where everything is up for grabs; where there has been market and managerial failure and what's happening is not clear cut. What we are living through now will have an effect on governors and governance in... there is a time lag into issues of FE governance the trouble is you're dealing with legal instruments. We face the issue of what form of governance is going to be appropriate for a changing world where many believe the ideology of market forces is discredited. How does FE governance cope with that and 3m unemployed?'

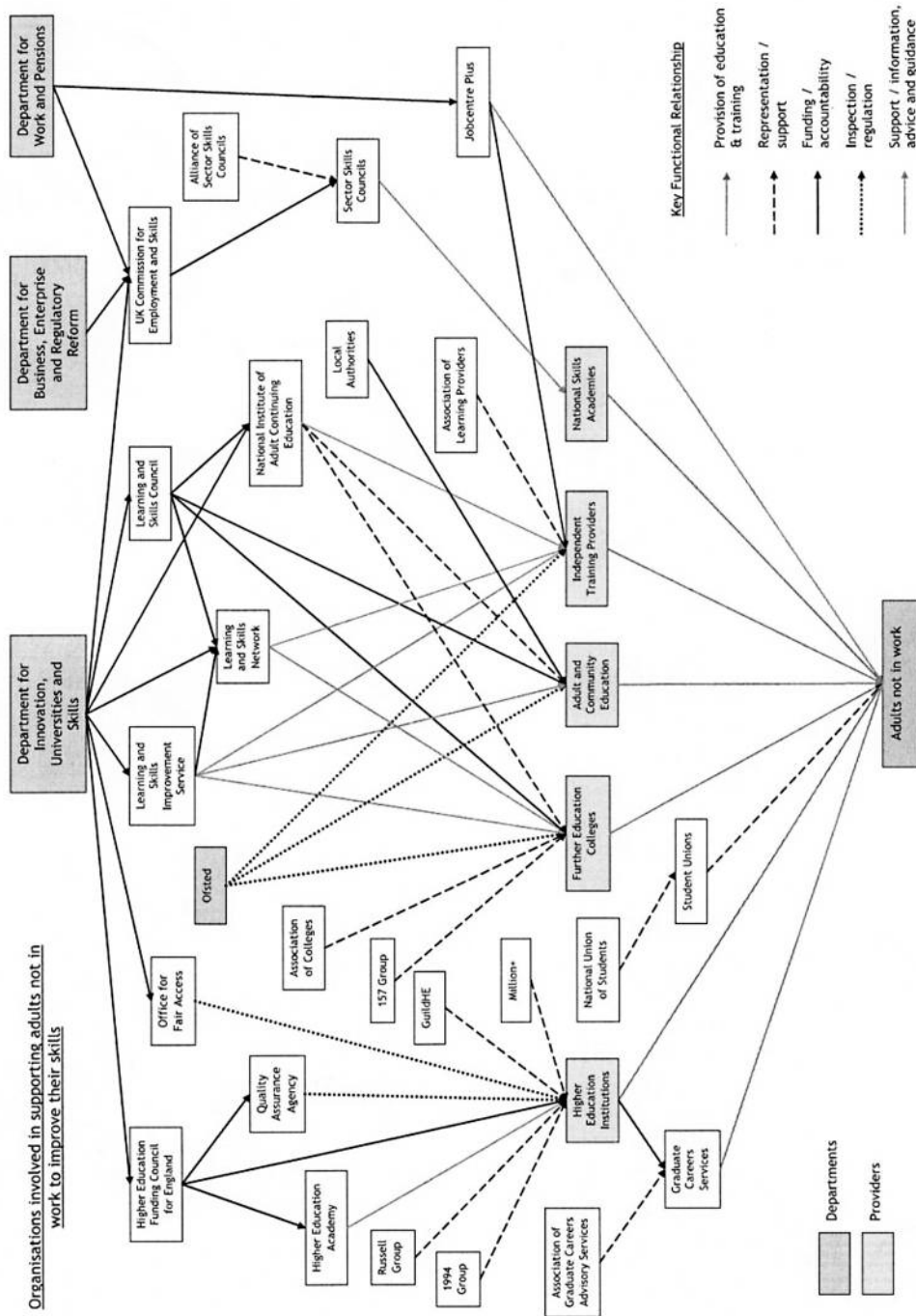
'I share the view that strengthening governance at local level is the way forward. Accountability has to relate to the mission of the college. But there are difficulties in the way governors can hold the executive accountable and how independent they can be. As non executives they don't have enough time or knowledge and are dependent on the exec for a lead. They are often quite rightly over-concerned about funding, audit and other data without the same attention to teaching and learning which isn't their expertise. I would like to see the introduction of community councils as an additional tier that would allow governors to become the buffer between college and community. This would provide a different slant on the way wider stakeholder partnerships can participate and support colleges in their changing localities and communities. This would be more akin to a combination of a Trust and Trustee model. A 'council of guardians' that widens the relationship between leadership, governors and governance.'

'There is an obsession with what we do about failure in the system. But on a variety of measured terms FE is doing well. Small numbers of failures are cited and have skewed perceptions of the system. The focus on failure is a deficit model rather than a capability one working from its weakest rather than stronger points. Colleges have had a poor press but they have achieved much in times of recession and delivering in hard times. Now no one is talking about growth and diversity and it's the right time for colleges to serve their communities.'

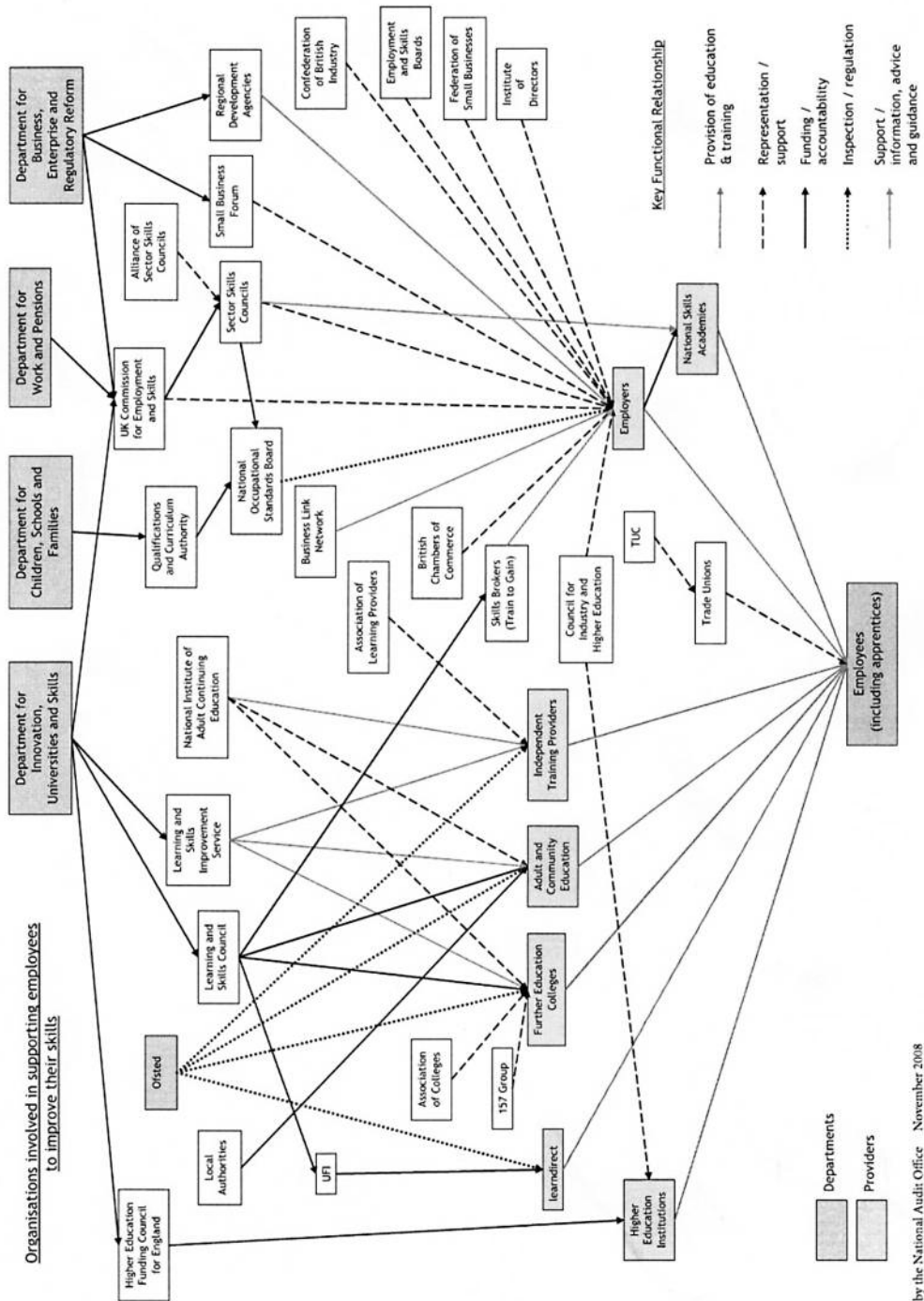
'Governors find it hard to exercise the burden of their executive responsibilities in terms of what is expected of them. This includes the increasing complexity of change that now engulfs FE. Since other public bodies, trusts and charities in the public sector remunerate Chairs, Trustees and Council members I don't see why FE cannot do the same alongside initiatives to attract, select, recruit and train new people beyond retirees.'

'It's when a college runs into trouble that is the acid test of governors. Governance needs to be more than that as a continuous process of improvement. The question is, are governors empowered to do a more creative and imaginative job? It's a 'pie in the sky view' of what is aspired to and what is practical. How do governing bodies make that leap? Is it the CE's responsibility which takes us full circle to whether governance is a managed or autonomous process? There is a need to be realistic about what a Board of governors can achieve. They can self regulate but how much can they do without a great principal? This draws attention to appointing the right person to the job, the importance of the SMT team and key governors. Governance doesn't just reside in governing bodies: you have to ask the question if no governing body existed, what difference would it make, perhaps we should start there.'

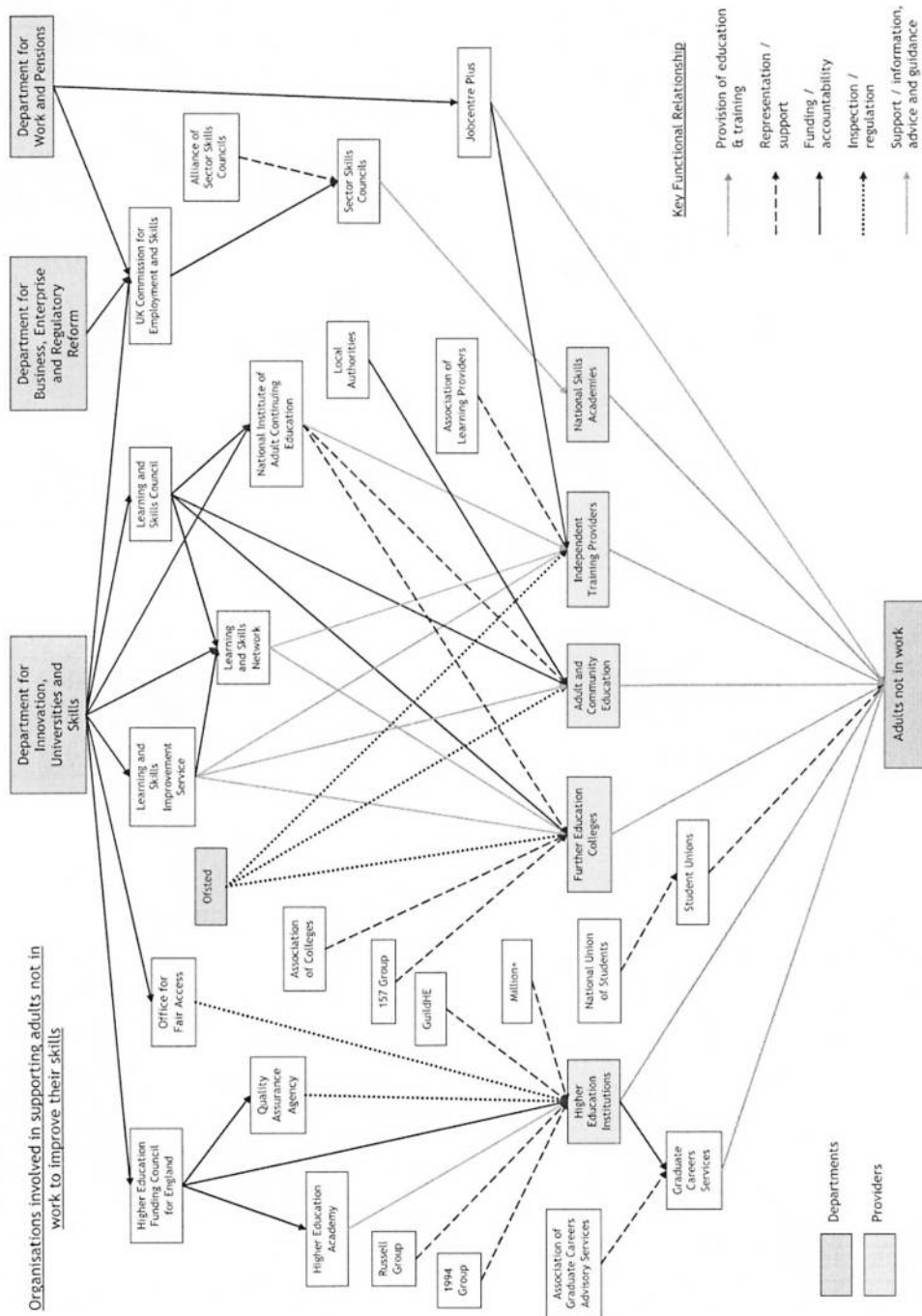
# Appendix 3



# Appendix 4

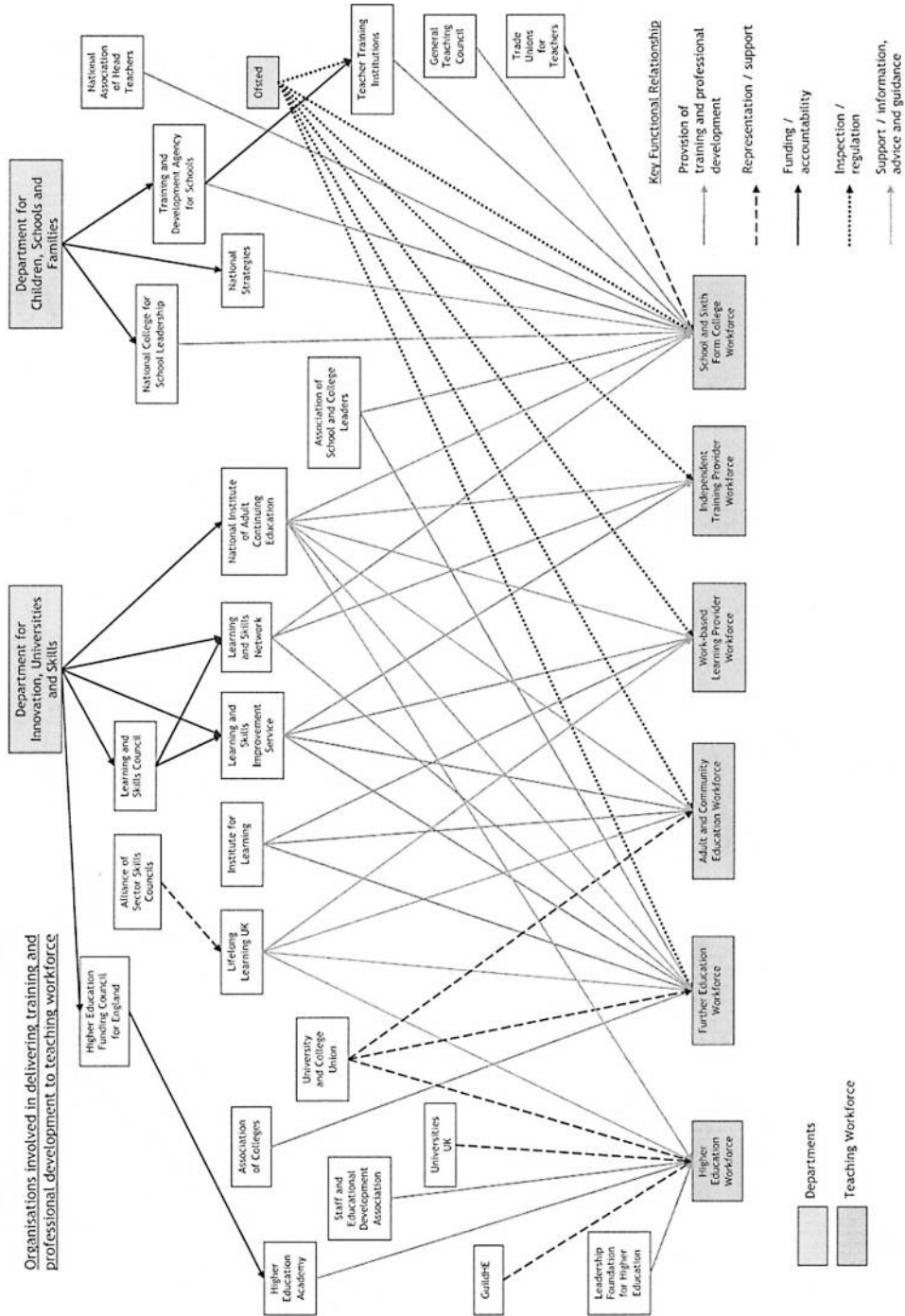


# Appendix 5



# Appendix 6

Re-skilling for recovery: After Leitch, implementing skills and training policies 97



## CEL/LSIS Research Programme Publications

Between 2006 and 2009, the CEL/LSIS research programme was directed by Professor David Collinson of Lancaster University Management School. During this time the programme published 12 edited volumes of practitioner research reports, 6 individual practitioner research reports and 20 individual HE research reports, all exploring leadership issues in the learning and skills sector. All these publications are available from LSIS (in hard copy) and from the LSIS website ([http://www.centreforexcellence.org.uk/default.aspx?Page=Practitioner Projects](http://www.centreforexcellence.org.uk/default.aspx?Page=Practitioner+Projects)) in electronic form, as follows:

### Edited Volumes

Volume	Title
Volume 1	Researching Leadership in the Learning and Skills Sector: By the Sector, On the Sector, For the Sector (2005-06)
Volume 2	Developing Middle Leaders (2006-07)
Volume 3	Leading Quality Improvement (2006-07)
Volume 4	Leadership and the Learner Voice (2006-07)
Volume 5	Collaborative Leadership (2006-07)
Volume 6	Researching Disabilities (2007-08)
Volume 7	Leading Employer Engagement (2007-08)
Volume 8	Distributed and Shared Leadership (2007-08)
Volume 9	Leadership Development and Succession (2007-08)
Volume 10	New Directions in Leadership Excellence: Towards Self Regulation (2007-08)
Volume 11	Personalising Learner Voice (2007-08)
Volume 12	Researching Self Regulation in FE Colleges (2008-09)

## Individual Practitioner Reports

Title	Author(s)
Routes to Excellence: Performance Management Strategies for Organisational Improvement in General Further Education Colleges (2007-08)	Reg Chapman and Nadine Cartner, Association of College Management
Leading Multi-Faith Support Teams in the Learning and Skills Sector (2007-08)	Hilary Stone, Oxford and Cherwell Valley College
Leading Local Authorities, As Providers of Adult and Community Learning and Work-Based Learning, through Ofsted Multi-remit Inspection (2007-08)	Kate Watters, NIACE
Collaboration and Competition: A Leadership Challenge (2007-08)	Simon Penhall and Richard Graham, HelmePark
Exploring the Leadership and Governance Implications of Self-Regulation for Local Authority and Third Sector Providers of Adult Learning and Skills (2008-09)	Ian Yarroll, NIACE
Self Regulation and Private Providers in Work Based Learning (2008-09)	Di McEvoy-Robinson and Peter Marples, Aspire Achieve Advance

## Individual HE Research Reports

Title	Author(s)
Leading Partnerships for 14-19 Education Provision (2006-07)	Professor Ann Briggs et al., Newcastle University
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