

The Composition of Governing Bodies: a Case Study of a College in England

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1. Introduction

The aim of this case study is to investigate the perceptions of the governing body (GB) members of an English college in terms of how they view the composition of FE governance bodies (GBs) in England. It will also attempt to explore various membership types and their roles within the concerned college GB. Specifically, the study is interested in answering the following research questions:

- 1) *What perceptions do GB members of the college have of the composition of college governing bodies?*
- 2) *What views are held amongst the governors about the number of governors specified in the Further Education (FE) Act of 1992?*
- 3) *What views do they have on governors' roles and barriers in governance?*

The rationale for this mini-research project is that college governing bodies make strategic decisions affecting the long-term planning of college future. However, UK FE governance is a subject that is in need of much research (Gleeson, Abbott, & Hill, 2010).

The study will focus on one college, X, in England. It has a student population of over 7000 students and was judged as 'satisfactory' by Ofsted in the most recent inspection. It has one main campus and several other locations across the city, where it provides training and learning in 14 academic and vocational sector subject areas. The largest enrolment numbers are in programmes in 'Preparation for Working Life, Information and Communication Technology and Arts, Media and Publishing. The area where the college is located is an area of significant deprivation with higher than average unemployment rates. The number of students in the local authority region gaining more than five A* to C grades at GCSE in 2009 was below the national average.

With respect to governance, the college is led by the college Principal, who is also the Chief Executive of the college. The GB has a Chair and a Vice Chair and operates through several committees. The Search Committee usually approves the appointment of members other than teacher and student governors, who are elected by teachers and students respectively. At present, there are 14 governors (17 governor positions with 3 vacancies). They are:-

- **1** Business Governor; the Chair of the Corporation
- **Independent / external governors:** 11 positions with 2 vacancies: **9** governors; 2 of these have professional links to the local council; 3 attached to three different universities; 1 to a local academy.
- **staff governors:** 2 positions; **1** teaching staff governor; 1 vacancy (designated support staff governors)
- **2** student governors
- **1:** The Principal

It is important to note that just after the design phase of the project's data collection questionnaire, the government's legislation that relates to FE GB composition changed through the enactment of a new Education Act in November 2011. The current piece of research relates to the FE governance statutory instruments as described in the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 in effect up to November 2011.

After this first section, in Section 2 a literature review will be conducted. The review will engage with existing literature relevant to FE college governance composition and roles of governors within the FE context. Section 3 will describe the research design and the methodology used in the project, while Section 4 will present the findings from the project, together with an analysis of the data. Also, a discussion of the findings and a comparison of these will be made against the points made in the literature review. Finally, Section 5 will present the conclusions and any recommendations based on the research findings.

2. Literature Review

In Section 2a of the literature review, issues relevant to the composition of FE college GBs in England will be explored. These issues will address research questions 1 and 2 (p. 2) and define the term 'governance', governor types and the legal instrument, which stipulates FE college GB compositions. In Section 2b, issues that relate to governor roles will be looked into and they mainly relate to research question 3.

2 a. Governance, Governor Types and the FE Governance Statutory Instrument

2a.i. Governance

Governance in the English FE is a complex concept that is understood in various ways (Schofield, Matthews, & Shaw, 2009). Schofield et al. (2009) state that depending on the nature of the institution, the definition of the term 'governance' varies from "corporate governance" in larger colleges to "strategic leadership" in some parts of the sector. As in situations where terminology varies, it is helpful to rely on a definition that encompasses various understandings and broader practice. This is the approach adopted by Hirst (2000), in Glatter (2002:46-47), where the author defines governance as the "means by which an activity or ensemble of activities is controlled or directed such that it delivers an acceptable range of outcomes according to some established social standard."

2a.ii. Governor Types (Research Question 1)

Schofield et al. (2009) observe that the democratic/representational form of governance is the main form in many public organisations, to which FE colleges belong. If representational governance is followed, some of the governor types such as teachers and students may naturally be common constituencies in college GBs. In Gleeson, Abbott et al.'s (2010) study involving 6 college case studies in FE governance, one governor argued for a transformation of governance to a more representational form of governance. He/She complained that the GB was short of educationalists (ibid 2010:9). Also, in Chapman et al.'s (2009:17) study of college, principals' view supported the need for more governors

with extensive knowledge of education at FE colleges. Nevertheless, such memberships are with their associated challenges. For instance, a question that may arise is whether teacher governors have the same interests/preferences as important stakeholders such as learners. If so, in a representational model, having teachers on the board would be an asset.

As with teachers, having student governors is essential in a representational model but again with some practical concerns. In Schofield et al.'s (2009) review of FE governance, it is recognised that, while some colleges do well in making student governorships work, it is a struggle to shape effective student governor participation in many other colleges. In the same study, some college GBs were concerned that both teachers and students may represent their views too strongly in GBs, highlighting an issue to do with non-teaching governors' trust in teaching governors.

With regards to government representatives, the college respondents in the studies by Schofield et al. (2009) and Cornforth and Edwards (1998), whose research involved the case studies of GBs in several public organisations including a college, showed that governors were not in favour of strong involvement by such members in college governance. The latter study cited compromise of GB independence from political influence as the main reason. Given that public FE colleges use public funding for much of its operations, there may be a case for some governmental involvement in college governance to ensure appropriate use of taxpayer funding.

In terms of external governors, both Cornforth and Edwards (1998) and Schofield et al. (2009) came to the conclusion that independent governors contributed valuable business expertise and experience to the concerned GBs. However, it can be argued that a representational system could also add expertise to college GBs, especially in large institutions with a substantial pool of stakeholders. In a genuinely democratic form of electing stakeholders to the board, interested and potential members would campaign promoting their portfolio of expertise and experience and the relevant stakeholders groups would cast votes to elect board members based on their potential to add value to the board.

2a.iii. The Legal Instrument of Government (Research Question 2)

FE college's GB composition is bound by legal schedules (Schedule 1, Clause 2) stated in the Instrument of Government in the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 (Appendix A, p. 22). According to Gleeson et al.:

[t]he sector's voluntaristic and entrepreneurial legacy has made it both accessible to market capture and highly innovative while, at the same time, protecting its identity through established legal statutes and procedures of governance. (2010:5)

It can be interpreted that the "identity" that is protected are FE colleges' attachment to the public funding, relationship with the local communities and the various industrial partners. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that the legal instrument is one that needs to be both robust and allow flexibility as the need arises. In fact, it went through 2 major changes in 2007 and 2010, allowing more flexibility to college GBs, for example, by replacing mandatory membership of local government members with optional appointed local government governors and potentially lessening the burden associated with stringent audit requirements. Schofield et al. (2009:31-32) discuss the case for making the instrument even more flexible. It appears that their projects' participant college boards would favour some changes such as the removal of all political appointments and introduce more flexible arrangements in the case of student memberships. However, the researchers of the project were of the opinion that student governors "are likely to be here to stay at least for the foreseeable future" (ibid 2009:31).

As already mentioned in the Introduction (p.3), major changes have been announced through Education Act 2011 (HMSO, 2011), where, in terms of composition, the only main requirement for FE colleges appears to be the inclusion of student and staff governors, the Chair and the Principal. Political appointments have been taken off the landscape, meeting the independence demand voiced by some participants in the studies by Gleeson et al. (2010), Schofield et al. (2009) and Cornforth and Edwards (1998).

2a.iv. Governor Roles and Barriers (Research Questions 2 and 3)

Gleeson et al. (2010:7) quote the Articles of Government (DIUS, 2007) to list the expected responsibilities for FE governors. The main responsibilities are:-

- (a) determining the character and mission of the college;
- (b) approving the quality strategy;
- (c) safeguarding and using resources effectively and efficiently; solvency matters
- (d) approving annual accounts;
- (e) the appointment, grading, suspension, dismissal and determination of Senior Management Team (SMT) members' pay and conditions of service and
- (f) setting a framework for the pay and work conditions of all other staff.

When exercising the above responsibilities, governors could assume a variety of styles. For instance, governors could 'play the game' according to the wishes of the college's SMT, which one governor in Gleeson et al.'s study (Gleeson et al., 2010:9) called rubberstamping SMT's proposals. This style was not found to be followed by governors in the study by Lumby (2001), where most governors were engaged in strategic decision-making.

Some of the barriers against governors fulfilling their duties are reported by Chapman et al. (2009) and include time constraints and the lack of governance knowledge and skills on the part of some governors. However, it has to be noted (ibid) that the research focussed only on the views of college principals. Nevertheless, Gleeson, Abbott, and Hill (2009) add some weight to this finding as they too identified the need for training, in addition to identifying barriers such as college bureaucracy and SMT's attitude. One of the most recurring governance barriers appears to be governmental interference (Avis, 2009; Chapman et al., 2009; Lumby, 2001) in college governance. With the governance changes introduced in the Education Act 2011 (HMSO, 2011)(also, see Appendix B, p.23) it appears that this barrier may become less of an issue in the future.

2 b. Conclusion

From the literature review, it seems that a common governance model in colleges is the representational model (Schofield et al., 2009). Teacher and student governors' presence in GBs appear to be supported in some studies together with independent governors (Cornforth & Edwards, 1998), but not political appointments (Cornforth & Edwards, 1998; Schofield et al., 2009). The legal instrument on governance has gone through some changes over the last decade and appears to be loosening the grip on college governance. The instrument specifies the basis for governor roles but there seems to be several barriers against the fulfilment of governor roles. The current research will try to identify the target college's GB composition, and find out governor views on composition, the legal instrument, governor roles and any role barriers.

3. Methodology

The following was taken into considerations when deciding the approach and methods. This study is:-

- a single case study trying to depict a picture of governors' perceptions of GB compositions and the various types of members and their roles.
- not a 'theory-seeking' study as it focuses only on a single college and therefore, the population and target sample is small. The intention was not to arrive at a generalizable conclusion.
- The researcher is a semi-insider researcher at the college in question. Even though the GB being studied is the GB of the college where the researcher has had considerable professional affiliations as a lecturer, this case study was the first opportunity he had to come in direct contact with the GB and he has a professional relationship with the Principal – the Chief Executive of the GB and one of the staff governors.

An important factor for the choice of the college was to do with accessibility to data within the time constraints and the quality of access to data. The process of gaining access to college, X, involved securing "official permission" from "appropriate official[s]" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007): first, the Principal of the college was contacted to arrange a

presentation slot in a GB meeting and this was granted by the Chair of the GB. Also, the researcher met the Vice Principal in person to give a briefing. The day before the project presentation to the GB, a meeting was held with the Acting Clerk to the corporation to request his assistance in facilitating future communications with the governors and to finalise logistics.

The data collection began with the establishment of the number of governors in the college. A list of governors (Appendix F) showing the type of governors and the number of vacant positions (3) was obtained from the Acting Clerk to the GB. Focussing on the research questions, a survey questionnaire (Appendix C, p.24) was designed to obtain the relevant perceptions the governors held. This methodology of using surveys to obtain perceptions in case studies is recognised by Bassey (2007). Given the busy nature of governors' work schedule and the researcher's time constraints, it was not possible to conduct interviews, which would have been an ideal data collection method for a study that aimed to collect perceptions.

The type of questions used in the questionnaire addressed this issue by including as many open questions as possible, increasing the possibility of obtaining governor perceptions (as explained in the following paragraph).

The focus of the questions included governor demographics, governors' member constituency, views on governor roles and role barriers, and views on the limits on the number of governors in the various member categories as specified in the FHE Act (1992).

The questionnaire contained a mixture of question types:-

- 1) Likert Scale containing 4 responses
- 2) Ranking questions
- 3) Open-ended questions.

The aim of the first two types was to get as many as possible delineated perceptions and the purpose of the third type was to get detailed information based on governors' experience in working in the GB. Some questions asked the respondents to explain their choice, again to obtain detailed responses.

Once the questions were formed, to increase the reliability of the research tool, the questionnaire was piloted (Bassegy, 2007) with two people who have experience in working as governors. One is a former teacher of the college in this study and the other a current parent governor of a primary school in England. They completed the questionnaires and checked the questions for ambiguity, assumptions within questions, double, leading and sensitive questions (Bell, 2007). Also, there were general questionnaire instructions as well as question-specific instructions that highlighted the importance of answering the questions with honesty. These instructions and the rest of the questionnaire evolved over a few weeks before the data collection, as comments arrived from the piloting. The final and pilot versions of the questionnaire are presented in Appendices C (p.22) and D (p.28) respectively.

The questionnaire was hosted on a password-protected website and was distributed via an e-mail to the governors containing links to the website. This method was used to ensure anonymity when receiving completed questionnaires. In order to increase the validity and to assure the respondents (Bush, 2007) of the research ethics adhered to, ethical aspects such as confidentiality and anonymity as defined in the codes and guidelines by British Educational Research Association (2011) were covered in the Research Information Leaflet (Appendix E, p.31). This leaflet was distributed to the respondents at the onset of the project in the presentation to the GB. The purpose of the presentation was to ensure that the governors had enough knowledge about the project before they decided to take part, thus paving way for informed consent (Cohen et al., 2007:52) The leaflet also included details of who may have access to anonymised data (Fogelman & Comber, 2007) collected. Some practice, such as allocating alphabetical letters or numerical figures to both the college and participants, also contributed to the anonymity of the respondents. In the presentation, the passwords to the web-based questionnaire were given to the governors and were requested to complete the questionnaire at a time convenient to them.

Voluntary sampling (Cohen et al., 2007:116) was used in the project as the participation by the 14 governors in the GB was entirely optional. The aim was to obtain completed questionnaires from all governors of the college and therefore the population and the sample size was 14. Eight governors in total, after follow-up e-mails, responded to the questionnaire, making a response rate of 57%. In addition to the 8 governors, a ninth governor who had not completed the questionnaire responded to say he had joined the GB only recently and therefore, was not able to make any valuable contribution.

Data analysis included aggregation of perceptions amongst the governors; an analysis of patterns of perceptions amongst GB members and generating and interpreting analytical statements (Bassey, 2007:153) about governors' views about FE college GB compositions and governor roles.

4. Findings and Discussion

The results from the survey were analysed under the following topics: composition and legal instrument (Q4, Q5, and Q6 in the questionnaire) and governor roles and barriers (Q2, Q3 and Q7).

Amongst the respondents, there were 4 female and 4 male governors. The governor types consisted of:-

- 5 external governors co-opted for their experience in various services and industries in the local community – 2 governors from the local council; at least 1 from a local university and another from a local academy school;
- 1 business/industry governor;
- the Principal, and
- 1 teaching staff governor from the college.

4 a. Composition and Legal Instrument (Research Questions 1 and 2)

The first statement generated in the analysis was about the degree of satisfaction by the governors with the limits the legal instrument specified. Most governors (Table 1) felt that for most member constituencies, the limits stipulated in the legal instrument were set at the right level. This stance by the board seems to be in support of Gleeson et al.'s (2010:5) description of the governance legal instrument as the benign protector of FE's relationship with the public. The instrument's prescription paved way for participation of various stakeholders, which could result in a balancing act when contributions from various

stakeholders take place in GB meetings. However, this balancing act is not automatic by default. Even if all stakeholders are represented in a GB, their active participation depends on the relationship between the governors and barriers governors face, which is covered later in this section (p. 17).

However, there was a split amongst the governors about the limit of 16 set for external governors. Half felt that it was about right while the other half thought it was too high. Many highlighted the need to have access to a wide-range of expertise.

Question 5: Legal Instrument Maximum limits on Governor Numbers in FE College GBs: Governor Opinions							
	Q5a. Parent G no. limit of 2	Q5b. SFA members limit of 2	Q5c: college lecturer member limit 3	Q5d: college support staff limit of 3	Q5e: EXTERNAL GOVERNOR limit of 16	Q5f: college student member limit of 3	Totals
a) too high : over represented	2	6	2	3	4	1	18
b) about right	5	2	5	4	4	6	26
c) too low: under-represented	1	0	1	1	0	1	4

Table 1: Governor Views on Limits on Governor Numbers

Another observation is that 75% of governors (6 out of 8) felt a maximum of 16 SFA governors was too high. One governor commented that local government had too much control over colleges:

There are plenty of opportunities already for the SFA to keep tabs on colleges - why provide them with more? (Governor 3)

As in Schofield's (2009) study, the governors did not appear to be in favour of the presence of public authority governors such as SFA members in GBs. They would like to limit such memberships to a bare minimum but unlike Schofield's (2009) finding, their comments did not explicitly call for the removal of the SFA constituency.

As for staff, student and parent governors, most in the survey felt the current limits in the legal instrument were justified. Some felt that a maximum of 3 teacher governors would allow representation from a wide enough range of teaching backgrounds but there were comments stressing that teachers needed to focus on governance than representing views

in a unionist fashion. This is in line with Schofield et al.'s (2009) finding that membership of teacher governors from the college should be considered cautiously. The argument for including teachers in the GBs is that people who have chosen teaching as a career and have had teacher training are likely to sympathise with the needs of learners and demonstrate awareness of such needs. After all, in education, teachers are likely to be the single group of people who have a significant amount of contact with students in their educational career. Therefore, teacher governors could be a very useful source for a college GB when making strategic decisions that relate to students' educational needs.

Question 4 focussed on desired experiences potential governors should possess. Governors gave each experience a score from 1 to 7 depending on how much they valued each experience, 7 being the highest score. The most highly valued experience (see Table 2) was external business/industry experience, whose total was 49, jointly followed by FE teaching experience and being a current student at the college. All governors rated external experience highly but FE teaching, rated joint second overall, was not rated highly

Q4: Desired Experience for a Governor to Possess								
Governor	Governor Type	FE teaching	Current / recent teaching at this college	college management	local government	Parents guardians of college's students	current student at college	industry or an external business environment
G1	College Teacher	7	7	7	5	4	7	7
G2	Industry business	1	1	2	2	1	3	6
G3	Other External	6	1	1	1	1	1	7
G4	Principal	2	1	2	1	1	2	7
G5	External - HE education	2	1	1	1	1	1	7
G6	External - Local Government	1	1	1	3	1	1	4
G7	Other External	5	4	6	6	4	7	6
G8	External - School	3	1	3	3	5	5	5
Totals		27	17	23	22	18	27	49

Table 2: Desired Experiences in Governors

by the business and local government governors. One of the two governors (external) who rated FE teaching amongst their lowest desired experiences did concede that it is important to have some external FE teaching expertise represented in the FE GBs but that the important thing is to ensure such experience is acquired externally, rather than at the college in question. The college principals in Chapman et al. (2009) rated general FE teaching experience highly too. What is meant by 'knowledge of FE Education' in that study is not clear, however. It may mean FE teaching experience and or the management

experience gained in FE. It will be relevant to research further what specific types of FE education experiences are valued highly by FE governors.

Similarly, in this study, being a student was generally highly rated but was not regarded as important by the local government governor and two other external governors. Comments in favour of involving students in GBs include the assertion that “without students, there would be no college” (Governor 7). Another governor’s comment that students “need to be clear of their role” struck a chord with Schofield’s (2009) finding that it is a struggle for colleges to encourage student governors to participate. The current author sees that it is vital to provide student governors with appropriate training and incentives for active participation. At the same time, extracting examples of and sharing of good practice as those referred to in Schofield’s (2009) study would be beneficial for college governance.

Teaching at the concerned college and being parents were seen the least valuable experiences. However, in their comments, 4 governors, including the Principal, emphasized the importance of bringing a wide range of experiences to the governing board. Governor 2 described college governors as similar to “an external director of a company” and Governor 5 said a GB “should not be too closely aligned to the experiences of the individual institution”. These comments raise some governors’ concerns that governors being too closely affiliated with the college compromises independent scrutiny needed in governance. However, it can be argued that a GB is more likely to receive active involvement and commitment from proximal governors such as college staff and parents than from external governors such as business and industry governors (Cornforth & Edwards, 1998).

4 b. Governor Roles and Barriers (Research Question 2)

All 8 governors indicated that they had been involved in strategic leadership activities such as reviewing the college’s mission and almost all had been involved in several other activities shown in Table 3 below.

Given that 7 out of the 8 governors had been involved in accountancy activities, there is a strong element of auditing in their activities, following a stewardship role to protect the college's financial resources at least to some extent as described in Cornforth and Edwards (1998).

GB Activities	No. of Governors Involved
a. reviewing college's mission	8
b. approving quality policies/strategies	7
c. making decisions on the effective and efficient use of resources (staff, buildings, teaching and learning resources).	7
d. approving financial accounts.	7
e. appointment, suspension, determination of pay and conditions of SMT staff.	7
f. determining pay and conditions of all other staff	5

Table 3: Governors' Activities in the GB

Also, given that all governors have been involved in the majority of governance responsibilities (DIUS, 2007) it's safe to conclude that they feel they are all active in their governance roles, although given the scale of this project further analysis to verify this is beyond this project.

From the 4 governor activities (Question 7 in the questionnaire), responding to the ideas of the college's stakeholders is the activity which all 8 governors agreed to be an important governor role (Figure 1, below). This reflects governors tendency to lean towards a governance model where 'governance is for accountability, as described by Schofield et al. (2009:15). In this model, the GB could be kept in engaging activities that benefit the immediate public at large.

An interesting observation is that while 6 governors agreed that the profit-making objectives of the college is an important role, out of the two who disagreed, one governor, the Principal rightly noted that "the college does not have profit-making objectives - it seeks to break even taking one year with another."

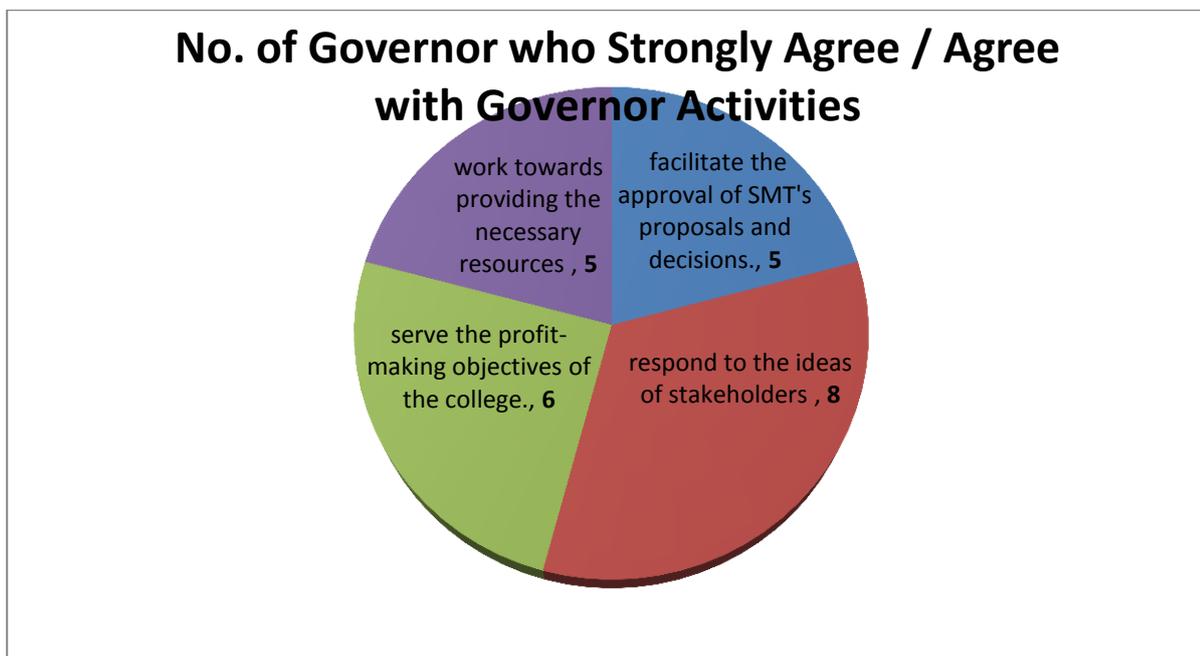


Figure 1: Governors' Agreement on Governor Activities

Also, 5 governors agreed or strongly agreed that they should facilitate the approval of SMT's proposals. Two of these governors added a caveat that such support for SMT's proposals should not be just blind support but needs to be given cautiously. Amongst the 3 governors who did not think it is a governor's role to facilitate the approval of SMT's decisions was the Principal, who noted that, in fact, it is a GB's role to challenge the SMT's decisions. The inference from this analysis is that at the college most governors (but not all) see that they should challenge SMT's decisions at least to some extent.

Question 3 in the questionnaire asked governors to grade ten potential barriers they may have faced in their governor roles. They graded each barrier from 0 to 10 depending on the severity of each barrier, where 0 meant not a barrier and 10 denoted the greatest degree as a barrier. The aggregated grading results, presented in Figure 2, show that governmental interference is the biggest barrier in governors' roles. Two governors – commented that their biggest concern was the impact on governance from various changes related to government's educational policies. The finding matches Chapman et al.'s (2009), Avis' (2009) and Lumby's (2001) conclusions too. A relevant point is that the Education Act 2011 (HMSO, 2011) frees college corporations from some governmental scrutiny but it may very well be that governors will have to take a more self-regulating role (eg:- more rigorous monitoring and scrutiny of college's activities and self-assessment) in the future.

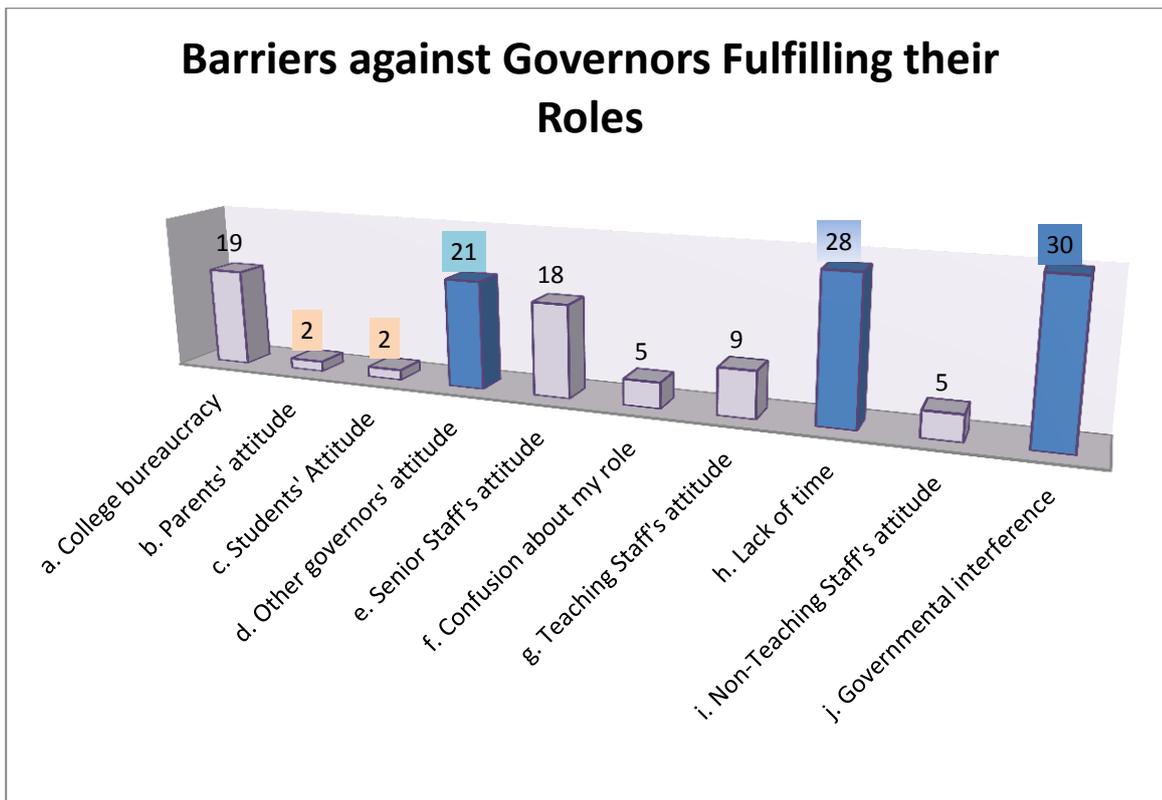


Figure 2: Governors' Views: Governor Role Barriers

Amongst other barriers, time constraints and other governors' attitude came to a close second (28) and third (21) respectively. Two governors cited full-time work commitment outside governance work as the cause of the time pressure.

In referring to other governors' attitude as potential internal barrier, Gleeson et al. (2010:8) et al (2010; p.8), describe it as assumptions some governors may have about governance but this is an area that needs further exploring. One governor in this study felt limited in the freedom to express his/her views in meetings because of uncertainty about being judged by the Principal. However, this does not necessarily mean such concern is a manifestation of the Principal's attitude. Another governor felt that sometimes, "a view has been reached prior to discussion taking place amongst the wider governing team" suggesting that more governors should be given the opportunity to contribute to the decision-making process.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Before drawing up any conclusions from the above discussion, it is important to recognise some of the limitations of this study. In addition to the case study approach used and the lack of generalizability of any findings to the wider UK FE governance as (explained in Section 3, see p.8), there are a couple of other points to be noted. Firstly, the response rate for the survey was just under 60% of the governors, which is lower than expected and therefore, a degree of caution will be applied when generalizing the findings to the whole GB of the college. Secondly, one governor constituency, the two student governors in the GB, did not respond to the questionnaire. Therefore, it is not possible to consider student governors' views about their roles and barriers against their involvement in governance, even though other governors view about student involvement was included in the data.

5 a. FE College Composition and Legal Instrument in FHE Act 1992 (Research Questions 1 and 2):

The governors in this study supported the presence of all constituencies apart from governmental/SFA members in the GB. They were in favour of the maximum numbers set in the FHE Act 1992:-

- 3 members for college teachers and business support each;
- 3 students
- 2 Parents

However, the governors seemed to be unsure about the high number (16) of external governors. It's worthwhile noting that the college GB's current designated number of positions (11) for this constituency is fewer than the maximum in the Act. Also, they found that having two SFA/governmental members on the board was too political but the current author argues that as tax payers' money is involved in FE, a representative from the government's funding authority is justified.

Governors regarded the experiences brought into the GB by the following governors very highly:-

- external governors;
- those who have been involved in FE Education (teaching/management) and
- student governors

However, they did not feel that parents' or college teaching staff's experience was equally important.

5 b. Governor Roles and Role Barriers (Research Question 3)

To sum up the governors' views of the governor roles, a considerable number of members in the project may:-

- play a supportive role, at least in some situations, of SMT's ideas,
- value a variety of expertise including FE Education;
- be keen to respond to the local community's needs;
- be very active in approving college's accounts and
- believe that profit-making is an important role of the college (even that in actual fact, it is not)

Many governors regarded the following as barriers to their roles in the GB:-

- various governmental interference via frequent changes in policies;
- lack of time and
- other governors' attitude, which sometimes may result in fewer governors being able to contribute to the decision-making process.

5 c. Recommendations

Finally, based on the findings in this project, the author makes four recommendations, listed below in order of priority. The governors are advised to revisit its composition and governance processes, to discuss:-

1. if the current board presents sufficient FE Education experience. If the GB feels more FE Education experience is needed, the vacant three independent positions could be filled with governors who have such experience.

2. If there is scope and ways for including more GB members in the decision-making process.
3. if there is a need to match the maximum 3 college teachers for reasons to do with the GB accessing the educational experience within the college for students (as discussed on p.13)
4. providing continued training for governors about the purpose of governance and the college's strategic objectives (see discussion on p.15) It is important to include within such training, appropriate resources targeted for student governors (see p.14).

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Appendix A: GB Composition in FHE Act 1992

Extract showing GB Composition in FHE Act 1992 (Amend Order 2010)

Taken from “Further and Higher Education Act 1992” (Amend Order 2010); Schedule 1; Clause 2
(available from <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/789/contents/made>)

Composition of the Corporation

2.—(1) Subject to the transitional arrangements set out in clause 4, the Corporation shall consist of—

- (a) up to sixteen members who appear to the Corporation to have the necessary skills to ensure that the Corporation carries out its functions under article 3 of the Articles of Government;
- (b) up to two CE of Skills Funding members (if appointed);
- (c) not more than two members, who are parents of students under the age of 19 years attending the institution, who have been nominated and elected by other parents, or if the Corporation so decides, by a recognised association representing parents (“parent members”);
- (d) the Principal of the institution, unless the Principal chooses not to be a member;
- (e) at least one and not more than three members who are members of the institution’s staff and have a contract of employment with the institution and who have been nominated and elected as set out in paragraphs (3), (4) or (5) (“staff members”); and
- (f) at least two and not more than three members who are students at the institution and have been nominated and elected by their fellow students, or if the Corporation so decides, by a recognised association representing such students (“student members”).

Appendix B: FE GB Composition in The Education Act 2011

Extract showing FE Governing Body Composition in the Education Act 2011

Taken from Education Act 2011; Schedule 4; Part 2

(available from <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/21/schedules>)

PART 2

ENGLAND

- 2 This Part applies in relation to –
- (a) a further education corporation in England;
 - (b) the governing body of a designated institution in England;
 - (c) a sixth form college corporation.
- 3 In this Part “the body” means –
- (a) in the case of a further education corporation or a sixth form college corporation, the corporation;
 - (b) in the case of a governing body, the governing body.
- 4 An instrument must provide for –
- (a) the number of members of the body,
 - (b) the eligibility of persons for membership,
 - (c) the members to include –
 - (i) staff and students at the institution, and
 - (ii) in the case of a sixth form college corporation, parents of students at the institution aged under 19, and
 - (d) the appointment of members.
- 5 (1) An instrument must make provision about the procedures of the body and the institution.
- (2) In particular, an instrument must specify how the body may resolve for its dissolution and the transfer of its property, rights and liabilities.

Appendix C – Research Tool: Online Web-based Questionnaire

Highlighted in red are changes made following piloting the questionnaire

FE Governor Perceptions Survey Form

To increase the reliability of your responses, it is essential that you respond to each question carefully and as accurately as possible. Throughout the questionnaire, 'GB' refers to the Governing Body of the college. 'Governor' and 'Member' are used interchangeably.

Gender*

- Male
 Female

Age Group*

- 16-18
 19-25
 26-35
 36-45
 46-55
 56-65
 66 and above

Q1. What is your GB membership type (tick one)?*

- a. Student governor
 b. Parent governor
 c. Teaching staff (Lecturer) governor
 d. Non-teaching staff (Business Support) governor
 e. Principal
 f. Industry / business member appointed by GB
 g. Other governor appointed by the GB

Q2. Have you been involved in any of the following GB activities? Tick all those that apply.*

- a. reviewing of the college's mission
 b. approving the quality policies/strategies
 c. making decisions on the effective and efficient use of resources (staff, buildings, teaching and learning resources)
 d. approving financial income and expenditure
 e. the appointment, suspension, determination of pay and conditions of the holders of senior management posts at the college
 f. determining pay and conditions of all other staff

Q3. Rank the following according to the extent they have been a barrier to fulfilling your role as a governor. (10=

the biggest barrier; 1= the smallest barrier; 0 = not a barrier.) You may use the same ranking number more than once.*

	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
a. College bureaucracy	<input type="radio"/>										
b. Parents' attitude	<input type="radio"/>										
c. Students' Attitude	<input type="radio"/>										
d. Other governors' attitude	<input type="radio"/>										
e. Senior Staff's attitude	<input type="radio"/>										
f. Confusion about my role	<input type="radio"/>										
g. Teaching Staff's attitude	<input type="radio"/>										
h. Lack of time	<input type="radio"/>										
i. Non-Teaching Staff's attitude	<input type="radio"/>										
j. Governmental interference	<input type="radio"/>										

Please explain/add comments on the **BIGGEST** barrier you have indicated above:*

Q4. What do you think are important experiences for a potential GB member to have? Rank the following according to the order of importance. (7 =

the most important, 1 = the least important)*

	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
a. Past experience in teaching at any college or FE institution.	<input type="radio"/>						
b. Current or recent experience of teaching at this college	<input type="radio"/>						
c. Current or recent experience of working in college management & administration	<input type="radio"/>						
d. Experience of working for local government	<input type="radio"/>						
e. Being parents/guardians of students who go to this college	<input type="radio"/>						
f. Being a current student at the college	<input type="radio"/>						
g. Experience of working in the industry and/or an external business environment	<input type="radio"/>						

Please explain why your **top choice(s)** above is/are so important.:-

Q5. Questions 5a-5f below are about the limit on number of governors as stated in the FHE ACT 1992.

Q5a. The government legal instrument (the FHE ACT 1992) states that a GB can have a maximum of 2 members who are PARENTS of the college's students (18 years or below). What do you think of this limit?*

- a) too high (parents overrepresented)
- b) about right
- c) too low (parents underrepresented)

If possible, please explain why here:

Q5b. The legal instrument states that a GB can have a maximum of 2 government's SKILLS FUNDING AGENCY (SFA) members. What do you think of this limit?*

- a) too high (SFA overrepresented)
- b) about right
- c) too low (SFA underrepresented)

If possible, please explain why here:

Q5c: The legal instrument states that a GB can have a maximum of 3 governors from the COLLEGE'S LECTURERS. What do you think of this limit?*

- a) too high (lecturers overrepresented)
- b) about right
- c) too low (lecturers underrepresented)

If possible, please explain why here:

Q5d: The legal instrument states that a GB can have a maximum of 3 governors from the college's non-teaching (BUSINESS SUPPORT) staff. What do you think of this limit?*

- a) too high (support staff overrepresented)
- b) about right
- c) too low (support staff underrepresented)

If possible, please explain why here:

Q5e: The legal instrument states that a GB can have a maximum of 16 EXTERNAL GOVERNORS (eg:- from local businesses and industry) appointed by the college's GB. What do you think of this limit?*

- a) too high (external members overrepresented)
- b) about right
- c) too low (external members underrepresented)

If possible, please explain why here:

Q5f: The legal instrument states that a GB can have a maximum of 3 governors chosen from the college's STUDENT population. What do you think of this limit?*

- a) too high (students overrepresented)
- b) about right
- c) too low (students underrepresented)

If possible, please explain why here:

Q6. If the government's regulations did not intervene, what would be the BEST way to decide the total number of members in the various categories of the GB membership? (Tick one option, ie:- your most favoured option)*

- a. The Principal of the college should make the decision.
- b. Students of the college should make the decision.
- c. Non-teaching staff should make the decision.
- d. Voting amongst the existing GB members should decide it.
- e. The Chair of the GB should make the decision.
- f. Teaching staff of the college should make the decision.
- g. Parents should make the decision.
- h. A consensus amongst representatives from the stakeholders (government, employers, college staff, parents, students) of the college

Q7. Rate the following statements about potential governor roles according to the degree you agree with them.*

	4. Strongly Agree	3. Agree	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
Q7a: Governors should facilitate the <u>approval</u> of the college's senior managers' proposals and decisions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q7b: Governors should respond to the ideas of stakeholders (students; parents; funding bodies; teachers; support staff and employers).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q7c: Governors should serve the profit-making objectives of the college.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q7d: Governors should work towards providing the necessary resources (teachers; support staff and learning aids) for the students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comment on the extent to which you have (or have not) been able to put any of the 4 activities above into practice in your role as a governor.*

If you agree, and are willing to be contacted by the researcher if needed, please provide your details below. FULL NAME:

Email

* indicates a required field

Privacy statement

All data collected via this questionnaire will be treated anonymously. Any research reports submitted to your college will not contain any information that may reveal the identities of the governors. The only instance where you may reveal your identity (and only to the researcher) is if the researcher needs to contact you for resolving technical issues to do with collecting the data or if your responses to the questionnaire is not clear. However, such contact is possible ONLY with your consent given in the questionnaire above.

Send form

Appendix D – Research Tool: Pilot Questionnaire

(Designed for paper format - Highlighted in yellow are amendments to produce the final questionnaire)

QUESTIONNAIRE: Your Perceptions on the Composition of Governing Bodies

To increase the reliability of your responses, it is extremely essential that you respond to each question carefully and as accurately as possible. Throughout the questionnaire, 'GB' refers to the Corporation on the Governing Body.

Demographics:

Gender:

M	<input type="checkbox"/>	F	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Age group (please tick):

16-18	<input type="checkbox"/>	19-25	<input type="checkbox"/>	26-35	<input type="checkbox"/>	36-40	<input type="checkbox"/>
41-50	<input type="checkbox"/>	51-65	<input type="checkbox"/>	66 and above	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

I. You and Your Involvement in GB

1. What is your GB membership type (tick one)?

a. Student Governor	<input type="checkbox"/>	b. Parent Governor	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Teaching Staff (Lecturer) governor	<input type="checkbox"/>	d. Non-teaching staff (Business Support) Governor	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Principal	<input type="checkbox"/>	f. Industry / Business member appointed by GB	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Other governor appointed by the GB	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Have you been involved in any of the following GB activities? Tick all those that apply.

a. review of the college's mission	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. approving the quality policies/strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. effective and efficient use of resources (staff, buildings, teaching and learning resources)	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. approving financial income and expenditure	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. the appointment, suspension, determination of pay & conditions of senior management post holders at the college	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. pay and conditions of all other staff	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Rank the following ideas according to the extent they have been a barrier to fulfilling your role as a governor. (1= the biggest barrier; 10= the smallest barrier)

a. College bureaucracy	<input type="checkbox"/>	b. Parents' attitude	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Student Attitude	<input type="checkbox"/>	d. Other governors' attitude	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Senior Staff attitude	<input type="checkbox"/>	f. Confusion about my role	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Teaching Staff attitude	<input type="checkbox"/>	h. Lack of time	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Non-Teaching Staff attitude	<input type="checkbox"/>	j. Governmental interference	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please explain/add more comments on the barrier you have chosen as the **biggest** one above:

2. Recruitment of Members and Numbers of Members

1. What do you think are **the most** important experiences for a potential GB member to have? Rank the following according to the order of importance. (**1 = the most important, 5 = the least important**)

a. Bringing up /looking after children who go to this college	
b. Past experience in Teaching at any college or Further Education institution.	
c. Recent or Current experience of working in college management & administration	
d. Current or Recent or Experience of teaching at this college	
e. Experience of working for local government	

Please explain why your **top choice** above is so important for you.:

2. The government legal instrument (the FHE ACT 1992) states that a Governing Body can have:

- I. a maximum of 2 members who are parents of the college's students (18 years or below). What do you think of this limit?

a) too high (parents overrepresented)		b) about right		c) too low (parents underrepresented)	
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If possible, please explain why.

- II. a maximum of 2 government's **Skills Funding Agency (SFA) members**. What do you think of this limit?

a) too high (SFA overrepresented)		b) about right		c) too low (SFA underrepresented)	
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If possible, please explain why.

- III. a maximum of 3 governors from **the college's lecturers**. What do you think of this limit?

a) too high (overrepresented)		b) about right		c) too low (lecturers underrepresented)	
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If possible, please explain why.

- IV. a maximum of 3 governors from the college's non-teaching (**support**) staff. What do you think of this limit?

a) too high (overrepresented)		b) about right		c) too low (underrepresented)	
-------------------------------	--	----------------	--	-------------------------------	--

If possible, please explain why.

- V. a maximum of 16 external governors appointed by the college's GB. What do you think of this limit?

a) too high (overrepresented)		b) about right		c) too low (underrepresented)	
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If possible, please explain why.

- VI. a maximum of 3 student governors. What do you think of this limit:-

a) too high (students overrepresented)		b) about right		c) too low (students underrepresented)	
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If possible, please explain why:

3. If the government's regulations did not intervene, what would be the best way to appoint/elect members to the GB? (Tick **one** option, ie:- your most favoured option)

The college Principal should make the decision.	The Chair of the GB should make the decision.
Students of the college should make the decision.	Teaching staff of the college should make the decision.
Non-teaching staff should make the decision.	Parents should make the decision
Voting amongst the existing GB members should decide it.	A consensus involving representatives from the stakeholders (government bodies, employers, college staff, parents, students) of the concerned college

Explain your choice above:

3. Your Perceptions & Views on Roles & Purpose of Governance

1. Rank the following potential governor roles according to the degree you agree with them as important roles.

- a. I think governors should facilitate the implementation of the senior managements' proposals and decisions.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

- b. I think governors should respond to the ideas of stakeholders (students, parents, funding bodies, teachers, support staff and employers)

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

- c. I think governors should serve the profit-making objectives of the college

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

- d. I think governors should work towards providing the necessary resources (teachers, support staff and learning aids) for the students.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Comment on the extent to which you have (or have not) been able to put any of the above 4 activities into practice in your role as a governor:

If you are willing to be contacted to elaborate on any of your responses above, please provide your contact details below:-

Name:

e-mail address:

Tel no:

Many thanks for completing this questionnaire.

Appendix E: Mini Research Information Sheet

Research Project: Governor Perceptions on the Composition of Governing Bodies and Governor Roles: A Case Study of an English FE College

You are invited to take part in a research study which is being conducted as part of a Doctor of Education degree at the Institute of Education, the University of Warwick.

What is the purpose of this study? The purpose of this study is to explore how Governing Body (GB) members view the composition of FE governance bodies in England. It will also attempt to study the various membership types and their roles within the concerned college governing body.

Why is the study being done? Governing Bodies make strategic decisions affecting the long-term planning of college future. However, UK FE governance is a subject that is in need of much research. You have been invited to take part in this study because you are an important member of the college's governing board and your views will form the central part of this study.

Do I have to take part? Your participation is optional. Your decision will not affect you or your rights in any way.

What do I have to do? You will be asked to complete a questionnaire where the questions are a mixture of closed and open-ended questions and there will be no right or wrong answers. The completion of the questionnaire will take approximately **20** minutes. ***It'd be much appreciated if you could complete the questionnaire as soon as possible, preferably by 21/12/2011.***

Link for questionnaire www.warwick.ac.uk/go/fegovernor

What are the possible benefits of taking part? There are no direct benefits to you from taking part in this study. However, your contribution will be invaluable as the field of FE governance needs much exploration to benefit the sector as a whole. Compared to school and university governance, currently there is very little research and understanding of this field.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part? The interview will take some of your time. Every effort has been made to keep any inconvenience to a minimum.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential? The use of any information that identifies you during the research will be kept strictly confidential, available only to the researcher. The anonymised

data collected through the questionnaire will be available to Professor Tony Bush and may be available to another research assessor at the University of Warwick. The project will follow the guidelines set by the **British Educational Research Association (BERA)**.

What happens when the research stops? A report will be produced for internal publication for a postgraduate project and submitted for assessment with a view to being published in academic journals/conferences. We can also send participants a summary of the study results on request. This summary will not contain any information that may reveal the identity of the participants.

Contact details: Abdulla Sodiq, Institute of Education, University of Warwick, Coventry.,
Tel: +44 781 383 1909 Email: a.sodiq@warwick.ac.uk; Web: www.warwick.ac.uk/go/asodiq

Thanking for your time

**Appendix F: The College's List of Governors
(Names and Identifiable Information Removed)**

Governors of the College

Business Governors (1)

Independent Governors* (11)

2 Vacancies

* The term 'Independent Governors' has been designated by the Corporation to refer to the category of Governors in the Instrument & Articles of Government 2008, namely "up to sixteen members who appear to the Corporation to have the necessary skills to ensure that the Corporation carries out its functions under article 3 of the Articles of Government".

Staff Governors (2)

(Teaching Staff Governor)

Vacancy
(Support Staff Governor)

Student Governors (2)

The Principal (1)

Total Governors under Corporation Membership Determination - 17

Current Governors - 14

Quorum - 7