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# The Role of Academic Staff Governors at Three Outstanding General Further Education Colleges in England

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education

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## Table of Contents

List of figures .....	vi
List of tables.....	vii
List of Appendices .....	viii
Dedication .....	ix
Acknowledgements.....	x
Declaration .....	xii
Papers in Publication / Conference Presentations by the Author .....	xiii
Abstract .....	xiv
List of Acronyms and Abbreviations .....	xv
List of Codes in the Thesis to Represent Evidence.....	xvi
Glossary.....	xvii
Chapter 1. Introduction .....	19
1.1. Why Research Academic Staff Governor Roles in the English Further Education (FE) system?.....	19
1.2. Research Aims .....	20
1.3. The Context of English Further Education and Governance.....	23
1.4. The 3 Case Study Colleges: General Characteristics .....	28
1.5. Structure of the Thesis.....	32
Chapter 2. Literature Review.....	33
2.1. Introduction .....	33
2.1.1. The Concept of Governance.....	35
2.1.2. Governance versus Management.....	36
2.2. Theories of Governing .....	39
2.2.1. GovernING and A Behavioural Theory of Boards.....	39
2.3. Academic Staff Governor Concepts: Role-Related Activities.....	45
2.3.1. The Concept of 'Roles' in Organisations .....	45
2.3.2. Academic Staff Governor Roles and Activities in Governance.....	47
a. Rationale for ASGs' presence in GBs.....	48
b. Trust, Power and Relationships in Governance.....	56
c. Responsibilities and Activities of ASGs in Practice .....	59
d. Understanding / Confusion of ASG Role .....	69
e. Overall Contribution of ASGs to Governance.....	71
2.4. Governance at Outstanding Colleges .....	73
2.5. Conclusion .....	74

Chapter 3. Research Methodology .....	75
3.1. Introduction and the Research Questions.....	75
3.2. Preferred Ontology and Epistemology .....	76
3.3. The Research Design .....	80
3.4. Data Collection Tools.....	88
3.4.1. The Questionnaire-based Survey.....	89
3.4.2. The Observations .....	92
3.4.3. The Interviews.....	95
3.4.4. Documentary Analysis.....	97
3.4.5. The Pilot Study.....	99
3.5. Collecting Data .....	102
3.5.1. Data Collection – the General Approach .....	102
3.5.2. Fieldwork Specific to Each College.....	105
3.6. Conclusion: Quality and Limitations .....	111
3.6.1. Quality of Research .....	111
3.6.2. The Study's Limitations .....	112
Chapter 4. Data Analysis and Findings .....	115
4.1. Introduction .....	115
4.2. X-College – ASG Role Findings .....	117
4.2.1. X-ASG's General Governance Activities .....	117
a. Statutory Governance Roles.....	117
b. X-ASG Responding to Local Community's Needs.....	123
c. X-ASG's Role in Challenging and Supporting SMTs .....	125
4.2.2. ASG Role-Specific Activities: X-College.....	127
a. X-ASG's Professional Information Giving .....	128
b. Linking Governance and TLA .....	130
c. X-ASG Representing Staff Interests .....	133
4.2.3. Further Exploration of X-ASG Role .....	136
a. X-ASG's Power Relations .....	136
b. X-ASG's Professional Status .....	140
c. Understanding or Confusion of ASG Role – X-College.....	143
4.2.4. Emerging Themes: X-ASG's Role and Evaluation .....	146
4.3. Y-College – ASG Role Findings .....	148
4.3.1. Y-ASG's General Governance Activities .....	148
a. Statutory Governance Roles.....	148
b. Y-ASG Responding to Local Community's Needs.....	152
c. Y- ASG's Role in Challenging and Supporting SMTs.....	154
4.3.2. ASG Role-Specific Activities – Y-College.....	157

a. Y-ASG's Professional Information Giving .....	157
b. Linking Governance and TLA .....	159
c. Y-ASG Representing Staff Interests .....	161
4.3.3. Further Exploration of Y-ASG roles.....	164
a. Y-ASG's Power-Relations.....	164
b. Y-ASG's Professional Status .....	169
c. Understanding or Confusion of ASG Role – Y-College.....	171
4.3.4. Emerging Themes: Y-ASG's Role and Evaluation .....	173
4.4. Z-College: ASG Role Findings.....	175
4.4.1. Z-ASG's General Governance Activities .....	175
a. Statutory Governance Roles.....	175
b. Z-ASG Responding to Local Community's Needs .....	178
c. Z-ASG's Role in Challenging and Supporting SMT .....	179
4.4.2. ASG Role-Specific Activities – Z-College.....	180
a. Z-ASG's Professional Information Giving .....	180
b. Linking governance and TLA .....	183
c. Z-ASG Representing Staff Interests.....	186
4.4.3. Further Exploration of Z-ASG's role.....	189
a. Z-ASG's Power-Relations .....	189
b. Z-ASG's Professional Status .....	193
c. Understanding or Confusion of ASG Role – Z-College .....	196
4.4.4. Emerging Themes: Z-ASG's Role and Evaluation.....	198
Chapter 5. Discussion of ASG Roles.....	201
5.1. ASGs' Roles at the 3 Outstanding Colleges .....	201
5.1.1. RQ1: What are an ASG's General Governance Activities in the Governance of 3 Outstanding Colleges? .....	201
5.1.2. RQ2: What are an ASG's Role-Specific Activities in the Governance of 3 Outstanding Colleges?.....	209
5.1.3. RQ3: What is the Power and Professional Status of the ASGs at the 3 Colleges? .....	218
5.1.4. RQ4: What are the issues around the understanding of ASGs' role in the governance of the 3 colleges? .....	224
5.2. The Study's Contribution: Conceptualisation of ASG Roles at the 3 Outstanding Colleges.....	226
5.2.1. The 3 RaPs Framework of an ASG's Role .....	227
5.2.2. Role Analogies Model for the 3 ASGs – A Conceptual Model for ASG Roles in FE.....	232
Chapter 6. Conclusion .....	239
6.1. Summary of the Role of ASGs Explored.....	239
6.2. Implications for Professional Practice and Recommendations for ASG Roles in FE Colleges.....	242

6.3. Opportunities for Future Research into ASG Roles .....	243
6.4. Personal Reflection.....	244
References.....	247
Appendix A. Example of E-mail sent to college Clerks for Research Access.....	258
Appendix B. Research Information Leaflet .....	259
Appendix C. Research Tool: S emi-Structured Questionnaire .....	261
Appendix D. Example of Completed Non-Participant Meeting Observation Tool 266	
Appendix E. Interview Schedule .....	269
Appendix F. Research Ethics: Design and Official Approval .....	272
Appendix G. Interview Consent Form.....	280
Appendix H. The Link between Questionnaire, Research Questions and Theoretical Perspectives .....	281

## List of figures

Figure 2.1: External Governors' Professional Backgrounds at GFE Colleges. ....	53
Figure 3.1: Question 9 in the Questionnaire .....	91
Figure 4.1: General Governance Activities Relevant to an ASG's Role - College X .....	118
Figure 4.2: Q15 - Appropriate Committees for ASGs to contribute to X- College .....	119
Figure 4.3: Q13 – ASGs' Most Valued Experiences, Knowledge and Skills.....	128
Figure 4.4: Q12: Governors' Expectation of ASGs' Future Contribution / Activities at X- College.....	136
Figure 4.5: Q18: Governors' Responses to Statements about ASGs' Power in Governance Meetings – X-College.....	138
Figure 4.6: Q21: X-College Governors' Views - ASGs Fulfilling a Gatekeeping Role through Monitoring of SMT's Activities.....	141
Figure 4.7: Q16a(5) Governors' Views: ASGs' Uncertainty about Their Governance Role - X- College.....	143
Figure 4.8: Q9. Statutory Governance Activities Relevant to an ASG's Role; Y-College.....	149
Figure 4.9: Q13: Y-College ASGs' Most Valued Experiences, Knowledge and Skills .....	157
Figure 4.10: Q12: Governors' Expectation of ASGs' Future Contributions / Activities at Y- College.....	165
Figure 4.11: Q18: Governors' Responses to Statements about ASGs' Power in Governance Meetings - Y-College.....	165
Figure 4.12: Q21: Y-College Governors' Views about ASGs Fulfilling a Gatekeeping Role through Monitoring of SMT's Activities .....	171
Figure 4.13: Q9. Statutory Governance Activities Relevant to an ASG's Role; Z-College.....	176
Figure 4.14: Q13 – ASGs' Most Valued Experiences, Knowledge and Skills.....	181
Figure 4.15: Q12 - Governors' Expectation of ASGs' Future Contributions / Activities at Z- College.....	189
Figure 4.16: Q18: Governors' Responses - ASGs' Power in Governance Meetings; Z-College .....	190
Figure 4.17: Z-College Governors' Views about ASGs Fulfilling a Gatekeeping Role .....	195
Figure 5.1: % of Governors across the 3 Colleges Agreeing that ASGs are able to Help Other Governors Understand the Colleges' Educational Issues .....	210
Figure 5.2: Q13 – ASGs' Most Valued Experiences, Knowledge and Skills across the 3 Colleges .....	211
Figure 5.3: Ranking by Governors to Show Relevance between ASG's Role and 'Linking Governance to TLA at the 3 Colleges .....	214
Figure 5.4: Ranking by Governors to Show Relevance of 'Representing of Staff Views' to an ASG's Role at the 3 Colleges .....	216
Figure 5.5: Cross College Averages of % of Governors' Responses .....	220
Figure 5.6: Conceptualisation of ASG Role : The 3 RaPs Framework.....	227
Figure 5.7: Role Analogies Model for an ASG, Showing the 3 ASGs' Roles - Adapted from the Analogies Produced by Earley and Creese (2001).....	232

## List of tables

Table 1.1: ASG Role-Related Activities Concepts Researched in the Current Study .....	21
Table 1.2: General Contexts of the 3 Colleges.....	28
Table 1.3: Governance Contexts of the 3 Outstanding GFECs.....	30
Table 2.1: FE College Governors' General Responsibilities as of 2007 and the Amendments in 2011 .....	59
Table 3.1: Ontological Concepts in ASG Roles in FE College Governance; adapted from Mason (2002:15) .....	77
Table 3.2: ASG Contributions in Observed GB Meetings .....	93
Table 3.3: Data Collection Summary at Colleges X, Y and Z .....	106
Table 4.1: Profiles of the 3 ASGs at the 3 Colleges, X, Y and Z .....	115
Table 4.2: Observation of Governance Meetings at X-College; X-ASG's Contributions Performing a Statutory Governance Role.....	121
Table 4.3: X-ASG's Contributions Addressing the Needs of the Community.....	124
Table 4.4: X-ASG's Contributions seen as challenges or support for SMT in 3 Governance Meetings.....	126
Table 4.5: X-ASG's Contributions that Agreed, Challenged, or Disagreed with Meeting Participants .....	140
Table 4.6: Observation of Governance Meetings at Y-College: Y-ASG's Contributions Performing a Statutory Governance Role.....	150
Table 4.7: Y-ASG's Meeting Contributions Addressing the Needs of the Community .....	153
Table 4.8: Y-ASG's Contributions that challenged or supported SMTs in 3 Governance Meetings.....	155
Table 4.9: Y-ASG's Contributions that Agreed, Challenged, or Disagreed with Participants in Observed Meetings .....	166
Table 4.10: Observation of Governance Meetings: Z-ASG's Contributions.....	178
Table 4.11: Z-ASG's Meeting Contributions Addressing the Needs of the Community .....	178
Table 4.12: Z-ASG's Contributions that challenged or supported SMTs in 2 Governance Meetings.....	179
Table 4.13: Z-ASG's Contributions that Agreed, Challenged, or Disagreed with Participants in Observed Meetings .....	192
Table 5.1: The 3 Colleges' Governor Responsibilities Compared to State-Directed Responsibilities by DIUS (2007) and Education Act 2011 (2011) .....	202
Table 5.2: The 3 ASGs' Meeting Local Needs Function in Contributions in Comparison to Statutory Functions .....	204
Table 5.3: The 3 ASGs' Challenge and Support in the Observed Meetings .....	206
Table 5.4: Analysis of ASG Role to Identify ASG Labels/Analogies, Using some of the Research Concepts .....	234
Table 5.5: Comparison of Contributions by the 3 ASGs at X, Y and Z Colleges.....	236
Table F.1: Ethical Considerations in Research Design .....	272
Table H.1: Mapping of the questionnaire (Appendix C) against sub-Research Questions and Theoretical Concepts / Exploratory Themes .....	281



## List of Appendices

Appendix A: Example of E-mail sent to college Clerks for Research Access	p.258
Appendix B: Research Information Leaflet	p.259
Appendix C: Research Tool: Semi-Structured Questionnaire	p.261
Appendix D: Example of Completed Non-Participant Meeting Observation Tool	p.266
Appendix E: Interview Schedule	p.269
Appendix F: Research Ethics: Design and Official Approval	p.272
Appendix G: Interview Consent Form	p.280
Appendix H: The Link between Questionnaire, Research Questions and Theoretical Perspectives	p.281

## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my father, Mohamed Ali, whose focus on mastery, perfection and attention to detail has always impressed me; to my mum, Mariyam Wadheefa Ahmed, who always craves knowledge and has so much care, to my wife – Steph, children – Ali, and Haisham - for their love, patience and enormous support and belief in me.

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## **Declaration**

The work in this thesis was developed and conducted by the author between January 2011 and October 2016. I declare that, apart from work whose authors are explicitly acknowledged, this thesis and the materials contained in this thesis represent original work undertaken solely by the author. I confirm that this thesis has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

## Papers in Publication / Conference Presentations by the Author

### Research Papers by the Author:

1. Shiuna, M. and Sodiq, A. (2013) Improving Education in the Maldives: Stakeholder Perspectives on the Maldivian Education Sector. *International Journal of Small Economies*, 4(1), 23-38. Peer-Reviewed Journal Article. Ilkley, UK: Maldives Research Available: <http://ijse.maldivesresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/IJSE-ISSUE-4-Shiuna-Sodiq-2013-Education-Forum-Maldives.pdf>
2. Sodiq, Abdulla. 2012. The Composition of Governing Bodies: a Case Study of a College in England. *Warwick Research Archive Portal*. Non-Peer Reviewed Research Paper. Coventry. University of Warwick. Available: <http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/49208/>

### Past Conference Presentation by the Author:

- Sodiq, Abdulla. 2012. FE College Composition – A Case Study into FE College Governance in England. *Kaleidoscope Conference*. 10/06/2012. Institute of Education, University of Cambridge, UK.

## **Abstract**

This thesis aims to explore Academic Staff Governor (ASG) roles at three Outstanding Further Education colleges in England. Uniquely, the research focuses on types of ASG activities; ASGs' professional and power status and the understanding of the role. The study draws upon relevant literature to identify concepts related to governors' roles and activities. An interpretivist stance is used to collect predominantly qualitative data through a combined methods approach, and to engage with ASGs and external governors. During fieldwork, qualitative and quantitative evidence from six semi-structured interviews; 35 questionnaire responses, observations of 8 governance meetings and governance documents, was analysed. Findings suggest that ASGs' insiderness; their affiliation with other groups and decision-making circumstances may influence their governing activities. Activities rooted in operational settings such as professional-information giving were highly-valued by other governors, while there were uncertainties about the benefit of having managerial staff as ASGs. The research also identified ASGs' relatively low power status which in turn may affect their professional status. There was evidence indicating uncertainty amongst the college staff regarding the role of an ASG in the colleges' boards. As a result of the study, to aid understanding and to conceptualise an ASG's role in FE colleges, 'The 3 RaPs Framework' and 'The Restricted Professional Model' of an ASG have been developed. For relevant practitioners, organisations and policymakers, the research recommends clear and specific role descriptions for ASG posts; action to develop ASGs' professionalism as teachers and to allow more opportunities for ASGs to act as governors. Finally, further research opportunities are identified in order to research ASGs' professional profiles in the FE sector; ASGs' personality characteristics; clarity of ASG role in educational governance; the role in high performing and underperforming colleges; and the role in the wider global educational governance.

## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>AoC</b>	Association of Colleges
<b>ASG</b>	Academic Staff Governor
<b>BIS</b>	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
<b>BSG</b>	Business Staff Governor
<b>CPD</b>	continuing professional development
<b>ETF</b>	Education Training Foundation
<b>FE</b>	Further Education
<b>GB</b>	Governing body
<b>GFEC</b>	General Further Education College
<b>HE</b>	Higher Education
<b>IfL</b>	Institute for Learning
<b>LSIS</b>	Learning and Skills Improvement Services
<b>NGA</b>	National Governors' Association
<b>NHS</b>	National Health Services
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>Ofsted</b>	Office for Standards in Education
<b>PSD</b>	Personal and Social Development Skills
<b>RaP1</b>	Role(s)-as-position(s)
<b>RaP2</b>	Role(s)-as-perceived
<b>RaP3</b>	Role(s)-as-practice(s)
<b>RoDM</b>	Routinization of Decision-making
<b>SCs</b>	Standing Committees
<b>SET</b>	Society for Education and Training
<b>StG</b>	Student Governor
<b>TG</b>	Teacher Governor
<b>TLA</b>	teaching, learning and assessment
<b>ToR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>UCU</b>	University and College Union



## List of Codes in the Thesis to Represent Evidence

### Codes Used for X-College's Evidence

<b>X-College</b>	College X
<b>X-ASG</b>	Academic Staff Governor at College X
<b>X-EXG3</b>	External governor 3 at College X; also Chair of the Curriculum/Quality committee
<b>X-Q-EXG2</b>	External governor 2 amongst external governors in questionnaire responses at College X
<b>X-SMT1-3</b>	Senior Managers, 1 to 3, at College X

### Codes Used for Y College's Evidence

<b>Y-College</b>	College Y
<b>Y-ASG</b>	Academic Staff Governor at College Y
<b>Y-Q-EXG1</b>	External governor 1 amongst external governors in questionnaire responses at College Y

### Codes Used for Z College's Evidence

<b>Z-College</b>	College Z
<b>Z-ASG</b>	Academic Staff Governor at College Z
<b>Z-Q-EXG1-9</b>	External governors 1-9 amongst external governors in the questionnaire responses at College Z

## Glossary

General Further Education Colleges (GFECs) / FE Colleges: GFECs in England provide Post-Compulsory Education in vocational subjects and may be considered a subset of Further Education colleges (Lambert, 2011). However, GFECs are often called FE Colleges (Masunga, 2014) and in the current thesis, unless stated otherwise, 'GFECs', 'FE colleges' and 'colleges' are used synonymously.

Governing Body (GB) and Governors: A GB may be referred to as board of governors, Further Education corporation or simply corporation (Hill, 2009). In FE colleges, the members of the GB may be known as governors or members of the GB and may be in effect, trustees in a charitable organisation (Hill, 2014). In this thesis, 'governing body (GB)', 'governing board' the 'board', and the 'corporation' are used synonymously.

Staff Governors: one group of constituents of an FE college GB selected from the college staff but the term does not normally include the college principal.

Academic Staff Governors (ASGs) or Teacher Governors (TGs): staff governors in a GB usually selected from the college teaching staff or curriculum areas. In the school sectors, they may be known as teacher governors (TGs).

Business Staff Governors (BSGs): staff governors usually selected from the college non-teaching staff or from the administration / business support areas.

Lay / External / Independent Governors: governors appointed by the board from outside the college, usually from the local community.

Outstanding Colleges: English FE Colleges are inspected for quality of their services by Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), which currently uses 4 grades to reflect the quality of FE colleges' education (Ofsted, 2014):

- Grad 1: Outstanding
- Grade 2: Good
- Grade 3: Requires Improvement
- Grade 4: Inadequate.

## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Why Research Academic Staff Governor Roles in the English Further Education (FE) system?**

As a practising FE teacher in England, the current author believes there is a need for teachers to be more actively involved with college senior management and governance of colleges. This is in order to ensure that there is a link between those who are directly involved in the processes of teaching/learning/assessment (TLA) and those who make crucial decisions in college policies. This view is recognised by MacNeill et al. (2003) in their work on leadership in education. Sallis (2006), a renowned campaigner for democratic values in educational governance in England, suggests that staff governors including Academic Staff Governors (ASGs) may have the most difficult job in a school governing body, while Earley and Creese (2001) concluded that teacher governor roles are under-developed. In other parts of UK education such as the Higher Education (HE) sector, it has been argued that institutions are best governed through partnership between external governors and the academic staff, where staff help the external governors appreciate the consequences of governance decisions (Shattock, 2002), perhaps by bringing the academic staff's point of view to governance. These authors are attempting to argue for the important place of academic staff in the governance of educational institutions in England. However, in the English FE system some of the recent changes to the Education Act 2011 (2011) add uncertainty to the place of ASGs in FE college governance. The replacement of the reference to teaching staff governors in the Education Act with a generic reference to staff governors means ASGs' place in FE college

governing boards is not guaranteed. These changes are taking place against the back drop of a continuing absence of academic research focussing specifically on the role of ASGs in FE college governance in England, while it is recognised that there is a growing body of research into FE governance (for example, Lee, 2000; Schofield, 2009; Gleeson et al., 2010; Masunga, 2013). The current research project, as part of a Doctor of Education study, intends to address this missing element, and contribute to an increased understanding of ASGs' role in the English FE college system.

## **1.2. Research Aims**

The purpose of the case study is to explore Academic Staff Governor (ASG) roles at three General Further Education colleges (GFECs) in England. In the most recent two inspections by Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the colleges were qualified as Outstanding (Grade 1) colleges. The research purpose will be achieved by answering the main research question, which is:

- What are ASGs' roles at Outstanding General Further Education colleges in England?

Four specific questions have been constructed to focus the main question further and they are:

1. What are an ASG's general governance activities in the governance of 3 Outstanding colleges?
2. What are the ASG role-specific governance activities in the governance of the 3 colleges?
3. What is the power and professional status of ASGs at the 3 colleges?
4. What are the issues around the understanding of ASGs' role in the governance of the colleges?

There is a theoretical basis (Yin, 2009:37) to the above specific research questions. Altogether seven theoretical orientations based on potential ASG roles have been identified for research in the current case study (Table 1.1). These concepts are addressed in the sub- research questions 1 and 2. The first three concepts are general governance role functions that may apply to FE college governors. The functions in the first concept were covered in the FE statutory governance instrument (2007). At the time of the study, Hill et al. (2012) noted in their research that the 2007 instrument appeared to be still in operation in many English FE colleges, despite the amendments to FE governance in the Education Act (2011). Role activities concepts 2-4 about

Concept No.	ASG Role-Related Activities Concept	Concept Type	Notes
1.	reviewing of college's mission; approving quality policies/strategies; effective and efficient use of resources (staff, buildings, teaching & learning resources); approving college's financial income & expenditure; appointment, suspension, determination of pay & conditions of SMTs and staff	General, statutory roles relevant to all FE Governors	in FE governance instrument (2007)
2.	responding to local community's needs	General role from research literature, relevant to all FE Governors	From Stoker (2004); Schofield et al. (2009); Avis (2009)
3.	challenging SMT's ideas		From Schofield et al. (2009); Sodi (2012)
4.	supporting SMT's ideas		
5.	contribution related to professional information - based on teaching & learning expertise, experience & knowledge	Roles specific to ASGs	Adapted from Earley and Creese (2001)
6.	Representation of teachers' views		
7.	linking governance & teaching/learning		From Gleeson et al. (2010); Sodi (2012)

Table 1.1: ASG Role-Related Activities Concepts Researched in the Current Study

community needs and ASGs' interactions with SMT are general to FE governors too, but were also identified in existing FE governance research specified in Table 1.1 above. Concepts 5 through 7 may be specific to ASG roles in FE colleges, where concepts 5-6 were adapted from a rare study by New (1993a) into teacher governors in schools. Studies into teacher

governors in schools are seen as pertinent to the current study as teachers in schools are the counterparts of academic staff in FE colleges and because as already stated, currently there is no published research on ASGs in the FE system in England. The seventh concept in Table 1.1, linking governance and education, was highlighted by Gleeson et al. (2010) in their finding that FE college governing bodies sometimes may be short of educationists who know about education. This role is supported by Sodiq (2012) and is also related to the sustainable leadership issue in colleges, raised by Lambert (2011).

In addition to the ASG role activities, the sub-research questions were used to research the following three exploratory themes without relying on pre-determined theories:

1. ASG's power-relations and
2. ASGs' professionals status in the college governing bodies (GBs); and
3. understanding or confusion of ASG roles

The concept of power appears frequently in governance studies in education, including FE, as well as in corporate governance research, for example, in Ebbutt and Brown (1978); Pounce (1992); New (1993b); Santiago et al. (2008); Smith (2010); Salaman (2011); Klijn and Koppenjan (2012); (Masunga, 2014) and Taylor (1983). ASGs' professional status was explored to find out their status in FE governing bodies, which feature many different professionals (AoC, 2014a). There are a number of studies that have cited the confusion of ASG roles as a theme in educational governance (Taylor, 1983; Cornforth and Edwards, 1998; Lee, 2000; Earley and Creese, 2001; McNay, 2002; LSIS, 2012b). In the current study, sub-research question 4

(RQ4) will be used to explore the extent the understanding or confusion of the ASG role was a significant issue in the governance of the 3 colleges.

In the current case study, the aim was to use the main and the sub-research questions (RQ1-4) to establish how many of the above ASG activities concepts applied to ASG roles in the three colleges, while remaining open to the possibility that new theories may emerge, for instance, while researching the three exploratory themes. It is important to note that the aim of the current project was NOT finding the effectiveness of the ASG roles or the correlation between Outstanding Grade by Ofsted and any attributes of ASGs or their roles at the colleges.

### **1.3. The Context of English Further Education and Governance**

#### **Relevant Historical Milestones**

Regarding FE governance in England, one of the most significant years was 1992, when local government powers were diffused; and FE colleges began to be incorporated and more independent through the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act (Abbott et al., 2012). FE colleges began to expand and appear more 'business-like', thus the birth of college corporations governed by GBs subjected to competition from one another, from HE and the private sector.

Following incorporation, the increase in the number of external business governors at the expense of elected local authority governors, together with



the resulting increase in business-oriented strategy in FE colleges, was described by Lee (2000:266) as “the most important issue” following incorporation. Lumby (2001:17) described the strategy as “less interventionist governance” but as one that was leading to an erosion of democratic accountability.

In 2001, the FE sector witnessed the state’s use of Ofsted to inspect FE colleges as a tool for accountability (Abbott et al., 2012). The next major change to FE governance was in 2011 through the Education Act 2011 (2011). The government’s initially proposed amendments to the Act had removed all categories of members of governing bodies but the government subsequently accepted a Labour Party’s (opposition political party) amendment which included a requirement for inclusion of student and staff governors, including ASGs in FE college boards (AoC, 2011).

As there are hardly any historical milestones regarding teachers’ involvement in FE governance, it may be useful to present some background into teachers’ involvement in general educational governance. New (1993b) describes how the worker participation movement in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s (Campbell, 1992) influenced teaching associations to call for teacher representation in school governance, basing their argument on teachers’ prior knowledge of the relevant education systems. Taylor (1977) reported teacher governors’ involvement in school governance in England as far back as in 1975. By early 1980s, schools had a majority of governors from the teaching staff, which was seen by the government as a barrier against change (Abbott et al., 2012), and hence, when the Education Act (1986), was

implemented, teachers were allocated only one or two places in a school's GB and more places were reserved for business and parent governors.

Another historical context relevant to the current study is the context of the teachers' professional status amongst other professionals, related to the theoretical role of 'professional information giving' (Earley and Creese, 2001), or asking for such information in governance. In the late 1960s in the wider education field, the relationship between the state and the teaching profession was low due to the former's attempts to demand accountability of finance and performance in the context of an economic recession in the country. Prior to this, there was a more or less balanced power centre between the state, the local authorities and the teaching profession (Abbott et al., 2012). Much more recently, between 2007 and 2010, there were some public investment initiatives towards teachers' continuing professional development (CPD) and the academic profiles of teachers were raised when teaching was made a master-level qualification (Abbott et al., 2012). In 2007, specific regulations introduced required that all FE teachers needed to be registered with the government-backed teachers' professional association, Institute for Learning (IfL); produce evidence of qualifications and annual CPD (Machin et al., 2014). Teachers could also apply for Qualified Teacher of Learning and Skills Status (QTLS) (ibid.). However, soon after the state's efforts to professionalise FE teachers, in 2009 the phasing out of IfL began and by September 2012, mandatory registration with the IfL came to an end (ibid.). In May, 2015, the Education Training Foundation (ETF), which has been put in charge of taking forward the short legacy of IfL, launched the Society for Education and Training (SET) - a rebranded version of IfL to

operate as a professional body for FE teachers (SET, 2015). Over the last 15 years, a variety of FE teachers' professional standards qualifications have been used and they are:-

- Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) Standards, introduced nationally in 2001
- Lifelong Learning UK's (LLUK) qualifications, 2007: Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS); Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (CTLLS) and Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS).
- Learning and Skills Improvement Services' (LSIS) simplified qualifications, 2013: Award in Education and Training; Certificate in Education and Training (CET); Diploma in Education and Training (DET).

(Machin et al., 2014:4-5)

### **The Status Quo in the Governance of FE Colleges**

The FE sector in England covers colleges, adult and community learning, work-based learning and apprenticeships. There are currently 235 general FE Colleges in England, offering academic or vocational programmes. Some colleges provide 14-19 education as well as HE courses (AoC, 2014c). English FE colleges are non-exempt charities - not-for-profit organisations not required to register with the Charity Commission - and regulated by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills Charity Commission, 2013). Colleges' boards can make modifications to their governance arrangements if they wish to do so (Stokoe and Haynes, 2012).

According to AOC (2014a), a typical English GFEC governing body may be made up of 11-20 governors, who may include one executive governor (the college principal) and non-executive governors: often with two student

governors, one to two staff governors (who may or may not be ASGs) and the rest may be external (independent) governors. Senior managers, other than the college principal are not permitted to be board members. An AoC survey conducted in 2013 (AoC, 2014a), showed about 62% of governors were male; 60% between 45 and 64 years of age and 88% were white British. This survey may be compared to the survey of 175 FE college governing boards reported by Davies (2002) a decade earlier, where about 70% per cent of governors were male; 55% were between 40 and 59 years of age; and 82% were white British. The comparison supports the fact that overall, while the gender balance in FE college GBs may have improved, FE college boards have become more white British over the last decade.

In terms of an FE corporation's responsibilities, following the introduction of the Education Act 2011, the statutory requirements became less prescriptive and the responsibilities in the Articles and Instrument were condensed to the following three key items in Schedule 12 of the Education Act (2011):

- the determination and periodic review of the educational character and mission of the institution and the oversight of its activities;
- the effective and efficient use of resources and
- the solvency of the institution and the governing body and the safeguarding of their assets.

The reforms following the 2011 Education Act reduced government control and expanded the role for governors, giving them collective responsibility for developing a diverse college sector, working with stakeholders including schools, academies, the independent sector, universities, local businesses, local government and the voluntary sector (BIS, 2013). The new act gave FE corporations more freedom and allowed them to decide the total number of

governors and the numbers of members in the various governor constituencies but stipulated that the roles should be specified; there should be staff (but not specifically ASGs) and student governors. Another influential governance tool, the Foundation Code of Governance, which had begun to be adopted at the time of this research, requires FE corporations to have a mix of skills and experience needed to implement evolving strategy (BIS, 2013). Any governors recruited cannot normally be remunerated (Hill, 2014) for their work, but if remuneration is needed, boards are required to apply to the Charity Commission for permission (BIS, 2013).

#### 1.4. The 3 Case Study Colleges: General Characteristics

The study focused on three Outstanding General Further Education colleges (GFECs), X, Y and Z in England (Table 1.2). GFECs are described by Ofsted (2010) as offering education and training for different age ranges. College X

College	Student no	No. of sites	No. of academic / vocational areas	Economic deprivation level of region in comparison to England average	Unemployment level of region	Relative nos. of A*-C GCSE Grades in Local Authority
X	7600+	1 main campus	15	High	Higher than UK average	Above England average
Y	6000+	1 main campus	12	Considerably high	Slightly lower than UK average	below England average
Z	10,000	1 main + 6 other sites	10+	Very low	low	Just above England average

Table 1.2: General Contexts of the 3 Colleges

is located in England with a student population of over 7600 students. It has one main campus and 15 academic and vocational sector subject areas. The local population experiences a higher economic deprivation level compared to the average economic contexts in England, with slightly higher than UK's average unemployment rates. The number of students in the local authority

region gaining more than five A\* to C grades at GCSE is above England's average.

College Y is in England with a student population of over 6000 students. It has a single campus that serves the local borough as well as attracting a small number of students from the surrounding region. The college has 12 academic and vocational sector subject areas and is located in an area of considerable deprivation but with only slightly lower than the UK's average unemployment rates. The number of students in the local authority region gaining more than five A\* to C grades at GCSE is below England's average.

College Z is also in England with about 10,000 students. It has one main campus and six smaller locations across the regions specialising in at least 10 of the academic and vocational sector subject areas. The local area is amongst the least deprived boroughs of England with considerably lower than UK's average unemployment rates. The number of students in the local authority region gaining more than five A\* to C grades at GCSE is just above England's average.

All three colleges were judged as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted in their most recent two inspections and had been awarded Beacon Status (LSIS, 2009) by LSIS for being amongst the highest-performing organisations in the FE sector. By researching the colleges, the intention was to identify ASG roles in high performing colleges to contribute to a better understanding of ASGs' roles through in-depth case studies of the colleges.

### **The Governance Contexts of the 3 Colleges**

Each of the three colleges was led by the college Principal - the Chief

Executive. All three governing bodies (GBs) had a Chair and a Vice Chair and operated through a number of governance committees. The Clerk facilitated much of the administration of the corporation including organising meetings. In order to protect the anonymity of the colleges, the names of all of the committees are not revealed in this thesis - a technique used by Tummons (2014b) - since some of the committee names were unique to each college. The governance or search committees of the colleges usually approved the appointment of members other than ASG and student governors, who were elected by teachers and students respectively. Two of the colleges, X and Y were governed by the Instrument and Articles of Governance of 2007 (2007) while College Z had amended its governance statutes using the freedom provided in the Education Act 2011 (Hill et al., 2012). College Z's instrument showed that they had removed the need to have Skills Funding Agency members and parent members in the board. A summary of the governing structures in operation at the outset of data collection in October 2013 are given below in Table 1.3 and in the descriptions below.

College	No. of Governors	No. of ASGs	No. of Business Support Staff	No. of Student Governors	No. of External Governors	No. of Committees	Instrument & Articles of Governance Used
X	18	1	1	2	13	6	State-issued 2007 version, with aspects of Education Act 2011
Y	15	1	0	2	11	5	State-issued 2007 version
Z	20	1	1	2	15 (with 2 vacancies)	6	Amended since Education Act 2011

Table 1.3: Governance Contexts of the 3 Outstanding GFECs

### **College X:**

The college governing body (GB) operated through 6 committees and had 18 governors. They were:-

- 13 independent / external governors: one was the chair and another the vice chair
- 1 ASG: (member of 2 committees: one to do with curriculum/quality and another to do with sponsored academy schools)
- 1 business support staff governor
- 2 student governors and
- 1 chief executive officer - The Principal.

### **College Y:**

At College Y, the GB operated through 5 committees and had 13 governors and 2 vacant positions. They were:-

- 11 independent / external governors, including the chair and the vice chair
- 1 ASG: (in 2 committees; one to do with curriculum/quality and the other an audit-related committee)
- 1 chief executive officer - The Principal
- 2 vacant positions for student governors (later filled in Dec 2013).

### **College Z**

In this college, the GB operated through 6 committees and featured 18 governors and 2 vacant positions for external governors:-

- 13 independent / external governors, including the chair and the vice chair
- 1 ASG: (member of 1 committee, which dealt with college staffing)
- 1 business support staff governor
- 2 student governors and
- 1 chief executive officer - The Principal.



### **1.5. Structure of the Thesis**

Following this introduction, in Chapter 2, the literature pertinent to the role of ASGs in a range of organisational contexts and in educational settings, in particular will be reviewed. The methodological approach and methods used in the case study will be presented in Chapter 3 before reporting the findings in Chapter 4. A discussion of the findings will follow in Chapter 5, where the research questions will also be answered. In the same chapter, a framework and model conceptualising the three ASGs' roles will be presented. The thesis will conclude in Chapter 6, where a summary of the ASGs' roles; the research's implications for professional practice in FE; the identification of opportunities for future research; and the author's personal reflection of the research experience will be presented.

## Chapter 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review relevant literature in order to identify key themes pertinent to the topic of “Academic Staff Governor Roles in Outstanding FE Colleges in England”. The themes are aligned with the research questions (Chapter 1:20) and will help the author to structure the research enquiry as well as bring together the relevant concepts to form the research framework for the project.

In-depth research into governing boards (GBs) is a rarity (Cornforth and Edwards, 1998; Cornforth and Edwards, 1999; Elms, 2014). The same observation applies to FE college governor roles in England (Gleeson et al., 2010:1) and at the time of the current project, published research focussing on the role of Academic Staff Governors (ASGs) in English FE colleges is non-existent. This is a concern for the FE sector given the onus on governing boards in the overall responsibility of college boards since incorporation in 1992 (Gleeson and Shain, 1999), and the amount of public money expended on FE in England. For instance, between 2008 and 2011, the average annual real increase of spending on FE was 7.7% (Chowdry and Sibieta, 2011:6) with total planned costs for the adult education sector alone in English FE reaching £4.5 billion for 2010-2011.

In pursuit of relevant literature in this under-researched but important area, a need to explore a wide variety of literature types was identified. Examples included academic empirical studies; peer-reviewed journal articles; papers

and reports from governance practitioners, national education and FE sector organisations, for example, LSIS, ETF, Ofsted, AoC, University and College Union (UCU), governmental and other sector organisations such as the Department for Education (DfE) and the National Health Services (NHS) and relevant sources outside the UK. Most of the sources are located in the UK, OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries and in South Africa. The author had to expand the search beyond FE, to fields such as corporate governance and governance in schools, given the limited research in FE governance. School governance is particularly relevant because of the existence of a handful of highly pertinent studies on teacher governor (TG) roles in school governance (for example, Earley and Creese, 2000); and corporate governance for the scholarly views on staff involvement in governance and board research.

The structure of the review will reflect the relevant themes that emerged from the literature sources. The two sub-sections, 2.1.1 and 2.1.2, will define and contrast key terminology in the topic, namely, governance, leadership and management. Section 2.2 will be used to identify the core theoretical concepts that apply to governing activities and behaviour of a board governor. Concepts related to the idea of roles; ASGs' professional status, power relationships, responsibilities and specific governance activities in the role will also be examined (Section 2.3). The penultimate section (2.4) will delve into governance practices at Outstanding (Grade 1) colleges in England. Finally, the chapter will be concluded with a summary of the overall understanding of the ASG role-related activities concepts. The reviews in the various sections will be mainly conducted thematically but within the themes,

sometimes, a chronological or context-based (for example, corporate governance, educational governance and FE college governance) structure may be followed.

### **2.1.1. The Concept of Governance**

Cornforth and Edwards (1998) in their research into governance in public sector organisations in the UK used the term, 'governance' loosely to refer to all the functions performed by the governing body (GB) members of the organisations. Within an FE college, this term works but where internal members such as Academic Staff Governors (ASGs), Business Support Governors (BSGs), Student Governors and the Principal, a qualification needed to be added to the definition so that governance incorporates only their activities directly linked to governance to exclude activities in their other roles such as teaching, leading the organisation as the Principal or being a student. Santiago et al. (2008:68), in their work focussing on governance in tertiary education in 24 countries, define governance as a concept that refers to the 'structures, relationships and processes through which, at both national and institutional levels, policies for tertiary education are developed, implemented and reviewed.' This is too wide and general definition of the term to be applied to the current study which focusses on governance at institutional level. Santiago et al. (2008) were interested in both how the state interacted with the concerned institutions as well as the governance processes within the institutions. Fuller et al. (2013:602) distinguish the state's role in governance in the wider national governance context from governance at institutional level by using 'government' for the former and 'governance' for the latter level, where institutional governance actors

engage in a variety of processes including but not limited to the accountability of the institution to the elected political bodies “but without political authority itself”. In the current study the focus is on governance at institutional level in 3 Further education colleges in England. Using Santiago et al. (2008) and Fuller et al.’s (2013) definitions above, ‘governance’ in this study relates to *structures, relationships and processes within the concerned FE college through which policies for the college’s education are developed, implemented and reviewed*. This study focusses on the Academic Staff Governors’ involvement with such structures, processes and their relationships within the governance of the 3 colleges.

### **2.1.2. Governance versus Management**

There are many examples of expert educational research that advocate a strict division between governance and management matters, for instance, Andringa and Engstrom’s (2007) international research into non-profit boards, Bush’s (2011) work in educational leadership and Matthews et al.’s (2011) international research into FE governance. The latter was supported by 14 large case studies of FE institutes across 4 countries, namely the USA, the UK, Spain and Australia. The authors highlight ‘Critical Success Factors (CSFs)’ for governance, amongst which a “clear recognition of the distinction between governance and management” is included as an important factor (Matthews et al., 2011:4). However, it is worth noting that the authors do not provide details of the research methodology but simply state that the case studies were conducted on the basis of information provided by the organisations themselves.

Research that recommended the split between governance and operational matters was reported in Higgs (2003) too. This research was conducted within the context of corporate governance in the UK involving 2,200 UK companies, a survey of 605 company directors and interviews with 40 FTSE directors. Higgs (ibid.) recommended that for effective governance, board members should focus on strategy and leave policy approving to the management. Schofield et al. (2009), in their LSIS-led review of FE governance in England note that as a result of Higgs' (2003) report, many governance codes, including the codes in the UK Further Education sector, began to advocate the separation of governance matters from organisational management issues. Schofield et al.'s (2009) review included meetings and consultations with 10 FE college governors and representatives of a variety of sector bodies such as Ofsted, UCU, AoC and government departments. In the education field, in terms of governance-management distinction, what is not clear is whether both policy-approving, referred to by Higgs (2003), and policy-making are operational matters.

In practice, boards may find it difficult to maintain the division between management and governance, even though they may recognise the importance of the separation (Cornforth and Edwards, 1998:52, 77). In Cornforth and Edward's (ibid.) study of 4 institutions, one of which was a UK FE college, the findings suggest that a seemingly over-emphasis on management matters does not always suggest weak governance. In fact, the authors concluded that some involvement in operational matters would allow the board to add value to the organisation by way of supporting making difficult decisions and board members acting as link governors to work with

management.

For Academic Staff Governors (ASGs) to observe the distinction between governance and operational matters proves to be a particularly challenging requirement. Academic staff experience operational matters in their day-to-day work and may apply this wealth of experience and awareness of college matters to their governance role. In LSIS' guidance document for staff governors, Hill (2012:11) warns staff governors against "crossing the line from governance to accounting for how something works or doesn't work in college" in order to avoid being seen "as a member of staff to be quizzed on operational details of the 'day job'". The difficulty for ASGs is to follow Hill's (ibid.) advice and engage with the college's governance by using the "knowledge of the college and its operational setting" as a "major asset", and to contribute to the college's strategy, while at the same time stratifying their knowledge and experiences into governance and management matters. In fact, Balarin et al.'s (2008:62) well-documented study into school governance found that both effective and less effective school governing bodies (GBs) do at times get involved with operational matters, even though this was advised to be kept to the minimum. Indeed, even if the distinction between governance and management issues is already made clear, Bartlett (2008:53) in his discussion/advisory article urges boards to be cautious when attempting to implement a 'management-free' type of governance.

What often happens from our experience is that Boards who have been engaging in the operational aspect of schooling and who then attempt to correct this by hopping aboard the helicopter of governance can lose their momentum or, worse, fall asleep at the joystick! Too often Boards end up abdicating their governance responsibility as well as returning management functions to the Principal or executive of the school.

The next sub-section will present a theoretical perspective into governing activities a board governor may be involved in.

## **2.2. Theories of Governing**

For the purpose of this research it is important to distinguish between governance and governing. Governance refers to the systems by which organisations are directed and controlled (Cadbury, 1992:15). Governing refers to the actual activities performed by governors (Balarin et al., 2008). The current study's main focus is on ASG's governing activities. When discussing governing concepts, they will be applied to the potential role of ASGs in governing bodies.

### **2.2.1. GovernING and A Behavioural Theory of Boards**

One of the elements that have influenced the current research project has been van Ees et al.'s (2009:308) review of board research. Van Ees et al.'s (2009:311) beginning argument concerns the over-dominance of foci on the economics-oriented relationship between GB structures, goals and outcomes as in agency theory of governance. The authors wanted to change this focus and conducted their review of past research into board behaviour and in their paper called for the application of Cyert and March's (1963) *A Behavioural Theory of the Firm* (Miner, 2006:60-75; Argote and Greve, 2007; Gibbons, 2013) to board research. Indeed, in a project such as the current that focusses on the roles of organisational members such as ASGs and the acts of governing, focussing on board structures and board outcomes alone will not reveal the intricacies of governor interactions, relationships within the



board and the contributions of ASGs' to the board's decisions. Thus, a behavioural approach is needed into the study of ASG roles in FE college GBs. Therefore, the current study will borrow the core theoretical concepts collated by van Ees et al. (2009) for the purpose of studying ASG behaviour and what ASGs do as part of their governing activities.

### **Core Concepts of a Behavioural Theory of Boards**

Following the work of several authors (for example, Zajac and Westphal, 1996; Ocasio, 1999; Huse and Rindova, 2001; Hendry, 2005), van Ees et al. (2009) identified four concepts as core in a behavioural theory of boards, namely bounded rationality, satisficing behaviour, routinization of decision-making and the dominant coalition. Also relevant to research in board behaviour are the concepts of power and trust, which are explored in the current study.

#### **Bounded Rationality:**

Bounded rationality (Hendry, 2005:S58; van Ees et al., 2009:311) refers to the limited knowledge and potential incompetence of a governor with regards to their governance role. Hendry (2005) used the concept as an extension of the agency theory / compliance model of governance (Balarin et al., 2008) to denote a facet of the relationship between the owners (stakeholders) and the agents (the managers) in corporate governance. However, van Ees et al. (2009:308) described the concept as part of an alternative to the agency theory, in the form of a behavioural theory of boards or corporate governance. When applying this theory to an ASG role in an FE college GB,

one may hypothesize that ASGs just as other peer governors may lack *complete* knowledge and competence to fulfil the college's governance tasks successfully. This lack of complete knowledge and competence, rather than ulterior motives could explain inefficiencies of a corporation. In other words, the mistrust between owners and agents in the compliance model (Balarin et al., 2008) is downplayed. The limited knowledge and resources is a reality and what is expected in governance contexts because not all governors can be realistically expected to possess all the relevant knowledge / skills, and may be constrained by resources such as time.

### Satisficing Behaviour

Satisficing behaviour may apply to decision-making where a governor makes choices or forms judgments that are simply satisfactory instead of searching for optimal choices of decisions or judgements (Hendry, 2005:S58; van Ees et al., 2009:312). This behaviour may arise due to the limited knowledge and competence level of the governors arising from bounded rationality or the wider context of governance the governors are in. This is relevant to the idea of skills, knowledge and competence of an ASG in an FE college corporation and the nature and quality of decisions, judgements and contributions made by the ASG. For example, there is evidence to support the assertion that the judgements made by board members on their organisation's performance may vary from member to member in the same board and this may depend on their knowledge and competence level (Hough, 2009:301). Hough's (ibid.) study was into governance at Australian non-profit boards and he suggests that an individual board member's personality characteristics too may be factors behind the member's judgments.

### Routinization of Decision-making (RoDM)

This concept refers to the collection of past decisions to form routines so that they can be used as a reference for future decisions. Adding further qualification to this definition, van Ees et al. (2009:312), describe the concept as a past record or collection of “successful solutions to problems that store and reproduce experientially acquired competencies, which can then be repeated over time” by the board. Argote and Greve, (2007:341) describing current research trends into the original *A Behavioural Theory of the Firm* (Cyert and March, 1963), add that routinization of decision-making (RoDM) can add stability to a firm but if used flexibly can be a source of change. Gavetti and Levinthal (2000:133; 2012:9) provide one criticism of the process of RoDM and state that the process tends to be too backward-looking because of the associated preoccupation of past experiential wisdom in making decisions but conclude that both forward-looking consideration of consequences of choices and backward-looking wisdoms can act as complementary decision-making tools in a behavioural theory of organisations. This is significant given the strategic decision-making / the direction-determining function of ASGs and the board as a whole.

One way the concept of RoDM may be applied to the role of an FE college's ASG is how sets of procedures and decisions related to the ASG's activities may become routinized, for instance, exclusion of ASGs from meeting agendas, and the involvement of ASGs in the college's general and special governing activities. When faced with a decision-making situation, GBs will ideally expect governors to input their view using their expertise, experience

and knowledge to make the process rational as much as possible. Avis (2009:644) highlights the difficulties and issues involved when leaders such as governors try to make decisions. In order for leaders to arrive at consensual decisions, the actors may be tempted to downplay any conflicting interests of various stakeholders such as external business governors, college leaders, students and ASGs, moving away from stakeholder model of governance (Bartlett, 2008). By doing so, Avis (op.cit.) argues that decision-makers routinize or technicise the engagement of stakeholders affecting democratic engagement, highlighting a potential issue with routinization of decisions in the behavioural theory of boards as theorised by van Ees et al. (2009). Bush (2007b:402) relying on the arguments put forward by a range of authors lends support to Avis' (2009) argument and underlines the need to avoid such standardised approach to decision-making and adopt a reflexive approach where issues in governance can be thoroughly assessed, discussed and appropriately responded to while considering all stakeholders' input. Perhaps, it is this need that is brought under the spotlight by Gleeson et al. (2010:8-9) using governor interview data suggesting that not enough debate takes place in some aspects of college governance and creative solutions are not sought for due to bureaucratic arrangements, whereby the managers make the decisions leaving no meaningful space for governors' input.

In Earley and Creese's study (2001:330, 334) the majority of school TGS (57%, n=240) did not have confidence in the decision-making process in setting SMT's pay; to some extent this could be linked to 22% of the TGS being excluded from the decision-making process on such matters, perhaps,

through routinized practices such as excluding ASGs from debate when pay-related matters are discussed. Additionally, in the same study, it was revealed that communication of decisions to staff through ASGs was not formalised. The authors recommended that board decisions should be made more accessible to staff, perhaps through ASGs, while it is noted that there are common restrictions in FE governors' codes of conduct against elected governors reporting back to the electorate (Hill, 2012:12).

### Dominant Coalition

Given that FE college boards have a variety of constituencies including academic staff of the college, the concept of the dominant coalition that Argote and Greve (2007) and van Ees et al. (2009:308) discuss are relevant to the current study. According to this idea, organisational goals, priorities and decisions are arrived at through political bargaining amongst the stakeholders, including the dominant coalition - powerful members within the board - within a context of conflicts of interest, power relations and trust. Following Brennan et al.'s (2013) assessment, non-executive members such as ASGs can play a particularly important role in ensuring the managers of a college serve the best interest of the college, whatever it may be. In the current research, an attempt will be made to identify if ASGs are part of the dominant coalition in the corporations of the three outstanding colleges. In addition, power and trust relationships between the ASG and the board at each college will be investigated.

## **2.3. Academic Staff Governor Concepts: Role-Related Activities**

### **2.3.1. The Concept of 'Roles' in Organisations**

As the current study is researching the 'roles' of ASGs, it is important to establish what the term 'role' entails in an organisation. Mullins (2004) describes a 'role' as a concept that is:

needed for analysis of behaviour in organisations. It explains the similar action of different people in similar situations within the organisation and the expectations held by other people. (:59)

In this definition of 'role', the work done by the concerned people in a given context, for example, ASGs at an FE college, shapes the role in question. In addition, the expectations held by other actors such as other governors and college staff are relevant in defining the role. It may be possible to add others' understanding of the given role (alongside their expectations) to the list of factors that influence the role.

Krantz and Maltz (1997) give much insight into what constitutes a role. Using their discussion of the concept of role in an organisation, a role can be seen to have formal aspects defined by the organisation, for example, the position of the ASG at a college. It can also be informal, for example, 'the passive governor', 'the trouble-maker' or 'the enthusiast'. Such informal roles can be identified with Mullins' (2004) reference to the expectations, and the role understanding referred to in the previous paragraph. According to James et al. (2007), the informal roles may be unconsciously assigned to the role holder. The authors go on to distinguish what a formal role such as a college 'manager' or 'governor' entails from what a role holder actually does in

fulfilling the role through the concepts of roles-as-positions and roles-as-practices. They also stress the notion that what is practised by a role holder is not necessarily bound by the role label because in practice, how the role holder performs his/her role depends on what activities or practices that he/she manages to discover, learn or collate together to form a coherent set of associated role-related activities. Roles-as-positions are assigned by the organisation while the associated roles-as-practices come alive through the role holder. What this leads to in terms of its relevance to an ASG is that while the role-as-position, ASG at an FE college, may be a formally assigned role (see Section 1.3:23), the role-as-practice could be viewed as a set of role-related activities (such as 'holding the management accountable' or 'linking teaching/learning/assessment to governance') the specific ASG has discovered and learned and performed. In other words, roles-as-practices encompass what an academic staff governor (ASG) actually does inside the board. Andersson (2012:180) in his PhD thesis researching financial performance in US non-profit organisations concluded that what board members do (roles-as-practices) is a main factor for the organisations' financial performance. Therefore, researching what ASG do in FE college governance could identify aspects related to a college's performance.

Based on James et al. (2007) above it can be argued that while the roles-as-positions are the same for various ASGs, the roles-as-practices may vary from one ASG to the other. One explanation of the variance is rooted in the social identity theory (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Huse et al., 2011), according to which an individual's (for example, an ASG's) actions may be influenced by the various social groups that the ASG identifies with as well as how important the connection between the ASG and the social group is - a claim

supported by LeBlanc's (2014) findings in her qualitative cross-sectional research into the place of teaching and learning professionals in Canadian Higher Education. However, a noteworthy finding from LeBlanc's (ibid.) interviews with the participants is that the activities that the professional role-holders engaged in, shaped their professional identity too.

Hillman et al. (2008:451-452) throw light into how governors' identification with, and influence from stakeholders may be managed to achieve an independent governor role to allow the member to play a full governance role. For instance, an ASG's distancing from the college principal can be achieved by not having direct social links with the principal and/or by strongly identifying with other stakeholders such as students or the general community the college serves. At the same time, an ASG's aspirations to belong to the college, the board, or the staff, may have an effect on the actual roles-of practices by the ASG, an organisational phenomenon highlighted by Ashforth and Mael's (1989:23) reference to an organisational member's "desire to maintain membership".

### **2.3.2. Academic Staff Governor Roles and Activities in Governance**

This section will explore the literature on various concepts relevant to the role of an ASG with a view to understanding any patterns detected in the role of FE college ASGs in the current study. This review will be done using empirical data from literature where available. The themes that emerged from the study of the literature will be presented here under the following five headings:-



- a. Rationale for ASGs' membership in governing boards
- b. Trust, Power and Relationships in Governance
- c. Responsibilities and Specific Activities of Governors and ASGs in Practice and
- d. Understanding / Confusion of ASG Role.

### **a. Rationale for ASGs' presence in GBs**

#### **Rationale: Knowledge and Expertise**

One of the main rationales for including ASGs in a GB may be to do with the ASGs' academic-related knowledge and experience. Consideration of a board governor's specific skills set is one of 12 characteristics of effective GBs of not-for-profit organisations, according to Bartlett (2008:53). These characteristics are based on international corporate governance research conducted by Andringa and Engstrom (2007). In addition, Masunga's (2014:124) research findings identified that "an understanding of the FE education system" is an important consideration for those who consider becoming an FE college governor. To verify such understanding/knowledge on the part of FE teachers, from whom ASGs are selected, one could turn to the relevant data from a number of surveys already conducted by various organisations. Analysis of the educational and professional profiles of the teachers in such data revealed that:

- just under half (49%; n=5632) of FE lecturers had an education qualification equivalent to Level 5 in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) or above and roughly 34% had a qualification equivalent to a university degree or above - combined data from LLUK, (2011a and 2011b).
- 77% of FE lecturers had a recognised teaching qualification – figure common to both UCU's (2013:12) survey of UK's Adult Vocational subject teachers and LSIS' survey of FE teachers in England (LSIS,

2012c:32).

- the mean full-time FE experience of the teachers was 14 years (n=127) (Clow, 2005).
- the annual average hours spent in CPD activities by FE lecturers was 44 (UCU, 2013:37).

From the above data, one can hypothesise that in a given college it is likely that governor candidates amongst teachers may possess relevant professional educational knowledge and experience, and can enrich the pool of expertise within the college governing body. However, research in further afield such as Santiago et al.'s (2008) study into tertiary educational governance in 24 OECD countries (including the UK) imply that, because of the emphasis on external accountability, while boards value governors with academic/educational skills, they also prefer such governors to be external and independent from the institution. In fact, much practical guidance on governance tends to value the external non-executive board members' knowledge acquired elsewhere for their presumed higher "scanning effectiveness" and "different mental models" while at work in governance (Brennan et al., 2013:22). However, ASGs in FE college governance are non-executive but *non-independent* directors because their recent educational knowledge, experience and skills are likely to have been acquired internally at the college in question as staff members. Staff membership in college boards may be more difficult to justify in some contemporary governance models such as policy governance models. As explained by the creator of the model, John Carver, the board "represents the owners and would fail in that stewardship if it allows staff to be on an equal level" (Carver and Carver, 2013:9).

In school governance, despite the esteemed independent knowledge of the external board members in Taylor's (1983:50) research, some TGs expressed frustration with the lack of professional knowledge amongst other governor colleagues, including the external governors in their schools. A similar observation was made in a much more recent single case study at an English FE college by Lee (2000:204). Part of Taylor's (1983) project focussed on 15 teacher governors at 7 schools in the UK and used data from questionnaires completed by 97 teachers (59% response rate); interview data from 15 teacher governors and 7 headteachers from the 7 schools and at least 7 observations of GB meetings. Interestingly, a decade later, New's (1993b) research analysing existing data from a 4 year project by Brehony and Deem (1995) that delved into the GBs at 10 schools in England, concluded that, although in at least 3 out of the 10 schools, teacher governors "are regarded as the resident experts in curriculum matters and their interventions as professional educators are largely deferred to" (New, 1993b:86-87), in the majority of governing bodies, there was evidence that at least a small number of external/lay governors questioned the TGs' competency in management and non-pedagogic matters. Despite this apprehension amongst some of the lay governors, authoritative guidance on English FE and school governance regard academic staff governors' knowledge of the education environment at colleges and schools as an invaluable source (Pounce, 1992:486; Earley and Creese, 2000) for external/lay governors as well as for the institution's strategic direction (Hill, 2009:8; 2012:11).

Earley and Creese's (2001) findings were also reported in a second paper,

where the participant TGs' background information revealed that 64% of the TGs' professional knowledge had been gained from a significant length of experience of 15 years or more in the teaching profession and 45% of the TGs had taught for more than 10 years at the school where they were governors at the time of the study (:328). Nearly three-quarters (74%) were also teachers holding a management post – a finding that was echoed in New's (1993b) study. In contrast with the professional teaching experience, the TGs had only limited governance experience, with only 35% of the TGs having served 5 years or more in the role and only 15% having fulfilled a governance role at another school. The study aimed at seeking TGs' understanding of their role and duties through questionnaires and follow-up telephone interviews. Regarding TGs' knowledge, the authors concluded that TGs do make "a very important contribution to their governing bodies through their knowledge of education and by making governors aware of the views of their staff colleagues" (Earley and Creese, 2001:334). Perhaps, it is the specific teaching and training expertise and skills of the TGs that the authors alluded to as being useful when they also concluded that TGs could contribute to the planning and delivery of whole governing body training sessions. Earley and Creese's (2001) study is a significant study given that 750 TGs from 500 schools were in the target sample with a resulting 32% response rate (n=240) and the data was complemented with follow-up interviews with 30 of the TGs. Despite much searching for relevant literature in the current project, it was not possible to locate a similar set of data about knowledge and experience of FE sectors' ASGs. Most research data such as the AoC's recent survey (AoC, 2014a) into GB composition in the FE sector seem to contain figures for 'Staff Governors' who may or may not be

teachers because BSGs (Business Support Governors) and ASGs are collated together into the ‘Staff Governor’ category. Therefore, the data currently available on Staff Governors’ knowledge/experience may be wide-ranging and cannot be reliably compared to the school TGs’ knowledge data discussed by AoC (2014a).

Although some of the above research articles (Taylor, 1983; New, 1993b; Earley and Creese, 2000; 2001) appear dated, they are amongst a set of rare research projects which focussed specifically into teacher governor roles in England and Wales. In the current project, an attempt will be made to find out if similar findings about ASGs’ knowledge and expertise recur in the 3 Outstanding FE colleges.

### **Rationale: Legitimacy of ASGs’ Role as Professionals**

Governing Bodies of FE colleges often tend to feature governors from a variety of professions, from fields such as engineering, finance and law (AoC, 2014a). This diversity of professions may be beneficial for college boards when attempting to meet the complex purposes of governance and undertake governing activities effectively. A valid point to raise then is, whether FE teachers can assume a legitimate, rightful professional status equal to other professionals in a college GB. The most recent AoC (2014a) survey of governors at 135 GFES in England, shows that amongst the independent/external governors (i.e.:- those excluding, the Principal, staff and students), 11 different professions are represented in GFEC Corporations (Figure 2.1). Remarkably, the overwhelming majority (1315, 75%) are from a non-educational background. It is also worth noting that the

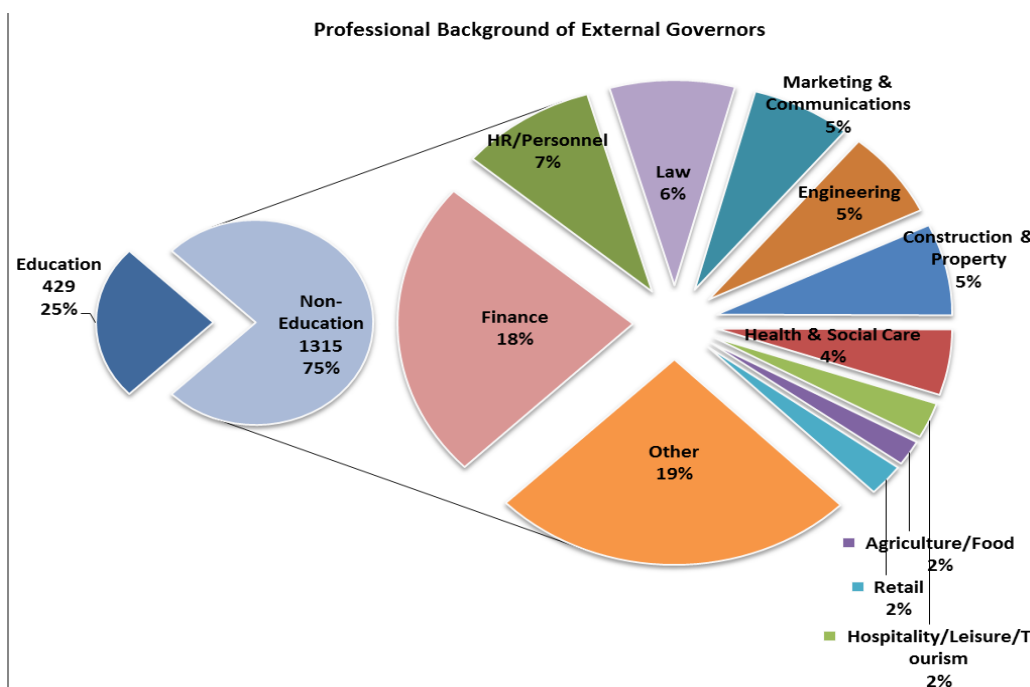


Figure 2.1: External Governors' Professional Backgrounds at GFE Colleges.  
Data from AoC (2014:14); n=1744

survey does not reveal the actual type of expertise / experience of the 25% (429) education professionals; whether their experience is in teaching, managerial or other education-related areas.

To answer the question about the legitimacy of professional status for ASGs in governance, one has to address the professional status of FE teaching as an occupation and explore FE teaching as a profession. According to influential social scientist, Abbott (1988:40), a profession is categorised as such, based on the work involved in the occupation. A professional's work in general terms involves classifying or diagnosing a problem / issue; making an inference and taking action in varying sequential order. In education, for instance, a teacher may assess a student's needs or existing skills through an academic test; make a judgement about the content of an education activity and deliver the content. Using Abbott's (1988) in-depth and comprehensive analysis of professions, Cowton (2008) identifies a set of 6 characteristics that may be found in a profession. An occupation as a

profession may:-

1. have a widely agreed and extensive specialist skill and knowledge base; the latter often of a theoretical or abstract/intellectual nature;
2. involve a long period of training, with formal certification of competence for the purpose of acquiring the requisite skill and knowledge base and, often, a general licence to practise;
3. enjoy autonomy and (professional) judgment, not only the application of rules in the deployment of the knowledge base;
4. dutifully protect the independence and self-regulation and have control over the requisite knowledge base, setting of entry standards and criteria for membership, and responsibility for members' conduct;
5. follow self-enforced ethical codes and;
6. enjoy high levels of personal and financial reward.

ASGs are likely to have a teaching background and on comparing the FE teaching profession to the above characteristics, one could assume that teaching contains specialist skills and a knowledge base, which form part of the various FE teacher-training courses (see Chapter 1:26) that have evolved over time. The requirement to have both subject and teaching knowledge via the prerequisite qualifications (Lingfield, 2012; TALENT, n.d.) led to the formal acknowledgement of the 'dual professionalism' of FE lecturers (ETF, 2014) together with a teaching licence. These changes were state-enforced until 2013, with a particular priority following the Foster Report's recommendations on vocational subject-specific CPD (Foster, 2005:79). Therefore, they constrained the degree to which the teaching profession can be regarded as having Cowton's (2008) concept of professional autonomy and hence, the extent to which FE teaching could be regarded as a profession. This was a concern echoed by Gleeson and James (2007:464) in their analysis of professionalism amongst FE college teachers. However, it is

worth noting that in the current national climate, there appears to be relative downscaling of governmental interference in the policy environment, for example, the removal of state-imposed mandatory teacher qualifications in 2013 (ETF, 2014).

Regarding the status of professional bodies in the FE sector, initiatives currently in operation are Education and Training Foundation (ETF) (see Chapter 1:25) and AoC's efforts in creating a professional code of conduct, which may elevate teaching's status as a profession and impact positively on ASG's professional status. According to Cowton (2008), once an occupation is considered a profession by way of having a professional code of conduct, professionals such as teachers can claim access to public service and demand involvement in order to promote good citizenship, perhaps in places such as college governing boards. Some may argue that such access may be to protect self-interest (ibid.) and Beck and Young (2005:192) acknowledge that many may challenge the idea that teachers or any particular professional should use their knowledge as a basis for claiming a hierarchically more powerful position than other professionals.

Professionals, according to Coffee (2006), ought to play a better *gatekeeping* role. Gatekeeping involves professionals such as accountants and teachers ensuring that management of organisations do not engage in wrongdoing as was the case at Enron in the US in 2006 (ibid.:18), and in FE colleges in the 1990s - Wilmorton, Cricklade, Wirral, Halton and Gwent (Hill, 2001). Professionals may also attempt to build their reputation as they build a portfolio of gatekeeping practice, for instance, teachers could work as



governors at more than one college. Obviously, the issue of limited time will arise here but ASGs should be given considerable time off from work to perform their governance duties, as legislated in the Employment Rights Act (1996). While recognising Coffee's (2006) emphasis on the importance of professionals' gatekeeping role in organisations, Cowton (2008) feels that Coffee (op.cit.) should have elaborated on how the gatekeeping function can be improved. Cowton (op.cit.) suggests effective gatekeeping by professionals could be achieved by the state carefully influencing the professionals through professional bodies (such as ETF and teaching unions) - but not through more prescriptive intrusion. Other practical issues of gatekeeping include when governors gatekeep the work of their employer who pay their wages (Cowton, 2008:19), they may be influenced by the chief executive or the SMT. Hence, in the case of colleges, the ASGs in the GB being employed as college staff may prove to be a concern. This is particularly true in partnership model of governance, where SMTs tend to be present in board meetings (Masunga, 2013).

### **b. Trust, Power and Relationships in Governance**

Trust amongst the actors in governance is essential, even if it is hard to harness (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2012), particularly when different stakeholders (such as ASGs, executives, student governors and lay governors) represent conflicting interests. Salaman (2011) argues that in corporate governance, one of the factors that affect the power relationships within leadership teams is the contemporary leadership style, which may impact on the relationship between senior leaders, governors and academic staff in educational governance. For example, in the governance of HE in OECD countries,

SMTs' discretion in academic staff appointments may be used to curtail internal criticism of SMTs and conversely, the academic staff and student governors may unite to derail SMT decisions (Santiago et al., 2008).

Problems to do with relationships and trust between teacher governors (TGs) and lay governors arise due to some lay governors' limited trust in TGs' capacity to fulfil the governance role (New, 1993; see Chapter 2:50 above). However, drawing from Pounce's (1992) suggestion that TGs may have similar apprehension about lay governors, the mistrust between the two parties can be argued to be mutual. Power relationship between TGs and headteachers was much of the focus in Taylor's (1983) school governance study. The school teachers in the study believed that TGs used their influence in backing the head's or staff's views when presenting agendas to the governing body but were wary of TGs not having enough influence or power when attempting to present alternative views to the heads' views (ibid.). Additionally, the headteachers felt that the TGs' role was supportive of the headteachers and they and the governors trusted the TGs. In much more distant contexts such as school governance in South Africa too, there is evidence of school leaders' influence on academic staff governors proving to be an issue (Bagarette, 2014). Smith (2010) while researching power in school governance also found out that in terms of governor relationships, there are other external relationships that matter. The author observed that governors were valued for their "localness", referring to their social and other connections they had with the local community. Governors with such connections were seen to be influential in school governance.

In terms of power in FE governance, one could turn to Ebbutt and Brown's (1978) paper based on the authors' evidence from separate studies in the 1970s, where the authors concluded that neither the academics in the academic boards nor the GBs had much power - much of the decision-making process was owned by the SMT, as in the model dubbed the rubber-stamp governance model, where board members are used as tool for approving what the managers propose (Schofield, 2009; Schofield et al., 2009). In such models, any ASGs on the board may not be able to play a substantial role in governance. This to some extent contrasts with Masunga's (2014) much more recent finding that in corporations, the Chair and those in the statutory Search and Audit Committees, where ASGs are less likely to be present, are more powerful. Masunga (2014) echoes Ebbutt and Brown's (1978) conclusion that staff governors (who include ASGs) appear to have less power because of their perceived relationships with the college principals (Masunga, 2014). Moreover, this observation strikes a chord with Taylor's (1983) observation (see previous paragraph) that in the schools sector, TGs may work to support the school leaders' agenda.

From the literature on professionalism, status and power of ASGs discussed in this section, it appears that ASGs' status as professionals in governance may be somewhat affected by aspects of the FE college teaching profession that has still some way to go before maturing; namely, the concepts of professional autonomy; having established professional membership bodies; and qualified / licenced professionals in recruitment as discussed on page 54 earlier. In addition, an ASG in college governance may not always enjoy the full confidence of the other governors and may have limited power when

compared to the powerful actors such as college principal, the chair or members of the statutory committees.

### c. Responsibilities and Activities of ASGs in Practice

#### **General Responsibilities and Functions**

In the Education Act (2011), FE college governors' general responsibilities were condensed from the 2007 version of the responsibilities so that all governors were responsible for the determination and review of the educational character and mission and oversight of college; effective and efficient use of resources, the solvency of the institution and the safeguarding of assets (Table 2.1). However, as of 2012 many colleges appeared to continue to use the 2007 version of the responsibilities due to the measured


<b>Governor Responsibilities in Instrument and Articles of Government (2007)</b>		<b>Education Act (2011)</b>
determination and review of the educational character and mission and the oversight of the college activities	Condensed to 	determination & review of educational character & mission & oversight of college
approving of quality strategy		Effective/efficient use of resources, solvency of institution & safeguarding assets
effective & efficient use & safeguarding of resources, solvency of college;		
approving annual finances;		
appointment, grading, suspension, dismissal of SMT & other staff;		
approving pay/conditions of SMT & other staff		

Table 2.1: FE College Governors' General Responsibilities as of 2007 and the Amendments in 2011

adaptation of the changes (Hill et al., 2012). In an effort to address the uncertainty of governance purpose in the English FE system (Schofield et al., 2009; Gleeson et al., 2010; Masunga, 2013), following consultations, AoC (2013:37) in its report on excellence of practice in governance reiterated the responsibilities in the 2011 Education Act (Table 2.1) but also added a further responsibility for an FE college board of supporting “the needs of the

community(s) it serves". Identification of such value-based responsibilities concurs with Stoker's (2004:6) localised governance or 'localism' approach, which strongly advocates colleges' direct interaction with local stakeholders (local community, staff and students) through "reason-giving, questioning and continuous exchange between the provider and the relevant public." However, issues of how this is practised may exist as claimed in Lea's (2005) analytical essay that accountability in the FE sector appears to be only for local markets, businesses and the state but not for other local parties such as students, parents and staff, resulting in an imbalance in how providers perform accountability. The UK government has tried to address this issue at policy level by emphasising that funding bodies must ensure that a college's public funding satisfies the needs of local learners and by expecting Ofsted to judge how well a college meets local learning and skills needs (BIS, 2013:13). In addition, in a study of school governance consisting of 43 interviews with school stakeholders; a survey of 5000 school governors and views of 42 headteachers, Balarin et al., (2008:61) noted that boards where governors pay attention to serving the local community tend to be more effective than those who do not. Arguably, AoC's (2013) identification of the college governors' general responsibilities has relieved some pressure in clearing the uncertainty in the sector as a whole.

Nevertheless, Hill et al. (2012) survey (n=119 colleges) found inconsistent practice in defining the responsibilities of college governors: while 80% or more colleges had their corporation chairs' and principals' responsibilities defined, only 62% had the roles defined for other governors such as ASGs. Even where governance purpose and responsibilities were clear, for some

governors in the earlier Gleeson et al.'s (2010) case study of 6 FE colleges in England, the real issue in FE governance was, as also concurred by Cornforth and Edwards (1999), how to go about putting the responsibilities into practice.

Research prior to 2011, had noted college governors' frustrations about the perceived limitations of their roles (Gleeson et al., 2010:8) and a lack of agreement about what a governor role constitutes despite the specified responsibilities in the statute (Schofield et al., 2009:20; Masunga, 2014:201). In Gleeson et al. (2010), the authors expound using interview data that "governors from diverse backgrounds have different priorities, understandings and expectations of their role", a view that resonates with Cornforth and Edwards' (1998) conclusion that board member contributions depend on factors such as:

the way the organisation is regulated; the history and culture of the organisation; the way board members are chosen; board members' skills and experience; the relationship with senior managers and the way the governance function is managed.(:75)

These views align with the theory that organisational roles can be understood in terms of 'roles-as-practices', in addition to 'roles-as-position' (Andersson, 2012; see earlier discussion on page 46), which is also an approach used by James et al. (2012) in their study of school board chairs.

Cornforth and Edwards' (1998) main aim was to research the relationship between boards and managers and their ability to perform their roles and responsibilities, whether strategic or financial, in public and non-profit organisations. They observed that amongst the four boards in their study, the college board had developed its strategic role the most. These strategic and

accountability responsibilities of the governors were partly performed by small strategic groups of senior board members and managers, where ASGs were not part of the senior members (Cornforth and Edwards, 1998). This approach suggests that it is worthwhile investigating if in some colleges ASGs were excluded from the power centre of the board and if so, how this affects their role in FE college GBs.

### **Specific Governance Responsibilities and Activities**

The concepts reviewed in this sub-section will support the current author's approach in studying *governing* activities as described earlier (Section 2.2:39). They relate to the specific activities governors including ASGs may involve in, in an FE college board. Due to the limited literature in FE Governance, literature from non-FE will be reviewed too.

#### **Contributions in Governing Board Meetings**

In New's (1993a) study into teacher voice in school governance, the authors observed that TGs' contributions in meetings were limited. This might have been because TGs felt inhibited in the presence of the headteacher. In fact, 58 TGs (24%) in Earley and Creese's (2001:334) study felt inhibited by the presence of the headteacher. The instances where TGs contributed in the meetings in New's (1993a:73-75) study, were categorised into five types:-

1. the 'good sense' contribution, not based on any specialist knowledge
2. the providing of 'professional information'
3. offering personal opinions
4. the presentation of staff viewpoint based upon soundings in the staffroom
5. the direct raising of issues at the request of their teacher colleagues

Based on activities 4 and 5, Earley and Creese (2001:326) hypothesised that TGs may be interested only in matters of direct concerns to teachers, justifying a restricted professional model of TGs' participation in board meetings. This hypothesis was supported in Lee's (2000:208-209) interviews with ASGs at 4 colleges in the Midlands, where ASGs intended to contribute only to GB discussions which were likely to impact on college staff. At times, Lee (2000) noted that the ASGs were seen to be observers that had to report back to teacher colleagues. The restricted professional model is further highlighted by Earley and Creese's (2001) finding that 53 (22%) of TGs felt they were often excluded from the discussion of certain issues (for example, personnel, finance and salary). Such exclusion is evident in college GBs too: Lee (2000) observed that in 3 GB meetings, staff governors (including ASGs) were asked to leave the meetings.

Earlier in this literature review, it was noted that ASGs may be found to support headteachers' positions (see 2.3.2.b:57). This raises the issue of the extent ASGs may challenge the SMT in GB meetings. According to James et al. (2012) both supporting and challenging the management are aspects of good governance. (Alimo-Metcalfe, 2012), while discussing clinicians' (the medical profession's equivalent of academic staff) and other staff's engagement in NHS governance, identified 'constructive challenge' as an important board function in companies that have a culture of empowerment, engagement and innovation. However, governors may often opt to back the Chief Executive and the SMT rather than provide the necessary constructive challenge because they may be 'members of a peer group' with the SMT and



therefore may not ‘ask questions inside or outside board meetings’ (Mace, 1973:26). In James et al.’s (2012) study, while 306 (30%) chairs of school GBs in England saw supporting the headteacher as a major governor responsibility, challenging was seen as important by only 56 (5.6%) of chairs. On the other hand, Masunga (2014:195) found that the majority of the governors regarded “checks and balances that challenge college leadership” as a high priority role activity in college improvement (see educational improvement in Earley and Creese, 2001; Sassoon, 2001; Ofsted, 2013:19; Wilkins, 2014:14), and there is further evidence that ASGs may not hesitate to challenge the status quo (Lee, 2000:263-264). Yet again, in practice Schofield et al. (2009:25) acknowledge that providing support to the executive may be preferred by some college governors when compared with challenging management proposals, thus affecting the quality of governance. The empirical evidence from schools and FE colleges suggest that offering constructive challenge may be an area of concern in both school and FE college governance in England, given that a “vibrant ethos of challenge, self-criticism and self-improvement” is a “critical success factor for effective governance” (Matthews et al., 2011:3). The effectiveness here may be attributed to the disciplinary effect on executives and the improved standard of SMT proposals to the board. It is a product of the expectation that non-executive governors such as ASGs scrutinise SMT’s proposals (Hill and James, 2013:113) presented at board meetings.

#### ASGs in Governance Initiatives, Assignments and Projects

Earley and Creese’s (2000) findings showed that TGs were positive about governors who were involved with various school activities. In their

conclusion, the authors suggested that TGs could do more towards forming partnerships between governors and staff; encouraging external governors to visit the school and planning such visits. Interestingly, the authors established that only 12 (5%) of TGs visited their schools regularly as governors (:329).

In the UK FE governance, 'link governor' (Gleeson et al., 2009) roles are sometimes established to assist with a college's governance function. Gannon (2014b:17), in 157 Group's research report presenting data derived from a workshop of 40 participants (governors, chairs, principals and clerks) from 20 British FE colleges, defined a 'link governor' as a "dispassionate but interested individual" linked to a particular curriculum area under 'intensive care' because of its underperformance. Such a governor, according to Gannon (2014), may have limited knowledge of the curriculum area or of TLA but can help the college staff to see things from a different perspective. Ofsted (2012a) following a survey of 18 UK FE institutions (including 10 GFE colleges) reported that improving colleges may have link governors attached to all curriculum areas of the colleges. Furthermore, in its Outstanding governance example, Ofsted (2011) observed that Barnsley College's link governors made regular visits to the college every year focussing on a single strategic priority and provided the board with written feedback. Nevertheless, not all colleges that have link governors are Outstanding colleges as AoC (2013) noted in its FE governance review that at least one college that was Graded 4 had a link governor but only for monitoring the college's safeguarding aspect.

In terms of link governors working with managers, Lambert (2011:138-140) suggests that compared to schools, it is unlikely that FE middle managers would engage with their governors at all. This suggestion is somewhat weakened by the evidence of 'link governors' working in partnership with college managers reported by Cornforth and Edwards (1998:24) to address specific issues and two instances where governors played a powerful advisory role both in and out of GB meetings when the college was faced with difficult staffing and legal circumstances (Lee, 2000:187). Finally, in relation to college governors such as ASGs acting as links, Cornforth and Edwards (Cornforth and Edwards, 1998:75-77) noted that not only can governors partner with college staff but also could act as links with other stakeholders and the public. Hence, the authors recommended that governors play a crucial link role between governance, staff, students and other service users.

#### ASGs in Governance Standing Committees

A typical English college has five standing committees to support the corporation's activities (AoC, 2014a); a standing committee is "formed with a view to having a continued existence to do assigned work on an ongoing basis" (ibid.:28). By law, English FE colleges are required to have an audit committee but most colleges have several other committees such as the standards / curriculum / quality committee and the governance / search committees (AoC, 2014a).

Given that ASGs may contribute to governance in accordance with Earley and Creese's (2001) 'restricted professional model' (:63, above), ASGs may

have an interest in working in standards / curriculum / quality committees (SCs) where education quality assurance matters are discussed. In the AoC 2013 (AoC, 2014b:17) survey, 133 (76%) colleges featured this committee. Furthermore, educational governance researchers, Santiago, et al (2008) note that in order to enhance efficiency of the quality assurance process, it is important to secure a sense of ownership of the process amongst academics as they are the ones who deliver the education service. It is envisaged that by involving ASGs in SCs, such ownership may be facilitated. Once an ASG becomes an SC governor, they will have to fulfil the committee's responsibilities which may include overseeing the college's educational character; monitoring quality of TLA and organisational outcomes (Masunga, 2014:178). According to Masunga's (ibid.) case studies at 6 English colleges involving 6 principals and 14 SC governors, these responsibilities may be accomplished through activities such as ensuring the right courses are offered for the target population, reading of documents, checking policies, looking at data objectively, asking relevant questions, providing comments and feedback (ibid.:179-180). Through analysis of the interview data, the writer concluded that SC governors' roles in English FE colleges needed a review and a new reconceptualization. If such a reconceptualization of SC governor roles were to take place, the outcomes of the review would be pertinent to the role of an ASG, assuming ASGs are likely to be members of Standards Committees at colleges.

The other important governance committee many FE colleges have is the governance/search committee. This committee is relevant to the idea of the dominant coalition discussed earlier as the committee's members may be

part of a GB's power brokers (see 2.3.2.b:58). Even though in the current legal regulations, there is no requirement for colleges to have this committee, the AoC survey revealed that 174 (95%) of colleges have this committee (AoC, 2014a:17). The committee's main responsibility is offering advice to the board on the (re)appointment of members of the board other than the principal and elected members. In some corporations, the Search Committee is responsible for the succession planning for GB positions such as chairs and vice-chairs of the board and committees. In these situations, ASGs' membership in the search committee equates to raising power and status within the board, which may mean the power issues discussed earlier in this review (Section 2.3.2.b) may come into play.

#### The Minimalist, the Watchdog and the Communication Link

Interesting analogies of TG roles were made, in terms of TG roles in school governance by Early and Creese (2001:25). They hypothesized that the overarching TG role was commonly thought to be about presenting the views of the school teachers as accurately and as reasonably as possible. In the authors' previous work (Earley and Creese, 2000), drawing on research conducted by New (1993a), they identified a much more diverse and a multiple-perspective of the role. They identified three general conceptualizations of the TG role, where the TG acted as the 'minimalist', the 'watchdog' or the 'communication link'. Such 'informal' labelling of roles share the conceptual approach used by Krantz and Maltz (1997), Mullins (2004) and also by James et al. (2007) in their study of school leadership systems. The three concepts were defined by Early and Creese (2001:332-333) as follows:-

1. the minimalist: unwillingly recruited to the GB because no other teacher has shown an interest; happy to present staff viewpoints to the board and report back to them informally on the events of the GB meetings; potentially without governor training; lacks confidence and uncertain about the governor role; has relatively limited power status and makes little contribution to the GB that is dominated by the headteacher.
2. the watchdog: has little trust in the board; is cynical about the board's intentions and prioritises teachers' interests; is active in teaching union matters in the teaching staffroom; speaks out in the board even if it means challenging the headteacher.
3. the communication link: sees the TG role mainly as the link between governors and staff but with no other major responsibilities; happy to present staff viewpoints to the board and report back to them informally on the events of the GB meetings.

In Early and Creese's (ibid.) study, which researched 240 school TGs, 17% of TGs were minimalists; 42% were watchdogs and 23% were communication links (:332-333). From the above descriptions of the three concepts, on the whole, the ASG role may relate to the ideas of power as in the case of the 'minimalist'; and trust and representing staff interests as in the 'watchdog' role and the 'communication link' profiles respectively. A likely criticism of the conceptualisation is that all the analogies appear to be rather negative perspectives of an ASG role. In the current study, these perceptions of the role, although conceived in school governance, will be adapted in Chapter 5 in the conceptualisation of the role of ASGs in FE college boards.

#### **d. Understanding / Confusion of ASG Role**

There are a number of studies that have revealed the confusion of ASG roles as a significant barrier faced by the governors in schools (Taylor, 1983:69;

Earley and Creese, 2001:331). In Earley and Creese's study the TGs (48%; n=240) identified the confusion to be amongst the teaching staff too. This is significant given that understanding the role is a characteristic of effective boards and good governance (Bartlett, 2008; LSIS, 2012b).

Cornforth and Edwards' (1998:54) case study of public organisations, which included an FE college, found a general lack of clarity about the specific board roles in their case studies. Two years later Lee (2000:263) noted "an ambiguity surrounding the role of staff members" in college governance, where one of the board clerks believed, in contrast with the ASGs' beliefs, that ASGs should not represent staff. However, a noteworthy point from this study was that ambiguity was more to do with specific governor roles rather than the general governance roles of strategy. Another interesting observation of the study was that even though the governors appeared to show understanding of the role, observations of board meetings showed that:

[T]here was a significant difference between what governors thought they ought to be doing; what some of them actually said quite vociferously that they were doing; and in the actual reality as observed over three consecutive meetings (Lee, 2000:335)

It has to be said that while the interview data in the project came from the 4 colleges, the board observations were 3 observations at only one of the colleges. Further reports of confusion over ASG roles have been published by McNay (2002) and IVR (2006:2) in FE and HE colleges respectively. McNay (2002) attributed the confusion to staff unions' influence and their insistence that ASGs should act as delegates of staff. The understanding of the strategic role by governors may improve into the latter part of their governorship tenure, as observed by Masunga (2014:130) in his case study of FE colleges in England.

There are a number of information resources that may help to tackle the issue of ASG role confusion. For instance, Hill (2012) advises that ASGs should participate in the collective responsibility of accomplishing the core functions stated in the college's instrument of governance (see page 59, above) using ASGs' knowledge of the college and its operational context. According to the authors, as already noted earlier in this review in the discussion about governance versus management (see Section 2.1.2), "accounting for how something works or doesn't work in college" (Hill, 2012:11) is not a governing activity and should consult the clerk when in doubt of the role. If boards follow LSIS' (2012a) advice that they should consult the general staff (as opposed to relying on the ASG) for staff perspectives on the college matters, then the pressure on ASGs to represent teachers mentioned above may not arise. However, such a limited role for ASGs may go against those who advocate deliberative democratic governance (Hopkins, 2014) in FE colleges.

#### **e. Overall Contribution of ASGs to Governance**

The overall impression of the role played by ASGs in governance, as depicted by available research, is that there is much room for the role's development. In school governance, Earley and Creese (2001:334) concluded that the role is underdeveloped and the TGs need more confidence; need encouragement to play a fuller role and the role needs to be understood by all concerned. In FE governance, there is evidence that ASGs see the importance of the role but the suspicion is that some college principals and other governors may perceive the role as rather insignificant



and the ASGs' contribution as of little value as highlighted by Lee (2000:264-266). Chapman et al. (2009:17) raised the concern that governors (including ASGs) do not challenge the principals. These issues in FE governance may be addressed by the actions suggested by Earley and Creese (2001) for schools as described above.

A much more recent multi-sited case study at 9 schools by Wilkins (2014) stated that some ASGs/TGs may find it difficult to play a role of challenging the senior governors because of the ASGs' affiliation with the SMT and ASGs may find it difficult to make any meaningful contribution because decisions appear to be already made. The former finding is in congruent with the findings by Taylor (1983) in schools and Masunga (2014) in FE as described in the discussion on power in governance (Section 3.2.2 above).

Despite the limited ASG role observed by some researchers, AoC (2013:23) suggests that staff governors should play a full role in FE GBs. They are a vital resource as their expertise, experience and knowledge can be used in a variety of governing activities such as drafting college policies and particularly helping all governors understand the curriculum and see how or if the GB decisions improve the position of the concerned college. There may be factors, as already underlined that affect the overall contribution of ASGs, for example, the staffing / HR context of the college (Schofield et al., 2009:18).

## **2.4. Governance at Outstanding Colleges**

Ofsted regards governance as a critical factor if a college is to become an excellent FE college (BIS, 2013:19). Currently, governance is not specifically graded by Ofsted but considered under the grading of a given college's leadership and management (LM) aspect.

In terms of governance at Outstanding colleges, there is some literature describing governance trends and practice associated with outstanding colleges. Governors at such colleges are reported to have a wide range of expertise in education and business; good knowledge about the college; are generous with the amount of time they devote and are actively involved with college life (Gannon, 2014a). Thus, they display strong commitment to the college's success and receive appropriate information, which they analyse and challenge managers thoroughly for the betterment of the college's performance (Ofsted, 2012a).

In addition, in Outstanding colleges the governors are observed to play a distinct role in strategic planning (Lee, 2000:167), but also show a good understanding of all of their responsibilities and enjoy a healthy relationship between managers to ensure accountability and success (Ofsted, 2012a:20). All board members go through a rigorous annual performance review; regular training in matters such as outstanding teaching/learning and equality and diversity (Gannon, 2014a) and the college curriculum areas have designated link governors who focus on targets and progress (Ofsted, 2012a:21). Other governing-related activities observed include involvement in short observations of teaching/learning lessons in action (learning walks).

## **2.5. Conclusion**

This chapter began by highlighting the dearth of research into FE governance. Based on the literature review conducted, it has been possible to establish an overall understanding of the nature of governor roles. It was possible to grasp details such as the intricate behavioural and relational elements of governor roles, for example governance structures, ASGs' possible governing activities; the related concepts of status and power of ASG roles in educational governance; the value of ASGs' knowledge and experience; and features of governance at outstanding colleges. This understanding contributed to the research questions (see Chapter 1:20) focusing on the ASG roles and related activities.

## Chapter 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1. Introduction and the Research Questions

The purpose of the current case study is to explore ASG roles at three GFE colleges in England. In the most recent two inspections by Ofsted, all three colleges, X, Y and Z were qualified as Outstanding (Grade 1). The study focussed on answering the main research question, which is:

- What are the ASG roles at Outstanding General Further Education colleges in England?

In addition, four specific sub-research questions have been formulated and they are:

1. What are an ASG's general governance activities in the governance of 3 Outstanding colleges?
2. What are the ASG role-specific governance activities in the governance of 3 Outstanding colleges?
3. What is the power and professional status of ASGs as governors at the 3 colleges?
4. What are the issues around the understanding of ASGs' role in the governance of the 3 colleges?

Earlier in Chapter 1, the following 7 theoretical orientations about ASG roles were presented:-

1. general, statutory roles relevant to all FE Governors defined in FE governance instrument 2007 (2007)
2. responding to local community's needs (general role relevant to all FE governors; from Stoker, 2004; Schofield et al., 2009; Avis, 2009)
3. challenging SMT's ideas (general, relevant to all FE governors; from Schofield et al., 2009; Sodiq, 2012)
4. supporting SMT's ideas (general, relevant to all FE governors; from Schofield et al., 2009; Sodiq, 2012)

5. contributions related to professional information - teaching/learning/assessment (TLA) expertise, experience and knowledge (specific to ASGs; adapted from Earley and Creese, 2001)
6. presentation of general teachers' views (specific to ASGs; adapted from Earley and Creese, 2001)
7. linking governance and TLA (specific to ASGs; from Gleeson et al., 2010 and Sodiq, 2012)

Finally, three concepts without pre-determined theories were specified for exploration:

1. ASG's power-relations within the college GBs (using studies into concepts of power in institutions by Ebbutt and Brown, 1978; Taylor, 1983; Pounce, 1992; New, 1993b; Santiago et al., 2008; Smith, 2010; Salaman, 2011; Klijn and Koppenjan, 2012; Masunga, 2014).
2. ASGs' roles as professionals (using concepts in Taylor, 1983; Earley and Creese, 2001; Cowton, 2008; AoC, 2014a; LeBlanc, 2014)
3. understanding or confusion of ASG roles (Taylor, 1983; Cornforth and Edwards, 1998; Lee, 2000; Earley and Creese, 2001; McNay, 2002; IVR, 2006; Bartlett, 2008; LSIS, 2012b).

### **3.2. Preferred Ontology and Epistemology**

In order to determine the ontological aspects (Silverman, 2005:97-98) of the study, the author first identified some of the case study concepts (Yin, 2009:41) that might need exploring. These concepts have been integrated into Table 3.1 below, which is adopted from Mason (2002:15). The header row in the table shows the authors' categorisation of general ontological entities with some examples from Mason (2002) in the first row. Ontology is concerned with knowledge types (Snape and Spencer, 2003) and hence, the concepts in the table relates to five types of knowledge. For instance, Mason's (op.cit.) ontological concept of role 'understanding' in the current

Concept Sources	Mental faculties	Natural phenomena	Experiences	People and Relations	Arrangements
Mason (2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ understandings</li> <li>➤ attitudes</li> <li>➤ beliefs</li> <li>➤ morality</li> <li>➤ thoughts</li> <li>feelings</li> <li>➤ emotions</li> <li>➤ reflections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ actions</li> <li>➤ reactions</li> <li>➤ behaviours</li> <li>➤ events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ multiple realities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ people</li> <li>➤ identities</li> <li>➤ interactions</li> <li>➤ relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ institutions</li> <li>➤ structures</li> <li>➤ organisation</li> <li>➤ rules</li> <li>➤ records</li> <li>➤ documentation</li> </ul>
Current case study's focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ ASGs' understanding of the role</li> <li>➤ other governors' understanding of ASG role</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ ASG roles &amp; activities</li> <li>➤ general governor roles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ ASGs' accounts</li> <li>➤ non-ASGs' accounts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ ASGs;</li> <li>➤ non-ASGs</li> <li>➤ ASGs' relations with other governors</li> <li>➤ power</li> <li>➤ status</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ governance instrument;</li> <li>➤ governing bodies (GBs);</li> <li>➤ Ofsted &amp; governance guidelines</li> <li>➤ GB meetings</li> <li>➤ Agendas &amp; Meeting Minutes</li> </ul>

Table 3.1: Ontological Concepts in ASG Roles in FE College Governance; adapted from Mason (2002:15)

study, are examples of the knowledge category, 'mental faculties' (column 1). The second row, highlighted in blue, shows the rest of the ontological concepts, in addition to understanding of the role, relevant to the current study: ASGs' roles/activities (natural phenomena, column 2); ASGs' accounts (experience, column 3), relations, power and status (people and relations, column 4) and in column 5 (arrangements), governance legal instrument, governance guidance and meeting documents.

The researcher considered the understanding of the ASG roles as an important aspect of knowledge in governance roles because roles in organisations are understood and practised by the role-takers. The concept of how an ASG role is understood is important in a case study of ASG roles and such understanding can be analysed through the interpretation of governors' accounts (verbal or written), for instance, in interviews and responses to semi-structured questionnaires. Such assumptions about how knowledge can be discovered, known as the epistemological assumptions

(Scott and Usher, 2002) of research enquiry, can affect decisions about case study designs.

The concept of roles can be interpreted as the expected and the actual roles ASGs play, and the activities they engage in, in governance. This interpretation is in line with the behavioural theory of boards (van Ees et al., 2009) and the concept of organisational roles (Krantz and Maltz, 1997; Mullins, 2004; James et al., 2007) as discussed in Section 2.2.1 and 2.3.1 respectively. In order to explore ASGs' understanding of their roles, the researcher sees it pertinent to investigate how this understanding is translated into practice in the form of activities such as participation in governance meetings and interactions with other governors. The origin of ASGs' understanding of their roles can be argued to be linked to the formal structure of the roles as enshrined in documents such as governance legal instruments, governance standing orders and in publicly available guidance. Such documents are again seen to be interpreted by ASGs in the process of translating them into the roles.

With a reliance on interpretive accounts from governors as potential sources of knowledge, about experiences and reality; and the interpretation of public descriptions of ASG roles, the epistemological basis (Silverman, 2005) of this study may be regarded as mainly interpretivist (Mason, 2002) rooted in the experiential epistemology (Reicher, 2000). In interpretivist research, phenomena such as ASG roles, behaviour and activities may be explored in terms of the way the role is experienced and understood by a number of relevant subjects (Morrison, 2007), for instance ASGs as well as other

governors in the current study. However, critics based in the social constructionist epistemology (Madill et al., 2000) may argue that what an interpretivist enquiry presents through analysis of the subject's language may not reflect the pure reality and may be affected by the way the researcher engages with subjects (Schwandt, 1994), for instance in obtaining ASGs' verbal accounts of their roles. Even though the current researcher has chosen a mainly interpretive approach of enquiry, others may opt for the alternative mainly positivist approaches, particularly if the aim was to generalise the findings to a wider population outside the case contexts. Such mainly positivist studies may separate research focus (ASGs in colleges) and the relevant contexts (Mishler, 1979) from the researched subjects and contexts may not be fully considered to keep wider generalisations possible. Unlike such studies, the current case study is interested in producing in-depth knowledge about ASG studies while considering the contexts of the three colleges fully, hence the choice of the mainly interpretivist path based on a contextual constructionist approach (Madill et al., 2000) of enquiry.

However, besides the interpretivist aspects of the current study, as demonstrated in the next section below, there will be some elements that may be seen as offering some positivist (Morrison, 2007) perspectives in this study, for example, the focus on patterns in the understanding of ASG roles and non-participant observing (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994) of ASG activities across the colleges. It is hoped that, as found in some combined paradigm research (Roth and Mehta, 2002), this study's mainly interpretive approach combined with features of positivism would bring about a much fuller understanding of ASG roles than a solely interpretivist perspective.



### 3.3. The Research Design

The current study is a holistic multi-case exploratory (Yin, 2009:50-52) study focusing on three cases of colleges. The study is described as a case-study because it was a study conducted with the intention of gaining an in-depth understanding of the cases (the ASGs at the 3 colleges) in real-world settings (Bromley, 1986). The unit of analysis (Yin, 2009:27) in the study is the ASG roles in the three colleges, X, Y, and Z within their specific college and governance contexts. In addition, the case can also be viewed as, using Bassey's (2007) terms, a "picture drawing" case study trying to depict a picture of the participating governors' understanding of ASG roles at the three Outstanding colleges. The idea of context is vital to any case study, and how the context interacts with a particular phenomenon (for instance, ASG roles in the current study) is illustrated by Yin and Davis (2007). They define a case study as one that attempts to:

understand a real-life phenomenon in depth, but such understanding encompassed important contextual conditions—because they were highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study (2007:18)

Each of the three college's contexts was considered as a different case within which the unit of analysis - the ASG role - was explored. The contextualised findings about the ASG roles and understanding of the roles in each college were collated into the overall findings, and analytic generalisations (Yin, 2009; 2011) of ASG-role related concepts were used to see if the similar conclusions about the target concepts were drawn across the 3 colleges, given that all colleges had Outstanding status in their most recent two Ofsted Inspections. This approach allowed the researcher to study

ASG roles, without losing focus of the crucial governance contexts of the three colleges.

The current study's aim was not about generalising ASG roles from the current study to other GFE colleges in England. In fact, what is more important than theory validation in a case study such as this is the "exemplary knowledge" (Thomas, 2011:33) it may offer through the study's theoretical concepts and exploratory themes (Section 3.1:75-76) in understanding the role of ASGs within the contexts of the 3 colleges. The contributions from the study depended more on the "phronesis" (Thomas, *ibid.*) or the explanation and the interpretation offered by the researcher through the cases and the governors; and the resulting understanding of ASG roles. This stance regarding generalisation is also in line with Ritchie and Lewis' (2003) approach to using qualitative studies to generate new theories, hypothesis and further understanding of phenomena, for instance, ASG roles in GFE colleges in England.

There are several reasons why a case study design was considered in this project. The approach allowed the researcher to obtain data related to the range of ontological concepts, ASG roles and understanding of the roles (see Table 3.1:77) specified in the research questions (Bassey, 2007:149-150). The method also leads to the convergence of data (Yin, 2009:18) from a variety of sources (ASGs, other governors, governing board meetings, documentation), thus a combined method is possible. A combined method within a case study facilitates the triangulation of the study, and hence, increases the reliability of the study, an important element in experiential /

realist approach to research (Madill et al., 2000). Such a method allows the formulation of substantive theories (Silverman, 2005:105) and may lead to understanding of ASG roles in GFE colleges in England. Finally, although limited in number, there are related governance studies in England that have used case studies based on combined methods, for example, Chapman et al. (2009), Gleeson et al. (2010), Schofield et al. (2009), and Masunga (2014) on FE college governance. Therefore, case study design is seen as an appropriate approach for the current study.

### **Selection of the Case Study Colleges and Access**

The selection of the cases started with identifying potential GFE colleges from Ofsted's datasheets, labelled 'Outstanding Providers List, 1993/94-2011/12' (Ofsted, 2012b). It was decided to choose a minimum of two GFECs that had received at least two successive Grade 1s in the most recent Ofsted inspections. The decision to focus on more than one case study college was made in order to obtain sufficient data enough to provide insight into ASG roles. Such evidence from multiple cases is "often considered more compelling and more "robust" (Yin, 2009:53). Despite this advantage, the current researcher was aware that in comparison to a single-case study, a multiple-case study would "require extensive resources and time" (ibid.) for someone in his position with full-time work and family commitments.

In order to establish contact with clerks and chairs of corporations, the researcher attended governance training and networking events organised by the Learning and Skills Improvement Services (LSIS), one of the main

training providers for college-based experts and the Association of Colleges (AoC), a representative body for colleges. This is a much more formal method than relying on personal contacts that may “skew data due to biased/easier access to the contacts' affiliates” (Chapman et al., 2009:12). Chapman et al (ibid.) suggest that such networking may also help the researcher to understand the processes of governance better. This is a particularly relevant point given that the researcher himself was not involved in the governance of the colleges. Therefore, in the study, he was an outsider researcher in the insider/outsider continuum given the limited familiarity between the subjects and the researcher, bearing in mind that as the research progressed the familiarity increased and hence, the insiderness of the researcher (Mercer, 2007).

However, after attending the first two networking sessions, no successful contacts with potential college gatekeepers were made because many attendees of such events were governors, not clerks. In addition, the colleges represented in the events did not fulfil the criteria of having had recent Outstanding Grade 1 inspections. Consequently, the author turned to another formal method: searching Ofsted's (Ofsted, 2012b) records of Outstanding GFE colleges in England. From these records, 16 potential GFECs colleges were identified. The initial contact was made with the colleges in June-July 2013 through e-mail addresses of clerks obtained from college websites and the general college reception telephone numbers. The e-mails (see Appendix A) were requests of “official permission” from the clerks - the “appropriate official[s]” (Silverman, 2005:62; Cohen et al., 2007:55) - for the colleges' participation in the research. The e-mails sent to each college introduced the

researcher and contained consent-specific information (Gregory, 2003) such as:

- a leaflet describing the research (see Appendix B) and brief ethical considerations
- a link to the researcher's online profile on the University of Warwick's website
- names of supervisors, who may have access to anonymised data (Fogelman and Comber, 2007) collected
- the reason why the college had been chosen for the research
- the benefits to the FE sector; and to the college by way of anonymised interim reports of the project commenting on the college's governance
- details of the research methods involved; the time required of the participant governors and finally, a request for a phone conversation to discuss the research.

Following the e-mail communication, telephone conversations were held with the corporations' clerks and/or the college principals, where appropriate, to provide a verbal overview of the project for the colleges to consider. Within 3-4 weeks, the following results were received regarding the colleges' participation:

- 4 colleges declined to participate due to time constraints
- 3 colleges accepted to take part in the research
- 9 colleges did not reply to the request

Hence, three colleges were set as the number of case studies.

### **Ethical Design, Risks and Ethical Approval**

The project followed ethical guidelines (BERA, 2011) in several ways. Firstly, the information in the research information leaflet (see previous sub-section and Appendix B) presented to the colleges and participants would increase the internal validity (Bush, 2007a:98) of the project and assured the

participants that research ethics were adhered to. Secondly, presentations/briefings delivered to the board by the researcher between October and December 2013 ensured that the governors had enough knowledge about the project before they decided to take part, thus paving the way for informed consent (Cohen et al., 2007:52). Furthermore, a decision had been made to allocate alphabetical letters, X, Y and Z to the colleges and codes to the participants for use in all research outputs and this would contribute to the anonymity of the respondents.

At the design stage, it was recognised that there would be different stages of participants' informed consent (Lindsay, 2010:18) because the study relied upon different data collection stages (questionnaires, interviews and meeting observations). Hence, consent was sought before observed meetings and interviews via governors' signatures before each data collection method. Informed consent also means an absence of coercion as consent should be voluntary, arising from participants' right to self-determination.

Incentives to boost questionnaire responses or to show appreciation for participant's time is acceptable (ESRC, 2012:21, 29, 50) in research. Therefore, in the pilot and the main study, it was appropriate to offer such incentives, for example, book tokens for governors on completion of questionnaires or gift cards for their interview time. However, the condition is that such incentives should not mount to coercion or affect governors' responses in the studies (ESRC, 2012:29). Nevertheless, after discussion with the supervisor, a decision was made not to use such incentives as a precaution against unexpected ethical complications.

Another issue of ethics and access considered was whether the colleges' decision to participate might be affected in a study that requested access to data from confidential and sensitive governance proceedings for public consumption. There may be researchers who would argue that, in such situations, partially-informed consent from participants may be justified. Plummer (1983) and Kimmel (1988), both cited in Cohen et al., (2007:6), address this subject of "deception" in research and suggest that not all "deception" is wrong, especially when no harm to respondents is caused and in cases where there may be bias in data, if the purpose of research is fully revealed. However, after consultation with the research supervisor, it was decided that the best and ethical approach was to inform the colleges fully of the research purpose; that confidentiality and anonymity will be retained, and that the study will share its findings with the aim of impacting positively on governance in the FE sector in England.

In order to achieve fully informed consent from the governors, it was important to identify the study's risks and make the governors fully aware of them (Busher and James, 2007:11). The following were identified as risks in the study:

- Risks to the 3 colleges: the normal proceedings in a governance meeting observed may be affected. Some meeting participants might not contribute to the meeting in their normal manner if an external observer is present affecting the quality of colleges' board meetings. However, all observation notes were anonymised and this fact was shared with the participants. In addition, the researcher took the least intrusive position in the meeting room in order not to affect the natural proceedings.

- Participants were requested to talk candidly about important but difficult issues. Controversial issues and intruding questions about governance featured in the project's semi-structured questionnaire (for example, views about whether ASGs are inhibited by the presence of SMT members in meetings; and also, questions 10 and 18-19, see Appendix C) and in the semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix E), question 6 about whether ASGs are requested to withdraw from meetings. However, all records of responses were anonymised to protect participants' identities. Prior to the commencement of the interviews, participants' right to terminate interview at any point was emphasised. Audio recordings of interviews were requested and the governors gave written consent for the recordings (Appendix G). Transcripts of interviews were offered to the governors for participant validation of data (Busher and James, 2007:115). Such practices were followed to enhance the authenticity of data.
- Loss of participants' own time (unpaid). For example, in the main study:
  - all governors at the colleges were requested to complete the questionnaire (about 10-20 minutes);
  - interviews with 2 governors from each college; about 60 minutes for each governor

College governors generally volunteer their own time for governance work without any remuneration. Their completion of the questionnaire and time spared for interviews might be seen as extra burden on their professional and personal time. This was addressed by giving the governors the guarantee that their boards would benefit from the researchers' anonymised progress reports and a final report to the colleges covering governance and ASG roles at the colleges.

- Risk to collected data: All data from both the piloting and the main study were kept in confidential and anonymous form. Some of the anonymous data were shared with the research supervisors for guidance purposes, and this fact had been stated in the research information sheet given to participants. Coding of all data, including data from the governor interviews (Lindsay, 2010:120-121) and



accompanying notes in the ethics and research diary, negated the need to attach participant identification to such information and enhanced data security. The data sets were stored remotely in password-protected digital cloud-based accounts in Dropbox® (2011) accessible through the researcher's personal account. A home computer and a tablet PC synchronised the data to local folders on the machines, both of which were password protected. This treatment and storage of research data during and beyond the research is in line with the UK's Data Protection Act (1998) and (BERA, 2011:8).

- Documentary analysis was one of the research methods in the project. Publicly available documents such as minutes of meetings were used while being mindful of their potential subjectivity. Such documents are regarded low-risk according to Johnson (1994) (cited in Busher and James, 2007:116) but data was still anonymised. Care was taken not to use searchable direct quotes (Gregory, 2003:53) from public documents (e.g.: Ofsted reports and minutes of meetings).

A summary of the project's ethical design and evidence of the official Ethical Approval Form from the University of Warwick are shown in Appendix F.

### **3.4. Data Collection Tools**

The set of data collection methods used in the case study were a survey questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations of meetings and documentary analysis for each of the 3 colleges. In this section, the rationale and the scope for each method will be explained, while Section 3.5 will detail the fieldwork carried out and the number of participants involved (Section 3.5.2:105). The sets of methods and tools were chosen in a way to facilitate the extraction of evidence connected to the main research question; the 4 sub-research questions and the theoretical concepts and exploratory themes (Chapter 1:75-76) researched in this study.

### **3.4.1. The Questionnaire-based Survey**

Focusing on the research questions, a draft cross-sectional survey (Fogelman and Comber, 2007:127) questionnaire (Appendix C) was designed to obtain the relevant data from both the ASGs and the other governors at the colleges. In fact, there were two versions of the questionnaire, one for ASGs, the other for the rest of the governors. Most of the questions were common to both, apart from the questions shown in blue (Appendix C) that attempted to extract role understanding and the 'reality' from the ASGs' points of view. The questionnaire was designed using an online survey software, Qualtrics® (2002), hosted on a password-protected website and was distributed via an e-mail to the governors via the clerks, containing links to the website to be completed at a time convenient to them. This method was used to ensure anonymity when receiving completed questionnaires, although it was recognised that, when compared to completing the questionnaires immediately at the place and time of distribution, the digital online method may return a lower completion-rate (Bell, 2007). Another practical point was that the online survey approach helped the author to index the responses, collect, store and analyse the data (Bassey, 2007:151) economically and quickly.

#### **The Focus of the Questionnaires**

The foci of the questions included governor demographics, governors' member constituency and views on ASG roles. Questions types with examples shown below from the questionnaire (Appendix C) included:

- 1) Selection from pre-determined choices; e.g.: questions 1-8 and 10 of the questionnaire, for instance, in Q4, “*What is your governor membership type (Choose one)?*” The pre-determined choices were, *Student Governor, Parent Governor, Academic / Teaching Staff governor, Non-teaching Staff Governor (Business Support), The Principal, External Governor appointed by the Governing Board, The Chair or Other.*
- 2) Qualifying and Ranking questions (Bell, 2007:229); e.g.: questions 9 and 11-13. For instance, in Q11, governors were asked to rank various governance activities according to their relevance to an ASG’s role.
- 3) Likert Scale containing 4 responses (Bell, 2007:229) e.g.: questions 16-19. For example, in Q17, ASGs were asked to show their level of agreement to the statement, *I feel that as an ASG I am perceived by my fellow governors as a ‘second-class’ governor*, using the four levels of agreement, *strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree.*

Almost all of the questions offered the governors the opportunity to add comments; state responses alternative to the given choices, or explain their responses. The aim was to obtain detailed information based on governors’ own experiences. Furthermore, the semi-structured nature of the questionnaire allowed the researcher to use respondents’ own variables (from their open comments in the questionnaire) in the subsequent methods (interviews, observations and documentary analysis), adding to the reliability of the study (Silverman, 2005:222).

In deciding the focus of the questionnaire, concepts in the four sub-research questions and the theoretical concepts and exploratory themes of the study were operationalized (Bell, 2007:277) so that the questions in the questionnaire aligned with the purpose of the study. Mapping the questions

against the sub-research questions and the concepts ensured that the questionnaire addressed the sub-research questions. How this was achieved is exemplified in question 9 in the questionnaire Figure 3.1, which was about governors' views about what governance activities an ASG should engage in. This question addressed sub-research questions 1, 2 and 4. The data from

9. Rank the following governance activities from 0-5, to indicate the <u>activities</u> you think Academic Staff Governors' should be involved in. (0=not relevant; 5=a highly relevant to an ASG's role)	
a. reviewing of the college's mission	
b. approving the quality policies/strategies	
c. effective and efficient use of resources (staff, buildings, teaching and learning resources)	
d. approving college's financial income and expenditure	
e. the appointment, suspension, determination of pay and conditions of the holders of senior management posts at the college	
f. approving pay and conditions of all other staff	
g. Responding to the Local Community's Needs	
h. establishing a link between college governance and teaching and learning-related issues	
i. related to personal opinion / experience	
j. presenting of staff viewpoints	
Optional Comments: <input type="text"/>	

Figure 3.1: Question 9 in the Questionnaire

all the governors related to ASG activities and produced governors' understanding of ASGs' roles across the three colleges.

When combined with the responses to the background questions, 1-5, this allowed the researcher to identify patterns in understanding of the role, as well as other demographic patterns across the 3 colleges. The complete mapping is shown in Appendix H:281).

### **Rationale for the Survey**

How the survey instrument aligned with the purpose of the research has already been discussed in the previous sub-section. In addition, the questionnaire was based on comparable studies (Earley and Creese, 2001; Gleeson et al., 2010; Sodiq, 2012) that had sought to collect perceptions of

school and college governors. Fogelman and Comber (2007:127) and Yin (2009:9) note the appropriateness of using surveys to obtain attitudes, understanding and perceptions in social research. Bassey's (2007:148) observation that "sometimes case studies and surveys work in tandem" is a near description of this study but an even pertinent rationale for this type of study is provided by Fogelman and Comber (2007:126): "a questionnaire is being used as one source of data within a case study". An important consideration was the fact that questionnaires are "very efficient ways" of collecting data and are used "to gather information about people's opinions" by asking respondents to indicate how strongly they agree or disagree with a statement given, and/or "giving respondents space in which to formulate their own replies" (Hannan, 2007:A). Such approaches referred to by the authors are also reflected in the current study.

### **3.4.2. The Observations**

Non-participant observation tools are used in research to easily quantify observable pre-determined phenomena in a systematic way and the data obtained can address a variety of research question types (Moyle, 2007). The observation instrument set used in the current study consisted of 3 sheets (Appendix D:266). The first sheet was used to record initial information such as start time of observed meetings, attendees list and layout of the room. The second sheet was a semi-structured sheet to record ASGs' verbal contributions, namely communication functions (e.g.: asking questions and challenging); governance functions (e.g.: reviewing mission) and ASG roles (e.g.: professional information giving). The final page of the tool was used to take meeting notes and included verbal contributions from

the participants with annotations about any relevant non-verbal and visual occurrences (Silverman, 2005:26).

### **The Focus of the Observations**

Continuing the approach used in the questionnaire design, the observation sheets shown in Appendix D were produced by first identifying theoretical concepts to focus on from the research questions and the research concepts and themes for exploration, and then transferring the concepts into the terminology for use in the observation tool. The tool was a systematic observation tool (Moyle, 2007:240) and is shown in Table 3.2 (below). It was

ASGs' Contrib.no	After whom	To whom	Topic	ASG's Communication Function	Governance Role (general)	ASG-specific Role	Length Min./sec	Next speaker		Voice Tone / Visual gestures
								who	Communic. function	
ASG1							/			
ASG2							/			
ASG3							/			
Add rows										

Table 3.2: ASG Contributions in Observed GB Meetings

used in the observations and contained several foci that served the research agenda. The general governance roles (column 6) were used to capture general college governor roles that the ASGs demonstrated in terms of the roles theorized by Cornforth and Edwards (1998); Schofield et al. (2009); Gleeson et al. (2010); Sodiq (2012) and Lambert (2011), as described in Section 1.2, for instance, statutory roles relevant to all governors such as reviewing college policies, or responding to the local community needs. The ASG roles (column 7) were included to capture any specific ASG roles derived from Earley and Creese (2001), for example, ASGs' contribution to the meetings related to 'professional information' or general teachers' viewpoints.

In the observed meetings, the data about the person who spoke before and after each of the contributions from the ASG (columns 2, 3) and communicative functions (columns 5 and 10) would provide information about relations and attitude in governance, which in turn may provide insight into power and relationships in ASG role. For instance, if the ASG tends to speak only when the Principal or the SMTs directly asks them a question, it may suggest that ASG acts only as directed by the leadership and may not be seen as playing the full professional governor role. Column 4 was used to record details of the topics of ASG contributions and this information was useful in understanding the topics to which ASGs contributed to.

### **Rationale for the Observation Method**

The observation method was included amongst the methods used in the study for several reasons. Firstly, it was to address the sub-research question 2 (Chapter 1.2:20) about ASG role-specific activities. Using observations to obtain data about behaviour occurring in natural settings (i.e.: governance meetings) is more valid than using interviews and questionnaires (Silverman, 2005:113). The second purpose was to triangulate data (Bush, 2007a) and further explore emerging themes from the survey and the interviews. This addressed research question 4 about the understanding of ASG roles. Finally, the method has been used in other similar combined methods case studies into college governance in England, for instance, Cornforth and Edwards (1998) and Gleeson et al. (2010).

### **3.4.3. The Interviews**

Altogether six face-to-face semi-structured interviews were planned, two for each of the three colleges. As interviewing is a delicate process that needs harnessing (Ranson, 2007; Ribbins, 2007:221), the author attended interview skills training sessions at the University of Warwick. Following the training, a range of interviewing and interview schedule aspects were considered, particularly, the focus on the emerging theoretical ASG concepts from the initial data analysis of the questionnaire responses; ASGs' contributions in the observed meetings; the style of interviewing and the sequencing of the interview schedule (Mason, 2002:62). Once the first draft schedule was ready, it was used in the pilot study (Section 3.4.5).

#### **The Focus of the Interviews**

The focus of the interview schedules for the ASGs was generally similar to the non-ASG interview schedules. Differences occurred in some instances, for example, the ASG interview schedule (Appendix E:269) had extra questions focusing on their professional background, to find out whether ASGs had any management role at the colleges; clarifying ASGs' contributions in the observed meetings (:269, prompt card questions) and questions that focussed specifically on ASGs' own experiences and role understanding (:269, questions 4-6), for example, asking if college staff approach them with requests to raise matters at board meetings. These questions allowed ASGs to make retrospective-meaning making (März and Kelchtermans, 2013; Patterson and Marshall, 2014; Tummons, 2014a) of their own meeting contributions and governance experiences. As in the questionnaire design, the specific interview questions were produced in



relation to the four sub-research questions and the theoretical / exploratory perspectives (Chapter 1.2:21-22). The whole set of interview questions were broadly categorised into the various themes of ASG roles, regarding governance activities, power, professional status and the understanding of ASG roles. The 'what' questions such as questions, 2, 9, and 19 (Appendix E:269-271) attempted to obtain the 'reality' from the governors' perspective, whilst questions such as 'why/why not' questions (e.g.: Q6, and 7), those asking governors to comment (e.g.:Q1) or describe (Q12 and 13) and questions that addressed feelings (e.g.: Q5), explored ASG roles in depth. In all interviews, a 'guide approach' was followed to "ensure that the same general areas of information are collected from each interviewee" providing "more focus than the conversational approach, but still allowing "a degree of freedom and adaptability in getting the information from the interviewee" (Hartas, 2007:10). Some variations were made to allow questions to clarify various comments in the questionnaire data already obtained. An example is the question asking interviewees to comment on why some questionnaire respondent governors had marked the college boards' remuneration committee as the least appropriate committee for an ASG to contribute to. As the interviews were semi-structured, the governors had opportunities to add important relevant themes through extended comments and responses to follow-up questions.

### **Rationale for the Interview Method**

Earlier in Section 3.2, Table 3.1 listed ASGs' accounts and various governors' understanding of ASG role as some of the ontological entities pertinent to this study. The main rationale for the interview method is that

interviews are regarded as appropriate methods for studying such entities (Mason, 2002:62). What may add further credibility to the use of interviewing is the fact that there are studies that have used interviewing in educational governance research. Cornforth and Edwards (1999), Chapman et al. (2009) and Gleeson et al. (2010) are such examples. Furthermore, Earley and Creese (2001:327) referred to Laidler's (1992) use of interviews in research into teacher governor roles in primary schools. Therefore, the interview method was seen a suitable method for the current study.

#### **3.4.4. Documentary Analysis**

In the current study, the approach used for documentary analyses was in line with Fitzgerald's (2007:281) definition that documentary analysis is one where the researcher would "collect, collate and analyse empirical data in order to produce theoretical account that either describes, interprets or explains what has occurred." The college-based documents and the Ofsted inspection reports contributed to the descriptions of the contexts within which each colleges' governance functioned as well as acting as complementary evidence when analysing data from the other three data collection methods.

In addition, Gephart (1999); Yin (2009:11) and Fitzgerald (2007:279-280) highlight the relevance of documentary analysis as part of a multi-method approach. Particularly, the latter highlights amongst several benefits, the potential for the method to add reliability to the study by providing an audit trail for other researchers to engage in similar studies further. Moreover, amongst the various governance studies already cited in various sections of this report, documentary analysis was used by Cornforth and Edwards (1998)

and Gleeson et al. (2010) to triangulate their findings in their studies into FE governance.

In the current study, documentary evidence was collected from the 3 Outstanding colleges between October 2013 and January 2015 (Section 3.5.2:106, Table 3.3). The types of documents sought were mainly from the period 2013-2015:-

- lists of governors
- instrument and articles of governance (IAGs)
- standing orders (general order of governance proceedings)
- terms of reference (ToR) for observed committees
- self-assessment reports / reviews of governance
- Ofsted inspection reports
- agendas and minutes of observed and preceding/subsequent meetings

These documents were obtained from the college's websites or through e-mail communication with the clerks. As a result of varying governance contexts in the 3 colleges, the documents eventually received differed from college to college. For instance, the clerk at College Y was on sick leave from March 2014 onwards and the governance administrator took on the clerk's duties. This disrupted the flow of communication between the researcher and the college, resulting in difficulties in receiving all the documentary evidence and some documents such as the corporation self-assessment was not received from College Y. Likewise, at college Z, the clerk had a part-time role, so it was more difficult to access the corporation self-assessment documents, although the same document for the observed committee (staffing-related committee) was obtained. Unlike colleges Y and Z, at

College X there was a full-time clerk and a team of administrative staff for governance matters and hence, a full range of the planned documentary evidence was obtained.

### **3.4.5. The Pilot Study**

The purpose of the pilot study was to identify lessons to be learnt in order to improve the data collection (Yin, 2009:94) in the main study. The data collection tools were piloted between November 2012 and June 2013 at a GFE college in England, where the researcher had some affiliation at a professional level. The college was not an Outstanding college at the time of the study but was seen as an invaluable opportunity to conduct a full trial of the whole set of data collection methods, namely the online questionnaire, the semi-structured interview schedule, the observation tool and the collection of relevant documentary evidence. Access to the GB was facilitated through the college Principal, and ultimately granted by the Chair of governors. In return for the generous access, the college was provided with two interim reports after analysing the questionnaire results and followed by a final report from the pilot study.

This pilot study was conducted in addition to the initial piloting of the draft questionnaire with four individuals: the two supervisors of the project, one former governor from the pilot college and a primary school chair of governors. They were requested to complete the questionnaire and check the questions for ambiguity, assumptions within questions, double questions, leading and sensitive questions and questions that might require an unreasonable amount of knowledge or hard-to-recall elements (Bell, 2007).

Repeated piloting increased the validity of the survey tool (Bassey, 2007; Bell, 2007:231-232). A presentation of the pilot study to the college board was arranged through the clerk and all ethical guidelines described for the main study were followed including the securing of informed consent.

The piloting began with the online questionnaire which was completed by eight governors at the college. After receiving the questionnaire, the following amendments to the questionnaire were made:-

- In questions about what roles ASGs had played, the phrase, "in this college" was included so that it is clear that the question was about the actual ASG roles specific to the colleges concerned as opposed to the roles ASGs were expected to perform in general.
- In ordering Likert Scale or Ranking questions, positive responses were placed towards the right end of the scale so that the Qualtrics® programme's data analysis allocated higher ranking values to the more positive responses.
- Revisions were made to the questionnaire so that it took more or less the length of time suggested in the research information leaflet (10-20 minutes) by eliminating the need to obtain additional comments for some questions, for example, questions to which the pilot governors did not provide additional comments.

In order to trial the observation tool, a corporation meeting at the pilot college was observed for the first 2 hours of the meeting, where there were 12 attendees including the ASG, the Principal and 3 other SMT staff. No request was made to audio record the meeting and extensive notes were made. The following points describe the lessons learnt from the observation:

- Whenever possible, voice recording was seen as essential to get the full picture of meeting proceedings and for reasons associated with the difficulty in taking notes while studying the agenda and the meeting papers.

- Prior to the meeting a request was made by the researcher from the clerk to be given a few minutes to be introduced but the chair did not follow this through. As a result, in the main case study, the request was put directly to the chair in addition to the clerk.
- Given that there were ample notes made on the meeting proceedings, it was established that the table for the ASG contributions (see observation tool, Appendix D:266), could be accurately completed if done immediately after the meeting.
- Due to the complex nature of the meetings, it was difficult and often impossible to make notes on some of the visual data such as body language. This was due to the fact the research relied on only one observer, the researcher himself. Therefore, in the main study there was only limited reliance on meeting participants' non-verbal cues.
- It was important to obtain the following prior to the meeting:
  - Meeting agenda and papers
  - List of Current/updated governors (and names so that their initials could be used for faster note-taking).

Following the pilot observation, four governors at the pilot college, including the ASG and the Chair, were interviewed for piloting purposes using the interview schedule (Appendix E:269). The trial's purposes included developing the researcher's interviewing skills; increasing clarity by removing any ambiguity in the questions; increasing the effectiveness of the schedule in obtaining evidence related to the research questions and checking the length of the interviews. The interviews were audio recorded, following which identifiable sections were removed for protecting anonymity and then transcribed. The two supervisors listened to the first interview recording and provided their comments to serve the piloting purposes. The main points from the 4 trials were:

- Questions that attempted to get details of critical incidents (Griffiths, 1998:24) in interviews worked well (for example, "could you give specific examples of any positive impact, you/the current ASG has had

on the GB or the college?”)

- Using prompt cards in interviews worked well (Appendix E:269)
- The researcher should:-
  - avoid using fillers (well, errm,) too often
  - avoid repeating or rephrasing questions unnecessarily
  - be less hesitant
  - pay attention to the potential differences between the committees structure at various colleges.

Following the piloting of the interview schedule, the final set of questions was finalised, aiming for the interviews to last about 60 minutes each. The above improvements and other changes made to the online questionnaire, the observation tool and the interview schedule following the pilot are shown in Appendices C-E in red.

### **3.5. Collecting Data**

The following sub-sections present the general data collection procedures followed across the 3 colleges in the main study (Section 3.5.1) and fieldwork specific to each college (Section 3.5.2).

#### **3.5.1. Data Collection – the General Approach**

For all three colleges, the questionnaires were completed first, followed by the observation stage and then the interviews. Some of the documentary evidence such as Ofsted inspection reports and IAGs were obtained in the early stages of research but agendas/minutes of meetings were collected throughout the research. At the later stages of the research, corporation and committee self-assessment documents were collected. Most of the

documents were available publicly but some had to be requested from the relevant clerks of the college corporations.

After the online questionnaires were published, their completion was monitored in the digital cloud space within the online Qualtrics® Survey software website. Updates of completion and follow-up e-mails were sent to governors via the clerks in order to encourage more governors to complete the survey.

As for observations of meetings, permission was sought to observe governance meetings where ASGs were present. At each college, one corporation meeting and at least one committee meeting were conducted. The observation instrument (see Appendix D) was used for all observations and completed contemporaneously in the meetings to minimise skewing of data due to potential difficulties in recalling events (Moyle, 2007:243) after the meetings. In terms of the practicalities of the non-participant observations, the researcher arrived early at the venues and a few minutes before the meeting, requested from the chair to announce the observation to the participants. When introducing himself to the meeting participants, the researcher referred to previously obtained informed consent and the details of the governors' anonymity and confidentiality agreements were reiterated. The researcher seated himself away from the 'circle' of the meeting participants so as not to be too invasive, yet close enough to be able to have a reasonable view of all participants in the meeting. Before the meetings began, the meeting agendas had been obtained through the clerks, in order to identify the parts of the meetings when the ASGs would be present. When the observations began, the front sheet of the observation instrument had



been completed and the researcher started recording data onto the ASG sheet and the notes sheet. An electronic timer was used to track time. After the observation, a message of appreciation was e-mailed to all participants via the clerks. In addition, during the interviews that took place in the subsequent weeks, the ASGs were invited to check the accuracy of notes representing their contributions in the observed meetings to improve the trustworthiness (Busher and James, 2007) of the observation data.

Before the interviews at the colleges, governors to be interviewed were identified through voluntary responses received to a request made at the end of the questionnaire, a method followed by Earley and Creese (2001). From those who responded, purpose sampling was used to identify and invite one ASG and one other senior governor to be interviewed. Interviewing such governors allowed the researcher to obtain information related to the research questions from the relevant experts (Maxwell, 1996) about ASG roles. Following the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed and the data was anonymised. Furthermore, all interviewees were invited to check the anonymised transcripts and respond if they had any issues; for example, about the inclusion of sensitive information. This was to further enhance the trustworthiness of data but no governors raised any issues.

### 3.5.2. Fieldwork Specific to Each College

A summary of the data collection in the questionnaire, interview and observation stages at each of the 3 colleges is presented in Table 3.3 below.

College	Method	Dates	Subject(s) / Participants / Sources	Time / Duration	Comments
X	Online Questionnaire survey	24/10/13-7/11/13	14 Governors	average 15 minutes / governor	Software used: Qualtrics
Y		28/10/13-21/02/13	8 Governors	Average 13 minutes / governor	
Z		04/12/13-18/12/13	13 Governors	Average 18 minutes / governor	
X	Observation 1 GB Meeting	Oct 2013	19 (14 Governors including Principal, 1 ASG); 1 Clerk; 4 other SMTs / managers)	3pm About 3 hours	Not audio recorded; Notes by researcher & Clerk
	Observation 2 Curriculum / Quality-related Committee	Feb 2014	14 (6 Governors including Principal & 1 ASG); 1 Clerk; 1 Assist. Corp.Secretary; 6 other SMTs / managers)	4pm About 2.5 hours	
	Observation 3 Academy-related Committee	May 2014	9 (3 Governors including Principal & 1 ASG); 1 Clerk; 1 Assist. Corp.Secretary; 4 other SMTs / managers)	3pm About 1 hour	
Y	Observation 1 Curriculum / Quality-related Committee	Feb 2014	11 (7 Governors including Principal & 1 ASG); 1 Governance Administrator; 3 other SMTs / managers)	5:30pm 1.75 hours (transcribed 1 hour)	audio recorded; ASG arrived 20 minutes late.
	Observation 2 Audit-related committee	Mar 2014	14 (4 Governors including Principal, 1 ASG & 1 co-opted governor); 1 Governance Administrator; 4 other SMTs / managers; 3 auditors)	5pm 1.2 hours (transcribed 15 minutes)	audio recorded
	Observation 3 GB Meeting	Mar 2014	19 (12 Governors incl. Principal & 1 ASG); 1 Governance Administrator; 5 other SMTs / managers; 1 local school headteacher as invitee nominated for governor appointment)	5:30pm; 2 hours (36 minutes transcribed)	
Z	Observation 1 GB Meeting: Part 1	Dec 2013	22 (17 Governors including Principal & 1 ASG); 1 Clerk; 3 other SMTs / managers; 1 auditor)	2pm 1.75 hours (transcribed 15 minutes)	audio recorded; Principal & external governor joined via online video)
	Observation 2 Staffing-related Committee: Part 1	Jan 2014	9 (5 Governors including Principal, 1 ASG; 2 co-opted); 1 Clerk; 3 other SMTs / managers)	5:30pm; 40 minutes	audio recorded;
X	Interview 1	May 2014	External Governor 3 at X (X-EXG3) / Chair of Quality-related Committee)	85 minutes	audio recorded;
	Interview 2		ASG (X-ASG)	90 minutes	

College	Method	Dates	Subject(s) / Participants / Sources	Time / Duration	Comments
Y	Interview 1	May 2014	External Governor 6 / Chair of audit-related Committee at Y-College	60 minutes	audio recorded;
	Interview 2		ASG (Y-ASG)	80 minutes	
Z	Interview 1	May 2014	Vice Chair & Chair of Staffing- Committee)	75 minutes each	audio recorded;
	Interview 2	Jun 2014	ASG (Z-ASG)		
X	Collection of Documents	Oct 2013 – Nov 2014	List of Governors; IAG; Most Recent Ofsted Inspection Report; Full Corporation self-assessment / review 2013-14; ToRs for observed Committees; Member evaluations for Corporation & observed committees; Student / Staff Voice Arrangements; Agenda & Minutes of observed + preceding meetings		
Y		Oct 2013 - Aug 2014	List of Governors; IAG; Most Recent Ofsted Inspection Report; Governors' Attendance Report; Agenda & Minutes of observed and preceding meetings		
Z		Dec 2013 – Jan 2015	List of Governors; IAG; Most Recent Ofsted Inspection Report; Observed Committee self-assessment / review 2013-14; ToRs for Committees; Agenda & Minutes of observed and preceding meetings; Governors' attendance data		

Table 3.3: Data Collection Summary at Colleges X, Y and Z

### **Fieldwork at College X**

Data collection at College X took place between October 2013 and November 2014. The questionnaire was completed by 14 out of 18 governors including the ASG, the Principal and one of the two student governors.

The 3 observed governance meetings were held in October 2013, February and May 2014 in the college boardroom. In order to protect the anonymity of data from the 3 colleges, full details of web-based searchable information (for example, names of governance committees observed; full dates of meetings) are not revealed in this thesis. The first non-participant observation was the academic year's first corporation meeting. The meeting was attended by 14 governors including 1 ASG and the Principal; and 4 other SMT staff, who presented various papers. The researcher had the opportunity to deliver a 10 minute research presentation to the board before the meeting began. In addition, in all observations all governors were given a copy of the research

information leaflet. The chairs of the meetings requested participants to voice any objections to the observations but none were raised. Because the board did not give approval for audio recording the meeting, extensive meeting notes were taken on the meeting proceedings by the researcher using the observation tool, shown in Appendix D (:266-268), which is a completed example showing an extract of the detailed anonymised notes from one of the meetings. The second and third observations were of committee meetings where the ASG was present and took place in February and May 2014 respectively (Table 3.3 above). The February observation was of a curriculum/quality-related committee and the May one was of an academy-related committee meeting. Again, observations were not audio recorded.

The two separate interviews took place at the college in May, 2014, a few weeks after the observations - the first interview in a small executive meeting room with an external governor who was the chair of the committee that dealt with curriculum and quality matters at the college, and the second interview was with X-College's ASG (X-ASG) in her office. In each interview, no other person was in the room apart from the researcher and the interviewee. All interviews in the project followed a particular protocol, which began with establishing informed consent and reiterating details of the research and the focus of the interviews. The research leaflet was handed to the interviewees – a procedure that was followed at every phase of the research, guaranteeing that participants had the right information about the research. This was particularly important for informed consent, especially when significant amount of time had elapsed between the different phases of data collection. The interviews were conducted using the semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix E) in a semi-formal but friendly atmosphere. Where

needed follow-up questions/comments were used to clarify information and obtain enough detail to produce thick descriptions (Denzin, 2001; Silverman, 2005) of the research context in the data analysis and interpretation stages of the research. Such thick descriptions related to the ASG role at the 3 outstanding colleges are critical to internal validity of the project and would go beyond superficial descriptions and interpret significance, intentions and reasons behind phenomena and concepts that emerge in the research (Silverman, 2005; Ponterotto, 2006).

### **Fieldwork at College Y**

Data collection at College Y was conducted from October 2013 to November 2014 (Table 3.3, :106). The questionnaire was completed by 8 out of 13 governors including the ASG and the Principal. No responses were received from student governors (StGs) because during this phase of research the 2 StG positions were vacant.

The 3 non-participant observations of governance meetings were held in the college premises in February and March 2014; the corporation meeting in a large meeting room and the others in small executive meeting rooms. The first observation was of the curriculum/quality-related committee. The meeting was attended by 11 governors including 1 ASG and the Principal; and 3 other SMT staff, who presented various policy papers. The researcher had the opportunity to deliver a five-minute brief to the board before the meeting began. The second and third observations were of an audit-related committee meeting and a full board meeting, where the ASG was present and took place in March 2014.

The board approved audio recordings of both the meetings at College Y and the meetings were recorded using a high quality digital meeting voice recorder but notes were still taken by the researcher to increase the confidence and richness of data quality (Yin, 2009). After the observed meetings, the relevant parts of the meetings where the ASG was involved were transcribed.

In the interview phase at the college Y in May 2014, two governors were interviewed. The first interview was with an independent governor who was the Chair of the audit committee. The interview did not take place at the college but in a meeting room at the governor's usual place of work. The second interview was with the ASG of the college, in which the first 30 minutes took place in his office at the college. At the half-hour mark, the ASG requested that interview continued at his home, because the college was being closed early as it was half-term holidays. This last hour of the interview took place in the ASG's living room with the only other person in the room being his elderly father, who sat at a distance and did not interfere with the interview.

### **Fieldwork at College Z**

Data collection at College Z started in December 2013 and was completed in January 2015 (Table 3.3, :106). The questionnaire was completed by 13 out of 18 serving governors including the ASG and the Principal. No responses were received from the student governors.

The 2 observed governance meetings at College Z were held in December 2013 and January 2014. The first non-participant observation was of the corporation meeting. The participants of the meeting included 17 governors including the ASG and the Principal; and 3 other SMT staff, who presented various policy papers. The researcher had the opportunity to deliver a 10-minute presentation to the board before the meeting began. The second meeting was of a staffing-related committee meeting, where the ASG was present. Notes were taken in both the meetings using the observation tool (Appendix D). They were also audio recorded and the relevant parts transcribed.

In the interview phase at the College Z in May and 2014, two governors were interviewed. The first one was with the Vice Chair of the corporation and also the chair of the already-observed staffing-related committee. The meeting did not take place at the college but in a meeting room at the governor's usual place of work. The second interview was with the ASG (Z-ASG) and took place in a quiet staffroom at the college. For most part of the interview, there was no other person apart from the researcher and the ASG. A couple of times, a member of staff walked in and out but this did not affect the interview. As with the previous interviews, the researcher followed the protocols related to informed consent, anonymity of participants and extracting relevant and quality interview data. As the ASG elaborated extensively on the issues in the earlier parts of the interview schedule (Appendix E:269), not all questions in the latter part of the schedule were covered due to time constraints.

### **3.6. Conclusion: Quality and Limitations**

#### **3.6.1. Quality of Research**

At various points of this chapter, methodological aspects addressing the reliability and validity of the study have been presented. For instance, regarding reliability of evidence, the semi-structured nature of the questionnaire allowed the researcher to use respondents' own variables in the subsequent methods, adding to the reliability of the study. Furthermore, the use of documentary analysis as part of a multi-method approach enhanced the reliability of the study through an audit trail for potential researchers in similar studies (Gephart, 1999; Fitzgerald, 2007:279-280; Yin, 2009:11). The internal validity of the study was enhanced through the information in the research information leaflet presented to the participants. Transcripts of interviews were offered to the governors for participant validation of data (Busher and James, 2007:115) and to enhance the authenticity of data. The validity of the survey questionnaire was prioritised through repeated piloting of the tools (see Section 3.4.5). The experience gained through the pilot project increased the overall quality of the observation data. The trustworthiness of observation data (Busher and James, 2007) was a research priority and therefore, during the interviews the ASGs were invited to check the accuracy of observation notes representing their contributions. Methodological triangulation was applied by using semi-structured interviews, observations and documents to collect data. These provided sufficient triangulation of raw evidence and strengthened the researcher's confidence in the data collected. Moreover, data triangulation was aimed for by using three case-studies from the three colleges with



different contexts in an attempt to maximize the range of data, which might contribute to a more complete understanding of ASG roles in governance. In this study it enhanced the rigour by contributing to the search for completeness of data, with each method adding a different piece to the evidence jigsaw (Knafl and Breitmayer, 1991; Mansour, 2011). Thus a multi-dimensional picture of ASG roles emerged through by a fusion of perspectives, rather than a single college perspective.

### **3.6.2. The Study's Limitations**

The author has demonstrated how a combined methods approach was used to collect data that interacted in a triangulating fashion to address the purpose of the project as well as presenting the rationale for the methods used. However, despite the rationale presented, the researcher recognises there are limitations associated with the methods. For instance, questionnaires would produce "limited data in terms of participants' perceptions" (Masunga, 2014:86) on various aspects of ASG roles. This was compensated by allowing respondents' own unstructured responses to the choices they made in the comparatively structured questions about ASG roles. In addition, where possible, some of the ASGs' questionnaire responses were verified and validated in the interviews.

Regarding the observations, the author conducted them with caution due to the recognised limitations of the method. Moyles (2007) notes rightly that everything that is observed is subjected to the researcher's own selective tendencies and own personal interpretation of the phenomena. Furthermore, there was a possibility that the participants' contributions might be affected by

the researcher's presence. Nevertheless, because of the potential of the method to address research questions 1 and 2, which the other methods may not, the method was included in the case study.

Similarly, interviews were not without their own limitations. The researcher bore in mind that the quality of data depended on several variables that he would not always have control of. For instance, Mason (2002:64) correctly identifies interview data's dependence on participants' ability to remember phenomena (example from the interview schedule: "[r]oughly, how many hours/week or month do you spend on governance?"), form concepts, interact with the interviewer and express their ideas. According to Silverman (2005:21), interviewing may not be the best method in verifying what actual activities take place in a given situation, for example, in the roles of the ASGs at the Outstanding colleges (example from the schedule, "[d]o some staff sometimes approach you with requests to raise matters at GB [board] meetings?"). Hence, the author decided to include observation methods as a complimentary method to the interviews.

With regards to documentary analysis, the method has limitations in the sense that information in governing documents such as governing board meeting minutes may not be objective (Fitzgerald, 2007:280) as they were produced by the colleges for public consumption. Therefore, they might have been vetted to include selective information in order to preserve the colleges' public image.

In terms of using a case study approach as the overall method, it is

acknowledged that there may be limitations of this approach. The findings from a small sample as it is in the current study cannot be generalised to cases outside the study (Yin, 2009:15). Overall, 35 governors took part including the 3 ASGs. In addition, the study cannot establish a causal relationship (Yin, 2009:16) between the Ofsted's qualification of the colleges' quality of provision and the ASGs' roles at the colleges. It is also worthwhile noting that only one of the student governors completed the questionnaires. No student governors volunteered to be interviewed, although they were present in two (colleges X and Y) of the 6 observed meetings. This meant the study did not benefit significantly from student governors' understanding of ASG roles in the governance of the three colleges.

## Chapter 4. Data Analysis and Findings

### 4.1. Introduction

For the purpose of data analysis, ASGs at colleges, X, Y and Z were allocated the indices, X-ASG, Y-ASG and Z-ASG respectively. Their profiles collected through the questionnaire and verified in the interviews are shown in Table 4.1 below.

ASG's INDEX	X-ASG	Y-ASG	Z-ASG
COLLEGE	X	Y	Z
GENDER	F	M	M
AGE	45-54	35-54	35-54
ETHNICITY	WHITE IRISH	ASIAN PAKISTANI	WHITE BRITISH
LENGTH OF TIME AS A GOVERNOR	5+ YEARS	3-4 YEARS	1-2 YEARS
POST: FULLT-IME/PART-TIME	FULL-TIME (PERMANENT)	FULL-TIME (PERMANENT)	FULL-TIME (PERMANENT)
POST-TITLE (GENERALISED FOR ANONYMITY)	HEAD OF SCHOOL	STUDENT MANAGER	HEAD OF SCHOOL
NORMAL TEACHING HOURS/WEEK	0 HOURS	10-15 HOURS	20-25 HOURS
Teaching Subject Specialism	Functional Skills	Business Studies; PSD	Computing and IT
Title of Post (generalised)	Curriculum Head	Manager (community- relations)	Curriculum Head
MEMBER OF TEACHING-RELATED PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATION	NO	YES	YES
GOVERNANCE EXPERIENCE AT ANOTHER INSTITUTION	NONE	TRUSTEE - PRIVATE SCHOOL	NO
SUBJECT QUALIFICATIONS	MASTER OF ARTS - LINGUISTICS	DATA NOT OBTAINED	UNIVERSITY DEGREE

Table 4.1: Profiles of the 3 ASGs at the 3 Colleges, X, Y and Z

In the analysis, the study used “analytic generalisation” (Yin, 2009:38-39) to see whether conclusions about the 7 role theories (Chapter 3.1:75) were replicated in the three cases; and to identify any emerging concepts related to the 4 concepts for exploration (:76). Where the role concepts were not replicated, an attempt to explain the differences was made within the

contexts of the colleges.

In order to analyse data and identify findings related to theoretical and exploratory concepts, 3 main tools were used:

- Qualtrics® web-based software in the initial analysis and visual presentation of raw data from the online questionnaires.
- Analytical tools in Microsoft Excel to carry out further analysis and for visual presentation of data
- Coding and analytical tools in NVIVO to code and identify emerging themes in the questionnaire and the observed governance meetings, interview evidence and governance documents with iterative data coding during analysis.

By amalgamating the theory-oriented and exploratory facets of the study, the researcher aimed at presenting a cross-case study synthesis (Yin, 2009; 2011) of ASG roles across the three Outstanding colleges as part of the subsequent chapter, Chapter 5. In the current chapter, each of the three main sections (4.2, 4.3 and 4.4) will present the analyses of evidence relevant to ASG role themes together with the findings. A full discussion of the themes for each of the 3 colleges (X, Y and Z) will form the first section of Chapter 5. At the end of each college section in the current chapter, there will be a summary of the findings.

## **4.2. X-College – ASG Role Findings**

### **4.2.1. X-ASG's General Governance Activities**

In the search for themes related to the general governor role activities that X-ASG was involved in, four aspects were focussed upon. They were: statutory roles enshrined in the instrument and articles of governance for X-College, for example, those linked to strategic governance; responding to the needs of the local community; and finally, challenging and supporting SMT's proposals (concepts discussed in Section 2.3.2.c).

#### **a. Statutory Governance Roles**

With regards to data collection and analysis, the first phase was the questionnaire survey. Question 9 in the survey (Appendix C) was about 10 general governance activities that may be carried out by an ASG and other governors. The governors at X-College were asked to rank the activities in terms of relevance to an ASG's role. This subsection presents the findings about 6 out of the 10 activities - the six statutory activities – Q9a-f. The activities were:-

- 9a. reviewing of the college's mission
- 9b. approving the quality policies/strategies
- 9c. effective & efficient use of resources (staff, buildings, teaching and learning resources)
- 9d. approving the college's financial income and expenditure
- 9e. the appointment, suspension, determination of pay & conditions of senior management staff
- 9f. approving pay and conditions of all other staff

All of the above were FE governance statutory responsibilities (2007) and

formed part of X-College's revised articles of government as of 2012. After tabulating and analysing the data in the chart shown in Figure 4.1, it can be

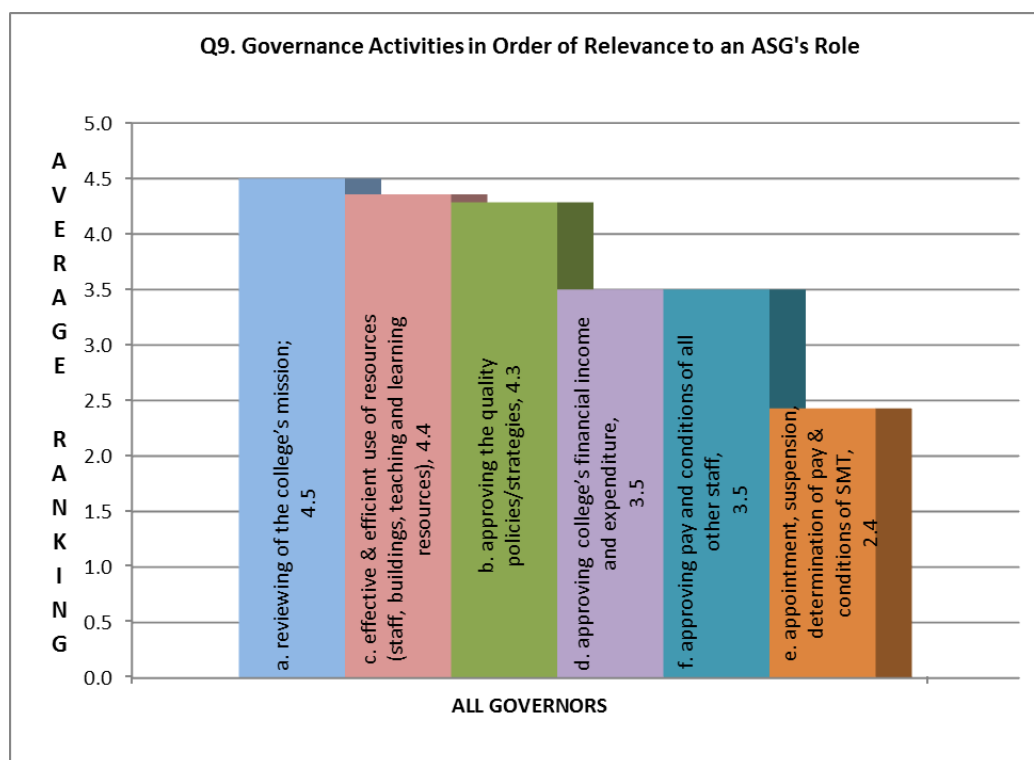


Figure 4.1: General Governance Activities Relevant to an ASG's Role - College X

inferred that 5 out of the 6 activities were seen as highly relevant to an ASG role, with rankings above the middle mark of 2.5 in the 5 point scale. The most relevant activity identified was the strategic function of reviewing of college's mission, followed by the monitoring of effective use of resources (including teaching / learning resources). The activity with the lowest ranking and therefore, considered as the least relevant, was item e, to do with appointment, pay and conditions of SMT at the college. These findings about statutory functions can be compared to governors' responses to Q15 (Figure 4.2), where governors considered the most relevant corporation committees for an ASG's role. The vast majority of the governors (13; 93%) indicated that they felt the quality and performance committee was the most appropriate committee for ASGs. This committee's main remit included monitoring the use of TLA resources, which was considered the second most

relevant activity (c, in Figure 4.1 above) for an ASG's role. In fact, the committee's ToR made ASG's membership in the committee compulsory.

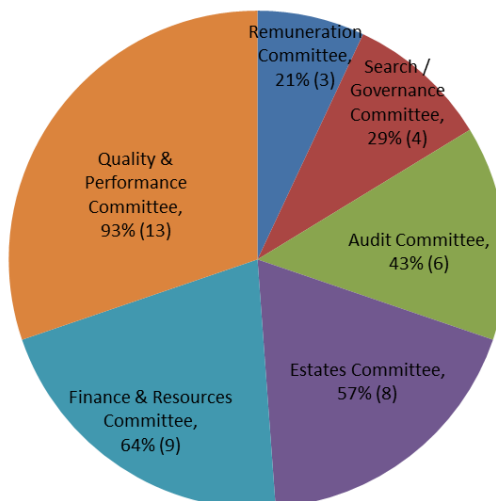


Figure 4.2: Q15 - Appropriate Committees for ASGs to contribute to X- College

According to the governors, the committee with the least relevance to an ASG's role was the remuneration committee, with less than a quarter (3, 21%) marking it as relevant. The committee's remit covered staff and SMT's posts and pay-related matters. Staff posts/pay matters are represented as activity f (one of the second least relevant) and SMT's post/pay as activity e - the least relevant activity in Figure 4.1. Although the search/governance committee was marked the least relevant for an ASG role (Figure 4.2), which also dealt with one of the least relevant matters (appointment of SMTs, Figure 4.1), the college governance arrangements did not exclude ASGs from the appointment/selection panel for SMTs (in Corporation ToR).

Individual governors referred to the issues of ASG's affiliation with the college and the impact on serving the best interests of the college, when giving reasons for specifying the audit, remuneration and search committees



amongst the least relevant to an ASG's role:

*Not sure Audit is appropriate - this committee should be the most independent / impartial (external governor, X-Q-EXG2)*

*The Remuneration and Search should be kept without ASG representation as I believe this to be in the best interest of the college (Business Support Governor).*

The Chair of the curriculum committee (X-EXG3) countered the Business Support Governor's argument giving vivid detail in her interview. She felt an ASG's presence in the remuneration committees could prove to be an invaluable asset for informed decision-making:

**X-EXG3** (interview): *I think remuneration, where if you want to know about a teacher's job role, you speak to a teacher. If they're saying teachers have to have this many prep hours, teaching hours, how we work out the pay. Whereas, if an ASG was on the remuneration committee, not to work out how much money it's going to be, but...if they can say, look in the grand scheme of things, this is a typical day/week for me. Because she's so close to the coal face, she can bring that information to people who are maybe two or three layers of management removed from that. So, I think it's useful for somebody to be able to argue and defend what's involved and talk about what's entailed. For example, if there were certain cuts having to be made I think if you said to me right you've got to take 20% of your teaching time and then if I said to you, if you took that away from me, this may impact here, then obviously I feel the students might suffer. Now you might make your decision anyway, but you're aware if you make this decision, this could happen...Just remuneration to me, it means more than money, anybody can go in and say I want 10% pay rise, that's not what it's about.*

(Quote1)

As for X-ASG's point of view in the interview, she felt that the remuneration committee could in fact be seen as the "most relevant" but even though she personally did not have any interest in being involved in the committee. Nevertheless, overall, she felt assured of the accessibility of the committees' membership for all governors at the college:

**X-ASG** (interview): *I did show an interest, when we joined and they said, "what type of things would you be interested in?" Obviously, the curriculum/quality committee wasn't even an option; I WAS going to be on that committee. But the academy-*

*related committee was something that I wanted to be on and I am. So to a point they do look at your skill set and your interest, because I was interested in the academics.*

**(Quote2)**

Overall, there appeared to be strong argument for ASGs' membership in the remuneration committee when the points made in Quote1 are considered. Nonetheless, and contrary to X-ASG's assurance, the committee's ToR excluded all staff of the college, including any ASGs, from the committee.

After the 3 observations of governance meetings at X-College, the data obtained was scrutinised for any contributions from X-ASG that related to her statutory functions. The data (Table 4.2) showed that an overwhelming

Observation	No. of ASG's Contributions Performing a Statutory Function
1	9/11 (82%)
2	7/8 (88%)
3	4/8 (50%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>20/28 (71%)</b>

Table 4.2: Observation of Governance Meetings at X-College; X-ASG's Contributions Performing a Statutory Governance Role

majority (9, 82%) of her 11 verbal and non-verbal contributions in the corporation meeting observation (Observation 1) were categorised as fulfilling the general statutory role of the ASG role, for example, approving college policies or monitoring the use of college resources. X-ASG performed these functions by asking SMTs questions such as *"[h]ow has the information from audits been used to improve teaching and learning?"* or, *"Need clarity, negative impact on reward - on student reward pay scheme - based on what? What's the size of impact?"* In the second observation (the curriculum/quality committee meeting), the total number of X-ASG's contributions was slightly fewer (8) but the statutory function contributions were of a higher proportion (7, 88%). In this meeting too, she participated in discussions that approved policies and monitored the use of resources. In addition, she appeared to

focus on college's reputation too, for instance, *"We need to be careful about not to clash against the college."* In the final observation (the academy-related committee meeting), her contributions related to statutory functions were much fewer (4, 50%). Again, X-ASG was observed paying attention to protecting the college's reputation: *"Will the pre-warning, will it give us a period to action urgent points before warning given to us, and what's the reputational impact?"*

During the interviews, the contributions were discussed with the X-ASG. The emphasis of her role on college reputation resurfaced here too:

**Researcher (R):** *In retrospect do you think even unintentionally you made some governors feel a bit uneasy or difficult?*

**X-ASG:** *No I don't think so because I'm very careful about how the image of the college and making sure that I'm projecting the right direction.*

**(Quote3, interview)**

It also became clear that while she was positive about the various reports from SMTs, in the corporation meeting, she was not happy with the explanations she received from one of the SMTs, X-SMT3, to her question about the how internal audit was used to improve TLA. X-SMT3 had responded during the meeting by explaining that the audit reports were shared with the curriculum teams. In the interview, X-ASG expressed her slight frustration:

**X-ASG (interview):** *As a head of school I haven't been part to any of those audits or any of the response of those audits. As a governor I have, so I wanted to know how and now it might be the parts that have been audited have never affected my curriculum team.... So I wasn't to be honest satisfied.*

**(Quote4)**

In the subsequent conversation during the interview, it emerged that that X-

ASG intended to discuss the matter further with X-SMT3, outside the governance meeting at the college:

***X-ASG** (interview): I will follow it up. I'm going to go back and re-ask that question. I won't ask it in an open forum, but I will go and speak to him.*

**(Quote5)**

This pointed to the possibility that at least some of X-ASG's statutory functions might be conducted at the college, outside the formal governance venues. It reflected a practical side of X-ASG's role given her proximity and accessibility to SMTs, as a staff member of the college.

#### **b. X-ASG Responding to Local Community's Needs**

Survey Question 9g sought X-College governors' views on the extent to which 'responding to the local community's needs' should be part of an ASG's role. As with most of the statutory functions (see previous subsection), the governors believed that the activity was of great relevance to an ASG's role, with an average ranking of 4.1 out of 5. In addition, albeit not having made any reference to meeting the needs of the community in the articles of governance, the ToR for the curriculum/quality committee expressed an ambition of engaging in activities of continuing relevance to all stakeholders including the local community. Nonetheless, this theme in X-ASG's meeting contributions was significantly limited (total 3, 11%; Table 4.3), in comparison to the statutory function-related contributions reported earlier (71%, Table 4.2). In the curriculum / quality committee meeting (Observation 2), one of the SMTs (X-SMT3) presented a report on the college's marketing, advice and guidance team's visit to local schools and X-ASG responded with the question, "*Does it include career advice?*". X-

SMT3 explained that the college benefitted from the marketing side of the visits. In the interview, X-ASG felt that the service “*should include career advice*” because the college used “*some of the careers people to go out into*

Observation	No. of ASG's Contributions that addressed the Needs of the Local Community (Coding: G_r2_CommN)
1	0/11 (0%)
2	2/8 (25%)
3	1/8 (13%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>3/27 (11%)</b>

Table 4.3: X-ASG's Contributions Addressing the Needs of the Community

*the schools when they are doing the marketing.*” This focus could be interpreted as X-ASG’s consideration of the wider local community’s need for information and career guidance. In the same meeting, when SMT member, X-SMT1, presented information about a new free meals scheme for eligible students of low-income backgrounds, X-ASG asked the question, seemingly disappointed, “*EMA removed, is it going to be brought back?*” ‘EMA’ (Educational Maintenance Allowance) was a reference to the government-backed financial incentives for those of low-income backgrounds. From the question, X-ASG was seen to be considering the financial needs of potential students in the community. In the final and third meeting (the academies-related committee, Observation 3, Table 4.3), the single contribution linked to the same theme was observed during a discussion where X-ASG expressed concern about potential delays in the academy construction project. The question she asked was, “*What implication is to us if the leisure side drags their feet?*”. In the interview, X-ASG clarified her concerns:

**X-ASG (interview):** *It's reputational risk. So, would it slow it down because there's been so much problem in the press with this particular project of the academy2 because some of the community weren't happy with it.... I think it was the whole idea of putting two schools together, because there was a good school and a school that wasn't so good and then it was joining it with a leisure centre and then it was the fact where they were putting it. That was a lot of contention there...Yes, also my interest in the academies as well because I live halfway between both academies, so from a community perspective.*

*(Quote6)*

The college reputation theme was emphasised again but this time combined with concerns about the impact of the project on the local population.

The issue of meeting the needs of the local community was a recurring theme in the corporation's self-assessment documents both in 2012/13 and 13/14. Both the assessments recognised several members' difficulty in understanding what 'meeting the needs of the community' meant. In both of the two years, in comparison to other governance priorities, this theme attracted the lowest number of agreements (11/16 governors; 69%) in terms of positive performance. Some governors were not sure if action in this area was taking place but relevant training continued between 2012 and 2014. The conclusion from this discussion is that limited appearance of the 'community needs' theme might not be unique to X-ASG's role, but an issue relevant to all governors at the college.

### **c. X-ASG's Role in Challenging and Supporting SMTs**

Most of the evidence for X-ASG's challenge and support role in governance was obtained from the three observations of governance meetings (Table 4.4). Overall, there was considerably more support (Total 10, 37%) than challenge (6, 22%) in X-ASG's responses to SMT's presentations and reports to the board. All of the challenges served other functions too. For instance, two of the challenges in the corporation meeting were the same questions from X-ASG that fulfilled her statutory role in the discussions about the internal audit report and the clarity of information about the impact on student pay award scheme (see Section 4.2.1.a). Four of the supportive

contributions were non-verbal nods in response to SMTs' presentations or explanations. In the interview, X-ASG elaborated on one such visual cue, and

Meeting Observation	No. of Contributions that Challenged SMT	No. of Contributions that Supported SMT
1. Corporation	3/11 (27%)	3/11 (27%)
2. Curriculum / Quality	1/8 (13%)	4/8 (50%)
3. Academy	2/8 (25%)	3/8 (38%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>6/27 (22%)</b>	<b>10/27 (37%)</b>

Table 4.4: X-ASG's Contributions seen as challenges or support for SMT in 3 Governance Meetings

explained that she was in agreement but also that she was targeting other governors and attempting to communicate her confidence in the SMT's report:

*R: ....but again you were nodding and showing understanding what [X-SMT1] was saying. So was that just an agreement and showing understanding?*

*X-ASG: Yeah, and support really as well so like the governors that aren't involved in the curriculum and you know, he is not trying to hide things.*

*(Quote7, interview)*

As a general observation from the document analysis of board evaluation documents of the curriculum committee meeting, it emerged that the corporation Chair felt that most of the meeting time was spent on the SMT delivering information with little questioning from governors. Hence, the Clerk's end of year report (13/14) suggested that the chairs of meetings needed to stimulate more debate.

In X-ASG's interview, there was further evidence and a specific example of X-ASG's role in supporting the Principal and the rest of the SMT, where she backed the decision to award them a financial reward at a time when the college was faced with financial difficulties:

*X-ASG (interview): I would always support him in meetings. I know one of the last*

*SMT pay award, that was one of the things that was an example of me supporting the whole SMT. Because one of the other governors happened to actually question why they were having a pay award in times of the review and I was very supportive of them, because I think especially in difficult times you need a strong senior management team.*

**(Quote8)**

However, she claimed, “*I don’t just agree with everything or back everything*” the SMT or other governors say but wouldn’t “*challenge them in a negative way.*” It appeared that any challenge that she might put was somewhat conditioned by her attention to maintain the college’s reputation in front of the external governors as well as possibly influenced by the board Chair because of X-ASG’s practice of meeting leading governors outside formal governance avenues :

*X-ASG (interview): I would never do anything to deliberately embarrass the college, I wouldn’t ask a question that would cause embarrassment or I would go first as I have done before, I have gone to the Chair and said look, I’ve seen this in one of the governance papers and I’m a bit concerned. This is one of the questions that I want to ask, if it will cause embarrassment and she said no, no, that’s a genuine question, you can ask that.*

**(Quote9)**

Nevertheless, the governance arrangements as stipulated in the college’s articles of government ensured that academic freedom for governors so that ASGs could challenge the SMT if they felt a need to do so without risk to their post or privileges at the college.

#### **4.2.2. ASG Role-Specific Activities: X-College**

In search of themes related to X-ASG’s activities other than general governance role activities, three aspects were focussed upon using concepts discussed in chapters 1 and 2. They were professional information giving;



linking governance to TLA; and finally, X-ASG representing academic staff's interests.

#### a. X-ASG's Professional Information Giving

In Q14 of the survey questionnaire, X-ASG indicated that in governance meetings she often contributed by giving professional information based on her TLA expertise, experience and knowledge. A closer look into the value of the information X-ASG relied upon, according to the participants (Q13), is shown in Figure 4.3. It can be inferred from the figure that all of the specified aspects were valued aspects with an average above 2.5 in the 5-point scale. ASGs' awareness of the college's learners' needs was the most highly valued (4.6/5) professional aspect while their knowledge/experience/skills associated with the college's management was the least valued (3.3). The participants also reiterated the value of ASGs'

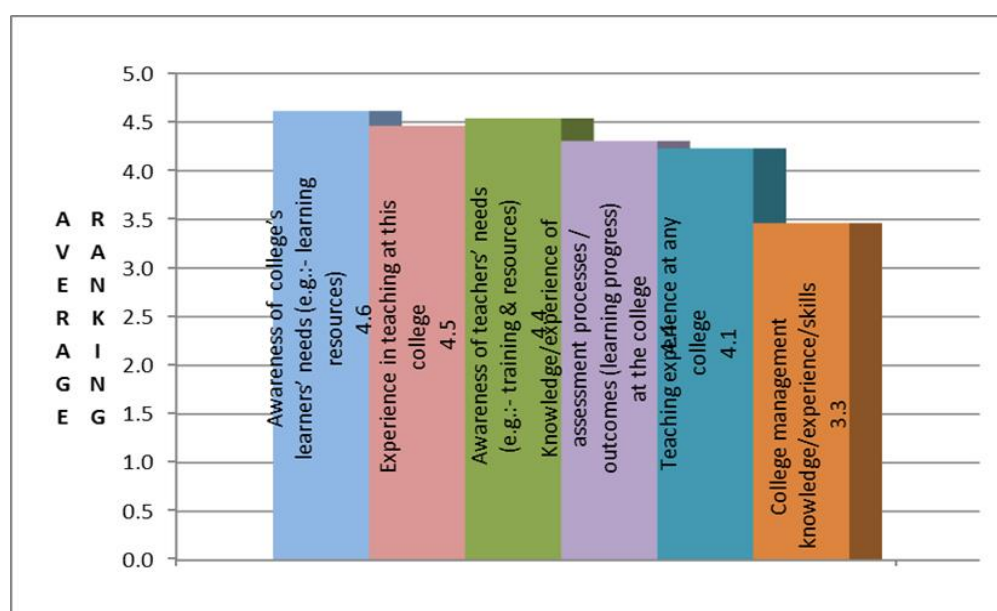


Figure 4.3: Q13 – ASGs' Most Valued Experiences, Knowledge and Skills. (Mean values 0-5, 5 = the most valued aspect) – X-College

professional knowledge in Q16(4), which showed an overwhelming majority (13, 93%) of the governors agreeing that the college's current and past ASGs

had been able to help the board understand the college's educational issues. This was demonstrated in 2 out of 3 observations too. In the Corporation meeting, X-ASG was seen to provide curriculum-related information to explain why she supported the revisions to the college policy to tackle teachers' absenteeism at the college:

***X-ASG:** I feel strongly about this...many in my school, 1250 hours in our school, stress on my team, on your people, with support and teachers, I am teacher and a curriculum manager, as a HoS, I absolutely welcome this.*

**(Quote10)**

Sometimes, X-ASG asked questions from SMT to inform the other governors by loading her questions with TLA related information. In the interview, she explained this:

***X-ASG (interview):** Sometimes I think I ask a question, because you can see other people around, they don't know. If it's a curriculum type question, you can see that they don't. So sometimes I ask the question to enlighten the rest.*

**(Quote11)**

Possible examples of such questions were observed in the curriculum committee meeting:

***X-ASG (to SMT2):** How's the audit affecting the curriculum? IT equipment affecting course recommendations by students?*

**(Quote12)**

In the interview, X-ASG described how the above question linked to her professional experience:

***R:** Is that a professional issue for you or is it something you've been asked to raise?*  
***X-ASG:** It's something that I haven't been asked to raise, but it's something that my team makes me aware of all the time, the issues that they have with the system. So, my team have those issues and I know from talking to other heads of school where their teams have the issues.*

**(Quote13, interview)**

Other examples of X-ASG's professional information-related contributions in

the observations included “*Does it include career advice?*” - the question to the SMT already discussed (:123), regarding meeting the needs of the local community.

According to external governor 3 (X-EXG3), she had witnessed X-ASG performing a professional-information-giving role:

***X-EXG3** (interview): I do know there's times when she's spoken out in the meetings and said, in practice this is what happens....I do know about the X-ASG is that she will, - she's very good at providing context. There's let's say low retention rates or with the functional skills - she's very good at justifying. I believe she's quite aware of what's going on and I think she can bring that.*

**(Quote14)**

## **b. Linking Governance and TLA**

According to X-College governors' responses to the survey, the function of linking governance to the college's educational matters like TLA is a highly relevant activity to an ASG's role (average ranking: 4.6/5). X-ASG herself ranked this activity as fully relevant at 5.0. Under this activity evidence for ASG's various linking activities, especially those taking place outside governance meetings, was sought. The specific sub-themes that emerged under the umbrella topic of 'linking governance and TLA' were:

- 1) ASG visiting the college as a governor
- 2) ASG's involvement in special governance tasks, initiatives and projects.

### **1. X-ASG Visiting the College as a Governor**

Two instances were identified when X-ASG would normally visit the college as a governor, in addition to her normal role as member of staff. One was on the Corporation's strategy days where governors visited different parts of the

college to observe the regular TLA processes. The second was the college students' graduation event. In the Corporation meeting, when the topic of college graduation arrived, X-ASG said, "*I went there last year*" and went onto explain to the meeting how important and satisfying it was to attend such events. In the interview, her account of her experience was characterised with pride and satisfaction:

*X-ASG (interview): I always go to graduations... I go because I'm a staff governor, but I also go because I'm a member of staff... We are invited by the board, but we are also invited by the college. As managers you are invited to go, because quite a lot of the students are coming through are still ones that I taught. There was a girl that I taught English and Math to and she was completing her foundation...to go on to do teaching eventually. So it was lovely to see her coming through. I go for that reason but I also go because I'm invited as a governor, and I think that it's good to show the support to the students.*

**(Quote15)**

Documentary analysis revealed that some governors attended graduation ceremonies and such attendance was seen by some as a reflection of the college's values in governance.

## **2. X-ASG's involvement in Special Governance Tasks, Initiatives and Projects**

### **X-ASG's Contribution to Governor Training**

Evidence in X-ASG's comments on governor training suggests that she could be influencing the nature of governor training available at the college, in particular, training related to TLA.

*X-ASG: When we are asked to make suggestions, I suggested that the governors join in our training days, so they're aware of what we do about TLA... We do a lot of teacher training and it's based around TLA and a lot of it is peer teaching; it's showing best practice, it's getting staff involved in different teaching strategies and finding out themselves.*

*R: Do you think it's going to happen?*

*X-ASG: I think they'll definitely get an invite... Because we have a staff conference and they are all invited and I encourage them to come. If they want to come in and look in the classrooms, my staff would not have any problems with the governors walking into their class. So it is that positive reinforcement all the time that they are welcome to come and see these things happening, they don't just have to sit and wait to get a report from [the SMT].*

**(Quote16, interview)**

Documentary analysis at X-College revealed that governors had requested further training related to TLA (corporation self-assessment 2013/14). The annual report (13/14) recognised this need and stated that the training had been planned and had already started. Therefore, X-ASG's suggestions for TLA training for governors could be seen as pertinent and resulting in an outcome.

Another idea related to the concepts of ASG linking governance to TLA and governor training is ASG's active participation in training such as induction for new governors:

*X-ASG (interview): We go around and visit so, in our strategic governor governance meeting, in April that is part of it is the tour of the college and I would go as a staff member.*

**(Quote17)**

Not only did X-ASG take part, but she also led some of the governors in the briefing / induction tour:

*R: So because you are staff do you play a sort of leading role?*

*X-ASG: I did this time round because I took them around my area, took them into the classrooms... That's the first time we've done it that way. What normally happens is when we join on the Board of Governors, you get a tour of the college.*

**(Quote18, interview)**

The TLA training format was well-received by the governors and was

something that would be repeated at the college in the future:

**X-ASG** (interview): *The consensus was that everybody preferred the way the meetings were handled this time, so it will be something we will take forward.*

(Quote19)

This particular training occurrence and governors' positive feedback were confirmed in the Clerk's report (2013/14).

### X-ASGs as a Link Governor for Underperforming Curriculum Areas

The interview evidence from X-ASG did not indicate that X-ASG as a governor had been assigned to any curriculum areas for monitoring their performance and this was confirmed by the chair of the curriculum committee. Moreover, the committee chair was quite clear that in her view such an approach was not best practice because of the fuzziness that it would cause with regards to the distinction between governance and management:

**Curriculum Committee Chair** (interview): *If you're actually going in to help solve a problem, are you managing or are you governing? Let's say if there was a problem in the curriculum, you could bring some information, you could bring some context. But then if you go in, in your capacity as a governor to solve the problem, that's not being a governor, that's being a manager.*

(Quote20)

### **c. X-ASG Representing Staff Interests**

According to X-College governors' responses to the survey, presenting of staff's opinions was a considerably relevant activity in an ASG's role (average ranking: 4.0/5). Interestingly, and in contrast, in her ranking of the activity, X-ASG disagreed (ranking 1.0 out of 5) that the activity was relevant to her role. If an ASG were to represent staff/teachers' interests, ASG's

awareness of their needs would be a vital resource. In fact, from the survey Q13's results already presented earlier in Figure 4.3 (:128), it can be seen that such awareness on ASG's part is a highly valued resource (average ranking, 4.4/5; third most valued) amongst the governors at X-College.

In the responses to the question (Q14) related to how X-ASG contributed at governance meetings, X-ASG indicated that she had never raised any issues in meetings at the request of any teaching colleagues. Again, this finding contrasted remarkably with the overall finding that the majority of governors (64%) agreed or strongly agreed that ASGs past and present at the college had been representing staff interests. X-ASG was one of the governors who disagreed or strongly disagreed (28%) with the statement. In the optional comments by governors in the survey, external governor 3, indicated that "*the voices of the teaching staff*" should be relied upon in order to get an impression of how well college systems were working but X-ASG alluded to the idea that amongst the college staff there was "*the misguided opinion*" that the ASGs were there to "*support them in terms of disputes*" and hence, to represent their concerns. X-ASG's stance in the matter was in line with the college instrument of governance's directive that governors should not represent any other person or group's mandates, apart from those of the college's.

From the observations and interview evidence it became clear that the issue of representing staff views or needs is not a straightforward but a complex matter. In the interview about her role, X-ASG said, "*I don't think an ASG's role should be about going and representing the staff, because I don't believe*

*that's what it's about.*" but that she could raise a staff issue "*only if it affects the learning of the students*", in other-words, if the issue was TLA-related. Some of her contributions in the corporation meeting about the computer equipment and the sickness policy that she supported were examples of such TLA-related issues staff faced that she had decided to raise in the meeting. She explained that in general, staff did not approach her regarding their issues for raising at governance meetings, although in this meeting the sickness policy issue was a matter one of the teaching union representatives had contacted her about, prior to the meeting:

*X-ASG (corporation meeting): I feel strongly about this. I was contacted by union, even though I'm not a member of this union, I was asked not to support the sickness policy change.*

**(Quote21)**

However, in this situation, she did not promote the viewpoint of the union representative:

*X-ASG (interview): Because they don't ask me and if they did ask me - a bit like the union guy asked me. Now I did bring that to the meeting simply to say that I wasn't bringing it to the meeting if that makes sense.*

**(Quote22)**

In terms of feeding governance matters back to staff, in the interview X-ASG said she would not disclose confidential information to staff:

*X-ASG (interview): I think it's a position of - there are certain things that you need to keep confidential, and I wouldn't go and repeat them. I mean even when they talk about pay awards for the staff, I wouldn't go out and say we are having a pay rise.*

**(Quote23)**

Nevertheless, there was evidence to show that that some feedback from the X-ASG to staff could take place at the college, perhaps with regards to TLA issues. For instance, regarding one of the SMT's explanations in one of the curriculum/quality committee meeting observation about the college Wi-Fi



access to students, X-ASG said:

***X-ASG** (interview): It gave me in terms of what I could then feedback when people were complaining about the Wi-Fi that the reasons why it's been set up that way.*

**(Quote24)**

### 4.2.3. Further Exploration of X-ASG Role

In order to explore X-ASG role at X-College further, attention was given to three concepts. They were X-ASG's power relations; X-ASGs status as a professional amongst other governors (see concepts introduced in Section 2.3.2.a) and finally, the extent to which ASG's role was understood by the governors or, if there was a confusion of the role in the college's governance (Section 2.3.2.d).

#### a. X-ASG's Power Relations

Governors' responses to four questions - questions 12, 16 (Statement 1), 17 and 18 - in the survey questionnaire provided evidence related to the power status of X-ASG in the governing body. The results from Q12 (Figure 4.4)

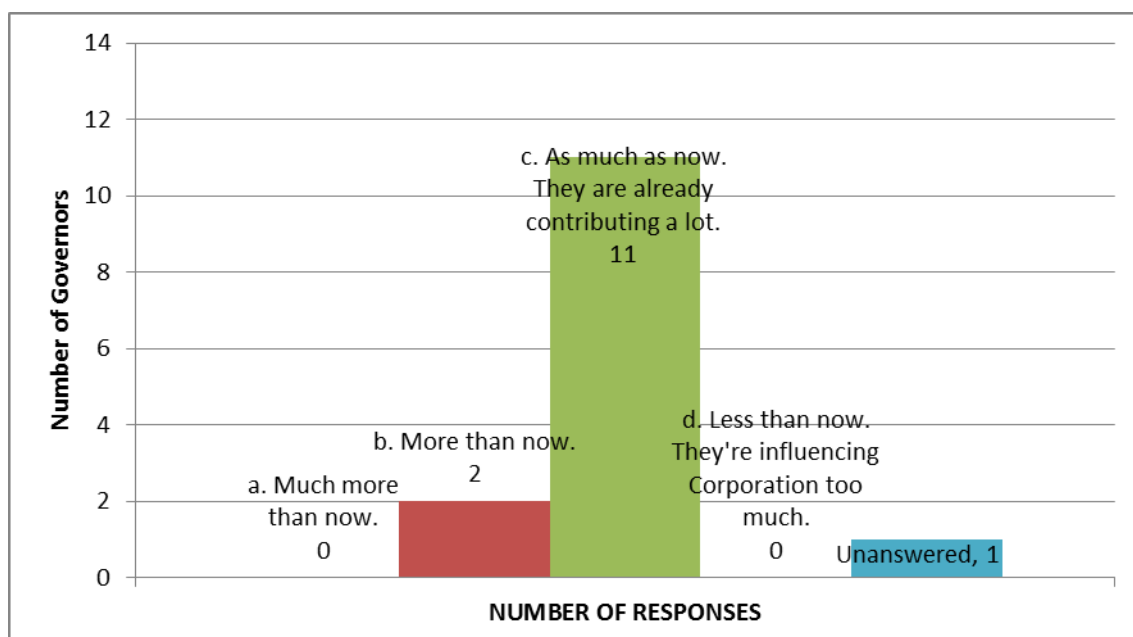


Figure 4.4: Q12: Governors' Expectation of ASGs' Future Contribution / Activities at X-College

showed that 11(79%) of governors felt that X-ASG was contributing to governance significantly (Statement c). However, none of the governors felt that X-ASG was influencing governance too much. Question 16 focussed on equality of ASGs' status in relation to other governors. According to the results, 93% (13) governors agreed or strongly agreed that X-ASG role was of an equal status to other governor roles and X-ASG too strongly agreed with the statement. In a separate question (Q17) in the questionnaire directed at ASGs only, X-ASG strongly disagreed with the statement that she was regarded as a 'second-class' governor by other governors.

From the above analysis it appeared that X-ASG was of equal status as other governors. However interview evidence suggested that she had a 'boss-employee' relationship with at least one of the governors, the Principal / CEO of the corporation, describing him as her "boss" but emphasised that he trusted her to the extent he would call on her to contribute to the meetings:

***X-ASG (interview):** I don't think he treats you any differently to how he treats any of the other governors. He will call on me to speak because he knows I suppose he trusts that I'm not going to say anything daft.*

**(Quote25)**

Question 18 contained 3 statements (Figure 4.5) – a, b and c – covering the topic of ASGs' power status in governance meetings.

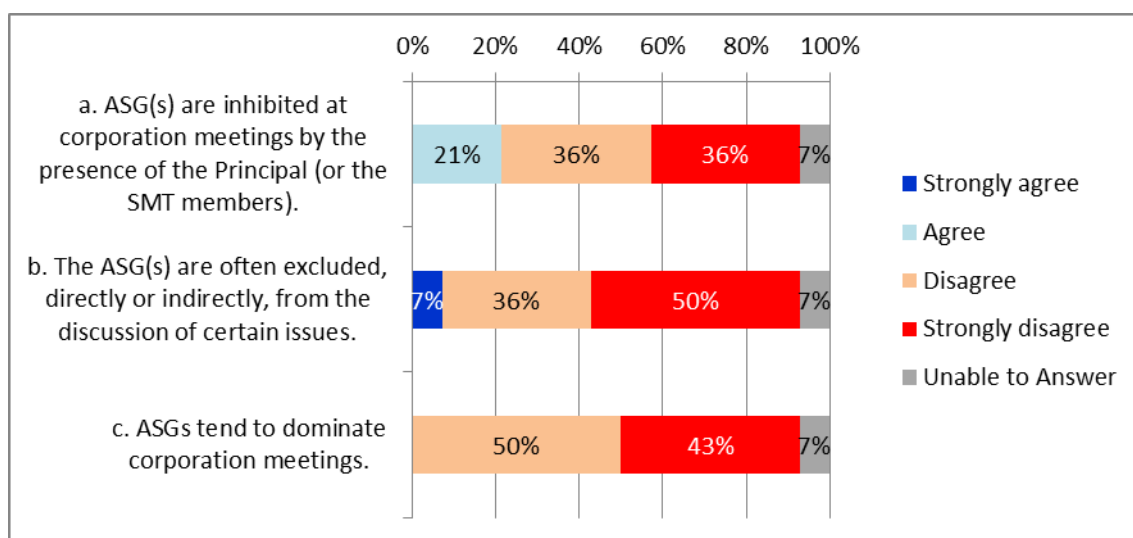


Figure 4.5: Q18: Governors' Responses to Statements about ASGs' Power in Governance Meetings – X-College

The results showed that:

- 72% of governors did not believe ASGs at the college were inhibited in governance meetings due to the presence of powerful actors such as the principal or other SMT members
- 86% did not believe that ASGs were excluded from the discussion of certain issues and
- 93% did not believe that ASGs dominated the corporation meetings.

X-ASG was of the same opinion as the majority of the governors regarding the above statements. The curriculum / quality committee Chair, concurred with X-ASG's assertion:

**Curriculum Committee Chair** (interview): *I feel the meetings are - nobody pulls rank, it's very interactive, very open, democratic discussion and long may it continue.*

(Quote26)

These results indicated that in governance meetings, X-ASG would have been more or less of equal status as other governors. Based on the results from responses in the questionnaire discussed here, X-ASG could be

regarded as an active governor but not with exceeding influence or power in the corporation.

Nevertheless, what is worth noting is that X-ASG did appear to be barred from membership of the remuneration committee as established already (Section 4.2.1.a). Therefore, at the college, X-ASG did not have power to influence the policy-making stages at committee level when discussing pay-related matters. In addition, interview evidence suggested that the curriculum/quality committee Chair was not sure if the governance arrangements allowed ASGs to assume committee chair roles. Unlike the corporation Chair and the Principal's positions, according to X-ASG, committee chairs did not carry much hierarchical power and she herself had previously carried out stand-in meeting chair roles in committee meetings.

***X-ASG (interview):** I think that Chair and the Principal obviously have more power but because that's their role. But in the committees I don't see that. I think those committees are just chaired...the chairs of those committees don't have any power. I have chaired one of the committees as step-in chair.*

**(Quote27)**

The governance documents did not indicate an ASG could not become a committee chair, although the instrument of governance clearly stated that no staff could hold the Chair or Vice-Chair's office of the corporation.

One aspect that may reveal the power-status of ASGs in governance is the extent to which ASGs agreed or challenged others in governance meetings. When these two aspects and the trends in X-ASG's disagreements with others are considered together, one could hypothesise about how X-ASG's power role in meetings. The figures in Table 4.5 show that in the observed meetings X-ASG tended to agree with others more than challenging them.

Most of the 6 agreements were with the SMTs; one instance was with the Principal and two with the Chair of the curriculum / quality committee. Out of the 5 challenges put forward, one instance was directed at the Principal and

	No. of Contributions Showing Agreements with Others	No. of X-ASGs Contributions that Challenged Others	No. of Contributions that Disagreed with SMTs
<b>Total counts</b>	6/27 (22%)	5/27 (19%)	0/27 (0%)

Table 4.5: X-ASG's Contributions that Agreed, Challenged, or Disagreed with Meeting Participants

the rest were at the SMTs who presented reports or policy papers. Notably, there were no overt disagreements expressed in response to any of the participants across the three meetings. A vast majority of the contributions (20, 74%) were out of her own initiative, not as responses to direct invitations or requests from others. The conclusion from the observed meetings was that while X-ASG did not hesitate to put forward challenges to SMTs, she was not observed to be an outspoken member of the board engaging in overt disagreements.

### **b. X-ASG's Professional Status**

From X-ASG's profile already presented in the introduction of this chapter, it is noted that X-ASG had been a member of a professional teaching association. From the interview data it became clear that her membership, which had been with IfL, was not active at the time of the current research because IfL was being disbanded by the government. Neither was she a member of a teaching trade union and since she became a curriculum manager, she had not engaged in any regular teaching duties for 5 years. From this assessment, one could argue that the nature of X-ASG's professional status as a practising academic was not clear.

Nonetheless, through the analysis conducted in preceding sub-sections it was established that:-

- the governors at college valued an ASG's professional experience, knowledge and skills
- X-ASG used her professional expertise to contribute to meetings
- the governors at the college believed that X-ASG was able to help the board understand the college's educational issues and that
- X-ASG played a full and equal role to other governors, who may be from different professional backgrounds but with some restrictions on committee membership.

These findings, all of which have some connection to the concept of professional status, suggested that X-ASG was fulfilling a professional role regardless of any uncertainties about her professional status.

A further question in the survey that covered the topic of an ASG's professional status was Q21, which attempted to explore any specific gatekeeping roles (Coffee, 2006; Cowton, 2008) that may be attributed to ASGs because of their professional status. The results from this question

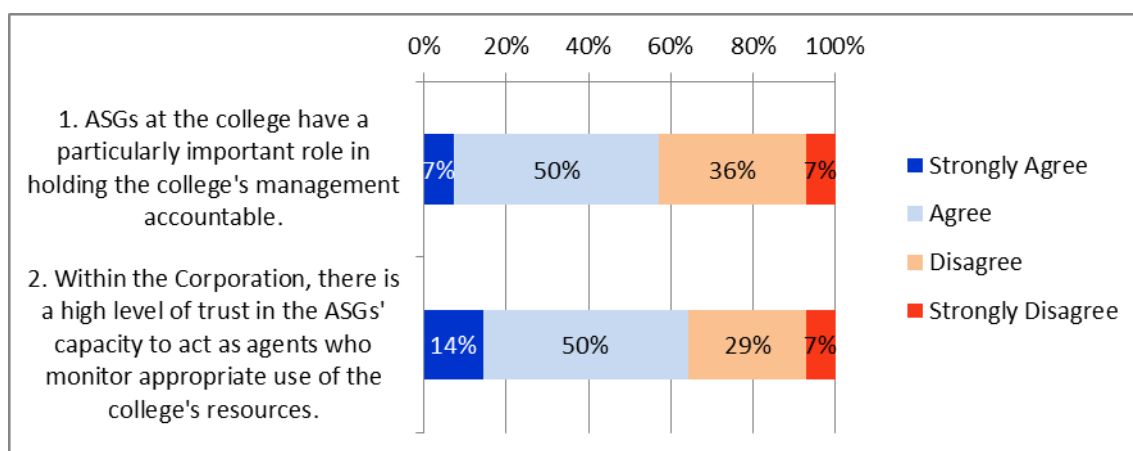


Figure 4.6: Q21: X-College Governors' Views - ASGs Fulfilling a Gatekeeping Role through Monitoring of SMT's Activities

(Figure 4.6) showed that a majority of governors (56%) agreed that ASGs have a particularly important role in holding the SMT accountable and a majority also agreed that there is high level of trust in ASGs in such a role (64%). The 42% disagreement regarding the accountability role is a significant proportion and their views may affect X-ASG's gatekeeping role. Such reservations about X-ASG's professional gatekeeping role may be attributed to her insiderness at the college:

*R: My question is whether the rest of the board would have trust in you to fulfil a major role to hold management accountable, more than any other governors are expected to play that role.*

*X-ASG: No, I would say a similar role as other governors. I wouldn't expect and I don't think any of the other governors would expect me to have more of an impact on holding them to account. In fact, in some ways it could work in reverse because as a teacher governor may be don't want to.*

*R: Is that because you are inside?*

*X-ASG: Well yeah, because they are your boss at the end of the day. It's a tricky one.*

*(Quote28, interview)*

The corporation Chair in her comments to Q21 took issue with raising the profile of ASGs' accountability role above other governors:

*Chair (Questionnaire comment): As full members of the board ASGs are as accountable as anyone else. The accountability is not theirs alone.*

*(Quote29)*

Curriculum committee Chair in her interview presented a similar position and underlined an ASG's equal status to other governors in accountability matters:

*Curriculum committee Chair (interview): I don't think there's a difference between whether it's staff or it's a governor - that would hold management. I think all of us as governors have an obligation to challenge managers.*

*(Quote30)*

The above views meant that at X-College, there was a strong view that ASGs were not expected to play a role of a higher profile than other professionals, and from what X-ASG said above (see Quote28), the professional profile in this regard might be even lower given her insiderness at the college.

More insight into her professional attachment emerged in the interview:

**R:** Do you think a teaching governor's role is a particularly passionate role in governance?

**X-ASG:** I would have to say yes because that's why I do the things that I do. I don't think you could be on a Board of Governors if you aren't passionate because you wouldn't attend and you wouldn't read the papers. I think you have to be absolutely, but then as a teacher you have to be.

**R:** So because you are teacher does it make it even more of a passionate role?

**X-ASG:** I think so because yes, because you care about the direction that the teaching and learning is going in.

(Quote31, interview)

Her passionate role was described as at least partly arising from her teaching-related professional background.

### c. Understanding or Confusion of ASG Role – X-College

Survey Question 16a, Statement 5 sought the extent to which X-College governors believed ASGs were uncertain about their role. The results (Figure 4.7) showed that the vast majority of the board governors (10, 71%)

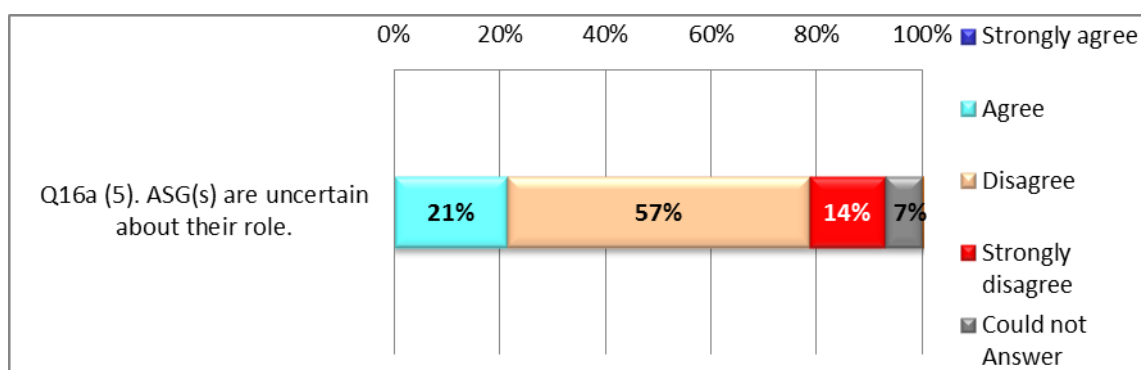


Figure 4.7: Q16a(5) Governors' Views: ASGs' Uncertainty about Their Governance Role - X-College



disagreed that ASGs at the college were uncertain about their role. X-ASG was of the same view highlighting a significant level of confidence within the board as to how well ASGs understood their role. In another related question, Q16b, similar results were obtained. Governors were asked to choose from 0 to 5, depending on how much they felt the confusion about ASGs' role was a barrier in governance. Across the respondents, the average ranking of this theme as a barrier was 2.1 out of 5.0, below the half-way point of 2.5, suggesting that any role confusion present was not a major issue in their view.

Nonetheless, given that 21% of governors felt that ASG was uncertain about her role (Figure 4.7) and that role confusion as a barrier was ranked at 2.1 out of 5, it is safe to assume that there was some uncertainty in ASGs' role at X-College. To illustrate this, one external governor who ranked the confusion at 3.0, commented that role confusion may be attributed to ASGs' dual role function: *"ASGs may feel they must wear two hats, one as an academic and the other as a governor and there may be appreciable conflict."* In fact, X-ASG role could be described as even more complex than a dual role, with at least 3 main roles attached to her – governor, manager, and academic staff. This was highlighted in the curriculum committee Chair's interview:

**Curriculum Committee Chair** (interview): *As an ASG you are an employee and you could be part of the management team which [X-ASG] is. There's blurred lines there... In many ways it's quite a difficult role because you're being paid and you could be, as a staff member, affected by some of the decisions made. When you're at these meetings, you've got to put that aside because you're a governor... So for them it could be quite difficult sometimes, and if you get them too involved, would it almost be too political?...sometimes the role is quite ambiguous.*

(Quote32)

X-ASG did demonstrate her awareness of this 'multi-hat' role. For instance, in

her interview, she referred to her multi-role as a head of school and a governor, and appeared to show mindfulness of her access to governance information such as audit reports or attending events in these separate roles. There was also some evidence that suggested that any issues with role understanding might have been more significant in the early years of X-ASG's governorship at the college:

*R: If you were to pinpoint one big problem you've had as a teaching governor what would that be?*

*X-ASG: Maybe in the very beginning the lack of preparation for the role and not really knowing what the role was about. I think that probably was the biggest.*

*(Quote33, interview)*

It is worth noting that when the current research project was conducted, X-ASG was in her second term in office.

In the interview with X-ASG, one of the ideas that surfaced was how X-ASG believed that the ASG election process created ASG role confusion. It appeared that the way ASG candidates conducted their election processes might have contributed to the confusion. In her first ever election, she lost the election to a teaching trade union representative, who had promised in his election statement to represent teachers' interests. This appeared to be an action that clashed with the expectations of a governor's role as described in the college's instrument of governance, where governors were instructed not to represent any individual or group's interests, apart from the college's alone. From this conflict arose the issue of how much the college staff understood an ASG's role. X-ASG appeared uncertain that the college staff were familiar with the role: *"I don't really know how much the staff know the role. Or is it just another email that comes out and says fill this thing out."* The Business Staff Governor exemplified the issue in the questionnaire using her

experience with college staff:

**Business Support Staff Governor** (Questionnaire comment): *When I first was appointed as a Staff Governor I had a couple of staff ask if I would query a holiday entitlement issue - I sought advice from the Corporation Secretary as I thought, this should have been addressed by the Curriculum Manager rather than at the board.*

(Quote34)

It appeared that some of the college staff were expecting all staff governors, including ASGs, to play a role where they represented staff interests – a role already discussed in section 4.2.2.c.

#### 4.2.4. Emerging Themes: X-ASG's Role and Evaluation

This sub-section, 4.2, has identified a number of themes relating to X-ASG's role. They are:

##### X-ASG's General Governance Activities:

- X-ASG's practice of interacting with SMT outside the governance avenue
- her focus on protecting the college's reputation
- controlled/influenced challenges from her to SMT in meetings
- meeting contributions laden with support-for SMTs
- her relatively limited role in meeting the needs of the local community
- her exclusion from the remuneration committee
- ASG's involvement in SMT pay-related decision-making despite not seen as a significant role.

##### ASG Role-Specific Activities:

- X-College governors' overwhelming recognition of the high value of X-ASG's expertise and the professional information (apart from any relevant management expertise) used in her role
- X-ASG's highly relevant activity of linking TLA matters to governance

- her influence on and leading role in some governor training
- the absence of any support for and evidence of her acting as a link governor for underperforming curriculum areas
- the variance in views about the value of her acting to represent staff interests, and the presence of some limited evidence of X-ASG performing this role.

#### Exploratory Themes Related to X-ASG's Role:

##### Power status:

- X-ASG appeared to be of equal power status to other governors (barring the Principal and the Chair), apart from being officially excluded from the remuneration committee that covered post/pay matters of SMT.
- X-ASG being regarded as an active governor but not with exceeding influence or power in the corporation.
- her official exclusion from being the Chair or Vice Chair of the board
- her ability to put forward some challenges to SMTs but unease in expressing overt disagreements
- her support for and mutual trust between her and the SMTs.

##### Professional status:

- X-ASG fulfilling a professional role but some uncertainties about her professional status existed
- limitations to her gatekeeping role due to her insidership
- her professional status did not appear to be higher than other governors
- her apparently passionate role as an ASG may be attributable to her professional (academic) background.

##### Understanding / Confusion of the ASG role:

- X-ASG role appeared to understand her role well.
- Possible issue of ASG role confusion amongst college staff

As an evaluative comment regarding the extraction and analysis of evidence relating to X-ASG role, it could be said that the researcher should have focussed more on the rationale for ASGs' consulting others before challenging SMT; for example, how such practice served the best interest of the college; and asked for more in-depth information about details about the reasons for her steadfast support for the SMTs. Some of the documentary analysis was conducted after the interviews because of the delay in accessing them. Earlier access would have allowed the researcher to ask for examples of 'meeting the needs of the community' training taking place.

### **4.3. Y-College – ASG Role Findings**

#### **4.3.1. Y-ASG's General Governance Activities**

As in the case of X-College, in the search for themes related to the general governor role activities that Y-ASG, the ASG at Y-College, was involved in, four aspects were focussed upon. They were: statutory roles enshrined in the articles of governance (2008) for Y-College; responding to the needs of the local community; and finally, challenging and supporting SMT's proposals.

##### **a. Statutory Governance Roles**

Following an analysis of the survey data from Y-College governors in the chart shown in Figure 4.8, it can be inferred that 3 out of the 6 statutory activities to do with college's mission, resources and strategy were seen as highly relevant to an ASG role, with rankings above the middle mark of 2.5 in the 5 point scale. This contrasted with the results for X-College, where all of

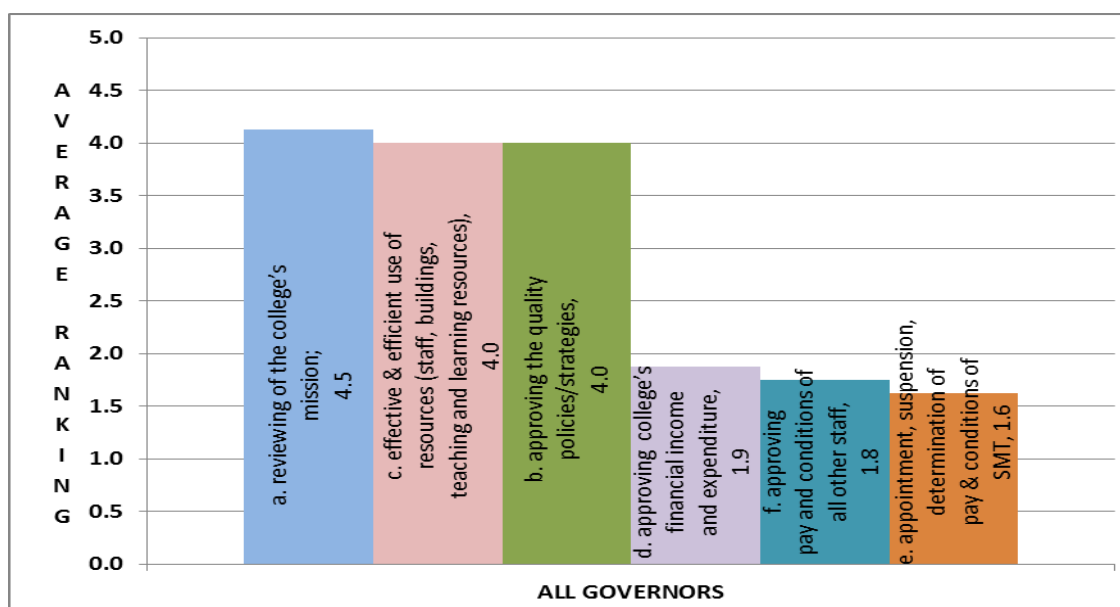


Figure 4.8: Q9. Statutory Governance Activities Relevant to an ASG's Role; Y-College

the six activities apart from SMT's appointment, post and pay-related activity were seen as relevant to the ASG's role. The most relevant activity identified at Y-College was the strategic function of reviewing of college's mission, followed by the monitoring of effective use of resources (including TLA resources). The activity with the lowest ranking and therefore, considered the least relevant, as in X-College, was item e, concerning appointing, suspension and the determination of pay and conditions of SMT at the college.

The above findings about ASGs' statutory functions can be compared to the governors' responses to Q15, where they considered the most relevant corporation committees for an ASG's role. All of the governors indicated that they felt the quality/performance committee was the most appropriate committee for ASGs – the same committee highlighted at X-College. The committee's main remit of monitoring the use of TLA-related resources, was considered the second most relevant activity (c, in Figure 4.8) for an ASG's role. According to Y-College governors, the committee with the least

relevance to an ASG's role was the remuneration committee (again replicating the situation at X-College) with no governors marking it as relevant. The remuneration committee's remits of monitoring staff and SMT's posts and pay-related matters are represented as activities f (the second least relevant) and e (the least relevant activity) respectively in Figure 4.8.

The data obtained in the 3 observations of governance meetings at Y-College was scrutinised for any contributions from the ASG (Y-ASG) that related to his statutory functions. The data (Table 4.6) showed that an overwhelming majority (7, 78%) of his 9 contributions in the curriculum/quality

Observation	No. of ASG's Contributions Performing a Statutory Function (Coding: G_r1_St)
1. Curriculum/Committee Meeting	7/9 (78%)
2. Audit Committee Meeting	2/2 (100%)
3. Corporation Meeting	No contributions in the meeting from Y-ASG
<b>Total</b>	<b>9/11 (81%)</b>

Table 4.6: Observation of Governance Meetings at Y-College: Y-ASG's Contributions Performing a Statutory Governance Role

meeting observation were categorised as fulfilling the general statutory functions of the ASG role, for example, approving college policies or monitoring the use of college resources. This figure was comparable to the finding in X-College, which was 82%. Y-ASG performed these functions, for example, by providing the board with insight into the college's internal lesson observation process:

***Y-ASG (Curriculum/Quality Committee Meeting):** I know some staff are petrified by it. But overall I think in the department that I'm in, I think it's quite a positive thing and it's been welcomed. You will always get some staff who don't like it, but overall, I think staff are really quite keen to get observed just to see where they are and where they pitch their lessons.*

**(Quote35)**

In the second observation (audit committee meeting), the total number of Y-

ASG's contributions was dramatically fewer - only two - but both of these were considered statutory functions. He participated in discussions that approved policies and monitored the use of resources. For instance, he gave his support for the re-appointment of the college's financial auditors and provided a positive account from students' perspective of the newly introduced digital payment-collection points in the college canteen. In the final observation (the corporation meeting), Y-ASG did not make any contributions at all.

During the interview, Y-ASG threw some light onto the nature of his contributions linked to his statutory role. He appeared dissatisfied about the strategic decision-making by the college's SMT, mainly because he felt he was excluded from the decision-making in strategic matters such as restructuring and the appointment, release and redeployment of SMT staff. According to him, it was "*sad*" that they acted as if "*they don't even need to really explain themselves to the governors*" (Y-ASG, interview) and gave two examples - one where governors found out only after one SMT had left the college and another example where it was not clear why one SMT's 80% of working hours had been reassigned to the college's affiliated academy without any discussion at board level.

Regarding being involved in SMTs' and staff pay decisions, he said he had been involved at board level but because he was not a member of the remuneration committee, he could not contribute to the discussions in detail. However, he agreed as X-ASG had done, that it would not be appropriate for him to be involved in such matters due to a conflict of interest – a point also



concurred with by the audit committee Chair (external governor) in his interview. Statutory governance matters that Y-ASG desired to be involved in much more than currently included the appointment/restructuring of SMT posts, college's strategic projects such as space expansion, and new build initiatives:

*Y-ASG (interview): How we employ and deploy, or restructure the college is something that would interest me as a staff governor - to know where we are going. I just feel quite blind sometimes when the structures are sent out and there is no theory behind it but I don't know about it now. You could say that you don't need to know and it's good that you don't need to know but I just feel that as a staff governor, I need to be aware of the imminent changes that are going to take place.*

**(Quote36)**

In contrast, despite being a member of the audit committee, Y-ASG conceded that financial matters “*bored*” him, although he recognised such matters as “*very important*”.

During documentary analysis, it was noted that Y-College's instrument of governance contained identical list of key responsibilities as X-College. For all governors, responsibilities included aspects such as strategy, policy reviewing, monitoring resources educational character and pay and conditions of all staff. No clause in the instrument prohibited Y-ASG from being involved in staff pay decisions as long as they did not involve specific staff. Neither did the instrument bar him from being involved in the appointment or dismissal of SMT or related matters.

#### **b. Y-ASG Responding to Local Community's Needs**

Survey Question 9g sought Y-College governors' views on the extent to which ‘responding to the local community's needs’ should be part of an ASG's role. As in the case of X-College, the data suggested that the governors believed that the activity was of great relevance to an ASG's role,

with an average ranking of 3.8 out of 5. This theme in Y-ASG's meeting contributions was more significant (5, 45%; Table 4.7 below) when compared

Observation	Number of Y-ASG's Contributions that addressed the Needs of the Local Community
1. Curriculum/Committee Meeting	5/9 (56%)
2. Audit Committee Meeting	0/2 (0%)
3. Corporation Meeting	No contributions from Y-ASG in the meeting
<b>Total</b>	<b>5/11 (45%)</b>

Table 4.7: Y-ASG's Meeting Contributions Addressing the Needs of the Community

to the findings at X-College (3, 11%; Section 4.2.1.b). In the curriculum/quality committee meeting, when one of the SMTs presented college marketing material aimed at the local community and highlighting the college's achievements at national level, Y-ASG made a request: "*Can we have this in Urdu?*" He justified the request by highlighting a potential positive impact on the college's image by adding that:

*Y-ASG (Curriculum/Quality Committee meeting): I just think the Imam would be reading something out and putting something up. Because I just think this is what people go for – just simple things like this. They read it and they think, wow!"*

**(Quote37)**

Incidentally, protecting the college's image/reputation was a concept heavily focussed upon by X-ASG too.

In his interview, the Chair of the audit committee, highlighted that Y-ASG's Asian ethnicity meant he had a good opportunity to serve a large part of the community's interest. The committee chair added that serving the community's need was a particularly relevant activity for Y-ASG, "*possibly more so than some other governors*" because Y-ASG "*lives in the area so it's much easier for him*" to represent "*the local community to a degree*", and that "*he's that link between the local community and the college and the Asian community*". Y-ASG in his interview asserted his awareness of the local

needs by claiming his recognition of “*what kind of community that we live in*” and the “*kind of things they prefer*”. He explained his request for the college’s promotional material to be translated to Urdu for dissemination through the local mosques was based on his desire to promote the college’s image and on his experience that there was a major language barrier between generations within the same local families, for instance, that “*in this community we have got parents and sons and daughters living in the same house who cannot speak the same language.*” Therefore, it would be much easier for many parents and grandparents to appreciate the promotional materials containing the college’s national achievements.

Y-ASG was able to give two real-life examples of where he had been able to link the college’s governance to the local community. In one instance, he had been asked by the previous principal to organise a community inter-faith forum, which he did manage through his contacts in the community, and where many from the community attended. In another instance, Y-ASG assisted in resolving a conflict between two groups of students, which required college governors to mediate and Y-ASG was involved in resolving the issue before it became a larger community issue.

### **c. Y- ASG’s Role in Challenging and Supporting SMTs**

Most of the evidence for Y-ASG’s challenge and support role in their interactions with the SMT in governance was obtained from the observations of governance meetings (Table 4.8). Overall, there was considerably more support (6, 55%) than challenges (1, 9%) in Y-ASG’s responses to SMT’s presentations to the board. It was also noted that the margin between the

number of Y-ASG's contributions of support and challenge was much greater

Meeting Observation	No. of ASG Contributions Challenging SMT	No. of ASG Contributions Supporting SMT
1. Curriculum/Committee Meeting	1/9 (11%)	4/9 (44%)
2. Audit Committee Meeting	0/2 (0%)	2/2 (100%)
3. Corporation Meeting	No Contributions made by Y-ASG	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1/11 (9%)</b>	<b>6/11 (55%)</b>

Table 4.8: Y-ASG's Contributions that challenged or supported SMTs in 3 Governance Meetings

than in X-ASG's case. Y-ASG supported his SMTs 6 times more than the challenges he put to them, while X-ASG's supporting contributions in the meetings were just under double the challenges observed. The single challenge put forward was directed at the Principal discussing the public dissemination of marketing information with statistics showing the college's recent nationwide achievements – an action both the Principal and Y-ASG supported. Y-ASG gently challenged the Principal and emphasised how the marketing information would entice members of the local community into considering the college for their education:

**Y-ASG:** *I just think the local Imam would be reading something out and putting something up. You know what I mean? Because I just think this is what people go for - just simple things like this. They read it and they think, 'Wow!'*

**Principal:** *It is mad – you'd have to be mad to go somewhere else [apart from the college].*

**Y-ASG:** *if you say that they think you've got a vested interest, but if you actually show them, they can't; this is the numbers. It's amazing to show them – we beat some of the other colleges.*

Y-ASG's meeting contribution in the curriculum/quality committee meeting quoted (Quote35) on page 150 is an example meeting contribution, where he supported SMTs' ideas that the lesson observation was having a positive impact on quality. What is worth noticing is the imbalance between support and challenge, which was confirmed by the Chair of the audit committee in

his interview:

**Audit Committee Chair** (interview): *I've certainly seen support for particular views or initiatives or recommendations. In terms of challenge - not as much. I don't recall a particular challenge from the staff governor on the Principal or the decisions that the governing body is made.*

(Quote38)

This imbalance was present even though one external governor (Y-Q-EXG1) in the questionnaire underlined the need to both “*challenge and support the strategic direction of the college and its management*” in order to act in the best interest of the college.

In his interview, Y-ASG gave examples of instances where he supported the general staff pay rise, even though it was less significant than the staff may have wanted because he had been aware of the college's financial difficulties. According to him, at times he wanted to challenge SMT but he added, “*If I did do that, I think I would have to leave*”, even though like X-College, Y-College's governing instrument guaranteed the academic staff's ability to “*question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions*”. It appeared that when there was a difficult governance issue relating to the SMT, Y-ASG would go to the Principal outside governance sphere possibly because of his good working relationship with the Principal. However, in general, he found it difficult to challenge the rest of the SMT as described above. This theme of the tendency for the ASG to address issues outside governance platforms was identified at X-College too.

### 4.3.2. ASG Role-Specific Activities – Y-College

#### a. Y-ASG's Professional Information Giving

In Q14 of the survey questionnaire, Y-ASG indicated that in governance meetings he often contributed by giving professional information based on his TLA expertise, experience and knowledge. In the interview with Y-ASG, when his observed meeting contributions were discussed, it became apparent that his personal viewpoints expressed in meetings could not be easily separated from his professional knowledge and expertise. For almost all of the personal views expressed by Y-ASG were based on his professional experience.

The analysis of governors' responses to Question 13 (Figure 4.9) revealed

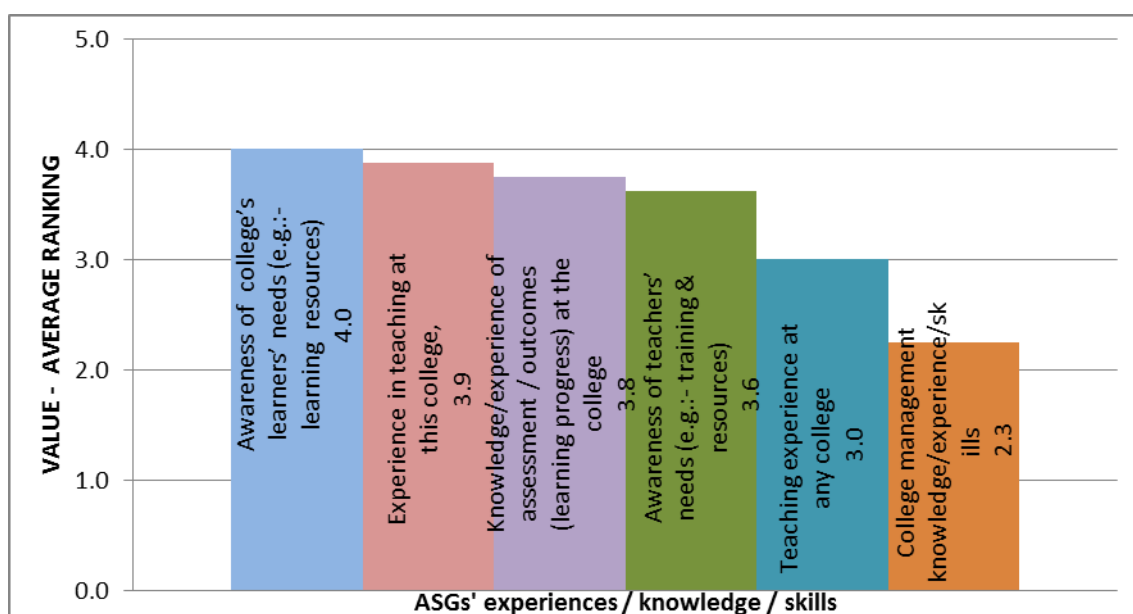


Figure 4.9: Q13: Y-College ASGs' Most Valued Experiences, Knowledge and Skills(mean values 0-5; 5 = the most valued aspect)

the value of the information Y-ASG relied upon. It can be inferred from the figure that all of the specified aspects, apart from ASG's management expertise, were valued aspects with an average above 2.5 in the 5-point scale. ASGs' awareness of the college's learners' needs was the most highly

valued (4.0/5) professional aspect while their knowledge/experience/skills associated with the college's management was the least valued (2.3) aspect. In the interview, Y-ASG asserted the value of an ASG's TLA expertise and knowledge for college governance, such as their potential to "*bridge*" governance and TLA; providing a "*teaching angle*"; "*a student-led angle*"; providing "*on the ground*" information, which other governors might not be able to provide. He saw that it was his duty to "*relay that information back to this board*" especially because he felt the board was sometimes "*quite blind*" to such information.

The above description of the value of ASG's professional knowledge resonated the view presented by the audit committee Chair too: "*Having that experience of teaching, exposure to the students, and the experience of the community and the culture around the local community is something we really do value, probably more than anything else.*"

Y-College governors also reiterated the value of ASGs' professional knowledge in Question 16(4), which showed all (8) of the governors agreeing that the college's current and past ASGs had been able to help the board understand the college's educational issues. This was demonstrated in two of the three observations. Across the observations, in 8 out of 11 (72%) contributions, Y-ASG performed a professional information-giving function. In the curriculum/quality committee meeting, in addition to the professional information Y-ASG provided about lesson observations, he also provided curriculum-related information to summarise the level of professional support academic staff had access to:

**Y-ASG** (*Curriculum/Quality Committee meeting*): *We've got a lot of learning circles – we've got so many things going on and for a young teacher, for a new teacher it's amazing the people that you can go to and there's nobody that you can't go to. I mean starting from the Principal all the way down you can go to anybody and pick up good practice.*

(Quote39)

Y-ASG provided this information during the meeting to add evidence to a reference the Principal made regarding types of professional development support available to staff.

### **b. Linking Governance and TLA**

According to Y-College governors' survey responses, linking governance to the college's educational issues such as TLA is a relevant activity to an ASG's role (average relevance ranking, 3.5/5). The ranking was lower than the 4.6 average ranking by X-College governors. As X-ASG had done, Y-ASG ranked this activity as fully relevant at 5.0. An ASG's professional knowledge and expertise has the potential to bridge the gap between college governance and TLA; a point to which Y-ASG and the audit committee chair alluded to - see the previous sub-section on ASGs' professional information-giving.

The following governance and TLA linking activities were further analysed during the interviews:

1. ASG visiting the college as a governor
2. ASG's involvement in special governance tasks, initiatives and projects.



## **1. Y-ASG Visiting the College as a Governor**

According to the comments made by the Chair of the audit committee, Y-ASG was invited to most college events such as open evening as other governors and he felt Y-ASG attended them fairly well, as he had seen him in open evening events. However, Y-ASG did not feel that he had been asked to visit the college in a governors' capacity but that he would like to attend other colleges to observe how their ASGs performed their various roles.

The apparent contradiction between what the committee chair and Y-ASG said regarding Y-ASG's visits to the college as a governor was explained by the committee chair. According to him, there was an issue as to what capacity Y-ASG was seen in such events:

***Audit Committee Chair** (interview): I don't distinguish him particularly as a governor or member of staff when I see him outside of the meeting and what he sees himself as I don't really know. It's a difficult as to whether he sees as a governor or member of staff.*

**(Quote40)**

The multiple-role identities of ASGs in relation to their roles as a governor, teacher or manager were recognised by X-ASG but the various roles were not differentiated by Y-ASG in his input into the current research project.

## **2. Y-ASG's Involvement in Special Governance Tasks, Initiatives and Projects**

In terms of Y-ASG's involvement in special governance-related activities, the audit committee Chair believed that Y-ASG did volunteer for such activities and that such initiatives had been mentioned in governance meetings. He gave an example of such an activity where Y-ASG helped to organise a

speed-dating event that had gone well between students and governors, where students had the opportunity to express their views about various aspects of the college. Other examples of Y-ASG's initiatives have already been covered in meeting the needs of the community theme in Section, 4.3.1.b, above. However, Y-ASG had been left slightly bemused that the only requests from the board for his regular involvement in special tasks had been in the college's tender opening for projects, where he would open the applications in the presence of the applicants. Y-ASG saw that this apparently trivial task devalued ASGs' role at the college.

Regarding the idea of Y-ASG working as a link governor between underperforming curriculum areas and governance, both the audit committee Chair and Y-ASG agreed that the idea was a good one in principle. However in reality, according to Y-ASG, even though *"the board assigned a governor to a department to see what the overview of the department is"*, the board *"will never assign us, a staff governor."* He further added, *"I don't know why they wouldn't, but they didn't"* and when he had volunteered, he was told his participation was not required. The audit committee chair was also able to confirm that non-ASG governors had been assigned such roles and was able to give a possible reason for Y-ASG's exclusion - *"you can see a bit of a conflict there if he's a link to a particular area and if it was his own area"*. It appeared that the insiderness of Y-ASG, as in X-ASG's case, would limit his role as a governor.

### **c. Y-ASG Representing Staff Interests**

Y-College governors' responses to the survey indicated that presenting of

staff's opinion was a relevant activity in an ASG's role (average ranking, 3.1/5). In contrast to X-ASG, Y-ASG strongly agreed (ranking 5/5) that the activity was relevant to his role. From the survey Q13's results already presented earlier in Figure 4.9 (:157), it can be seen that Y-ASG's awareness of staff/teachers' needs was a valued resource amongst Y-College governors and thus, substantiating the relevance of Y-ASG's representative role in governance.

In his response to the Q14, Y-ASG indicated that he had often raised issues in meetings at the request of teaching colleagues. Again, this finding added strength to the overall finding that half of Y-College governors (50%) agreed or strongly agreed that ASGs past and present at the college had been representing staff interests; and where about 13% were of a strong view that such a role had been taking place. Y-ASG too, was amongst those who agreed with the statement.

The analysis of Y-College's governance instrument confirmed that, as at X-College, ASGs or other governors were not permitted to represent any individual or group of people. Conversely, in her comments, Y-College Principal said the ASG *"should be able to help governors understand the college better and ensure effective links with college staff."* Such a role of linking governors to the college staff implies at least some representation of teachers' views in governance. The audit committee Chair also added weight to this position in his interview asserting that an important and unique role of ASGs is to enable the board to establish *"the link between staff and students."* Yet, he made several points to the effect that he did not feel that in

reality Y-ASG was performing a representative role on behalf of the college staff:

***The audit committee Chair** (interview): I certainly don't get the sense he's representing - as I say, I've not - I can't think of an occasion where I've recognized him sort of standing up or saying something on behalf of other staff.*

**(Quote41)**

Y-ASG's assessment was that he was not clear whether he was expected to represent teachers and that in meetings he had not been asked what the general staff thought about college matters:

***Y-ASG** (interview): I have never had anyone say to me, as a staff governor, if a member of the staff says, "I am being bullied", or "I feel that this work is too much for us" or "I feel this curriculum is not good" or "this is happening" or "this is racist", you can go to the governance body and say, I would like to put this on the agenda. The Chairman will say, "what do you think?" It's always "what I think". It's never "what does the staff think?"*

**(Quote42)**

Despite the uncertainty, Y-ASG's personal stance regarding his role was similar to that of the Principal and the audit committee Chair. He felt that he "should represent other staff on the board" and the role is such that it should allow "staff an opinion; where they can freely with respect speak their mind through the staff governor."

In terms of what was observed in the three governance meetings, there was one contribution from Y-ASG, which after discussing with the ASG, was classified as presenting the general teacher's viewpoint. Y-ASG was seen explaining to the board the various developmental opportunities related to lesson observation and TLA practice from the college teachers' points of view. In the interview, he also described another example where he attempted to raise an issue about a staff member who approached him unhappy about having to work during unofficial hours on a college open day.

Y-ASG presented the issue to the Clerk, through whom he received the Principal's response that the matter was "*any other business*", not a governance matter.

Regarding ways Y-ASG could canvass staff views for them to be presented to the corporation, Y-ASG said he would like to have general meetings with staff but again was uncertain if that was within his role remit. Therefore, any communication he had had with staff was "*informal*", mainly with "*individual*" staff; "*through e-mail*", or "*through word of mouth*", where staff would approach him or he would report back critical news such as the time the college announced a pay rise for staff. The audit committee Chair in his interview pointed out that there was potentially a developmental opportunity for the staff representation aspect of the ASG role at the college, where the ASG "*feeds back to the wider staff community after meetings and what's been discussed and what the key decisions were.*" However, he added caution that while such activities could be "*beneficial*", they could also "*cut across messages that are going to come out from the Principal.*"

#### **4.3.3. Further Exploration of Y-ASG roles**

##### **a. Y-ASG's Power-Relations**

Governors' responses to four questions - questions 12, 16 (Statement 1), 17 and 18 - in the survey questionnaire provided evidence related to Y-ASG's power status in governance. The results from Q12 (Figure 4.10) showed that 4 (50%) governors felt that Y-ASG was contributing to governance significantly (Statement c). However, as in X-College's case, none of the

governors felt that Y-ASG was influencing governance too much. According

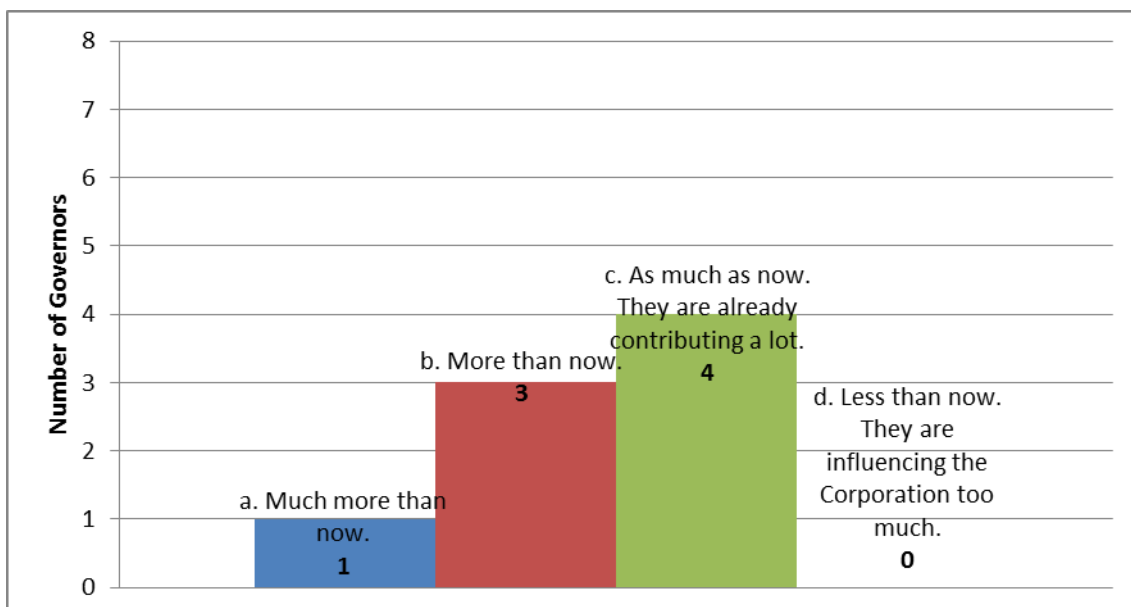


Figure 4.10: Q12: Governors' Expectation of ASGs' Future Contributions / Activities at Y-College

to the governors' responses to Question 16, all but one of the governors (7, 88%) agreed or strongly agreed that Y-ASG's role was of an equal status to other governors' at the corporation and Y-ASG too agreed with the statement. However somewhat contradictorily, in a separate question (Q17) directed at ASGs only, Y-ASG's response indicated that he felt that he was regarded as a 'second-class' governor by other governors.

The results for Question 18 in the survey containing (Figure 4.11) power-

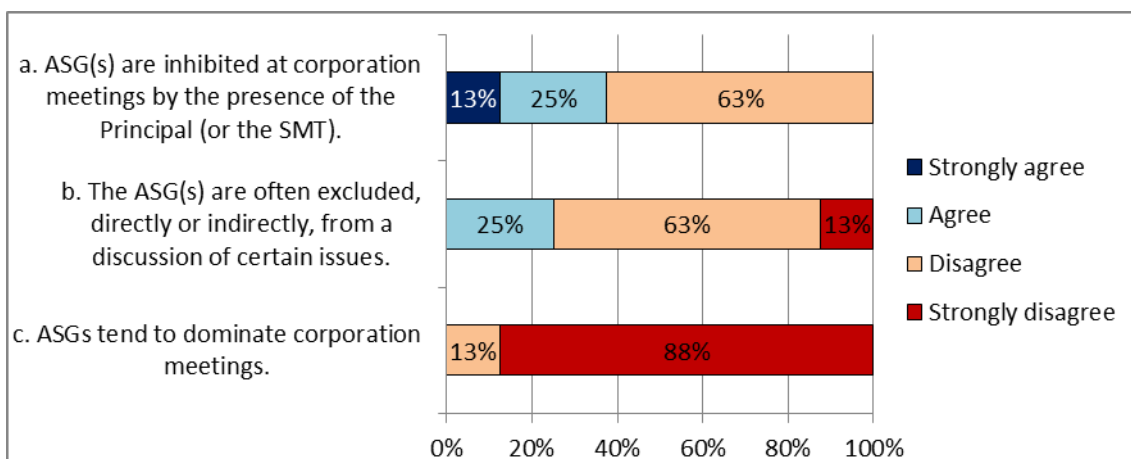


Figure 4.11: Q18: Governors' Responses to Statements about ASGs' Power in Governance Meetings - Y-College

related statements showed that:

- 63% of governors did not believe ASGs were inhibited in corporation meetings due to the presence of the principal or other SMT members ;
- 76% did not believe that ASGs were excluded from discussions of certain issues and
- 88% did not believe that ASGs dominated the corporation meetings.

By contrast, and unlike X-ASG, Y-ASG strongly believed that he felt inhibited in meetings because of the presence of SMT. He also believed that he was in fact excluded from some discussions too. This was confirmed in the ASG interview, where Y-ASG stated SMTs seemed to be present in every meeting and throughout whole meetings. He said he was reluctant to air his honest opinion because of possible repercussions and organisational politics at work, even though as already noted, all college academic staff had been given protection in the instruments of governance so that staff could raise any issue they wished.

In order to identify power themes in Y-ASG's role, his meeting contributions were analysed in terms of the number of his agreements, disagreements and challenges to other meeting participants. The figures in Table 4.9 representing how Y-ASG performed these actions show that in the observed

	No. of Y-ASG's Contributions		
	Contributions in Agreements with Others	Contributions that Challenged Others	Contributions that Disagreed with SMTs
<b>Total counts</b>	5/11 (45%)	1/11 (9%)	0/11 (0%)

Table 4.9: Y-ASG's Contributions that Agreed, Challenged, or Disagreed with Participants in Observed Meetings

meetings, Y-ASG tended to agree with others significantly much more than challenging them.

As at X-College, there were no disagreements by the ASG in response to any of the participants across the three meetings. A majority of the contributions (9, 82%) were out of his own initiative, not as responses to direct invitations or requests from others. The conclusion from the observed meetings was that Y-ASG possibly wanted to but could not challenge SMT or held predominantly similar views as SMTs. Furthermore, he was not observed to be an outspoken member of the board engaging in any disagreements.

At the interview stage of evidence collection, the audit committee Chair pointed out the reality that governors who were members of the resources-related committee and the academy school committee had more power than Y-ASG, and influenced board decisions more because the majority of the decisions were formulated in those committees. The Principal, the Chair, the Vice Chair, the audit committee Chair himself, and the Local Council member sat in these committees forming the dominant coalition. According to the audit committee Chair, Y-ASG's power status was lowered by the fact he was not a member of these committees but also because of his limited contributions (also supported by observation data; Section 4.3.1.a) in the audit committee due to his non-financial background. Y-ASG in his interview made the same point but further referred to an executive committee made up of the Vice-Principal, the Chair, the Vice-Chair and two or three SMTs being the main power brokers and decision-makers. Restrictions were also placed



on Y-ASG by the governance instrument with a bar on ASGs being the Chair or Vice Chair of the board. In reality, according to Y-ASG, similar restrictions went further, whereby Y-ASG would not be expected to be a chair or vice-chair even at committee level. To some extent, such restricting of ASGs' role to mundane tasks frustrated Y-ASG because to him, they devalued the role:

*Y-ASG (interview): They'd never put me as a chair of any committee. You know, I didn't know that I can never be the chair of the finance committee or the curriculum quality committee...I would like to be told why we are not in the executive committee. I would also like to be given a more prominent role in the governance, I am not just a tick-box to attend and open tenders.*

**(Quote43)**

Overall, Y-ASG felt that in the college board, ASGs were towards the bottom of the power spectrum, just above the student governors.

Regarding the nature of Y-ASG's relationships with governance actors, in the observations Y-ASG was seen to interact with a variety of meeting participant categories, including various governor constituents (Chair, external governors and the Principal and SMTs). This implied a good relationship between Y-ASG and others and such relationships were further scrutinised during the two interviews. What transpired from Y-ASG's comments was that even though SMT might interact with him in meetings, they did not necessarily ask for his opinion with serious intentions; that management would hear him only in governance meetings or when he raised issues through the Principal. He also had feelings that SMTs feared what he might say in governance would cause concerns. Overall, he was disappointed with that relationship he had with the SMTs. Some of Y-ASG's words included:

- There is some staff - some managers who will ask your opinion for the sake of asking.*
- Sometimes the management are quite scared of maybe what I'd say or - it's like rocking the boat.*
- Sometimes, SMT would hear me but only when I'm amongst governors or go to the*

*Principal's office and say "what's going on?"*

*(Quote44, Y-ASG, interview)*

Y-ASG's relationship with the Principal appeared to be much more positive. The audit committee Chair described ASG's relationship with the Principal as consisting of "*open dialogue*" where "*they both value each other.*" Y-ASG added weight to the external governor's assertion by describing her as "*kind*", with "*good vision*" and a "*good leader*". According to him, she would "*listen*" to him and also "*respect*" what he would have to say. Y-ASG's relationship with other governors, including the Chair, the Vice-Chair and the audit committee Chair were described by both Y-ASG and the audit committee Chair as good and of mutual respect.

These results relating to Y-ASG's power relations indicated that in governance, Y-ASG had a limited power status and was not in the dominant coalition. He could be regarded as supportive of SMT's proposals in meetings but in reality he would hesitate to engage fully in governance meetings because of his relationship with the SMTs and their constant presence in governance meetings. His relationship with the Principal and the rest of the governors was seen to be of mutual respect and of a professional nature.

#### **b. Y-ASG's Professional Status**

In Y-ASG's profile presented in the introduction of this chapter, Y-ASG declared that he was a member of a professional teaching association but from the interview it became clear that his membership was with a wider professional (as opposed to teaching) association for those from ethnic minority backgrounds. He was not a member of a teaching trade union and

was a college students' affairs manager with regular teaching duties of 10-15 hours per week.

Through the analysis of evidence conducted in preceding sub-sections it has been established that:-

- the governors at Y-College valued an ASG's professional experience, knowledge and skills apart from the non-teaching related aspects such as managerial expertise.
- Y-ASG used his TLA-related professional expertise to contribute to meetings. The special task he accomplished such as the 'speed-dating' opportunity for students with the governors would have allowed him to explore his background in teaching Personal and Social Development Skills (PSD). At the same time, some of the governance activities he performed were not necessarily relying on his general TLA professional knowledge, but professional knowledge linked to his other professional background. For instance, such as his interception to resolve student group issues in the community would have called for his profession as a college manager liaising with the local community.
- Governors at the college believed that Y-ASG was able to help the board understand the college's educational issues and that
- Y-ASG's power status was likely to be lower than many other governors (see previous section) and with some restrictions on committee membership or limited contributions at committee level.

These findings from previous sections suggested that Y-ASG was fulfilling a professional role regardless of the potentially low power status.

Exploring Y-ASG's professional status further, the results from survey Q21 (Figure 4.12), which focussed on specific gatekeeping roles (Coffee, 2006;

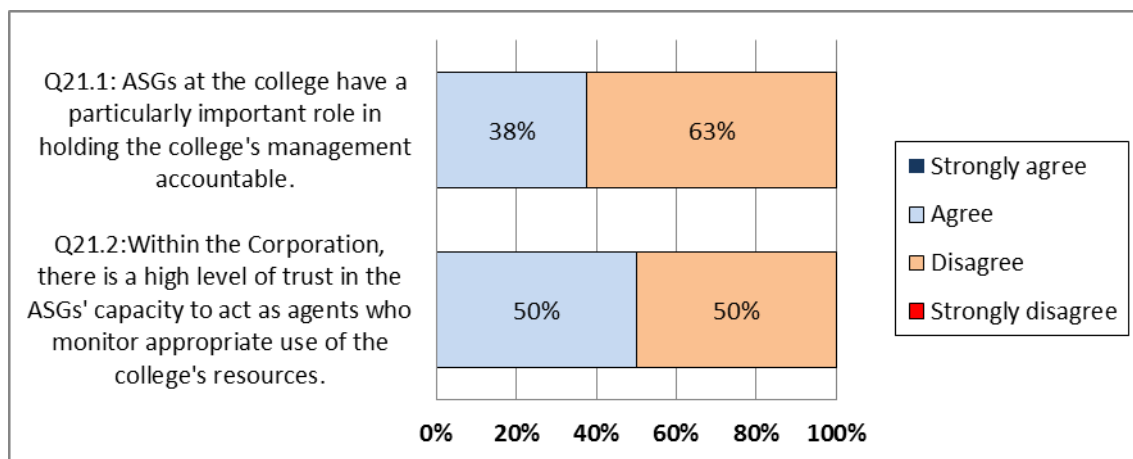


Figure 4.12: Q21: Y-College Governors' Views about ASGs Fulfilling a Gatekeeping Role through Monitoring of SMT's Activities

Cowton, 2008) showed that unlike at X-College, a majority of governors (63%) disagreed that ASGs have a particularly important role in holding the SMT accountable and only half (50%) agreeing that there was a high level of trust in ASGs playing such a role. The Principal addressed this topic of professional status in her comments in the questionnaire by saying that the college already had a strong set of professionals in the corporation and therefore, the governors “*do not depend on the ASG to lead the way*” in oversight functions. The audit committee Chair further clarified in his interview that it would be risky for any governor to be more important than the Principal or other governors and that in Y-ASG’s case, conflict of interest would arise in an excessive governance role given his insiderness at the college. In Y-ASG’s view, he would not be able to play a more prominent role as a professional monitor because of the low power status he experienced in governance.

### c. Understanding or Confusion of ASG Role – Y-College

Survey Question 16a’s results in showed that as at X-College, the vast majority of the Y-College governors (7, 88%) disagreed that ASGs at the college had been uncertain about their role. Y-ASG was of the same view

highlighting a significant level of confidence within the board as to how well ASGs understood their role. Moreover, Q16b's results showed that confusion about ASGs' role was not a significant barrier in governance. Across the respondents, the average ranking of this theme as a barrier was only 1.9 out of 5.0, below the half-way point of 2.5. Yet, it is significant that the only governor who thought Y-ASG was uncertain about the role was the college Principal.

More strain between views appeared at the interview stage. While the audit committee Chair stressed that there was no issue about the board's or Y-ASG's understanding of ASG role in governance, Y-ASG's strong views about the issue surfaced. He felt that no one had explained to him what the role entailed; his rights, duties, limits; whether he could represent staff or not; and that he had had no training at all. He added, *"To fulfil the role, I'd just had to basically do the research myself."* and *"I am a staff governor, but I never had any clarity about that."* Clearly, there were real issues of understanding what an ASG role was in governance. He also claimed that there were uncertainties about the role across the college, echoing X-ASG's view about her college, and put the responsibility on the SMTs:

**Y-ASG (interview):** *I think it is the management responsibility to say that you know we have a staff governor. He is the governor of all the staff. He represents the staff.*

**(Quote45)**

Y-ASG's belief that ASGs should represent staff was clear in the interview and evidence of him performing this role has already been presented in section 4.3.2.c. The fact that Y-ASG, the Principal and the audit committee Chair held the view that an ASG's role should include at least some representation of staff views, in contrast with what the college governance

instrument stated, does challenge the survey findings presented earlier in this section. The clash between the governance instrument and governors' views indicate a fundamental issue related to the general understanding of ASGs' roles at the college, while noting that Y-College is one of the top performing colleges in the country.

#### **4.3.4. Emerging Themes: Y-ASG's Role and Evaluation**

This sub-section, 4.3, has identified the following themes relating to Y-ASG's roles.

##### Y-ASG's General Governance Activities:

- Y-ASG's practice of interacting with the Principal outside normal governance avenue in governance matters
- his meeting contributions laden with support-for SMTs and hardly any challenges
- evidence of his activities related to meeting the needs of the local community
- his exclusion from the remuneration committee and limited contribution to the audit committee
- tendency not to get involved in pay-related matters.

##### ASG Role Specific Activities:

- Y-College governors' overwhelming recognition of the high value of Y-ASG's expertise and the professional information (apart from any relevant management expertise) used in his role
- Y-ASG's highly relevant activity of linking general TLA matters to governance.
- the absence of any support for and evidence of him acting as a link governor for underperforming curriculum areas due to his insiderness
- the generally valued role of an ASG acting to represent staff views, and the presence of some evidence of Y-ASG performing such a role; however, the governance instrument did not allow such a role

- the difficulty in separating ASG's professional information from his personal points of view
- Y-ASG's engagement in specific activities involved organising student and community-related events in governance
- some engagement in low value/satisfaction tasks and desire to get involved in more high profile governance activities

#### Exploratory Themes Related to Y-ASG's Role:

##### Power status:

- Y-ASG did not appear to be of equal power status to other governors; mainly because of not being involved in any of the more powerful committees or in the dominant coalition
- Y-ASG not seen with exceeding influence or power in the corporation.
- his official exclusion from being the Chair or Vice Chair of the board
- his unease in expressing overt disagreements
- his support for and mutual trust between him and the Principal but not necessarily with the SMT.

##### Professional status:

- Y-ASG fulfilling a multi-disciplinary (managerial; subject specific - Personal and Social Development; TLA) professional role despite low power status
- limitations to his gatekeeping role due to his insiderness
- his professional status equal or potentially lower than other governors' status

##### Understanding / Confusion of ASG role:

- Y-ASG appeared to be confused about his role in the board.
- Possible lack of clarity of ASG role amongst college staff and potentially amongst the governors

As an evaluative comment regarding the extraction of evidence relating to Y-

ASG role, what made the research at Y-College difficult was that the Clerk had to be on long-term leave from work, which resulted in some of the document for analysis (for example, committee terms of references) not being made available.

In the next section of the thesis, findings about the role of the ASG, Z-ASG, at College Z will be presented.

#### **4.4. Z-College: ASG Role Findings**

##### **4.4.1. Z-ASG's General Governance Activities**

###### **a. Statutory Governance Roles**

In the analysis of themes related to Z-ASG's statutory role, evidence relating to governors' responsibilities enshrined in FE governance statutory responsibilities (DIUS, 2007), which also appeared in the college's Articles of Government (2013), was sought.

The survey data for Q9 (Figure 4.13), showed that 4 out of the 6 statutory activities to do with strategy, mission, TLA resources and finance were seen as highly relevant to an ASG role, with rankings above the middle mark of 2.5. As at X and Y colleges, the activities with the lowest ranking and therefore, considered the least relevant were to do with appointing, suspension and the determination of pay and conditions of SMT (ranking 1.6)



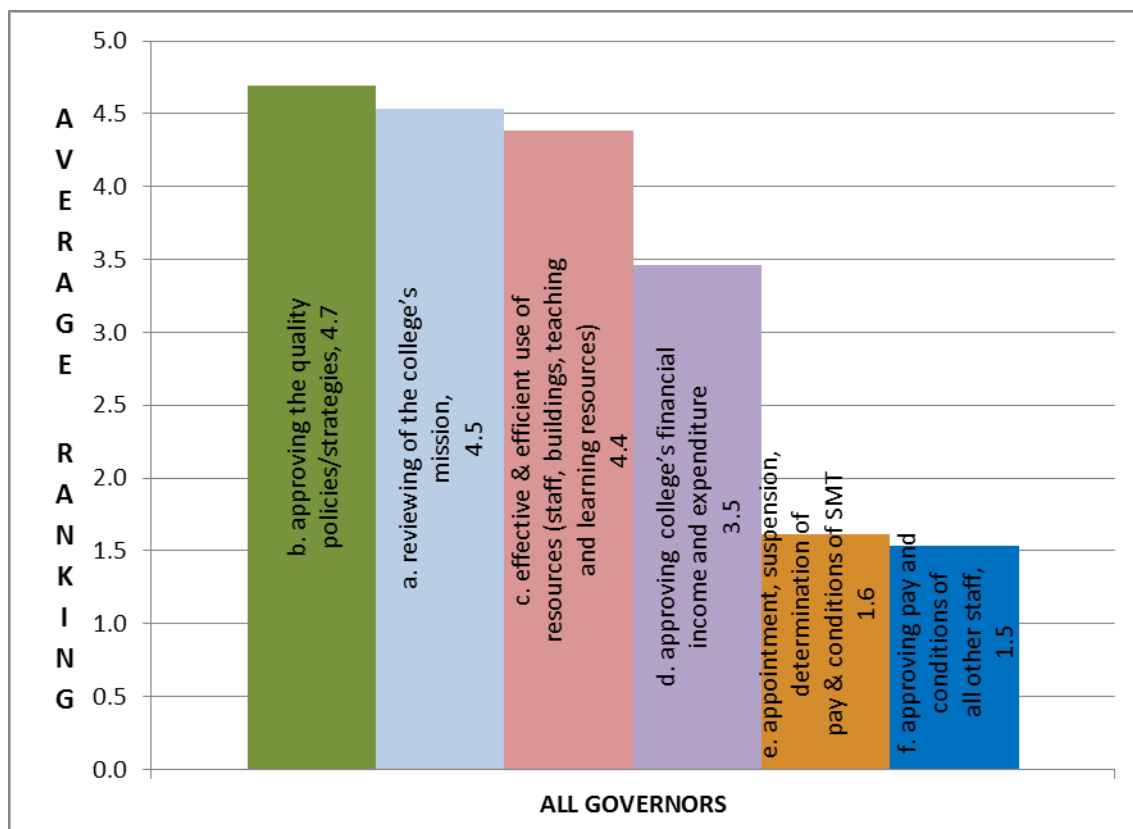


Figure 4.13: Q9. Statutory Governance Activities Relevant to an ASG's Role; Z-College

and staff (ranking 1.5). In the questionnaire, external governor, Z-QEXG1 commented that “*conflict of interest*” is the reason why these two aspects were not relevant to an ASG’s role. The Vice Chair in his interview concurred with this position and further added that by excluding ASGs from pay-related matters, the corporation was protecting ASGs from being put in a position where the individuals might be compromised if given access to confidential information.

Z-College governors’ responses to the related question, Q15, showed that almost all of the governors (12; 92%) felt quality and performance and finance/resources-related committees would be the most appropriate committees for ASGs. At Z-College, the committee structure was such that finance and resources committee were combined into a single one that performed finance and quality/performance functions. Interestingly, Z-ASG

was not a member of this committee even though the committee's remit of monitoring the use of TLA-related resources, was regarded as highly relevant to an ASG's role (a close third; item c, ranking 4.4/5 in Figure 4.13).

The committee with the least relevance to an ASG's role was seen to be the remuneration committee (2, 15%), again replicating the situations at X and Y colleges. The committee's remit of monitoring SMT's and general staff's posts and pay-related matters are represented as activities e (the second least relevant) and f (the least relevant activity) respectively in Figure 4.13. In the interview with Z-ASG, regarding his contribution to strategic decision-making, he said that ASGs together with most of the board did not have much of a role because decisions were being made by the SMT before meetings, and that at the college, *"the operational drives the strategic rather than the other way round."* He gave recent examples where governors' suggestions were over ridden by SMTs' pre-conceived proposals in strategy meetings. In such a situation, Z-ASG together with the whole board would have limited influence in strategic decision-making.

The data obtained in the 2 observations of governance meetings showed that all 4 (100%) of Z-ASG's contributions in the corporation meeting observation and the staffing-related committee observation were categorised as fulfilling general statutory functions of the ASG role (Table 4.10). For example, Z-ASG asked delving questions into the effective use of college resources to develop e-governance (digitalised papers in governance meetings) and making suggestions in the discussion on the effective use of governors' time on annual strategy days. The Vice Chair in his interview gave further insight into

Observation	Number of Z-ASG's Contributions that Performed a Statutory Function
1. Corporation Meeting	1/1 (100%)
2. Staffing committee meeting	3/3 (100%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>4/4 (100%)</b>

Table 4.10: Observation of Governance Meetings: Z-ASG's Contributions

the expected strategic role of ASGs. He was quite clear that there had to be a certain “*corporateness*” about the role by which he meant ASGs giving views “*which might not always be about what teachers would see*” but views about what “the institution should be doing” or provide the “*helicopter view*” and where necessary, “*drill down into the professional activities of the college.*”

#### b. Z-ASG Responding to Local Community's Needs

According to the governors' responses to Q9, Statement g, as in the case of X and Y colleges, Z-College governors believed that the activity of responding to the local needs was of great relevance to an ASG's role, with an average ranking of 3.8 out of 5. This theme in Z-ASG's meeting contributions was the most significant (2, 50%; Table 4.11), when compared

Observation	Number of Z-ASG's Contributions that addressed Needs of the Local Community
1. Corporation Meeting	0/1 (0%)
2. Staffing committee meeting	2/3 (67%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>2/4 (50%)</b>

Table 4.11: Z-ASG's Meeting Contributions Addressing the Needs of the Community

to the findings at colleges X (11%) and Y (45%). An example of such a contribution from Z-ASG took place in the staffing committee meeting, in the discussion about mental health issues amongst college students. Z-ASG made a suggestion about identifying such students at enrolment: “*Is there*

*any merit in screening for it, from entry to the college?"* This was seen as a consideration of the issue amongst the wider community and led to a discussion on the co-operation between local schools and the college in the matter. In the interview, Z-ASG further explained his suggestion for screening applicants, highlighting his empathy with relevant individuals in the community: *"It's not mandatory, but as we begin to remove the stigma of mental issues, it would be useful to have a way of capturing that information."*

### c. Z-ASG's Role in Challenging and Supporting SMT

The evidence from observations of governance meetings (Table 4.12)

Meeting Observation	No. of ASG Contributions Challenging SMT	No. of ASG Contributions Supporting SMT
1. Corporation Meeting	0/1 (0%)	0/1 (0%)
2. Staffing committee meeting	1/3 (33%)	0/3 (0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1/4 (25%)</b>	<b>0/4 (0%)</b>

Table 4.12: Z-ASG's Contributions that challenged or supported SMTs in 2 Governance Meetings

showed that in contrast to X and Y colleges, there were no contributions particularly supporting the SMT. This could be a result of the relatively minimal contributions by Z-ASG (average of 2 contributions/meeting compared to 9 by X-ASG and 4 by Y-ASG). There was one challenge by Z-ASG to SMT's presentations across the two meetings, which was directed at the Principal when discussing students' mental health issue already referred to in the previous sub-section. When the Principal said such information was already collected via enrolment forms, Z-ASG challenged this information:

**Z-ASG:** *Do we do anything around mental health; I know we've got the equality and diversity form, haven't we?*

**The Principal:** *We do, yeah, people complete medical forms and if we do know,*

*then, they'll have the green form.*

**Z-ASG:** *Cause nothing explicit around the area of mental health, is there?*

The Vice Chair, in his interview said he expected ASGs to “*challenge and support without fear or favour*” and confirmed that ASGs did both support and challenge but there tended to be more support than challenge from them. Z-ASG explained in his interview the sensitive nature of challenging SMTs. He felt it would be “*unfair*” to confront SMTs at meetings in advance of him raising the relevant issue with the SMTs first. However, he thought it was appropriate to raise the issues in governance if SMTs had not acted upon already identified issues. He also revealed that at times it was difficult to support or challenge SMTs. “*It puts you under pressure of not raising your head above the parapets*” because sometimes SMTs’ information to governors contradicted their information to the college staff. The Vice Chair said it was normal to disagree but that he would expect any major disagreements to be addressed/resolved at management level rather than in governance avenues.

#### **4.4.2. ASG Role-Specific Activities – Z-College**

##### **a. Z-ASG’s Professional Information Giving**

In the questionnaire (Q14), Z-ASG indicated that in governance he sometimes contributed to the meetings by giving professional information based on his TLA expertise, experience and knowledge. The analysis of governors’ responses to Q13 (Figure 4.14) revealed that, as in X-College, all of the specified knowledge aspects were valued aspects with an average above 2.5 in the 5-point scale. Unlike at X and Y colleges, ASGs’ experience

in teaching at the concerned college was the most highly valued (4.6/5)

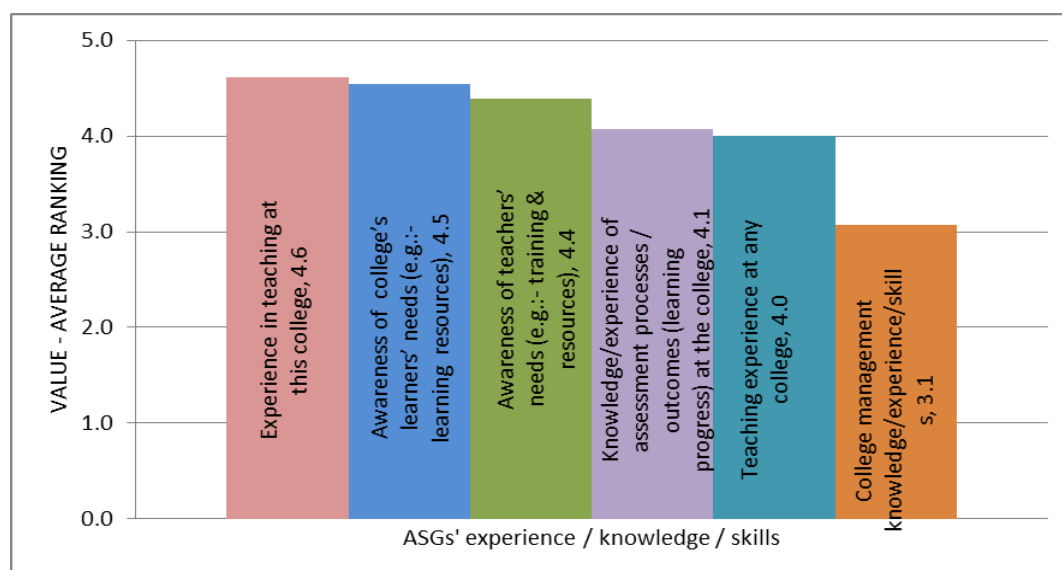


Figure 4.14: Q13 – ASGs' Most Valued Experiences, Knowledge and Skills (Mean values 0-5, 5 = the most valued; aspect); Z-College

professional aspect, while, as in the other two colleges, their college management knowledge was the least valued (3.1) aspect. Z-College governors also reiterated the value of ASGs' professional knowledge in Q16(4), which showed the vast majority (11, 84%) of the governors agreeing that the college's current and past ASGs had been able to help the board understand the college's educational issues. In the two observed meetings, all 4 of Z-ASG's contributions performed a professional information-giving function. In the staffing-related committee meeting, in his response to the Principal's request from Z-ASG for suggestions about how governors could interact with various curriculum areas on the annual stewardship/strategy day, he gave details of how this could be organised using his knowledge of TLA quality monitoring observations known as 'learning walks':

**Z-ASG** (staffing committee meeting): Governors could follow the format of the 'learning walk', just to get a feel for what that's about, in terms of looking at specific areas for focus when they are doing their learning walks, maybe with a 10-15 minute briefing and set them up.

(Quote46)

The Vice Chair in his interview asserted that it is an ASG's responsibility to share professional knowledge with the governing body and gave a further example of such a function being performed recently. Z-ASG, when the board had been discussing the college self-assessment process (SAR), was *"asked to talk through the process and how the decisions were arrived at and how he had felt from going through it himself and he was very supportive and certainly gave governors confidence that the process had been fair, well-delivered, and well-received by staff."* (The Vice Chair, Z-College)

In the interview with Z-ASG, it became apparent that his professional knowledge and expertise was not always TLA-related but sometimes more connected to his professional expertise in his academic subject field, Computing. For instance, in the observed corporation meeting, his question to SMT member, Z-SMT1, delving into e-governance plans was, *"What are they doing in terms of e-Governance?"* and in response, the SMT member explained the technical details of how the system would be implemented. During the interview, Z-ASG threw more light into the professional nature of his question:

***Z-ASG (interview):** It's more my understanding of the Sharepoint platform. It's more professional knowledge. So it was more knowledge of the platform itself which was outside of teaching and learning and my subject and specialism although they do overlap because it is technology.*

**(Quote47)**

and he used his expertise to elaborate on e-governance and express his scepticism about the practical and technical aspects of implementing the plans:

***Z-ASG (interview):** It shows a level of ignorance of the technology and how it works and the specific problems that we have through our slightly archaic authentication*

*protocols and procedures ... once governance documents are annotated on an iPad, how do you make sure that you know who has edited it, etc. I always get slightly scared when I hear senior members of staff talk about technology, and to the uninitiated it sounds plausible and whizzy and great, and to the technologist you're thinking, that's not quite how it works.*

**(Quote48)**

Z-ASG's past contributions linked to dual professionalism founded on subject-knowledge and TLA-knowledge was also confirmed by the Vice Chair but he asserted that it was the general TLA-related expertise and knowledge as opposed to the subject/curriculum knowledge that was sought from an ASG. Nevertheless, it appeared that as in Y-ASG's case, Z-ASG's subject knowledge could be as useful in governance as his TLA knowledge is.

### **b. Linking governance and TLA**

According to the Z-College's survey responses, linking governance to educational issues such as teaching, learning and assessment (TLA) is a highly relevant activity to an ASG's role (average ranking, 4.5/5;). As X-ASG and Y-ASG had done, Z-ASG ranked this activity as fully relevant at 5.0.

In the evidence from Z-ASG's interview, two instances of potential governance and TLA linking role were identified. Firstly, at one point he referred back to his suggestion in the staffing committee meeting regarding 'learning walks' for governors on stewardship day and said, *"in hindsight, I don't think they actually should be implemented, just given the pressure that we're all under at the moment and will be under in those last few weeks."* The pressure teachers might be under could be regarded as vital information that could impact on the governors' learning walk. In this research, it was not identified whether Z-ASG was able to feedback his revised stance to the



board.

Secondly, in the interview he referred back to his idea of collecting information about newly enrolling students' mental health. In the interview he expressed dismay at the limited discussion around what he regarded as an important matter:

**Z-ASG** (interview): *I probably wasn't satisfied with the response. I think it deserved wider discussion because it is a very important topic and mental health issues are increasing significantly just in the last four, five years also students coming with spectrum disorders as well. But I don't feel that the response in that meeting was given any level of credence.*

**(Quote49)**

In the interview, Z-ASG went on to highlight the relevance of this important governance topic to TLA support for students. He suggested that '*from a student perspective, given the pressure that they can be under*', it is "*useful to know such information within the college, so that you can target them for extra support because you know that potentially they will face more difficult opportunities than other people.*" It appeared that Z-ASG's disappointment was about not being able to convey this message through a thorough discussion. He also identified that a teachers and governors forum without the SMT would be a better alternative to ASGs' attempts to link governance and TLA.

### **1. Z-ASG Visiting the College as a Governor**

Interview evidence from Z-ASG suggested that he did not visit the colleges in his capacity as a governor but the Vice Chair seemed to believe that Z-ASG might have visited some special events such as graduation events. The Vice

Chair asserted that any such visits would not see ASGs involving in specialist activities such as observing TLA or other practices. Like the ASG at Y-College, Z-ASG also expressed his desire to gain more experience through external training and development opportunities for ASGs.

## **2. Z-ASG's Involvement in Special Governance Tasks, Initiatives and Projects**

### **Z-ASGs as a Link Governor**

Z-ASG revealed that unlike most other governors, he was not offered the opportunity to play a link governor role but conceded that he “*just would not have the time.*” He also was rather apprehensive about the board’s view of ASGs and believed that the board would not seriously consider ASGs for such a role because they considered ASGs as a “*nonentity.*” The Vice Chair confirmed that the board would not accept ASGs volunteering for link governor roles because of “*conflict of interest*” arising from their insiderness. He regarded link governors as “lay and independent” experienced governors who “*would have never taught in their lives*” but would go into curriculum areas and “*hold up a mirror*” for reflective practice. They would not be expected to guide as professionals such as ASGs or consultants would do. The official minutes of the observed minutes noted college staff’s positive response to the link governors but Z-ASG felt that the staff’s overall response had actually been “*quite negative*”, contradicting the board’s official position. He also questioned external/lay governors’ suitability to make a positive impact in underperforming curriculum areas by questioning their experience in TLA matters because “*education is a very different ball game to real world industry.*” It appeared at Z-College, in contrast to X-College, ASGs would be

less likely to take part in significant governance initiatives or special activities, potentially because of their insiderness.

### **c. Z-ASG Representing Staff Interests**

As at X and Y colleges, Z-College governors' responses to the survey indicated that presenting of staff's opinion was a relevant activity in an ASG's role (average relevance ranking, 3.1/5). However, like X-ASG but in contrast to Y-ASG, Z-ASG disagreed that the activity was relevant to an ASG's role (relevance ranking 1/5).

It has already been identified that Z-ASG's awareness of staff/teachers' needs was a greatly valued resource amongst Z-College governors. This finding, therefore, substantiated the relevance of Z-ASG's representative role in governance in the board's view, despite Z-ASG's own stance. In the optional 'comments' section of the questionnaire, some governors expressed views supporting the representative role:

- very important to have the '*voice of the teacher*' as a member of the corporation (Z-Q-EXG4, external governor in the questionnaire)
- ensure there is a breadth of opinion from the teaching staff (Z-Q-EXG5, external governor in the questionnaire)
- ensure the best outcome for learners and staff;

while another comment was cautious of such a role:

- ASGs should not be '*representative of staff issues*' (Z-Q-EXG4).

In his response to Q14, Z-ASG indicated that he had never raised issues in meetings at the request of teaching colleagues. Another external governor, Z-Q-EXG8, supported this claim by saying that "*our ASG feels free to*

*express his views without pressure to tow a particular line that might be popular with other teachers.*" This evidence added strength to the overall finding that an overwhelming majority of Z-College governors (85%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that ASGs past and present at the college had been representing staff interests. Z-ASG was amongst those who strongly disagreed with the statement. According to the comments he made in the interview, he regarded his role was not representative in governance and when giving his opinion he would ensure that it was clear that he was *"not speaking on behalf of other people,"* because he could not realistically represent the whole staff's opinion. On the same point, the Vice Chair said that he would ask Z-ASG in meetings, *"What do you think about this?"* as opposed to, *"What do teachers think about this?"* – a practice at Y-College too.

Z-ASG cautioned that any strategic actions taken based on ASGs' views mistaken to be representative could have a negative impact on the college, a point concurred by the Vice Chair. Z-ASG added that even if ASGs' opinions were not representative, such opinions should be used as a governance resource; and as information to be *"researched and investigated"*, rather than be ignored.

The Vice Chair's interview evidence illustrated that the matter of ASG's potential representative role is not a straightforward issue. His general description of the role was *"a particularly strong conduit between the teaching staff and the corporation as a two way feeder of information and opinion,"* suggesting ASGs' potential to represent staff views, barring any *"confidential*

*issues.*” He went even further suggesting that it was appropriate for ASGs to meet teachers and find out their views but then added that ASGs should not be militant in such transactions. His overall position as an experienced and senior governor was that FE corporations should not expect ASGs to represent teaching staff despite them being elected by staff – perhaps a situation that added to the confusion. He believed if critical representative information was needed, the corporation should contact the unions or the relevant academic departments of the college directly rather than via ASGs.

While noting Z-Q-EXG9’s (an external governor) observation in the questionnaire that sometimes a limited amount of representation might take place, analysis of Z-College’s governance instrument confirmed that, as at colleges X and Y, Z-College ASGs were not permitted to represent any individual or group of people. The instrument also specified that any formal communication of governance decisions from the corporation to the staff should take place via minutes of meetings published on the college’s public website rather than through the ASG or other elected governors.

The overall theme regarding ASGs’ representative role at Z-College was that it was recognised with caution, as a relevant role but the governance arrangements did not allow representation of staff as a defined formal role. It was not seen as a realistic formal role for ASGs at the college even though in practice it might take place to a limited extent.

### 4.4.3. Further Exploration of Z-ASG's role

#### a. Z-ASG's Power-Relations

Governors' responses to four survey questions - Q12, Q16, Q17 and Q18 - provided evidence related to Z-ASG's power status in governance. The

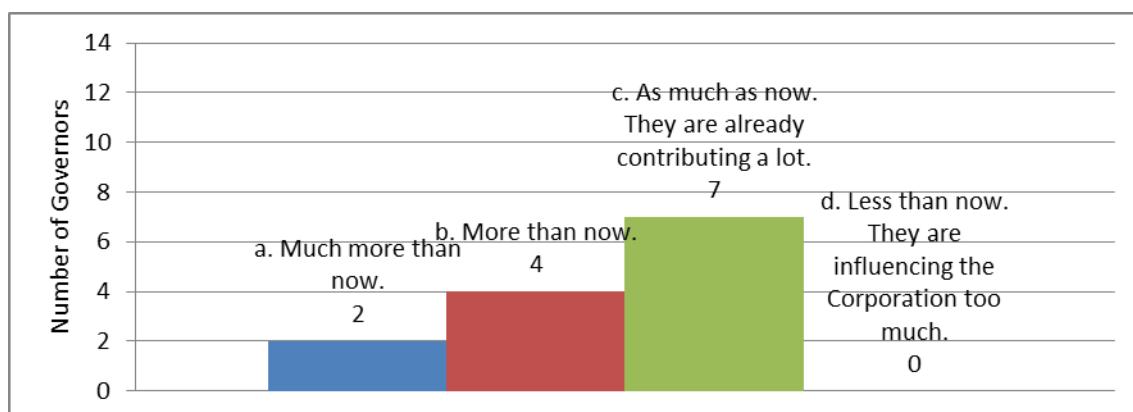


Figure 4.15: Q12 - Governors' Expectation of ASGs' Future Contributions / Activities at Z-College

results for Question 12 (Figure 4.15) showed that 7 (54%) governors felt Z-ASG was contributing to governance significantly (Statement c). However, as in X and Y colleges, none of the governors felt that Z-ASG was influencing governance too much. According to responses to Question 16 (Statement 1) a majority of the governors (8, 62%) agreed or strongly agreed that Z-ASG's role was of an equal status to other governors at the corporation, which reflected the Vice Chair's views in his interview too. In contrast, Z-ASG strongly disagreed with the statement. In a separate question (Q17) directed at ASGs only, he confirmed the divergent opinion between his view and other governors. Z-ASG felt he was regarded as a 'second-class' governor by other governors at the college. Furthermore, Z-ASG's interview evidence pointed to his feeling that his role had not been more than a "token role" simply to "tow the party line" but felt an ASG should be "a full governor with equal things to bring to the table."

Question 18's responses containing (Figure 4.16) power-related statements showed that:

- 62% of governors did not believe ASGs were inhibited in corporation meetings due to the presence of the SMT but 38% believed so;
- 61% believed that ASGs were excluded from certain discussions and
- 100% did not believe that ASGs dominated the corporation meetings.

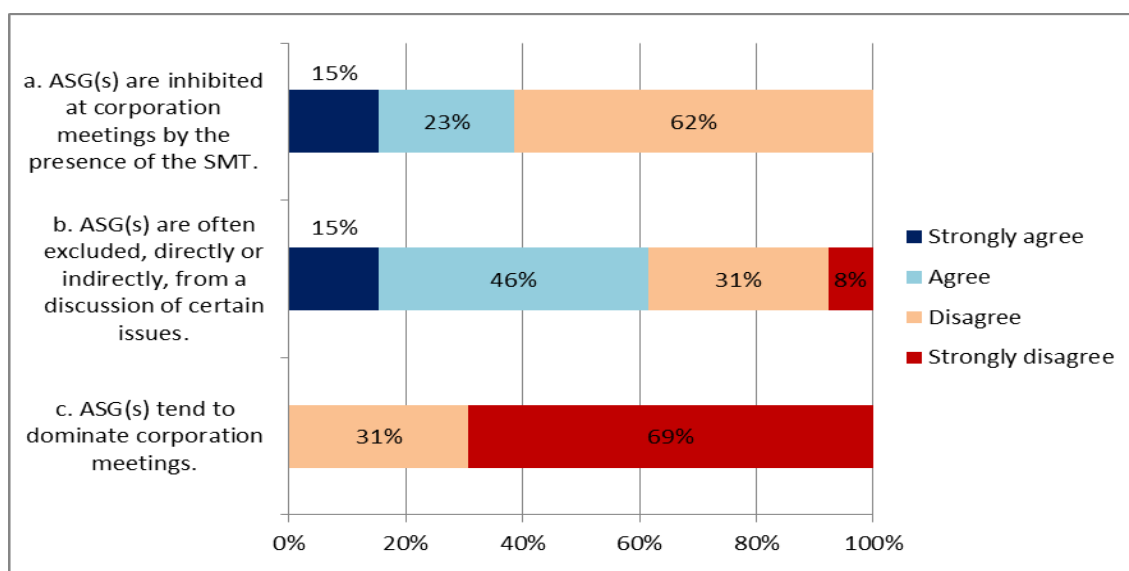


Figure 4.16: Q18: Governors' Responses - ASGs' Power in Governance Meetings; Z-College

There was further interview evidence on the idea of Z-ASG being restricted in meetings due to specific circumstances:

**Z-ASG** (interview): *I have a couple of times candidly said, when asked about specific initiatives and because of what we were undergoing at the time, I can't offer my own opinion.*

(Quote50)

According to external governor, Z-Q-EXG9's comments in the questionnaire, such restrictions could be attributed to ASGs being "*inhibited from speaking*

*freely in the presence of the Senior Management Team.*” Z-ASG’s description of such situations added strength to Z-Q-EXG9’s position:

**Z-ASG (interview):** *It’s very difficult when the SMT are at every governors’ meeting. It doesn’t necessarily allow for free floating discussion amongst the governors, let alone for the ASG to be part of that. Perhaps there needs to be forums whereby the governors meet without SMT.*

**(Quote51)**

The above suggestion that at least some parts of governance meetings should be conducted without SMT was echoed by Y-ASG too.

Regarding the exclusion of Z-ASG from some governance discussions, the Vice Chair established that there was a confidential (Part B) section in all corporation and committee meetings, where ASGs would always be excluded from. The Vice Chair in his interview and external governor, Z-Q-EXG1 in the questionnaire, explained that such exclusion was normal procedure for all governors when the matter under discussion raised a conflict of interest if the relevant governor were to influence the discussion. The Vice Chair believed the same explanation for the board’s reservations about Z-ASG being a member of the remuneration committee. Z-ASG’s counterargument against such exclusion was that, while specific agenda items may be confidential, it was *“not right and proper”* to exclude ASGs on a regular basis from significantly large sections of meetings *“because there are all sorts of leaks within any organization”* and that *“probably a lot of the information is available under a Freedom of Information Request anyway.”* He added that information leaks had come in the past from several sources in the corporation; not necessarily from ASGs. He also had misgivings about the corporation’s reasons for excluding ASGs from the remuneration committee and attributed it to the leaders’ desire to *“divide and conquer”* in order to exercise power



over staff governors and college staff. His overall position was that the practice of regularly excluding ASGs from pre-determined sections and the decision-making processes should be abandoned.

In order to identify power-relations in Z-ASG's role, his meeting contributions were analysed in terms of the number of his agreements, disagreements and challenges to other meeting participants. The figures in Table 4.13 show that in the observed meetings, Z-ASG did not hesitate to disagree or challenge

	No. of Z-ASG's Contributions		
	Contributions in Agreements with Others	Contributions that Challenged Others	Contributions that Disagreed with SMTs
<b>Total counts</b>	0/4 (0%)	1/4 (25%)	1/4 (25%)

Table 4.13: Z-ASG's Contributions that Agreed, Challenged, or Disagreed with Participants in Observed Meetings

others in meetings and in fact, there were no agreements by the ASG in the two meetings. This data is somewhat weakened by the relatively fewer contributions by Z-ASG compared to X-ASG and Y-ASG. In addition, at Z-College two observations were possible while three were conducted at the other 2 colleges. Two out of the meeting contributions (50%) were made out of Z-ASG's own volition, not as responses to direct invitations or requests from others. This figure was much higher at X and Y colleges: with 74% and 82% for X-ASG and Y-ASG respectively, suggesting much freer unmanaged ASG contributions at X and Y colleges. The conclusion from the observed meetings was that Z-ASG's contributions were limited and likely to be made when prompted by others. He was certainly not observed to be an outspoken member of the board but did not hesitate to put the occasional polite challenges or disagreements to the SMTs.

With regards to ASGs' hierarchical status in the committee structure, the Vice Chair had reservations about ASGs being committee chairs due to potential conflict of interest arising from ASGs being college staff, even though he believed they had the skills and expertise to perform such roles. At the same time, it was noted that the college instrument and articles of governance did not bar ASGs from committee chair roles, although they were barred from corporation chair and vice-chair positions.

Regarding the hierarchy of power at Z-College's overall corporation structure, the Vice Chair's interview evidence suggested that as in many FE corporations, there was a hierarchy of power because he believed colleges are political organisations. Corporation chairs, committee chairs and some outspoken governors were at the top of this hierarchy, effectively barring Z-ASG from the 'dominant coalition' in the board. He also suggested that if ASGs happened to be overly forceful, the Principal would address the issue outside governance. According to Z-ASG, powerful governors such as the chair and the vice-chair worked closely with the SMT; and the Vice Chair substantiated this claim by saying that "*The Chair and the Vice Chair work very closely with the senior managers. That sometimes makes you feel you have less power.*"

#### **b. Z-ASG's Professional Status**

From Z-ASG's profile presented in the introduction of this chapter, it is observed that Z-ASG was a member of a professional teaching association. In the interview, it was established that his membership was with a professional body associated with his specialist curriculum subject IT, as

opposed to teaching. He was a member of a teaching trade union and was a curriculum manager at Z-College with regular teaching duties of up to 22 hours per week.

Through the analysis in preceding sub-sections it has been established that:-

- the governors at Z-College valued an ASG's professional experience, knowledge and skills.
- Z-ASG used his TLA-related professional expertise to contribute to meetings. From the analysis of his meeting contributions, it became apparent that not only did he rely on his general TLA professional knowledge, but also professional subject knowledge linked to his expertise in IT.
- governors at the college believed that Z-ASG was able to help the board understand the college's educational issues and that
- Z-ASG's power status was likely to be lower than many other governors (see previous section 4.4.3.a) and with some restrictions on committee membership and restrictions on playing a link governor role linking college TLA activities and governance.

These professional status-related findings suggest that Z-ASG was fulfilling a professional but restricted role with a potentially low power status. Nevertheless, according to external governor, Z-Q-EXG8 (survey comment) the key contribution from past and present ASGs at the college had been to enhance "*the other governors' understanding of what actually goes on in the classroom.*"

Exploring Z-ASG's professional status further, the results from the 'gatekeeping' (Coffee, 2006; Cowton, 2008) related survey question, Q21 (Figure 4.17), showed that unlike at X- College, a majority of governors (62%) disagreed that ASGs have a particularly important role in holding the SMT accountable despite the majority (69%) agreeing that there was a high

level of trust in ASGs playing such a role. External governor, Z-Q-EXG1 believed there was no difference between an ASG and another governor in these two aspects and that “*all governors have an important role in holding college management accountable and there is a high level of trust in all governors,*” suggesting ASGs’ professional status was not any higher than other governors. In fact, the Vice Chair, in his interview concurred with this

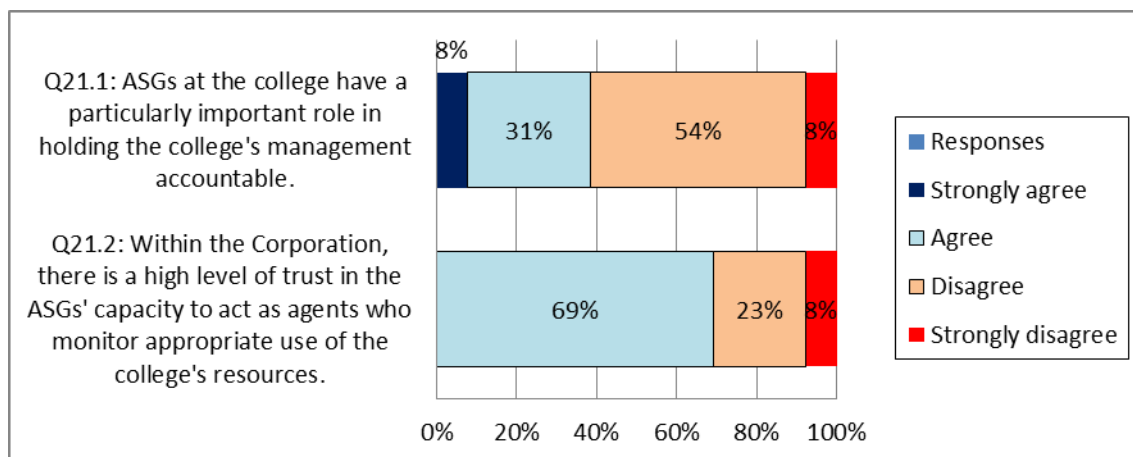


Figure 4.17: Z-College Governors' Views about ASGs Fulfilling a Gatekeeping Role

position even though he could understand why some might argue for a higher professional status for ASGs because they “*are the elected representatives of the people who deliver for us.*” He countered such arguments by insisting that the board in terms of number of constituencies, needs “*a positive ratio between the lay and professional governors*” and that the college’s governance was not about “*the professionals having their own way of dealing with the professional leadership of the college*” but it was more about “*the community leadership of the college.*” According to Z-ASG’s contrasting point of view, the board needed “*more educational experience.*” He felt the board lacked sufficient professionals from the field of education, highlighting that the only such governors were the Vice Chair and himself. He illustrated his point using examples from other industries such as the health sector, software engineering and automotive engineering:

**Z-ASG** (interview): *A team from such industries will not make decisions without at least consulting or having a fair representation within their team, because you know that that project would fail or would deliver things that are actually unsuitable because what you think they [consumers] want isn't necessarily what they want or what they need.*

(Quote52)

From the above evidence set, it appeared to underline the unease the board was at raising ASGs' professional importance above others despite recognising the value of ASGs' professional role; and ASGs actually playing such a role in a restricted environment.

### **c. Understanding or Confusion of ASG Role – Z-College**

The results for survey question Q16a, Statement 5 showed that unlike at X and Y colleges, just over half of the Z-College governors (7, 54%) agreed that ASGs at the college had been uncertain about their role. Z-ASG was of the same view, highlighting a significant issue within the board. Moreover, Q16b results showed that according to the governors, confusion about ASGs' role could be a barrier in governance, with an average ranking of this theme as a barrier at 2.6 out of 5.0, just above the half-way point, higher than at X and Y colleges. The governors' perception of this confusion could be attributed to the relatively minimal contribution from Z-ASG in meetings combined with the generally restricted ASG role in governance.

The Vice Chair was of the opinion (in his interview) that a potential barrier in an ASG's role would be "*if the teacher governor genuinely thinks they are the voice of the entire teaching staff on every single matter.*" He clarified that any confusion of an ASG role would normally be at the beginning of the ASG's tenure "*when they come to the corporation meetings for the first time,*"

reflecting X-ASG's experience at X-College. Z-College's Clerk "*helped the staff to prepare*" for ASG role, according to the Vice Chair. External governor, Z-Q-EXG9 confirmed this saying that the role "*was made clear to ASGs (and all other governors) and that they are not there in a representative capacity*", but he still felt that the expected role "*may not always happen*" because according to another governor, Z-Q-EXG5, ASGs "*need time to understand the role.*" This was one of the governors who felt confusion of ASGs' role as a barrier against ASGs performing their role and ranked this concept at 3.0 out of 5 in the barrier spectrum (average ranking by governors: 2.6). On the other hand, Z-ASG in his interview demonstrated that he was clearly confident about what was expected of the role by the corporation:

**Z-ASG (interview):** *I had to do quite a lot of research into the role and the fact is that you don't represent the body of staff but you just bring an element of your experience to it.*

**(Quote53)**

This succinct encapsulation of the role was in line with the instrument of governance at Z-College. His clear expression of the role in the interview was apparently in contrast to his response in the questionnaire where he felt he was uncertain about the role. Perhaps, his uncertainty is an expression of dissent about the arrangements for the role, example about being excluded from certain discussions and not being valued by other governors.

External Governor, Z-Q-EXG6, and the Principal felt there was confusion of the role amongst the college staff. The Principal believed it was "*in relation to some staff perception that the role should be to represent staff's collective and specific views,*" while the external governor felt such views amongst staff may affect ASGs' understanding of the role in governance too. Z-ASG was aware of this situation and agreed that "*there is a misconception in the*

*college that the ASG, elected by the staff, represents them in meetings” – a view shared by X-ASG.*

#### **4.4.4. Emerging Themes: Z-ASG’s Role and Evaluation**

This sub-section, 4.4, has identified the following themes relating to Z-ASG’s roles.

##### **Z-ASG’s General Governance Activities:**

- limitations to Z-ASG performing strategic functions existed even though these functions were seen as relevant to an ASG’s role; limitations included:
  - the view that the SMT, not the governing board. may be making and influencing the main decision-making process
  - Z-ASG was not in the TLA quality/standards committee, even though the quality of provision was seen as the most relevant aspect to an ASG role.
- some limited evidence of Z-ASG challenging and disagreeing the SMT in governance but in general, challenging SMTs was difficult due to power issues.
- some evidence of his contributions related to meeting the needs of the local community and this aspect seen as highly relevant to the role.
- staff and SMT pay-related matters were seen as of little relevance to the ASG’s role.

##### **ASG Role Specific Activities:**

- Z-College governors’ overwhelming recognition of the high value of Z-ASG’s expertise and the professional information used in his role
- Z-ASG’s highly relevant activity of linking general TLA matters to governance
- the absence of the board’s support for and evidence of him acting as a link governor for underperforming curriculum areas due to his insidership at the college; but Z-ASG regarded link governor roles as valid for ASGs if time allowed it

- the board's valuing the ASGs acting to represent whole staff views, but Z-ASG did neither support nor perform such a role and the governance instrument did not allow such a role
- evidence of Z-ASG providing both subject-specific and TLA-related professional information
- an absence of evidence relating to Z-ASG engaging in specific governance activities or projects

#### Exploratory Themes Related to Z-ASG's Role:

##### Power status:

- Z-ASG not seen to be of equal power status to other governors; mainly because of not being involved in any of the more powerful committees or in the dominant coalition
- Z-ASG not seen to have exceeding influence or power in the corporation.
- his official exclusion from being the Chair or Vice Chair of the board
- his trust of the SMT not seen as high; him not supporting SMTs' presence in all parts of board meetings
- his weakened power status due to being excluded from pre-determined parts of all meetings; Z-ASG did not see this exclusion was necessary.

##### Professional status:

- Z-ASG fulfilling a multi-disciplinary (managerial; subject-specific in IT; TLA) professional role despite low power status
- limitations to his gatekeeping role due to his insiderness
- his professional status not appearing to be higher than other governors; and potentially of lower professional status due to low power status

##### Understanding / Confusion of Z-ASG's role:

- Z-ASG appeared to understand his governance role well, despite



most of the board not agreeing with this.

- possible lack of awareness of ASG role amongst college staff and generally amongst the governors

One prevalent finding was that Z-ASG played a limited role in the governance of the college. This was evident in the observed meetings, where he made relatively few contributions and from the non-involvement in activities apart from the meetings.

As an evaluative comment regarding the extraction of evidence relating to Z-ASG's role is the Clerk's post in the corporation was a part-time post, which resulted in some of the documents for analysis (for example, committee terms of references, complete board evaluation documents) not being made available.

## Chapter 5. Discussion of ASG Roles

### 5.1. ASGs' Roles at the 3 Outstanding Colleges

#### 5.1.1. RQ1: What are an ASG's General Governance Activities in the Governance of 3 Outstanding Colleges?

##### ASGs' Statutory Role Activities

The data analysis approach conducted helped the researcher to understand the ASGs' general governance roles. Through document analysis, it allowed the current researcher to scrutinise what Krantz and Maltz (1997) described as the 'formal role as defined by the organisation' – in this case, each of the three colleges. It was found that a specification of role responsibilities existed for all governors at the 3 colleges. The specification reflected an amalgamation of the 2007 state-directed FE governor responsibilities (DIUS, 2007) and the Education Act (2011) as shown in Table 5.1 (overleaf). These responsibilities shaped Krantz and Maltz's (1997) concept of formal role and to borrow James et al.'s (2007) term roles-as-positions for ASG but these responsibilities applied to all governors. Krantz and Maltz's (op.cit.) converse concept was 'informal roles' and James et. al.'s (op.cit.) role-as-practices. Examples of these in action could be seen in:

- X-ASG's prevailing role (and to a limited extent on Y-ASG's part) observed in protecting the college's reputation
- Y-ASG's involvement in governance-related student / community events
- Z-ASG's tendency to focus on the community's needs to some extent

- all 3 ASGs' chosen behaviour of consulting the Chair, the Principal or the SMTs informally outside the governance avenues.

The last item above suggests that such informal practices may expose ASGs to SMTs' or the Chair's influence.


<b>Governor Responsibilities in Articles of Government (DIUS, 2007)</b>		<b>Education Act of 2011(HMSO, 2011)</b>	<b>Governor Responsibilities In the Colleges' Current Articles of Government</b>
(a) determination and review of the educational character and mission and the oversight of the college activities	Condensed to 	(a) determination & review of the educational character & mission; oversight of college;	(a) determination & periodic review of the educational character and mission; oversight of its activities;
(b) approving of quality strategy		(b) effective and efficient use of resources, solvency of institution; safeguarding of assets	(aa) publishing arrangements for obtaining staff's & students' views on determination & periodic review of the educational character & oversight of its activities;
(c) effective & efficient use & safeguarding of resources, solvency of college;			(b) approving the quality strategy of the institution;
(d) approving annual finances;			(c) effective & efficient use of resources, solvency of institution & Corporation; safeguarding assets;
(e) SMT & staff appointment, grading, suspension, dismissal.			(d) approving annual estimates of income / expenditure;
(f) approving pay and conditions of SMT and other staff			(e) appointment, grading, suspension, dismissal & determination of pay & conditions of SMT & Clerk,
			(f) setting framework for pay & conditions of service of other staff.

Table 5.1: The 3 Colleges' Governor Responsibilities Compared to State-Directed Responsibilities by DIUS (2007) and Education Act 2011 (2011)

In Chapter 4, it was established that the colleges either formally or informally excluded ASGs from their remuneration committees, possibly because of compromised independence due to their insiderness. An ASG's potential bias may be attributed to his/her engagement with day-to-day activities at the college and Hill's (2012) advice for FE governors is to differentiate between

governance and management, and not to concentrate on how something works in an operational setting. This advice follows the position emphasised by many governance researchers (Andringa and Engstrom, 2007; Bush, 2011; Matthews et al., 2011). However, it is worth considering the possibility that the ASGs' exclusion may be attributed to routinization of decision-making (RoDM), a concept of the behavioural theory of boards (Section 2.2.1) theorised by van Ees et al. (2009). If ASGs affiliation with their colleges is seen as an issue of bias, subsequently, governors could continue to exclude ASGs from important committees, as an act of efficient decision-making but without much deliberation. It could be argued that the colleges are forgoing opportunities to involve important resources such as ASGs in critical decision-making processes. This becomes an important issue when a remuneration committee is faced with the remuneration and resource-related decisions around academic staff posts (Section 4.2.1.a). In such situations, therefore, there is an argument that ASGs are being excluded when they could provide invaluable TLA and academic staff-related information to make effective decision-making.

There was evidence that some important strategic decisions were being made by SMT without the board's or ASGs' significant involvement at both Y and Z colleges. Examples included changes to SMT posts at Y-College and strategic decision-making at Z-College. Such practice contrasted with the recommended practice in Carver's (2001) policy governance model. Taylor's (1983) research in school boards; Cornforth and Edwards' (1998) and Masunga's (2014) research into FE boards found similar by-passing of governors in colleges, reportedly because of the boards' lack of expertise.

While there was no such evidence found at X-College, what was surprising was that governing bodies of large high performing colleges such as Y and Z could be landed with such a defunct status in decision-making.

### ASGs Responding to the Local Community's Needs

In the findings in Chapter 4, it was discovered that X, Y and Z college governors regarded 'meeting the needs of the community' as a highly relevant activity for ASGs, on a par with ASGs' statutory functions. In practice, however, this function was observed only in 26% (average) of the 3 ASGs' contributions in comparison to an average of 79% of statutory functions (Table 5.2). This could perhaps be explained by what some authors

	<b>Function: Responding to the Needs of the Community</b>		<b>Statutory Function</b>	
<b>College</b>	<b>No. of ASG's Contributions/Total</b>	<b>Average % across Observations</b>	<b>No. of ASG's Contributions</b>	<b>Average % across Observations</b>
X-College	3 out of 27	8%	20/27	70%
Y-College	5/11	45%	9/11	81%
Z-College	2/4	50%	4/4	100%
<b>Figures across 3 colleges</b>	<b>11/42</b>	<b>26%</b>	33/42	79%

Table 5.2: The 3 ASGs' Meeting Local Needs Function in Contributions in Comparison to Statutory Functions

refer to as bounded rationality, discussed by Hendry (2005) and van Ees et al. (2009) in a behavioural theory of boards. In X-College's case, it could also be attributed to the lack of knowledge recognised in the college governing board's self-assessment for 12/13 and 13/14, regarding what meeting the needs of the community entails – a finding similar to Cornforth and Edward's (1999) observation that FE boards may lack expertise in implementing policies related to issues they may already recognise the importance of. According to the behavioural theory of boards, bounded rationality related to expertise or resources could affect how governors fulfil their responsibility.

Proponents of the theory soften the situation caused by such limitations on the grounds that boundedness of competencies is almost an acceptable reality and irreducible (Hendry, 2005). However, serving the local community is a critical governance responsibility of all governors including the ASGs and hence, the AoC's (2013) integration of this element into their version of excellence of practice for FE college boards. The fact that X-College is putting effort into governor training in meeting the needs of the community suggests that the issue could be addressed and that any negative impact was, in fact, at the very least seen as reducible through training.

The 3 ASGs' identification with their local communities may be explained by Hillman et al. (2008) and Ashforth & Mael's (1989) references to desire to belong and this seemed to have shaped X-ASG's and Y-ASG's roles-as-practice (James et al., 2012). Overall, at the three colleges, especially at X-College, there appears to be scope for more interaction and association with the local community to gain enrichment through direct contact with the public, as advocated by Stoker (2004) and Lea (2005) – see discussion in Section 2.3.2.c.

### ASGs Challenging and Supporting the SMT

Researchers in governance across several decades and cross-sector assert that constructive challenge to SMTs from governors is crucial to effective governance (Mace, 1973; Earley and Creese, 2001; Sassoon, 2001; Matthews et al., 2011; Alimo-Metcalf, 2012; Ofsted, 2012a; Hill and James, 2013; Masunga, 2014; Wilkins, 2014). As in Mace's (1973) study into corporate governance, and as advocated by the board chairs in James et

al.'s (2012) in schools, in the meeting observations, X-ASG and Y-ASG were observed to perform significantly more support (X-ASG: 37%; Y-ASG: 55%) than challenge (X-ASG: 22%; Y-ASG: 9%) functions in their interactions with the SMT (Table 5.3).

<b>ASG</b>	<b>Amount. of Contributions that Challenged SMT</b>	<b>Amount of Contributions that Supported SMT</b>
X-ASG	6 (22%)	10 (37%)
Y-ASG	1 (9%)	6 (55%)
Z-ASG	1 (25%)	0 (0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>8/42 (19%)</b>	<b>16/42 (38%)</b>

Table 5.3: The 3 ASGs' Challenge and Support in the Observed Meetings

Nevertheless, in terms of advocating challenge to SMT, these figures are more positive in comparison to the findings in James et al. (2012). The 3 ASGs' challenge to support ratio was approximately 1:2, while amongst James et al.'s (ibid) subjects (school board chairs), a much lower ratio of 1:5 was reported. Only 6% of chairs in James et al.'s (ibid.) believed challenging SMT was important while 30% indicated support to SMT was important. The 22% and 25% of challenges from X-ASG and Z-ASG respectively, also add support to Lee's (2000) evidence that ASGs may not hesitate to ask challenging questions from SMTs, even if the debate in the meetings may not be thorough enough to make them meaningful, as Gleeson et al. (2010) observed in their study.

X-ASG's and Y-ASG's contributions supporting SMT could be influenced by a number of factors:-

1. ASGs' insidership affecting their role in holding SMTs accountable. At the same time, Z-ASG's suggestion that his access to management information may limit both support and challenge contributions in meetings. This idea is in congruence with Mace's (1973) concerns

about having insiders in the board. He doubts that insiders could give CEOs good advice but this may be challenged by the thoroughly well-presented arguments by the Chair of the curriculum/quality committee at X-College, regarding the value of what a teacher knows about what is involved in a professional post.

2. ASGs' personal concerns about challenging SMTs; for instance, X-ASG being conscious of embarrassing others in meetings; and Z-ASG expressing similar reservations and regarding too hasty or direct challenges to SMT as unfair. Such attitudes could be described as personality traits – a finding also common in Hough's (2009) work, which suggested that personality types could impact governor judgments and actions.
3. Satisficing behaviour: It has already been shown how bounded rationality (Hendry, 2005; van Ees et al., 2009) could affect the amount of interactions in a given topic. Bounded rationality could also lead to satisficing behaviour, where governors would choose the adequate decision rather than the optimal one due to limited resources. This concept could explain why one governor might challenge a decision, while the other might not, as in the case of the SMT pay award decision in one of the corporation meetings (not observed) at X-College. The governor who challenged the award might have been underestimating the SMTs' performance while X-ASG, who supported it, might have been over-estimating their performance; both cases suggest some satisficing behaviour because of their lack of complete knowledge about the matter (bounded rationality). The rationale for suggesting such boundedness is that at



least X-ASG was not part to the original discussions because it would have taken part in the remuneration committee which X-ASG was excluded from (ToR, for Remuneration committee, X-College). This was similar to the 22% of TGs excluded from some decision-making described in Earley and Creese (2001). Time was a bounded factor too in the final board discussion about SMTs' pay rise, as revealed by X-College's curriculum committee Chair in her interview:

**Committee Chair** (interview): *I do know there were some things about the management where it was to do with pay and the management team left and we agreed to it. To be honest the meeting was supposed to finish at six, it was five to six. SMT left five minutes early, we had our discussion and then we left.*

(Quote54)

The approval discussion about the award in the board meeting took only 5 minutes and therefore, it is likely that both X-ASG and the other governors would not have had sufficient time to consider X-College SMTs' performance thoroughly in their decision to challenge the award or not. Similarly, at Y-College in the audit committee meeting observation, Y-ASG supported the reappointment of financial auditors even though he had limited interest and involvement in the committee's matters. The bounded rationality (Hendry, 2005; van Ees et al., 2009) of financial knowledge might have led to the satisficing support for the reappointment. At Z-College, Z-ASG's recommendation for conducting learning walks during the board's strategy days parallel Ofsted's (2012a) observation in Outstanding colleges. However, in hindsight, the timing of the activity at Z-College was not seen by Z-ASG as a good recommendation, probably because the initial recommendation was made under a bounded

rationality situation arising from insufficient consideration of the impact of learning walks on staff. The recommended times was a particularly busy time for teachers and students when most of the college assessments were taking place.

#### RQ1: Summary

It appears that despite the presence of specifications for role responsibilities for all governors, in practice what role an ASG performed, roles-as-practices (James et al., 2007), may be shaped by ASGs' position as insiders and influenced by other insiders such as the SMT. They may not have the space and support for performing some of the general governance roles other governors may be involved in, for instance, the pay-related matters. Their insiderness may prevent them from performing their statutory role in staffing or remuneration matters using the full extent of their knowledge, experience and expertise. Moreover, some decision-making may by-pass whole boards as found in X and Y colleges affecting ASGs' roles-as-practices. In addition, ASGs' identification with their local communities might encourage ASGs' role in meeting the needs of the colleges' local community while bounded rationality (Hendry, 2005; van Ees et al., 2009) could be a barrier in such efforts. ASGs' insiderness, satisficing behaviour and personalities may influence the increased support for SMTs' decisions, in comparison to their relatively fewer challenges to the SMT.

#### **5.1.2. RQ2: What are an ASG's Role-Specific Activities in the Governance of 3 Outstanding Colleges?**

Analysis of the three colleges' governance documents (ToRs, Instrument and

Articles of Government) did not reveal any role description specifically for ASGs. This observation resonates with Hill's (2014) finding in the FE sector that only 62% of colleges in their study had defined roles for governor constituencies other than chairs and principals.

### ASG's Professional Information Giving

ASGs' meeting contribution data across the 3 colleges revealed that they often contributed in governance meetings by giving professional information. This assertion was confirmed by 92% governors (Figure 5.1) across the 3

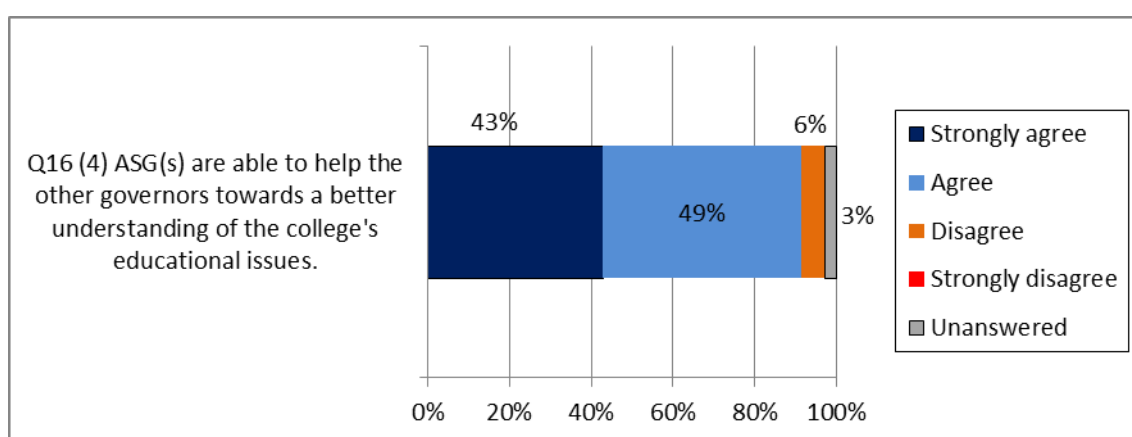


Figure 5.1: % of Governors across the 3 Colleges Agreeing that ASGs are able to Help Other Governors Understand the Colleges' Educational Issues

colleges who agreed or strongly agreed that ASGs helped them to understand the colleges' educational issues. This finding was also supported by meeting observation evidence for the 3 colleges. The professional information may consist of highly valued knowledge such as an ASG's awareness of learners' educational needs or their teaching experience at the concerned college (Figure 5.2). College governors' valuing of such knowledge and expertise is in line with Masunga's (2014) finding that understanding of an FE education system is an important characteristic of an

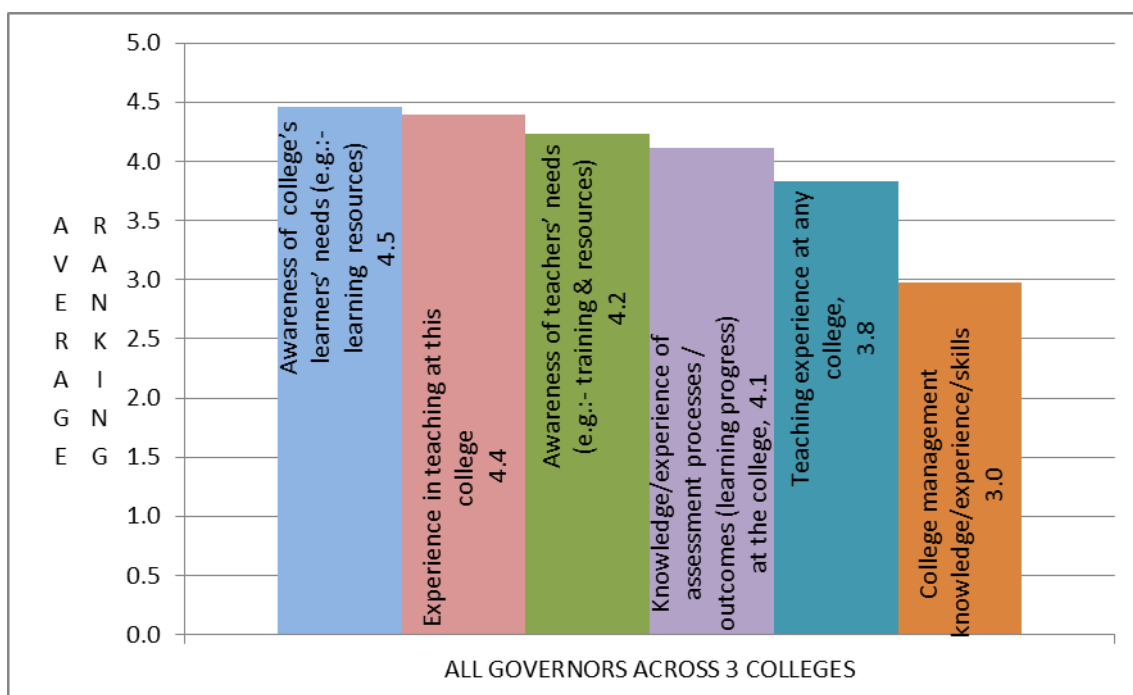


Figure 5.2: Q13 – ASGs' Most Valued Experiences, Knowledge and Skills across the 3 Colleges

FE governor. Nonetheless, another important aspect of an educational governor, insidership, or independence from the institution (Santiago et al., 2008), remained an issue.

The three ASGs' affiliation with their colleges as staff members did produce some contended benefits to the corporations in the form of access to the ASGs' knowledge of operational matters, as external governors at the three colleges asserted. The existence of such interventions relating to operational matters by ASGs using their experiences at the college, may be comparable to Balarin's (2008) finding that effective practice in school governance does feature governors' involvement in schools' operational matters. As has already been discussed in Chapter 2 and in the current chapter, some governance researchers do not regard such consideration of management/operational matters as good governance practice (Andringa and Engstrom, 2007; Bush, 2011; Matthews et al., 2011; Hill, 2012).

However, one has to consider the practicalities of abiding by such strict distinction between governance and management, particularly in the case of ASGs in FE. The challenging reality of ASGs' role in FE is that their almost entire professional knowledge and expertise may be based on their experiences gained in operational settings within the college. Therefore, it may be unrealistic to expect them not to rely on such experiences when performing their governance role. In fact, from the findings reported earlier on ASG's awareness / experience / knowledge valued by the college governors, the 4 most highly valued items (ASGs' knowledge of learners' needs; teachers' needs; teaching experience at the college; college's TLA processes) were ASGs' expertise related to the colleges' operational settings. Making use of such expertise would work well in partnership governance models (Masunga, 2014).

It was also revealed that ASGs' college management expertise was the least valued amongst the college governors. This finding is comparable to that highlighted in New's (1993b) finding in school governance, where external governors doubted if TGs were competent enough when discussing management affairs. The interview evidence from Y-College gave an insight into why an ASG's management experience was the least valued expertise even if they were teaching managers. Y-ASG felt that the governors considered management-related expertise as relatively less valued, probably because an ASG's *"management skills are not going to be called into question"* and that an ASG's management experience is *"not really a point in conjunction with being a teacher governor."* Y-ASG did not believe a teacher had to be a manager before he/she could become an ASG. Y-College's Chair

of the audit committee hypothesized that ASGs may be managers too because ASGs may be expected to have “*a certain level in the organization and have developed the appropriate communication skills and networks.*” Yet he was not able to explain the contradiction between the lowly-rated management expertise in an ASG and ASGs tending to be managers, apart from hypothesising that teachers may be reluctant to elect to be ASGs to be amongst high profile people such as FE board governors:

***The audit committee Chair (Y-College)** (interview): Given that we’ve got other managers on the boards, then being a manager in itself isn’t that important to us. But, why that is the case that they’re all managers, or whether more junior staff feel reluctant to be put in the position of sitting on a board of more senior people and contributing to that debate, I don’t know.*

**(Quote55)**

The governors’ apprehension about ASGs’ management expertise could also be due to the false impression that ASGs are simply teachers without much involvement in college management, despite all ASGs in the current study being curriculum managers in their respective colleges, a finding that could be compared to the 74% managers amongst the ASGs (TGs) in schools (Earley and Creese, 2001). Perhaps, the 3 colleges in the current study had tried to address past ASGs’ bounded rationality (Hendry, 2005; van Ees et al., 2009), related to management knowledge. By encouraging an academic manager to be nominated for the ASG role, the colleges’ boards secured the service of an expert both in academic and management affairs. On the other hand, McNay (2002) suspects that manoeuvring of managers into ASG posts may be taking place in order to align the ASGs’ governance role with the SMT’s stances on college matters.

It also emerged that ASGs may use their academic subject-specific

knowledge and expertise, in addition to TLA knowledge, to contribute to governance. Hence, Y-ASG as the community manager used his expertise to link governance to the local community and Z-ASG used his subject-specific computing expertise to engage with the board's initiative in e-governance.

### ASGs Linking Governance and TLA (Teaching, Learning and Assessment)

Earley and Creese's (2001) study suggested that ASGs such as TGs could do more towards forming linkages between staff and governors, for instance by encouraging external governors to visit the school and planning such visits. At the three colleges, the governors felt the task of linking governance and TLA was relevant to an ASG's role (Figure 5.3). In fact, such linking

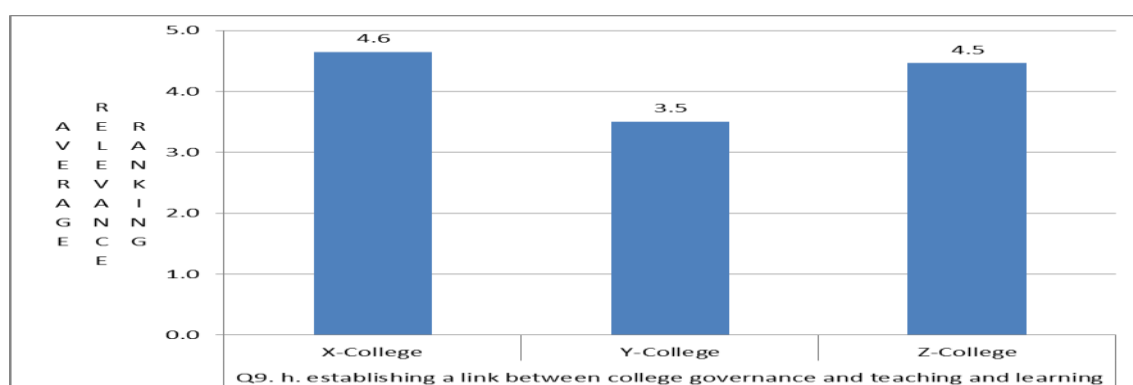


Figure 5.3: Ranking by Governors to Show Relevance between ASG's Role and 'Linking Governance to TLA at the 3 Colleges

activities did occur at the colleges, where X-ASG and Y- ASGs visited their colleges with other governors on strategy days to observe curriculum activities or open days or students and governor meeting events. Interestingly, in Earley and Creese's (ibid.) study, only 12 (5%) of TGs visited their schools regularly as governors. This topic of how and the extent ASGs interact with the colleges' internal activities as governors in English colleges and beyond, is a worthwhile study in a future large-scale research project.

One of the other findings at the colleges was concerned with ASGs acting as link governors for underperforming curriculum areas. There was no evidence for such a role in the observations or in the interviews. Gleeson et al.'s (2009) definition of such a link governor encompasses a "*dispassionate but interested individual*", as opposed to an insider such as an ASG. The evidence from Y-College and Z-College pointed to the 'insiderness' of Y-ASG as the reason for him not performing such a role. The other reason observed was the need to differentiate between governance and management. In the interview with curriculum committee Chair, she disagreed that a link role for ASGs role was helpful because such a role would be a management remit and therefore, would create a conflict between governance and management activities. Such emphasis and caution on the separation between governance and management is similar to the issue given prominence by authors such as (Andringa and Engstrom, 2007), (Bush, 2011), Matthews et al. (2011), as already discussed in Chapters 2 and 5.

#### ASGs Representing Staff Interest

Overall, at the colleges, one of the findings was that most governors agreed that ASGs representing staff's interests was a relevant role, barring X-ASG's and Z-ASG's views (Figure 5.4). At the same time, X-ASG recognised that the staff at X-College might expect her to play such a representative role. A similar contrast of views within an organisation has already been noted by Lee (2000) in FE governance in England. In Lee's (ibid.) study, the Clerk, disagreed with a representative role for ASG while the ASGs in the study, like 10% of teacher governors in Early and Creese's study (2001) and Y-ASG,



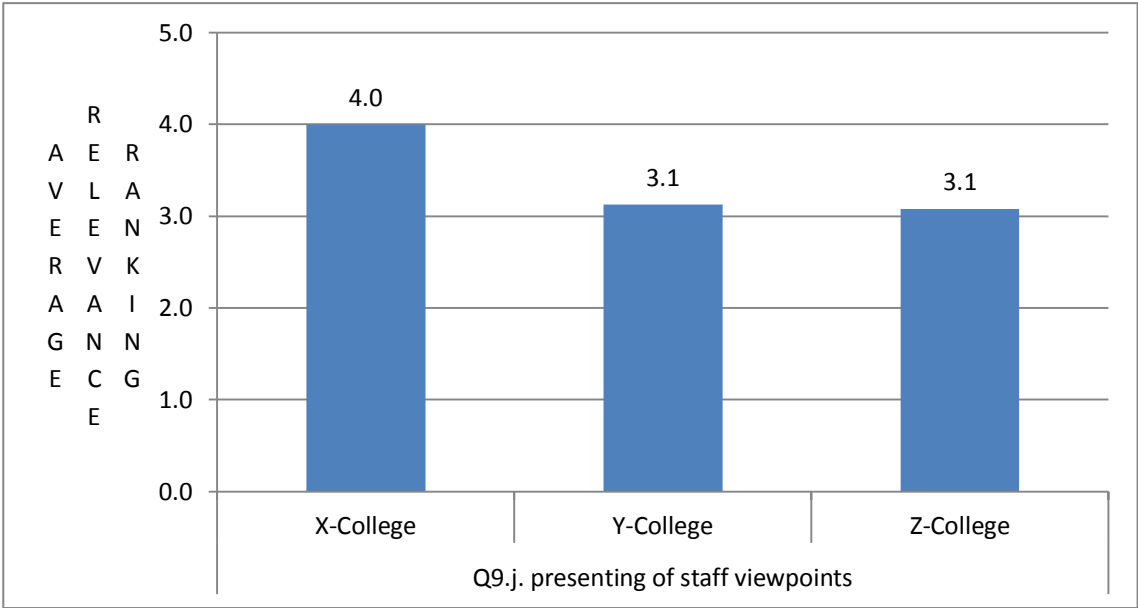


Figure 5.4: Ranking by Governors to Show Relevance of 'Representing of Staff Views' to an ASG's Role at the 3 Colleges

believed such a role was a valid one. The sector wide guidance available on the matter is that governing bodies should consult staff for staff matters rather than seeking a representative role from ASGs (LSIS, 2012b). One has to be reminded that the guidance was rooted in the pre-Education Act 2011 era. In such guidance, the state recommendations discouraged ASGs representing staff interests and did not appear to pay attention to the views such as those of some of the governors and the Principal (Y-College) in the current study, who believed representation of staff views was important. Neither did the guidance appear to have considered the arguments put forward by Hopkins (2014) towards democratising FE college governance.

In practice, Y-ASG revealed that he had represented specific staff views and issues in governance. Furthermore, X-ASG and Z-ASG asserted that they had never raised issues at the specific request of any teaching staff but X-ASG clarified that she had raised staff viewpoints in governance meetings only if the views were critical TLA issues. X and Y college governors' data in

the questionnaire pointed to their belief that at those colleges, ASGs did, in fact, represent staff interests. Any representation of staff interests would strike a chord with Earley and Creese's (2001) three categorisations of ASG roles, particularly, the 'watchdog' analogy of the role in school governance, where an ASG would seek to promote staff interests. The contrast between what the ASG believed their role was, and what the other governors said they had observed, as in X-College, was also similar to the observation Lee (2000) made in his study of FE governance in England. In the study, the author detected a disparity between what a governor felt what their role was and what was actually practised.

In terms of ASGs reporting governance proceedings back to staff, the findings suggested Y-ASG would typically share relevant governance decisions with staff including pay decisions. As for, X-ASG, she would not report confidential information back to staff, although there was a suggestion that some information sharing may take place in general teaching matters. This was similar to the findings in Lee's (2000) study into FE governance and in school governance (Earley and Creese, 2001). In Earley and Creese's (ibid.) study, although not a formal communication process, TGs reported information from governance meetings to the schools staff. In fact, the authors recommended formalising of such communication channels as Y-College's audit committee Chair had suggested. At Z-College, there was no evidence of such communication channels between the ASG and college staff but the Vice Chair of the board saw such communication as viable as long as it did not contravene the college's overarching interests. At all three colleges, there was a formal process of communicating governance

decisions through the college intranet and news bulletins but this process did not involve the ASGs.

### RQ2: Summary

ASG role-specific governance activities at the colleges included the highly valued role of professional information giving using TLA knowledge and sometimes, subject-specific knowledge, which were rooted in the colleges' operational settings. The ASGs in the study were also college managers, although the governors did not indicate there were any substantial benefits to the board from their managerial status. ASGs appeared, to a limited extent, to participate in college visits as governors; some of which may be in their multiple roles as governors, managers and academic staff. However, even though ASGs wished to act as link governors to support underperforming curriculum areas, their insidership prevented them from playing such a role. Finally, although representing staff views in governance was seen as a relevant role, the governance did not allow such a role. In practice, Y-ASG appeared to perform this function and to a limited extent X-ASG too, where it served the college's TLA priorities.

### **5.1.3. RQ3: What is the Power and Professional Status of the ASGs at the 3 Colleges?**

#### ASGs' Power Relations and Trust

The relationship between governors and managers is an important factor in Ofsted inspection grades (Ofsted, 2012a). In addition, trust amongst governors is important even if it is difficult to harness (Klijn and Koppenjan,

2012). From the evidence collected in the current study, it became apparent that Y-ASG and Z-ASG were conscious of the boss-employee relationship between their principals and themselves. At the same time, there was evidence suggesting mutual trust between ASGs at colleges X and Y and their principals. X-ASG felt assured of the fact that her Principal had trust in her regarding making appropriate contributions during meetings. This was similar to the findings in Taylor's (1983) research where headteachers of schools in England were found to have trust in TGs in governance matters.

Existing literature points out that where significant distrust between boards and SMTs may occur is in the compliance model of governance (Balarin et al., 2008). There was a similar relationship between Y-ASG and his SMTs and between Z-ASG and his SMT too. In contrast with the compliance model, in the partnership model (ibid.), there is a high level of trust between governors and the SMT to facilitate cooperation between the board and the college in order to serve the best interest of the college. In the current research, there was evidence of X-ASG having such trust in X-College SMTs. Furthermore, there was no strong evidence to support the presence of mutual mistrust between ASGs and external governors at the three colleges, unlike the mistrust Pounce (1992) had observed between TGs and external governors in schools originating in the two constituencies' perceived lack of expertise in one another. This is while noting, the three ASGs' observed attempts to educate or inform other governors in meetings regarding educational matters. In fact, as already highlighted, governors confirmed that ASGs helped them to understand educational matters, pointing to the possibility that the other governors recognised the need for ASGs' input to fill

any gaps in professional TLA-related knowledge they had. Therefore, as far as trust between ASGs and other governors is concerned, it was not identified as a major issue.

In his corporate governance research, Cowton (2008) cautioned against governors who gatekeep the work of those who employ them in regular work. The ASGs in the current study fell into this category as they were employed by the colleges as academics. Despite being paid members of staff, in the current research ASGs were not identified as having an exceeding amount of influence (Figure 5.5). They were regarded by the board, according to the

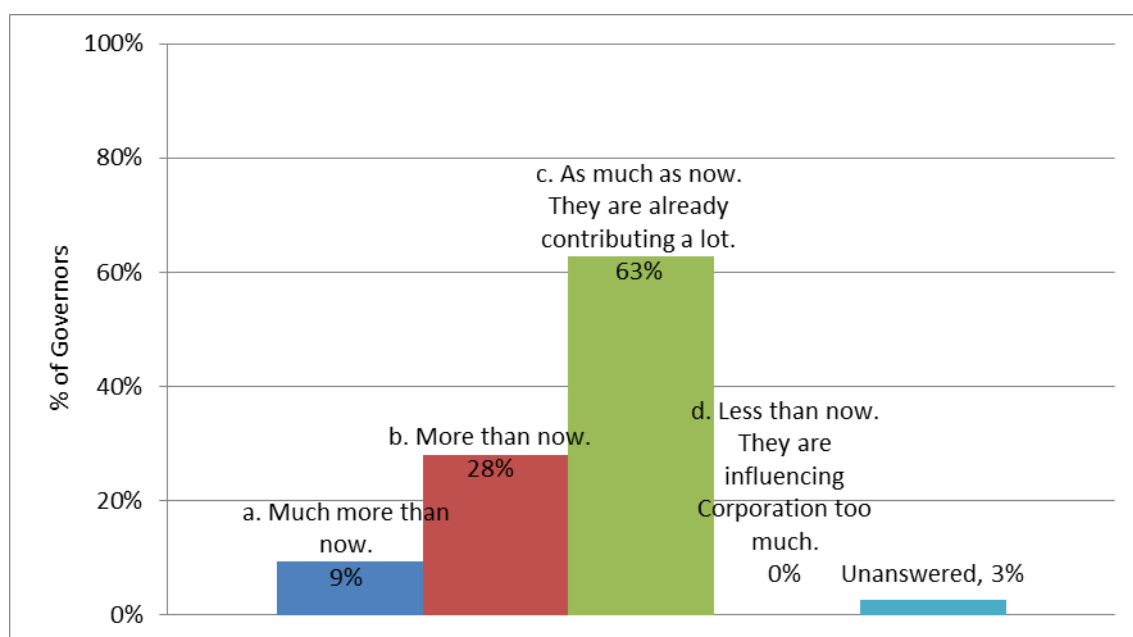


Figure 5.5: Cross College Averages of % of Governors' Responses

vast majority of the 35 governors across the 3 colleges (80%), as of equal status as other governors in their respective boards. However, ASGs at Y and Z colleges, unlike at X-College, felt they were treated as inferior to other governors. Moreover, as already noted in the previous section, all three ASGs were observed to be barred or discouraged from participating in the boards' remuneration committees, which meant they could not influence staff and SMT's pay and conditions significantly. This finding was in line with

Masunga's (2014) finding in FE colleges, where ASGs were typically not members of the powerful search and audit committees and that they were not of equal status as the power-brokers - the Principal, the Chair or members of central or statutory committees such as the remuneration or the governance committees. In addition, ASGs could neither be the chair nor the vice-chair of the corporations according to governance arrangements at the colleges. Y-ASG and Z-ASG were informally discouraged from being committee chairs too. All of these restrictions meant ASGs in the three colleges could not be in what van Ees et al. (2009) and (Argote and Greve, 2007) call the 'dominant coalition' in governance. This may be seen as an expected aspect of the ASG role as several authors have presented evidence arguing that it is perhaps not advisable for ASGs to be part of the power circle. For instance, teachers in schools have highlighted issues of credibility when TGs have too close a relationship with school heads (Taylor, 1983; Bagarette, 2014). ASGs appear to have less power because of their perceived close relationships with college principals (Ebbutt and Brown, 1978; Masunga, 2014), perhaps because such affiliations may affect ASGs' meeting contributions (Cornforth and Edwards, 1998). However, despite a good relationship with the Principal, ASGs might enjoy a lower power status because of other factors. For instance, Y-ASG was seen as of low power status because he had limited influence in the committee structure that shaped the dominant coalition. In terms of gaining power status, an arguably more effective relationship to harness is the relationship between the wider stakeholders in the community because board members valued such relationships (Smith, 2010) and governors who enjoyed such relationships were seen as more influential than those who did not.

### ASGs' Professional Status

From the findings in the current research, it is apparent that the ASGs were fulfilling a professional role through their governance activities, for example professional information-giving - but there were some uncertainties to do with professional status, because Y-ASG and Z-ASG might not be able to play a full professional role due to the particularly restricted nature of their positions in the boards, echoing the "*restricted professional model*" referred to by Earley and Creese (2001:326).

On the other hand, Y-ASG could arguably command a certain professional status because of his professional membership in a professional body for ethnic minorities; his professional background in the curriculum subject, PSD; and for holding a managerial post in community relations. For when a leader is in a position to interact with the local community, it potentially raises their power status (Masunga, 2014; Smith, 2010). Similarly, Z-ASG held membership with a professional body related to IT (curriculum subject); had subject and TLA expertise and was a manager at the college. In contrast, X-ASG's profile showed that she was not a member of a professional (teaching or otherwise) organisation since the main professional body serving FE professionals at the time, IfL, was being disbanded by the government (Machin et al., 2014). Moreover, at the time of research, X-ASG, although being the academic staff governor, had not engaged in regular in teaching activities for about 5 years but was a curriculum manager at the college. According to LeBlanc (2014) such professional backgrounds and activities shaped people's professional identity. Furthermore, Cowton (2008), using

Abbott's (1988) analysis, stated that one of the characteristic of a professional is the ability to self-regulate and having autonomy over a profession's knowledge base, as would be possible through membership with a professional body. Therefore, unlike ASGs at Y and Z colleges, X-ASG's professional characteristic may be regarded as weak if one applies Cowton's terms to X-ASG's professional status. Perhaps X-ASG's significant involvement in conducting governor training and the relatively high amount of interaction that took place between her and the SMTs in her strategic role would raise her professional status in the college's governing board. The potentially significant role of delivering governor training by ASGs as a role-as-practice (James et al., 2007) in governance is a function that Earley and Creese (2001) have suggested for TGs in schools too. It would compensate for X-ASG's weakened professional status, in view of LeBlanc's (2014) idea of professional identity.

### RQ3: Summary

ASGs appeared to have a good relationship with other governors but Y and Z ASGs limited power status and were not in the dominant coalition. Their relationship with the SMT, as in the case of Y-ASG, may not be as good as with the governors. All ASGs seemed to be performing a valued professional-information giving role but the professional status of ASGs at Y and Z Colleges may be affected by their low power status in their boards. On the other hand, even though X-ASG performed more high profile professional activities such as governor training, her professional status may be affected by her non-practising teacher status and her not holding membership with any professional bodies.



#### **5.1.4. RQ4: What are the issues around the understanding of ASGs' role in the governance of the 3 colleges?**

Understanding a governors' role is a characteristic of an effective board and good governance (Bartlett, 2008; LSIS, 2012b). At colleges X and Y, the majority of governors, did not believe ASGs were uncertain about their role in governance. In contrast, Z-College governors felt, their ASGs had been uncertain about the role. In the interviews, Y-ASG displayed his uncertainty about what role he was expected to play in governance. The reason for this appeared to be a lack of adequate training from the corporation. Any uncertainty in ASGs' role could also be described as arising from the different institutional role ASGs might have to take on; for instance as a governor or curriculum manager or a teacher. However, X-ASG displayed great awareness of these distinct roles. Any confusion of the role could also be attributed to the absence of specific role specifications for ASGs at the colleges. According to Hill (2014), a majority of FE colleges (62%) have roles defined for governors other than college principals and board chairs. Therefore, it is slightly surprising that the 3 Outstanding colleges did not have ASG roles defined separately.

Further reports of confusion of the role have been published by McNay (2002) and IVR (2006) in HE and FE education, suggesting that this issue of ASG role confusion might pervade various education sectors, a postulation that needs further investigation in future research. At X-College, X-ASG recalled that most of her uncertainties and confusion had been in the early part of her time as an ASG, in her first term (Chapter 4:145), reflecting the

views of two external governors at Z-College. Masunga's (2014) research into FE governance too seems to suggest that understanding of the governor roles may improve into the latter part of their governorship tenure.

There was also evidence in the current research indicating some confusion amongst the general staff regarding staff governors' (including ASGs') roles. This was claimed by X-ASG, Y-ASG and governors at Z-College, in common with Early and Creese's (2001) study into school governance. Earley and Creese (ibid.) discovered that nearly 50% of 240 TGs in the study believed their corresponding school staff were confused about TG roles. Some may argue that the GFE colleges' staff may, in fact, understood the role well but might have wanted the arrangements to change and allow ASG roles to represent staff interests in the board. It is recognised that confusion amongst the three colleges' staff was not established as an undisputable finding because the general staff were not the subject matter of the current case study. In McNay's (2002) study, ASG role confusion was attributed to staff union's attempts to convince ASGs to represent staff interests, while similar evidence was found at X-College too. The confusion could also be attributed to the ASG election process, where staff elected ASGs but produced no specific benefits to staff – a process that may be regarded as Carver (2001:26) called "*rituals*" of no value in governance. In order to enhance ASG role understanding, Hill's (2012) advice is that ASGs should concentrate on performing the core responsibilities in the relevant corporations' instrument of governance using their professional expertise and experience and should consult the corporation's clerk when any uncertainties about the role arise. Corporations should also have in place mechanisms to consult staff directly

without having to refer to ASGs in order to obtain general staff views on various college matters (LSIS, 2012a). However, such approaches may limit ASGs' role and go against the democratic model of governance suggested by Hopkins (2014).

#### RQ4: Summary

It appears that in the three boards, what the governors perceived as uncertainty on the part of the ASGs did not always reflect the ASGs' views. At Y-College, the governors did not believe Y-ASG was uncertain but Y-ASG confessed to his uncertainty of the role. Similarly, Z-College governors believed Z-ASG was uncertain but Z-ASG displayed a good understanding of the role. At all three colleges, the uncertainty of the role could be amongst the wider college staff. Governor training-related issues and a lack of clarity arising from an absence of ASG role specifications could also be related factors.

### **5.2. The Study's Contribution: Conceptualisation of ASG Roles at the 3 Outstanding Colleges**

This section presents the current case study's main contribution to the understanding of ASG roles in FE Colleges using the findings and discussions in the preceding sections in this chapter. The understanding of the role is presented under the two conceptual topics of:

1. The 3 RAPs Framework of an ASG Role in FE College Governance
2. Analogies and Labels of an ASG Role

### 5.2.1. The 3 RaPs Framework of an ASG's Role

In order to capture the themes of an ASG role emerging from the current study, a conceptual framework named, 'The 3 RaPs Framework of an ASG Role' is proposed in Figure 5.6. The framework encompasses three facets of

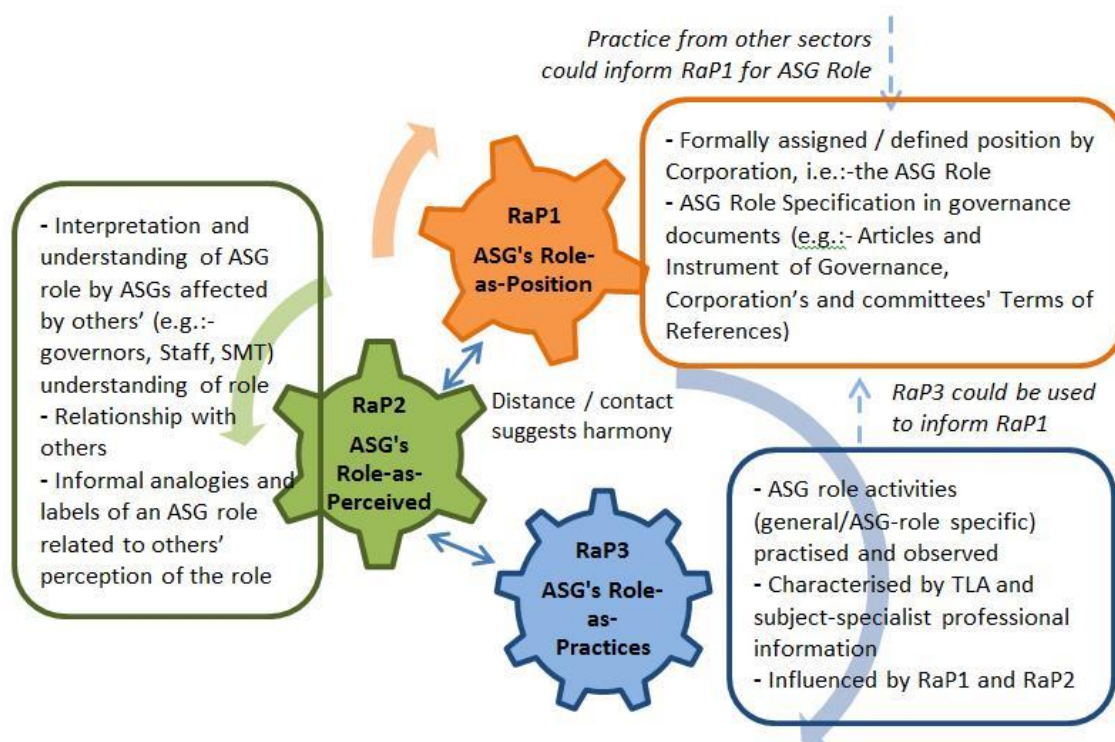


Figure 5.6: Conceptualisation of ASG Role : The 3 RaPs Framework

an ASG role in an FE college in England. The facets have been created using three aspects of a role in an organisation: Roles-as-positions (RaP1), roles-as-perceived (RaP2) and roles-as-practices (RaP3). Roles-as-positions, labelled RaP1 in the proposed framework, and introduced by James et al. (2007), relate to the concept of formal role as discussed by Krantz and Maltz (1997). For the ASGs in the current case study, RaP1 (formal roles) refer to responsibilities which applied to all governors in each college and were specified in the colleges' instruments of governance. However, the current study showed that there were not specific role descriptions for ASGs, – a situation similar to at least 38% of colleges, in Hill's (2014) study. RaP1 at a college might incorporate ASGs' exclusion from

certain committees such as remuneration committees; from positions such as board chairs, vice-chairs, due to routinization of decision-making (van Ees et al., 2009).

The second facet of an ASG role may be conceptualised as roles-as-perceived (RaP2), a facet introduced as a product of the current research to link James et al.'s (2007) two concepts of roles-as-position and roles-as-practices. Lee (2000) observed discrepancy between how roles are understood and practised and this discrepancy could be conceptualised in terms of RaP2, a transitional phase between James et al.'s concepts of roles-as-positions (RaP1) and roles-as-practices (RaP3) to correspond to the job specifications of the role and how the role is implemented by an ASG respectively. RaP2 encompasses aspects that influence roles-as-practices and interpretations and understanding of RaP1 in formal documents. The influence may result from ASGs' affiliations with other key actors/stakeholders and others' expectations and perceptions of an ASG's role. In the current study, such potentially influencing affiliations included X-ASG's relationship with her community, the SMT and the Principal; Y-ASG's apparent close relationship with the Principal and the teaching staff; and Z-ASG's relationship with college staff and the local community.

Research by Ashforth and Mael (1989); Hillman et al. (2008) and Smith (2010) suggest that a governor's association with stakeholders could influence a governors' role, practices and status in governance. In an FE college board, if the ASG has a strong affiliation with his/her colleagues amongst the college's staff, then the ASG may take action in governance,

either deliberately or inadvertently, to benefit the teaching staff of the college, or to advise the board members on TLA matters (Chapter 4).

RaP2 can also be characterised by stakeholders' expectations and perceptions of the role (Mullins, 2004). At the three colleges in this study, there was evidence of the governors expecting ASGs to represent staffs' interests or views, which may potentially affect the actual role activities practised (RaP3, see below). Negative perceptions of an ASG's role by leaders (Lee, 2000) or perceptions amongst governors as to the value of the role and what constitute the role (New, 1993b; Earley and Creese, 2001) could both influence RaP3. At colleges Y and Z, the ASGs felt their role is not valued by the board and/or the SMT and this negative image could affect the role.

Some may perceive ASGs as insiders within the college as evident in the current research. This too could affect the room for their influence (Mace, 1973), as it has been seen in the 3 ASGs' potential to participate in staff and SMTs' remuneration related issues; ASGs' ability to support/challenge SMTs in meetings; and their potential to contribute to governance.

Role understanding represented in RaP2 could also influence RaP3. In addition to idea of whether ASG role specification is enshrined in RaP1, other factors could influence ASG roles too; specifically, how the role is interpreted by ASGs and others; role uncertainty associated with training; ASGs holding multiple roles at the colleges; and conflict between how ASGs see the role and what is expected of the role by governance arrangements.

The third and final gear in the framework in Figure 5.6 (:227) represents James et al.'s roles-as-practices (RaP3). In the current research, this concept encompasses what activities the ASGs were known to have conducted in reality in their governance role. The current study found that the 3 ASGs engaged in predominantly statutory activities, forming the bulk of their RaP3 activities. ASGs' other RaP3 activities established in the current research include:

- protecting college reputation
- consulting SMT or corporation chair informally
- some tendency to consider the community's needs
- generally more support for SMT than challenging them but with some challenge to SMT at times
- contributions in meetings using TLA knowledge and expertise
- some ambiguous evidence regarding ASGs representing staff views and interests and
- visiting college areas to conduct governing activities but no evidence of acting as link governors for specific curriculum areas.

What a governor actually does in a board (RaP3 activities) is important because such activities impact on a board's financial performance (Andersson, 2012). Moreover, RaP3 may impact on ASGs' professional status (LeBlanc, 2014). Valued activities such as influencing policy or conducting governor training as in X-ASG's case could raise an ASG's professional status. On the other hand, less valued ones such as opening college project tender applications, as in Y-ASG's case, may lower their professional status.

In terms of symmetry between an ASG's roles types, RaP1 to RaP3, in reality

there may be discrepancies between the role aspects for a given ASG. This is denoted in Figure 5.6 by the arrows showing distance/contact between the gears containing each of the types of roles (RaPs). When the gears are not in contact, they represent a situation where ASG roles may have room for improvement for effective governance. For instance, in Chapter 4, it was discovered that college governors regarded 'meeting the needs of the community' as a highly relevant activity for ASGs (RaP2). In practice, however, this function was observed only in 26% of the 3 ASGs' contributions (RaP3). Similarly, at all 3 colleges, governors did not recognise ASGs' management experience or managerial status as relevant or useful to the role (RaP2) but in practice all 3 ASGs were managers (RaP3). In addition, ASGs' potential to represent staff views was recognised as a valued aspect (RaP2) but the instruments of governance at the colleges did not allow such a role (RaP1). Another example is that, at Y-College, governors felt that the ASG had a clear understanding of the role (RaP2) but Y-ASG admitted to his uncertainty of the role and at times engaged in activities that represented staff interests at an informal level (RaP3) - an activity not within the remit of the role in the governing instrument.

In optimal governance, the 3 RaP 'gears' would be in harmony and contain information that complements one another, instead of contradicting concepts of the ASG role. The harmony would be helped through various relevant governor training. It could also be achieved via the presence of ASGs' role specifications in articles and instruments of governance, which are informed by regular evaluation of RaP3 activities and using knowledge and expertise shared by governance collaborators in other sectors, such as schools,



universities and corporate governance. In the framework, such information is represented by the dashed arrows. The current author believes such a harmonious model of ASG role would address Sallis' (2006) description of the TG/ASG role as the most difficult role in an educational institution's governing board.

### 5.2.2. Role Analogies Model for the 3 ASGs – A Conceptual Model for ASG Roles in FE

This subsection presents the informal analogies or labels that may be used to describe an ASG role. The analogies correspond to some of the aspects of RaP2 (roles-as-perceived) created and presented in the previous section in the proposed framework of an ASG role. They are similar to the informal role

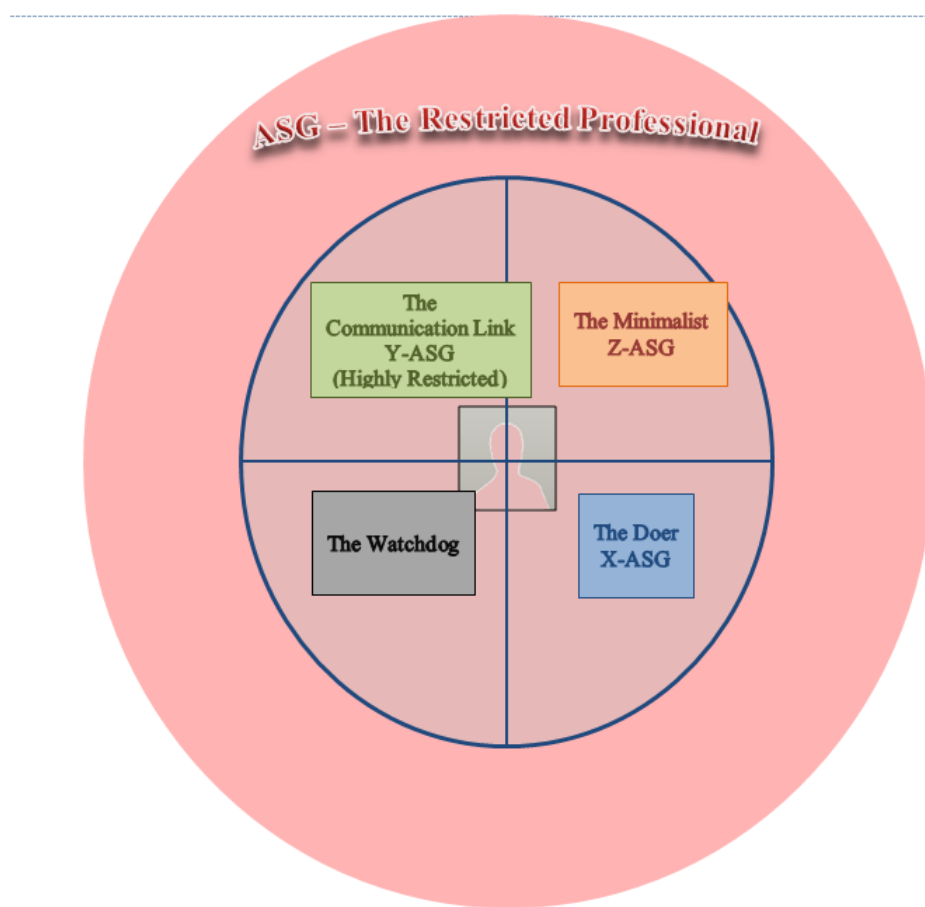


Figure 5.7: Role Analogies Model for an ASG, Showing the 3 ASGs' Roles  
- Adapted from the Analogies Produced by Earley and Creese (2001)

labels discussed by Krantz and Maltz (1997) and Mullins (2004). Using the current study's evidence set, a model (Figure 5.7, above) has been created encompassing informal role labels for X-ASG, Y-ASG and Z-ASG. These labels are the analogies (the minimalist, the watchdog, and the communication link) used by Earley and Creese (2001) and a new label resulting from the current study, 'the doer' to describe the ASGs' roles. The model was arrived at after analysing ASG role themes researched in the current study using the study's concepts such as ASGs' activities in governance, meeting contributions; trust, power, professional status, relationships; as well as role understanding and perceptions (Table 5.4, overleaf), developed from Earley and Creese's (2001) concepts to characterise the ASG role analogies. Basing on the analysis, the following paragraphs describe X-ASG, Y-ASG and Z-ASG's role analogies.

In Figure 5.7, the top left segment in the circle presents the analogy, the restricted communication link, corresponding to Y-ASG's role. Using the analysis in Table 5.4, Y-ASG's role was initially seen to feature many of the characteristics of a 'minimalist' (the brown squares); for example, him not being active in the board meeting (third column) and low attendance (69%). However, given that Y-ASG had been active in some aspects of governance outside formal meetings (for example, meeting community needs), it may not be entirely accurate to describe him as a minimalist. In fact, the dominant feature of his role was his belief that ASGs' main role was to act as links between teachers and governors (McNay, 2002), presented in the last column. This merited the label 'the communication link' (the green squares). As shown in Section 5.1.2, Y-ASG had communicated governance matters






















Characteristics of ASG Role that Applied to Each of the Role Analogies/ Labels														
	Engages in Meaningful Special Tasks only	Influential in Decision-making	Active in All Observed Meetings	High Attendance	Recruitment influenced by SMT / No Other Competitors	Presents Staff Views / Interests & Reports back	Has had Governor Training	Uncertain about ASG Role	Low Power Status	Has Little Trust in the Board	TU Member	Professional Body Member	Openly Challenges Principal / SMT	Sees Main Role as Link between Teachers & Governors
ASG						 T								
X-ASG	T	T	T	100% (13/14)	T	 T  ONLY occasionally when TLA-related	T, substantial	F	Some Power	F	F	F	F	F
Y-ASG	F	F				 F		T	T	F	F	T	F	T
Z-ASG	F	F		 T 88% (13/14)		F	 a good amount	F	 T	F	 T	 T	Only Occasionally	F

Table 5.4: Analysis of ASG Role to Identify ASG Labels/Analogies, Using some of the Research Concepts

T=True; F=False; Coloured Squares Mark Analogies Applicable to Each ASG (For the Colour-coded Key for the Analogies / Labels, please see

#### The Watchdog

- has little trust in the board
- presents staff views to the board & reports back
- affiliated with a teachers' union
- affiliated with a professional association
- has had some governor training
- possibly a middle/junior manager
- outspoken in meetings & challenges Principal/SMT
- less likely to see themselves as 'second-class' governors

#### The Communication Link

- sees the ASG's main or sole role as the link between governors and teachers
- presents staff views to the board and reports back informally
- has had limited governor training
- possibly a middle/junior manager
- average attendance level at meetings
- less likely to see themselves as 'second-class' governors

#### The Doer

- Engages in meaningful, special activities only, no 'rituals'
- influential in policy approving decision-making
- Active in all observed corporation and committee meetings
- Has had substantial governor training
- High attendance level

#### The Minimalist

- unwillingly recruited to board because no other teacher has shown interest
- happy to present staff views to the board and report back informally
- potentially without governor training
- uncertain about ASG role
- more likely to see themselves as 'second-class' governors with limited power
- makes little contribution to the board meetings
- low attendance level

between teachers and governors but to him his role was very uncertain as he had not undergone any governor training. Given that an ASG's communication of governance matters was officially restricted at Y-College as in educational governance in general in England (Lee, 2000; LSIS, 2012a); and that he was barred from representing teachers, his potential to act as a communication link between governors and teachers was clearly restricted. Hence, he was given the label, 'the highly restricted communication link'.

As for Z-ASG, he could be described as 'the minimalist' amongst the 3 ASGs in this study – the top right segment in the circular model of ASG role in Figure 5.7, (above). Three characteristics of a minimalist applied to Z-ASG; namely his limited activity (contributions) in meetings as demonstrated in Section 5.1.1; being recruited by SMT with no other competitors in ASG election; and his low power status (columns, 3, 5 and 9, Table 5.4). Some features of the 'watchdog' analogy (bottom left segment in model in Figure 5.7) may apply to Z-ASG too. However, these did not become predominant aspects of his role characteristics. For example, regarding the 'membership of a trade union' (column 11, Table 5.4), Z-ASG said he was not a political person and the union he held membership was the least militant of the teachers' unions at the college. Therefore, it was unlikely he would be active in trade union matters and he was not seen as an outspoken governor in meetings, a feature of 'the watchdog' analogy (Earley and Creese, 2001).

X-ASG's activities were characterised by the main features of 'the doer'

analogy of the role – a new ASG role analogy created as a result of the current research. The role is represented in the bottom right segment of the ASG Role model in Figure 5.7. A notable aspect of the doer is that the role is depicted in a more positive light than the ones in Earley and Cresse's (ibid.) study because the label could be used to capture the governance work of an active and relatively influential ASG such as X-ASG. The characteristics of X-ASG's role that merited her the doer label are shown in (Table 5.4 above), specifically her engagement in meaningful tasks, her influence in decision-making, her relatively active role in meetings, high level of attendance and having had substantial governor training as confirmed in her interview (columns 1-4 and column 7). The attendance level was verified in governance review documents while the following characteristics were identified in Chapter 4:

- her engagement in meaningful governance tasks such as leading training events for governors and influencing governor training
- her influence in decision-making; she was the main contributor in the meeting when she backed the college's new sickness policy that was approved by the governors
- her total contributions to the meetings were significantly more than the other two ASGs: X-ASG made 27 contributions at an average of 9 per observed meeting; while the average figures for Y-ASG and Z-ASG were 4 and 2 respectively (Table 5.5)

<b>ASG</b>	<b>Total No. of Contributions in Meetings</b>	<b>No. of Observed Meetings</b>	<b>Average No. of Contributions Across Observed Meetings</b>
X-ASG	27	3	9
Y-ASG	11	3	4
Z-ASG	4	2	2

Table 5.5: Comparison of Contributions by the 3 ASGs at X, Y and Z Colleges

According to Earley and Creese's finding, governors were generally positive about TGs or ASGs who were involved with various educational activities

such as X-ASG's passionate involvement with the college's graduation events and about ASGs who found opportunities for other governors to interact with the institution's internal activities, for example, X-ASG encouraging other governors to engage with the college's TLA training and graduation events. Therefore, X-ASG could be described as a governor with a positive influence on other governors.

An important aspect of the ASG Role Analogy Model is that it encompasses the potentially restrictive nature of an ASG role in the English FE system. This is shown by the surrounding circle labelled, 'the restricted professional' in the model (Figure 5.7) and implies that all four ASG role analogies are restricted in nature. The 'professional' label could be attributed to the 3 ASGs in view of Cowton's (2008) 6 criteria of professionalism, but to varying degrees; for instance, X-ASG's professional status was raised because of her leading role in training governors in TLA matters but she had not been a practising teacher for some years and did not hold membership with a professional body. In contrast, Y-ASG and Z-ASGs both held professional membership and were practising teachers but their power status was lower in their respective corporations than X-ASG. All 3 ASGs possessed multiple-discipline professional expertise that was observed in governance action in the current research.

The restricted nature of their roles also arises from their exclusion from remuneration committees due to potential routinization of decision-making (van Ees et al., 2009); exclusion from the dominant coalition (Argote and Greve, 2007; van Ees et al., 2009) in governance; bounded rationality and

satisficing behaviour, for instance in expressing judgement on financial matters. The original reference to the idea of restricted professional model in the current study's literature review arose from Early and Creese's (2001) and Lee's (2000) finding in school and FE governance respectively that ASGs tended to contribute to matters that related to teachers' concerns. It has to be noted that in the current case study, there was evidence that the 3 ASGs did contribute to a variety of topics beyond teachers' specific concerns. Examples of non-teacher related topics included:

- X-ASG's topics: college academy building project; student union matters; student reward scheme; college graduation event; college reputation; career advice for students and community needs
- Y-ASG's topics: student destinations; college achievements; college reputation; community needs and income collection
- Z-ASG: e-governance arrangements and students' health and safety

Nonetheless, given further restrictions associated with ASGs' insiderness and barring them from activities external governors were involved in (example, link governor role for curriculum areas), it is safe to regard ASGs in FE colleges as professionals operating in a relatively restricted environment.

## Chapter 6. Conclusion

### 6.1. Summary of the Role of ASGs Explored

The current study stemmed from the researcher's passionate belief that there is a need for teachers to be more actively involved with college senior management and governance of colleges, and because of a lack of research into roles of teachers in FE governance in England. Through a case study approach incorporating combined methods, the sub-research questions about the three ASGs' general governance and role-specific governance activities; their power and professional status and issues around the understanding of ASGs' role in governance have been addressed.

It appears that despite the presence of specifications for role responsibilities for all governors at the colleges, an ASG's RaP1, may be shaped by their position as insiders and influenced by other insiders such as the SMT. ASGs' affiliation with the colleges may prevent them from performing their statutory role in staffing or remuneration matters. ASGs' identification with their local communities might encourage ASGs meet the needs of the local community, while bounded rationality (Hendry, 2005; van Ees et al., 2009) could be a barrier in such efforts. ASGs' insiderness, satisficing behaviour and personalities may influence the increase in their support for, in comparison to their challenge to SMTs' decisions.

ASG role-specific governance activities at the colleges included highly valued role of professional information giving using TLA knowledge and sometimes,



subject-specific knowledge, which were rooted in the colleges' operational settings. The ASGs were college managers, although the governors did not indicate there were any substantial benefits to the board from their managerial status. ASGs appeared, to a limited extent, to participate in college visits as governors; some of which may be in their multiple roles as governors, managers and academic staff. However, even though ASGs wished to act as link governors to support underperforming curriculum areas, their insiderness prevented them from playing such a role. Although representing staff views in governance was seen as a relevant role, the arrangements did not allow such a role.

ASGs appeared to have a good relationship with other governors but with limited power status, and were not in the dominant coalition (van Ees et al., 2009). At times, their relationship with the SMT, as in the case of Y-ASG, may not be as good as with the governors. Their professional status might be affected by their low power status in their boards, by their non-practising teacher status or by their non-membership status with any professional bodies. This relationship between ASGs' status and professional membership needs further investigation and verification.

It appears that in the three boards, the governors were in discord with the ASGs regarding whether ASGs were uncertain about ASGs' role in governance. Y-ASG confessed to his uncertainty of his role, while X and Z-ASG displayed a good understanding of the role. At all three colleges, the uncertainty of the role could be amongst the wider college staff. Governor training-related issues and an absence of ASG role specifications could also

be related factors.

Some of the predominant themes across the ASGs' roles included:-

- ASGs' insiderness affecting ASGs' role as credible gatekeepers of SMTs' work and
- a potential threat to practising teachers' opportunities to be ASGs attributable to the appointment of curriculum managers (who may or may not be practising teachers) to ASG positions

In order to collate and capture the ASG role and its concepts, the '3 RaPs Framework of an ASG's Role' and the 'Role Analogies Model for ASGs' have been created and presented in Chapter 5 on pages 227 and 232 respectively. These conceptualisations highlight ASGs' roles-as-positions, roles-as-practices (James et al., 2007) as well as the newly introduced roles-as-perceived. Roles-as-perceived gave rise to the role analogies model emphasising ASG' restricted professional role and incorporating various informal role labels used by Earley and Creese (2001) to describe TG roles, and a new ASG role analogy, 'the doer' has been created as a product of the research.

The findings of this research may become transferable. Readers of the current multi-site case-study should, from the detail provided, be able to determine if the findings can be applied to other contexts. The findings about ASG roles; the framework and model could be used to see if they can be applied to other colleges, or with modification, to other educational contexts, where roles of governors are researched.

## **6.2. Implications for Professional Practice and Recommendations for ASG Roles in FE Colleges**

The researcher's general impression of ASG roles in educational governance based on research conducted by Taylor (1983), Earley and Creese (2001), Masunga (2014) and now the current research, is that over a period of 30 years, ASGs have much room to develop in order to play a much fuller role in educational governance. In order to facilitate this, several recommendations for governance practitioners can be identified as a result of the case study:

- It is recommended that FE corporations introduce specific role descriptions for ASG roles in the articles of governance in order to aid role understanding. The specifications could vary from college to college but would address any uncertainties in the role.
- In order to address ASGs' insiderness, it may be worthwhile considering Y-ASG's and Z-ASG's idea of discussing at least some governance issues in SMTs' absence (see Chapter 4:166, 191). This may encourage more contributions from ASGs, especially the necessary challenge and support from them, adding more autonomy to their statutory and gatekeeping roles.
- Another way of addressing ASGs' insiderness is by providing them with opportunities to assume ASG governorships at other FE colleges, as opposed to their own college.
- ASGs' professional status may be indirectly affected by the professionalism of teaching as a profession. Working towards raising the status of the profession, perhaps, using Cowton's (2008) characteristics of a profession as reference points, may help ASGs' professional status in FE governance.
- Include data on FE governors' training in national databases, such as AoC's (2014a) surveys, in order to publicise vital profile and governance efficiency-related information of FE college governors. This could increase responsibility for improving the board through governance training - a characteristic of effective boards (Bartlett, 2008).

- A research methodological recommendation for future researchers into ASG role is to follow/observe ASGs on corporations' strategy and/or training days; and in ASGs' special governance projects or tasks, in order to gather deeper and richer evidence related to ASG-role specific activities.

### **6.3. Opportunities for Future Research into ASG Roles**

The current case study lends exploration opportunities for 5 specific areas:

1. Firstly, an immediate opportunity that surfaces is a potential project that could delve into detailed professional profiling of ASGs in the English FE. The impact of ASGs' professional profile on non-ASG governors' perceptions of ASGs would be a worthwhile study to conduct in the future.
2. Another opportunity may be a research project focusing on ASGs' relationships and interactions with SMTs outside governance avenues. Unlike the current study, such a project could include SMTs in addition to ASGs amongst the participants. This could give more insight into ASGs' support and challenge for SMTs' proposals and decisions.
3. Both the current study (see Chapter 5:207) and Hough's (2009) research imply the relevance of governors' personality to decision-making in governance. Therefore, to ascertain the nature and details of ASGs' personality's influence on ASG's activities may be another interesting area for research.
4. A fourth area may be to do with clarity / confusion of ASG roles in wider educational governance. Y-ASG in the current study appeared to be uncertain about his role as well as the general staff at the 3 colleges (Chapter 5:224-225). In addition, McNay's (2002) and IVR's (2006) research in educational governance, suggest that this issue might pervade various education sectors, a postulation that needs further investigation.
5. A fifth opportunity may be a case study comparing ASG roles in high-performing (for example, Outstanding, Grade 1) colleges and underperforming colleges. However, a potential problem will be

obtaining consent from the corporations of underperforming colleges as they are likely to be relatively cautious in permitting external researchers to delve into their governance affairs. Another challenge may arise if such a study spans over a period of several years. For Ofsted grading for a participant college has the potential to change dramatically during a case study of multiple colleges.

All of the research topics above have the potential to be influential and interesting if extended beyond England to explore practices in global educational governance.

As has already been identified in this case study, there may be significant gaps in contemporary FE governance research, for instance, perspectives from students, student governors, parents and teachers. The current research has presented an in-depth focus on the roles of one such constituency the ASG, and hopefully will be an incentive for future research that will continue to fill the vacuum.

#### **6.4. Personal Reflection**

In these last few paragraphs, the researcher feels it is appropriate to collate and present some recollections and reflect on the experiences from the case study. The case study was an extremely challenging experience, especially given his full-time teaching commitment. Balancing the wants and needs of a young family, work and doctoral research required immense determination and resolve. What kept the author's drive and focus purposeful was his passion to find out the processes at the 3 Outstanding colleges and his desire to make a transition from an FE lecturer to a Higher Education academic and researcher. During his research, he learnt to expect the

unexpected; for during the study, the clerks and the administrators of the 3 corporations changed and the researcher had to respond swiftly and communicate the details of the research to the new staff. This ensured that the data collection stages ran as smoothly as possible.

At the onset of the research, gaining access to the colleges and their board meetings and governance documents proved to be a challenge. This was not surprising given that the institutions discuss both confidential and sensitive information and to grant an external researcher access to such information cannot be an easy decision to make. At the same time, the researcher realised that the research community needs to put more effort into publicising the importance of conducting research that collects sensitive evidence in order to understand and improve educational governance systems. If this becomes a much more co-ordinated process between researchers and educational leaders both nationally and globally, sensitive educational research could become more commonplace to impact positively on both theory, policy and practice in educational governance. Furthermore, if educational researchers and academics assume influential roles in educational institutions, such research would become even more common.

In terms of how the authors' awareness of ASG roles has evolved, he has come to the understanding that there are limitations against a full-blown and pivotal role for ASGs because there are other credible and eligible actors in governance. FE governance needs not just educational experience but other professional skills such as knowledge and skills of the law, accountancy, and institutional management amongst other things. Yet, based on the opinion

aired by various governors, ASGs are unique in their capacity to bring the shop-floor and TLA perspective to governance as no other governors are in a position to present this perspective with the immediacy an ASG can.

As an educator, the author feels obliged to seek opportunities to take up an ASG role in educational governance and to encourage his teaching colleagues to engage with governance more. He feels strongly, particularly after concluding the current research, that there is much potential for FE governance in England to be enriched with the benefit of the expertise and experience that FE lecturers have. At the same time, there is a duty for him to make FE educators aware that there may be a threat to their roles in governance arising from colleges' tendency to appoint non-teaching academic managers to the corporations as it was seen in the current research. Through wide and immediate dissemination of the findings, it is hoped the researcher could contribute to raising such awareness.

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## Appendix A. Example of E-mail sent to college Clerks for Research Access

Dear (Clerk),

I am a doctoral researcher at the University of Warwick researching governance at Outstanding colleges. I would like you to kindly consider your college's participation in a research study I am conducting into Academic Staff Governor roles at Outstanding colleges. My doctoral study is at the Institute of Education (WIE), Warwick and my supervisors are (names). You can find my profile [here](#).

I am extremely keen to do this research at your college given its Beacon status and if you accept this invitation, *(College X) will be one of 3 Outstanding colleges with Beacon Status* contributing to this study. The research will collect data using 4 main methods: a 20-minute online questionnaire, interviews with 3 governors; 2-3 board/committee meeting observations and documentary analysis. The data collection is expected to start in September 2013 and will be completed by September 2014.

By taking part in the project, your college will benefit from 3 interim feedback reports and a final collated one. The interim reports will be based on data from the college governors' views in the questionnaires, interviews and the meeting observations. The final report will bring together all the aforementioned data and state any recommendations if relevant.

I would also like to state that any data gathered will be treated in such a way that participants' anonymity will be respected throughout the research and in any post-research dissemination. This is to respect the British Educational Research Association's (BERA) 2011 guidelines and the UK's Data Protection and the participants' rights and dignity.

I would be most grateful if you could present my request to the Chair of the Corporation.

Thanking for your time reading my request and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Kind Regards  
Abdulla Sodiq  
EdD Doctoral Researcher  
University of Warwick, WIE  
(Mobile)

## Appendix B. Research Information Leaflet

### Academic Staff Governor (ASG) Roles at Outstanding GFE Colleges

Abdulla Sodiq, University of Warwick, 2013-2015

*You are invited to take part in a doctoral study project into Academic Staff Governor (Teacher Governor) roles at Outstanding GFE colleges.*

**What is the purpose of this study?** The purpose of the study is to identify the nature and aspects of ASG roles in Outstanding colleges. The study will become the main part of the researchers' Doctor of Education degree at the Institute of Education, University of Warwick. The project aims to study academic staff governor roles and views held by the colleges' governors about such roles in college governance. The views of the governors at the three colleges *will form the central part of this study.*

*It is important to highlight that throughout the project the researcher will give utmost importance to the participant colleges' and governors' dignity and privacy. 'Outstanding' in this project is used as defined in the latest Ofsted Inspection report for the colleges and it is acknowledged that each college's latest self-assessment grade since the Ofsted Inspection may or may not be different from the latest Ofsted Inspection grade.*

**Why is the study being done?** ASGs, as all other governors, are expected to contribute to the functions of the governing body in a constructive way. Educational Governance experts have asserted that FE governance in England, in general, is a subject that is in need of much research and indeed, the concept of college governance itself.

**Do I have to take part?** The colleges' participation is entirely optional but the participation will be invaluable to developing this important area of the education system in England.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?** The project will be an opportunity for the colleges and their governors to make an invaluable contribution to understanding ASG roles at Outstanding FE colleges. Compared to school and university governance, FE governance in general is little understood and needs much research. In addition, each college will receive independent feedback from the researcher. In producing this feedback, leading educational leadership researchers at the University of Warwick will be consulted. Such feedback will be of great value to the governing bodies' self-assessment and evaluation processes.

#### What does the research involve?

For each college, the project will involve:

- A 10-20 minute online questionnaire (for governors) Dec 2013
- 2 or 3 observations of part of a governance meeting and a committee meeting where an ASG is involved – Dec 2013 - Mar 2014
- Two or four interviews: about 60minutes each April-July 2014
  - with one or two 'academic/teaching staff' governor(s) and
  - with one or two with other governors
- Documentary analysis: governing body meeting minutes and other governance documents publicly available via the college's website

**Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?** The use of any information that identifies the colleges and the governing board during the research will be kept strictly confidential, available only to the researcher. The anonymised data collected through the questionnaire will be available to the researcher's supervisors, at the Institute of Education, University of Warwick. The project will adhere strictly to the ethical guidelines set by the **British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) and UK's Data Protection Act.**

**What happens when the research stops?** A doctoral thesis will be produced for internal publication and submitted for assessment with a view to being published in academic journals/ conferences. Also, a summary of the study and results will be made available to the college's governing body and participants. This summary will not contain any information that may reveal the identity of the participants.

**Contact details: Abdulla Sodiq**

Doctoral Researcher at the Institute of Education, University of Warwick

**Tel: +44 781 383 1909** Email: [a.sodiq@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:a.sodiq@warwick.ac.uk)

<https://warwick.ac.uk/go/asodiq>

*Thanking for your time*

## Appendix C. Research Tool: S emi-Structured Questionnaire

Note: [Questions and phrases **highlighted in yellow** within square brackets will appear only in the Academic Staff Governor (ASG) questionnaire, and not in the version for other governors.] Other questions will appear in both versions. ASG, Teaching Staff Governor and Teacher Governor (TG) are used synonymously. Revisions to the initial draft at various piloting stages (initial piloting and post-pilot study) are shown in **red**. The following does not represent the actual layout of the online questionnaire.

About you: Choose the appropriate answers.

### 1. What is your gender?

1. Male	
2. Female	

### 2. How old are you?

1. 16-18	2. 19-24	3. 25-34	4. 35-44
5. 45-54	6. 55-64	7. 65 or over	

### 3. What is your preferred description of your ethnic origin?

White	Tick	Mixed	Tick	Asian or Asian British	Tick
British		White & Black Caribbean		Indian	
Irish		White & Black African		Pakistani	
English		White & Asian		Bangladeshi	
Scottish		Any other Mixed background		Any other Asian background	
Welsh					
Any other White background					
<b>Black or Black British</b>	<b>Tick</b>	<b>Chinese or other ethnicity</b>	<b>Tick</b>		
Caribbean		Chinese			
African		Any other ethnic group			
Any other Black background					

### 4. What is your **GB** governor membership type (Choose one)?

1. Student Governor	2. Parent Governor
3. <b>Academic</b> / <del>Teaching</del> Staff governor	4. <b>Non-teaching</b> Staff Governor (Business Support)
5. The Principal	6. External Governor appointed by the Governing Board
7. The Chair	8. Other

### 5. Length of Time as a Governor at the college

1. Less than 1 year	2. 1-2 years	3. 3-4 years	4. <del>More than 5 years</del> 5 or more years
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### [About Your Current Teaching Role at the College]:

#### 6. [Your Teaching Post:]

1. Full-time (Permanent)
2. Part-time (Permanent)
3. Sessional/Hourly Paid

#### 7. [Average Number of Teaching Hours/week]:

1. Less than 5 hours/week
2. 5-10 hours/week
3. 10-15 hours/week
4. 15-20 hours/week
5. 20-25 hours/week

8. [Are you a member of teaching-related professional organisation?]

Yes  
No

9. Rank the following governance activities from 0-5, to indicate the activities you think Academic Staff Governors' should be involved in. (0=not relevant; 5=a highly relevant to an ASG's role)

a. reviewing of the college's mission	
b. approving the quality policies/strategies	
c. effective and efficient use of resources (staff, buildings, teaching and learning resources)	
d. approving college's financial income and expenditure	
e. the appointment, suspension, determination of pay and conditions of the holders of SMT posts at the college	
f. approving pay and conditions of all other staff	
g. Responding to the Local Community's Needs	
h. establishing a link between college governance and teaching and learning-related issues	
i. related to personal opinion, interest / experience	
j. presenting of staff viewpoints	

Optional Comments:

10. How many ASG positions should there be in the Corporation?

- a. None
- b. One
- c. Two
- d. Three
- e. Other... (Specify below)

If possible, please explain your **view of the above number of ASGs**:

11. In your opinion, overall, how much has ASG(s) in their governing role contributed to the college's successes.

0: No Contribution at all	1: <del>A lot</del> Little Contribution	2: <del>quite a lot</del> Some contribution	3. <del>A little</del> Significant Contribution	4. <del>Not at all</del> Immense Contribution
---------------------------	--	--	--	--

Optional Comments:

12. How active do you think an ASG should be in the governance of the college in the future?

- a. Much more than now
- b. More than now
- c. **As much as now.** They are already contributing a lot.
- d. **Less than now. They are influencing the Corporation too much.**

Optional Comments:

13. What do you think are the most valued experiences/knowledge/skills of an ASG? Rank each from 0-5; 0 indicates not a useful experience and 5 showing the most useful experience

1. College management knowledge/experience/skills
2. Experience in teaching at this college
3. Teaching experience at any college
4. Knowledge/experience of the assessment processes and outcomes (~~checking learning, examinations~~ learning progress) ~~of learners~~ at the college
5. ~~Knowledge~~ Awareness of the college's learners' needs (e.g.: training and resources)
6. ~~Knowledge~~ Awareness of teachers' needs (e.g.: training and resources)?

Optional Comments:

**14.[How frequently do you contribute at governance meetings in the following ways?**

Ways of contributing	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
a. by giving Professional information - based on teaching and learning expertise, experience and knowledge of the profession					
b. by giving personal opinions based on 'good sense' / personal interest – Contributions not based on any specialist/professional knowledge.					
c. representing a teachers' union's stance					
d. by directly raising issues at the request of your teacher colleagues					
<del>e. by presenting a staff viewpoint based upon soundings in the staff-room</del>					
<del>f. Other (Please state)</del>					

**Optional Comments:**

15.If the college governing board had all of the following sub-committees, could an ASG participate and contribute to them? Tick all those you agree with.

1. Quality & Performance Committee
2. ~~Remuneration Committee~~
3. Finance and Resources Committee
4. Search / ~~Governance~~ Committee
5. Estates Committee
6. Audit Committee

Any other committee or Comments:

16.a. The following is a list of views about **ASG roles**. Please study the views carefully and then rate each statement on how much you agree with them.

1. ASG(s) play a full and equal part in the work of the governing body.

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

2. Contributions from the ASG(s) are valued by all other governors.

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

3. The ASGs have been acting as a representative of the college's staff's interests.

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

4. The ASG(s) help other governors understand ~~the college's~~ educational issues.

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

5. The ASG(s) are uncertain about their role.

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

16b. Rank the following 0-5 to show how much of a barrier it is in ASGs' role.

Confusion about Academic Staff Governor (ASG) role	
--	--

Optional comments:

17.[How much do you agree with the following statement?

I feel that as an ASG I am perceived by my fellow governors as a 'second-class' governor.



Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

Optional comments:]

18. The following is a list of views about corporation meetings. Please study the views carefully and then rate each statement on how much you agree with them.

ASG(s) are inhibited at corporation meetings by the presence of the Principal (or the SMT Senior Management Team members).

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

The ASG(s) are often excluded, directly or indirectly, from the discussion of certain issues.

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

~~My governing body is dominated by the Principal and/or the chair.~~  
ASGs tend to dominate corporation meetings.

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

Optional comments:

19. The following views are about the selection of ASGs for governorships. Please study the views carefully and then rate each statement on how much you agree with them, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

The current process of appointing ASGs (including the nomination/election process) is a meaningful process.

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

ASGs should not be elected by the college's staff but should be appointed directly by the Corporation.

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

The current term of service for a teacher/academic staff governor is of the right length.

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

Optional Comments:

20. How do you see the function of the ASG in the college Corporation?

Indicate the value from 1 (Merely Symbolic / least valued) and increasing up to 4 (Highly Valued).

1	2	3	4
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Optional Comments:

21. The following statements are about ASGs as trusted professionals fulfilling an accountability role and monitoring the use of the college's resources.

ASGs at the college have a particularly important role in holding the college's management accountable.

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

Within the Corporation, there is a high level of trust in the ASGs' capacity to act as agents monitoring appropriate use of the college's resources.

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

Optional Comments:

22. [The following statements are about your role as Academic Staff Governors and the way you make decisions / express views in the college's Governance. Please study them carefully and then rate each according to how much you agree with them.

Regarding the way I normally make decisions,

I am normally able to explore governance issues fully before expressing my final judgment on the issues

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

I only explore the most immediate concerns/needs before expressing my final judgement.

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

I haven't been able to contribute a great deal to the decision-making process.

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

I feel I have served long enough in the college governing board to make use of the

experience of contributing to governance decisions.

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Optional Comments:]

23.Finally, in your view, what is meant by 'for a governor to act in the best interest of the college'? (max 75 characters)

## Appendix D. Example of Completed Non-Participant Meeting Observation Tool

Revisions to Pilot Study Tools **Shown in Red**

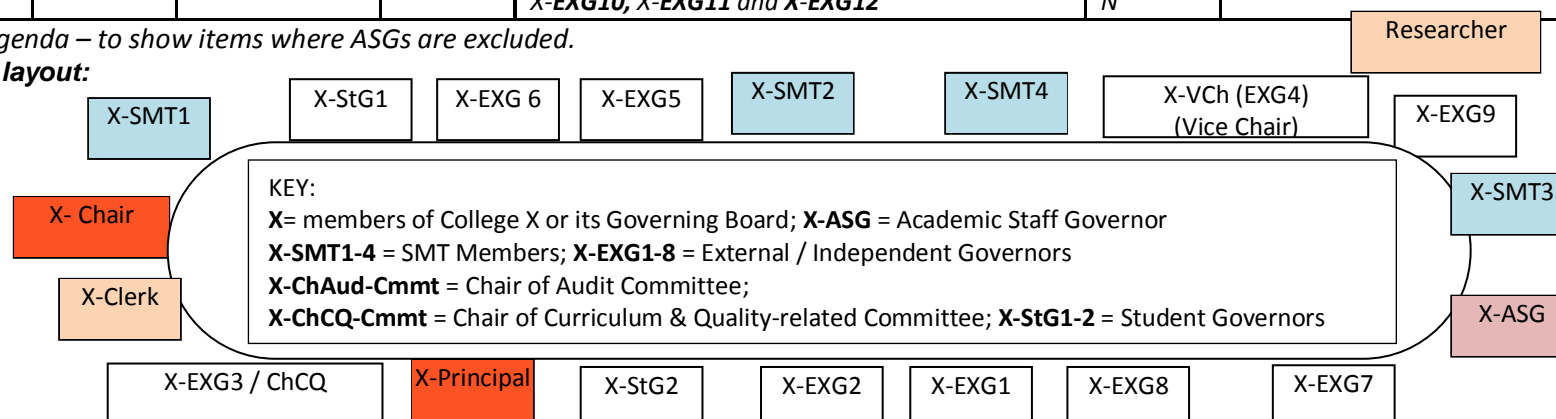
**College:** X; **Meeting:** Corporation; **Date:** xx/xx/2013; **Setting; environment:** small board room; oval table with a PC, projector and screen

**Participants:** (X-BSG=Business Support Governor; StG= Student Governor; for others, see key, next page)

Leads	Present Y/N	Internal	Present Y/N	External	Present Y/N	Non-Governors / SMTs	Present Y/N
X-Chair	Y	X-Principal	Y	X-EXG1	Y	X-SMT1	Y
		X-StG1	Y	X-EXG2	Y	X-SMT2	Y
		X-StG 2	Y	X-EXG3/ Chair of Committee related to Curriculum & Quality	Y	X-SMT3	Y
		X-ASG	Y	X-VCh EXG4/ (Vice Chair / Chair of Audit Committee)	Y	X-SMT4	Y
		X-BSG1	N	X-EXG5	Y	X-Clerk	Y
				X-EXG6	Y		
				X-EXG7	Y		
				X-EXG8	Y		
				X-EXG9	Y		
				X-EXG10, X-EXG11 and X-EXG12	N		

- Attach Agenda – to show items where ASGs are excluded.

- **Meeting layout:**



○ ASG (X-ASG) Observation Sheet. X-ASG refers to the ASG from College X; <u>Only an extract of data shown here.</u>											
Contribution no. & TYPE	After whom	To whom	topic	ASG's Communication Function (VERIFIED IN INTERVIEW)	Governance Role (general)	ASG-specific Role (VERIFIED IN INTERVIEW)	Length		Next speaker	Tone of Voice*/ Visual gestures	Body- Language (Visual)
								Min./sec			
X-GB-obs-ASG-1 Verbal	X-SMT3	X-SMT3	Fin. audit report & teaching/learning	CF-OQ; CF-AC	G_r1_St (use of resources)	ASG_ra1_Prof; ASG_ra6-L		/15	X-SMT3	CF-VW / CF-EX	
X-GB-obs-ASG-2 Verbal	X-SMT3	X-SMT3	audit report & teaching/learning ; IT equipment	CF-OQ; CF-Ch	G_r1_St (use of resources); G_r3_ChSMT	ASG_ra3_GTVw; ASG_ra6-L		/30	X-SMT2	CF-EX	
X-GB-obs-ASG-3 Visual	X-SMT4	X-SMT4	Financial Audit	CF-A	G_r1_St (approving audit report); G_r4_SupSMT					NODDING	
KEY (for extract):											
Communication (C) Functions				General Governance (G) Roles:							
CF-OQ - open question				G_r1_St: General, statutory roles relevant to all FE Governors; in FE Governance Instrument of 2007 or Education Act 2011: reviewing of the college's mission; determining and review of college's educational character; approving quality policies/strategies; effective and efficient use of resources (staff, buildings, teaching & learning resources); approving college's financial income & expenditure; appointment, suspension, determination of pay & conditions of SMTs; of all other staff.							
CF-CQ - close question				G_r2_CommN: Responding to local community's needs							
CF-A- agreeing				G_r3_ChSMT challenging SMT's ideas							
CF-DA- disagreeing				G_r4_SupSMT supporting SMT's ideas							
CF-PA- partially agreeing											
CF-AC- asking for clarification											
CF-Ch- challenging											
CF-Pr- proposing											

**Notes (An Extract only):** (Write down important utterances from ASGs, and **any non-verbal cues + tone. The meeting will be audio recorded where possible.** (Extract only): College X's GB had 1 ASG (coded as X-ASG). X-ASG made 9 verbal contributions and 2 pertinent visual cues. These are **highlighted in yellow** below, numbered from 1-11. The meeting was NOT audio recorded. Notes in **blue** were verified by comparing to the Clerk's notes both after the meeting and using the official meeting minutes where needed. Sections **highlighted in green** are critical thoughts made during the observation by researcher.

Speaker	Content / Notes
X-SMT3	Presented college audit report
X-ASG1	Audits...how information from audits have been used to improve teaching and learning (from Minutes: A question from member on the report related to the way in which information is fed back to curriculum teams
X-SMT3	Don't understand the Q, then explains: that draft recommended actions are produced by the internal audit team and the managers provide written responses to be included in the final version. Information is then sent to the subject areas by the relevant manager.
X-ASG2	How's the audit affecting the curriculum? IT equipment affecting course recommendations by students
X-SMT2	clarified that the virtual terminals causing problems were replaced before the academic year began. The wi-fi system is being improved and, although there are still some issues raised in the student meetings, the College is working on improving the systems. (from minutes)

## Appendix E. Interview Schedule

Revisions to the initial draft at various piloting stages (initial piloting and post-pilot study) are shown in **red**. Questions/wording highlighted in yellow are specific to the ASG interviews. Anticipated duration: about 60 minutes

### Background Questions:

- How many hours do you currently teach / week? How long have you been teaching? What subjects do you teach?
- Is your post a management post too? If so, how long have you been a manager?
- Are you a member of any professional associations and Unions?
- Roughly, how many hours/week or month do you spend on governance?
- Are you or have been a governor at any other institution?

**Prompt Card question containing a description of meeting contributions.** *In this section, the researcher attempted to explore ASG's contributions in observed meetings by asking ASGs to categorise their contributions into the following 5 categories. Sections of the meeting transcriptions in verbatim showing ASG contributions were shown to the ASG in the interview, asking them to categorise the contributions and explain their thought process. Following are 3 examples from the interviews with the 3 ASGs at the colleges with identifiable information removed.*

**Q1.** We'll start with some questions about the meetings that I observed: First the Board meeting that I observed on [DATE], with X instances of your verbal contributions at the meeting: In trying to understand the nature of each of the contributions, I'm using 5 categories of contributions. Could you talk about your contributions and if possible categorise them into some of these categories.

**Prompt Card: Categories of Verbal Contributions in Meetings (shown with data coding in brackets)**

- 1. Professional information giving** based on teaching/learning expertise, experience & knowledge of profession (ASG\_rA1\_Prof)
- 2. Giving your personal opinion / interest / experience** simple good sense; not based on any specialist/professional knowledge (ASG\_rA2\_PO)
- 3. General Teachers' Viewpoints-** presentation of general teachers' viewpoints (ASG\_rA3\_GTVw)
- 4. Trade Union View:** Based on a teacher trade union's stance (ASG\_rA4\_TU)
- 5. Specific Teacher(s)' View:** view presented at the request of specific teacher / group of teachers of college. (ASG\_rA5\_SpTVw)

### Sample Extract 1 from ASG contribution to meeting used in interview: College X Corporation meeting (date) – Agenda Topic: Internal Audit Report

**SMT:** Presented audit report paper

**X-ASG: Audits..how has the information from the audits been used to improve teaching and learning**

**SMT:** I don't understand the question.. (but then explains)

**Interview Q:** Further Probing Q: Were you satisfied with the answer given by the SMT on the point about the link between the audit and teaching /learning?

Were the 3 meetings affected by my presence as the observer in anyway?

### ASG Roles

**Q2.** What do you think are an ASGs' role in the GB? (Any roles specific to ASGs?)

- Some governors indicated on the questionnaire that ASGs **aren't** trusted professionals and that they **don't** have any role more important than any other Governor in holding the management accountable. What's your response?

**Q3.** How would you qualify and summarise the roles **you/ASG** have played in contributing to the college's Governance so far?

- the ASGs' contributions to meetings

**Q4.** Do some staff sometimes approach you with requests to raise matters at GB meetings? (any example issues?)

**Q5.** Are you sometimes required to withdraw from meetings or excluded from meetings?

(If so, what do you feel about that? Without revealing any confidential information, are you aware of the subject matters addressed in meetings when you have been excluded?)

- Participation in committees:

**Q6.** Some governors marked The Remuneration Committee as the least appropriate/relevant committee for an ASG to contribute to. Why may that be?

**Q7.** Overall in the study, the data shows that the boards generally value the ASGs' contributions but some data suggests the ASG posts may not be always taken seriously by the Board. Why may that be so? Would you want to see any changes in the role?

**Q8.** What positive impact could ASGs have on governance? Any real examples of your contribution to the Corporation?

**Q9.** What negative impact could ASGs have on governance? Are there any situations, where you feel you have made things difficult for the Board in any way?

*What would you say are worthwhile aspects of the role as an ASG?*

**Q10.** Now turning to some specific roles (on Card):

- **From the questionnaire data**, some **believe** that functions of **appointing, suspending and the approving of pay and conditions for SMT are not very relevant or appropriate functions to an ASG**. What's your reaction to that? Why is that?
- **What about** ASGs being involved in approving pay and conditions of other **college staff**?
- Involvement in **initiatives / projects / tasks / assigned** by the GB, e.g.:- as a Link governor role:
  - **Do YOU visit any part of the college as a governor?**
- Do you feel an ASG should **represent fellow teachers' (as a whole group) views** in the governing body? (why, why not?). *Any examples where you have done so in the past?*  
(Presented to the interviewee on a Prompt card – data codes shown here, in bold and italicised):

A. Review of the college's mission (see Van Ees et al 2009, p.312 – goal formation)
B. Approving the quality policies/strategies (see Van Ees et al 2009, p.312 – goal formation)
C. Effective and efficient use of resources (staff, buildings, teaching and learning resources)
D. Approving college's financial income and expenditure
E. The appointment, suspension, determination of pay and conditions of the holders of senior management posts at the college
F. Approving pay and conditions of all other staff
G. Responding to the needs of the local community
H. Establishing a link between governance and staff & students (teaching & learning)
I. Presenting of staff view points
J. Representing a teaching union's stance

**Q11.** Valued Experiences of an ASG – Prompt Card Question

- All ASGs appear to be managers as well as teachers at the 3 colleges. Their management experience has been the least valued ASG skill/expertise in the questionnaire data.
- Could you explain why management experience of an ASG has been rated so low?
- **Why do you think manager teachers have been appointed even though the management skills are not seen as important as their teaching and learning-related experience and skills?**
- ASGs' **teaching/learning related skills and experience have been rated very highly** across the 3 outstanding colleges. Do you feel that you are providing benefits to the Board using such experience? If yes, any specific examples? If no, what has made it difficult for you to contribute in this area?

**Q12.** ASGs' relationships with other governors:

- **How would you describe relationship between you & the Principal? Is it a strength, a hindrance? Can it be better?**
- **Do you support or challenge the Principal?** Any past example situations?

**Q13.** How would you describe the relationship between you and the Chair and you and the VChair:

•**Another important Q:** What do you think about the suggestion that the **Chair should meet ASGs on a regular basis** in order to achieve a closer link between governance and TLA?

•*Do you feel the Chair would welcome such meetings in a formalised manner?*

•*What are the problems that may be associated with implementing such an initiative formally?*

•The Chair obviously may have specified powers as well the Principal does. *Do you feel there is a Power differential or pecking order of power, within the Corporation, intended or unintentional? If so, where would the ASGs be in such a hierarchy of power?*

**Q14.** Some barriers that may be faced by ASGs:

•~~What particular difficulties are there for Teachers in joining the GB?~~

•What problems, if any at all, may an ASG face in speaking freely in meetings in the presence of the college principal or SMT? **[how do you feel in such situations?]**

**Q15.** In the questionnaire data, the majority, just over **X% of the governors** suggested that the college should have **2 ASG positions** in the Board. Could you explain **why it may or may not be a good idea to maintain one ASG position?**

**Q16.** How does the current system of **appointing an ASG work at the college?**

•**How were you appointed to the Board, unopposed?**

•**Could you explain a little bit more on why some may favour a direct appointment of the ASG to the board while other may favour the current election process?**

**Q17.** What's your response to the statement that ASGs being teachers have a particularly passionate role to play in governance of colleges?

**Q18.** Describe one big problem **an ASG has or you have** encountered in the governing board. (Do you get any training? Have you attended an induction? How many training sessions have you had since you joined the Board?)

**Q19.** Finally, what encourages you/ASGs to play a positive and active role in governance?

•[rewards of any nature; support from other governors etc.]

•[Any formal Support and Training received]

•[Individual reasons (e.g.- personal interest, career-related)]



## Appendix F. Research Ethics: Design and Official Approval

### 1. Ethical Research Design: Pilot and Main Study

1. <b>Research Topic:</b> - topic (ASG roles in FE colleges) worth studying? Mini-Survey→yes; Gleeson, Abbott and Hill: yes - Responsibility to sponsor/public
2. <b>Risk assessment:</b> level of riskiness to the colleges, participants and to others: colleges will be anonymous; assess consent validity for student governors (no CRB needed)
3. <b>Competence / governance knowledge / training:</b> Past research (Sodiq, 2012) Grade A award: experience in electronic questionnaire-based data collection; <u>Observation method skills:</u> ongoing substantial classroom observation experience & note-taking at workplace as accredited classroom observer, both as mentor + lesson observer; <u>Interviewing skills:</u> experience 2001-5: MA studies (interviewing teachers); guidance available in library training programmes; interview practice sessions at library; presentation skills for dissemination completed at library + presented RELM research at Cafe' Scientifique, WIEGA, workplace and at Cambridge Uni; <u>Personal skills:</u> communication skills at library completed; Completed comprehensive literature searching training (library); <u>Governance knowledge:</u> <b>Literature review:</b> literature on college governance; + wider edu. & corporate governance; member of at the British Educational Leadership & Management Society + attended & presented at BLMAS' governance RIG.; ASG induction & corporation self-assessment (LSIS, Nov & Dec 2012)
4. <b>Methodology &amp; methods-related ethics:</b> - Case study appropriateness to the research; - Ethics in Design Data source / Tools + consider Internal Validity
5. <b>Ethical Approval form:</b> - attended ARM1 session; discussed form with supervisor; reviewed it with supervisors before submitting, incorporating ethics discussed/relevant to pilot & main study; - internal ethical engagement/issues noted in ethics diary during and beyond research
6. <b>Pilot study:</b> insider research access (college/sponsor) : from Chair via clerk, inform principal via e-mail, informal meeting + send pilot research information sheet + formal request for access; informed consent – pilot information sheet with all relevant info + confidentiality and anonymity assured as under BERA guidelines (copy with info sheet) <b>pilot data collection:</b> - <u>questionnaire:</u> Qualtrics: electronic data; consent by taking part; anonymity; Q completion by separate email/button so that questionnaire responses are separate. - <u>observation:</u> consent: electronic 'agreement'; reduce intrusiveness in meetings; audio recording?; invite participants validation; e-mail thanking those who took part in - <u>interviews:</u> voluntary participation; requests for consent sent via e-mail; interviews at a time that suits interviewees: chair, ASG and one other governor: risk: possibility for participants having to address difficult issues in governance; emphasis: right to terminate interview at any point; validate data: invite participants to check data - <u>Pilot Reporting:</u> - identifiable data omitted; focus on lessons learnt; 'insiderness' of researcher not mentioned in published output to reduce risk to anonymity; aim for journal paper too; Findings report to pilot participants; language appropriate to student governors
7. <b>Main Study:</b> revised data collection tools based on lessons learnt from pilot •Produced final proposal with focus on ethics; • <u>Cases:</u> similar ethical issues as pilot but more risk due to more colleges & participants • <u>Access</u> via networking in LSIS training events (see training (3) above); informed consent facilitated via clerks; main research info sheet (no sponsor information); e-mails + phone calls • <u>data collection methods:</u> questionnaires from all governors at each college (20-40 governors); at least 2 governance meeting observations for each college; 2 interviews each: ASG; + one other non-ASG); documentary analysis <u>documentary analysis:</u> corporation & committee meeting minutes; structure of corporation; low-risk but will anonymise data; Ofsted report data anonymised and no direct quoting • <u>data security:</u> password-protected in cloud and local storage; DATA Protection Act followed.
8. <b>Reporting / Dissemination:</b> Institution anonymised to reduce risk to participants' anonymity; - any identifiable data omitted in report; findings report to participants; Possible Journal article based on the pilot and/or main study; seek the possibility of book/chapter on research ethics – follow Warwick's guidance on authorship and agree terms with any eventual co-authors
9. <b>Post-research Data:</b> Follow DPA (1998): data anonymised for pilot and EdD research; purpose (of research & potential publishing) mentioned in research info sheet.

Table F.1: Ethical Considerations in Research Design

## 2. Ethical Approval Form

Only scanned images of the first and last page of the approval form are included below for brevity. The whole document is available on request.

**Institute of  
EDUCATION**

**Application for Ethical Approval for Research Degrees**  
(MA by research, MPhil/PhD, EdD)

Name of student: *Abdulla Sodiq*

MA	EdD	PhD
By	X	
research		

Project title: *Teacher Governor Roles: a Comparison of an Outstanding and a Satisfactory GFE College in England*  
 Supervisor: *Ian Abbott, Mary Briggs*  
 Funding Body (if relevant): *Study Sponsor: City College Coventry*  
 Please ensure you have read the Guidance for the Ethical Conduct of Research available in the handbook.

**Methodology**  
 Please outline the methodology e.g. observation, individual interviews, focus groups, group testing etc.

Main Research Question: How are teacher governor roles at an outstanding and a satisfactory English GFE college similar to (and different from) each other?

Four specific sub-research questions have been constructed to address the main question, and they are:

- 1) How do the actual Teacher Governor (TG) roles and activities compare in the governance of the 2 colleges?
- 2) What encourages/hinders the roles of the teacher governors (TGs) in the 2 colleges? Is there a difference between the teacher governors at the two colleges, in terms of what they view as aspects that encourage/hinder their roles?
- 3) What are the teacher governors' (TGs) perceptions of their governance roles at the two colleges? Is there a difference between the teacher governors at the two colleges, in terms of how they view their roles?
- 4) What are the non-teacher governors' (Non-TGs) perceptions of the teacher governor roles at the two colleges? Is there a difference between how non-teacher governors at the two colleges view teacher governor roles?

- Methodological Approach: mainly interpretive approach combined with features of positivism to bring about a much fuller understanding of teacher governance than from a solely interpretivist perspective.
- The study: a multi-case exploratory study focussing on two cases of colleges
- The unit of analysis: the teacher governor in each college within their specific college and governance contexts.
- The methods to be used to address the sub- research questions derived from the main research question are a survey questionnaire, interviewing, observations and documentary analysis.

Methods	Target no. of participants	Other details
One semi-structured questionnaire	25-40 respondents, depending on the no. of governors at each of the 2 colleges	<u>17 questions</u> : - Selection of pre-determined choices (e.g.:- questions 1 and 2 on page 2 of the questionnaire (see Appendix A, p. <b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b> ) - Qualifying & Ranking questions - Likert Scale containing 4 responses
face-to-face semi-structured interviews	Between 4 and 12 depending on the number of governors at each of the chosen colleges.	The number of interviews will be equally spread between the two colleges and between teacher governors and non-

## Ethical Approval Form Page 2

4 (two at each the colleges) observations of governing body meetings where teacher governors are present)	Depends on meeting attendance	teacher governors. 5-7 questions from the draft schedule (to be decided after piloting)  Purpose of observations: 1. to address the mini research question 1 (p.2) about actual teacher governance roles. Using observations to obtain data about behaviour occurring natural in settings (ie: governance meetings) is more valid than using interviews and questionnaires 2. to triangulate data and further explore emerging themes from the survey and the interviews. This may address research questions 2-4 about perceived teacher governor roles, teacher governor motivation and barriers. 3. The method has been used in other similar combined method case studies into college governance in England
Documentary analysis	Documents that will be analysed from the colleges are:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>governing board meeting minutes</li> <li>standing orders that describe the general order of proceedings and</li> <li>governing board legal instruments.</li> <li>Other external/public documents: Best practice documents in college governance and AoC's Foundation Code of Governance (AoC, 2011).</li> <li>Ofsted's inspection reports for the two colleges (for judgements on governance in the 2 colleges)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These documents will be used to complement the discussion of the findings from the above methods</li> <li>Ofsted reports and publicly available governing board documents will help the researcher to identify appropriate colleges for the case study.</li> </ul>

Participants

Please specify all participants in the research including ages of children and young people where appropriate. Also specify if any participants are vulnerable e.g. children; as a result of learning disability.

Governors at the colleges: 25-40 governors at the colleges (see above for details of their participation)

2-4 Student governors across the colleges: Amongst the governors, there may be minors aged 16-18 assuming student governor roles and there may be questions about whether they can give informed consent. However, age is not a critical indicator of ability to provide consent in legal terms. The main criteria is the ability to comprehend information and make an informed judgement, as stated in the Mental Capacity Act (GREAT BRITAIN, 2005: 9-2). The students' ability to give consent will be assessed when presenting the research information sheet. If necessary, alternatives such as assent (ESRC, 2012) or not including any data from the student governors will be considered. There is no requirement for a Criminal Record Bureau Check as the researcher will not have any regular contact with the student governors (Home Office, 2012:5).

Respect for participants' rights and dignity

How will the fundamental rights and dignity of participants be respected, e.g. confidentiality, respect of cultural and religious values?

When requesting access formally, and requesting informed consent, research information sheet with all relevant research information will be sent. In this sheet confidentiality and anonymity will be assured as under BERA 2011 guidelines (copy sent with info sheet).



## Ethical Approval Form Page 3

- thanking interview participants, questionnaire respondents and those observed in the meeting (governors and others) using appropriate methods (face-to-face in interviews; general e-mail to governors via Clerk thanking those who participated, verbally thanking those observed in the governing board meetings)

### Privacy and confidentiality

How will confidentiality be assured? Please address all aspects of research including protection of data records, thesis, reports/papers that might arise from the study.

#### Confidentiality:

- In Observations: all observation notes will be made and stored in a way such that the confidentiality and anonymity of information will be retained. Also, the researcher will take the least intrusive position in the meeting room.
- In interview data: participants assured of confidentiality and anonymity in any outputs.

The steps taken to protect anonymity are:-

1. deletion of identity-specific details such as names, names of the colleges, addresses;
2. generalising information (for instance, using only years in dates, general professions of people involved instead of the specialities) and
3. wherever possible and appropriate, generalising data to the 'average' governor, rather than data on a specific governor at a particular college
4. avoiding the use direct quotes from literature and documents such as Ofsted inspection where the concerned colleges are referred to; also avoid direct quotes from the participants where identities of participants or names of institutions are used
5. avoiding revealing the 'insiderness' of researcher (in the pilot study) as it may compromise anonymity of participants (Floyd and Arthur, 2012:176, Pirrie et al., 2012:43) in specific governance roles.

#### Data storage and Protection of Data

All collected data from both the piloting and the main research will be kept in confidential and in anonymous form. Some of the anonymous data (in anonymous form) may be shared with the research supervisors for guidance purposes, and this fact will be stated in the research information sheet.

Coding of all data, including data from the governor interviews (Lindsay, 2010:120-121) and accompanying notes in the ethics and research diary, would negate the need to attach participant identification to such information and will enhance data security. The data will be stored remotely in password-protected digital cloud-based accounts in Dropbox (2012) accessible through the researcher's personal account. A home computer and a laptop will synchronise the data to local folders on the machines, both of which are password protected. This treatment and storage of research data during and beyond the research will be in line with the UK's Data Protection Act (GREAT BRITAIN, 1998) and BERA (2011:8)

#### Consent

- will prior informed consent be obtained?

- from participants? Yes/No from others? Yes/No

- explain how this will be obtained. If prior informed consent is not to be obtained, give reason:

Clerk: In the pilot study, Consent request will be initiated at access request stage, by discussing the pilot with the Clerk of the corporation of the pilot college in a face-to-face meeting. This will be followed up with a formal email with a pilot study information sheet to the clerk, copied to the principal of the college. The clerk will then discuss the project with the Chair of the Governors and the Principal of the college, and inform the researcher of the decision.

## Ethical Approval Form Page 4

In the main study, the above procedure will be followed but the instead of the initial face-to-face meeting with the clerk, this will be through a phone call.

Governors (participants): Informed Consent for governing board meeting observations.

Prior to the observation, the research information sheet will be e-mailed to all governors via the clerk. Governors will be requested to respond with either agreeing disagreeing to be observed in the governing meeting. No meeting data from or about governors who disagree will be included in the observation data. At the beginning of the observations, the already- obtained informed consent will be referred to and the details of the governors' anonymity and confidentiality agreements will be reiterated.

Governors (participants): Informed Consent for the Questionnaire:

The governors' voluntary completion of the questionnaires, after reading the research information sheet, will represent informed consent.

Teacher Governors (participants): Informed Consent for the Interviews:

Either electronic or handwritten consent will be obtained before the interviews with the teacher governors, again, after they have read the research information sheet.

**- will participants be explicitly informed of the student's status?**

Participants will be informed that the researcher is a doctoral research student at the University of Warwick. Also, in the pilot study, the participants will be informed that the researcher is a lecturer at the pilot college. However, no outputs (eg- public presentations, research articles, findings reports will reveal the 'insiderness' of the researcher. This is to avoid any inadvertent compromise of participant's anonymity. If the 'insiderness' of the researcher is revealed, readers may be able to identify the name of the pilot college and the governors in specific roles such as the chair.

Competence

How will you ensure that all methods used are undertaken with the necessary competence?

Competence / governance knowledge / training: The researcher has acquired governance knowledge and training in educational research by completing the research module, RELM (Researching Educational Leadership and Management Module, Award: Grade A award) at WIE in 2011-2-12. In addition, the research module gave him experience in electronic questionnaire-based data collection methods.

Observation method skills: Ongoing and annual substantial classroom observation and note-taking experience at work from workplace as accredited classroom observer, both as a mentor + institutional evaluator. This will enable the researcher to take notes efficiently.

Interviewing skills: experience 6 years ago: MA studies( interviewing teachers); will use guidance available in library training programmes; will also requesting research interview practice sessions at the library.

Presentation skills for dissemination: some training completed at the library + presented RELM research at Cafe' Scientifique, WIEGA, workplace and at the Fac. of Ed. at University of Cambridge;

Personal skills: communication skills at the library completed

Completed comprehensive literature searching training(library)

Governance knowledge: Literature review: already read literature on college governance; to read more about wider educational governance; apply to be a parent or community governor at local school; member of at the British Educational Leadership & Management Society (BELMAS) + attended & presented at



## Ethical Approval Form Page 5

BLMAS' governance RIG; to attend teacher governor induction & corporation self-assessment seminars (LSIS, Nov & Dec 2012)

Pilot Study at one college will help the researcher to increase level of competence and complete the main case study at the required standard.

### Protection of participants

#### How will participants' safety and well-being be safeguarded?

Using full-informed voluntary consent as described with regard to at every stage of data collection will help reduce risks to the participants. In order to consider the safety and well-being of participants, the risks they may face have been identified:

- risks to the colleges: the normal proceedings in a governance meeting the observed's performance may be affected. Some meeting participants might not contribute to the meeting in their normal manner if an external observer is present. However, all observation notes will be made in a way the confidentiality of information will be retained. Also, the researcher will take the least intrusive position in the meeting room.
- emotional risks in giving responses: participants will be asked to talk candidly about important but difficult issues. Controversial issues and intruding questions about governance will feature in the project's semi-structured questionnaire (for example, questions, 13, 14, 15 and 17, Appendix A, p.27) and the semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix C, p.31). However, all responses will be anonymised to protect participants' identities. Also, participants will be reminded of their right to withdraw from the research whenever they wish to do so.
- Use of participants' own time (unpaid). For example, in the main study,
  - all governors at the colleges will be requested to complete the questionnaire (about 15-20 minutes);
  - interviews with 4 governors (1-2 teacher governors, the Chair, the Principal, and 1 other non-teacher governor) from each college; 30-60 minutes of each governor's own time)

In conducting interviews, the researcher will make sure both he himself and the participants know the safety- sensitive information such as the condition of the location where interviews will be held and fire-escape procedures for the sites concerned.

### Child protection

Will a CRB check be needed?  
attach a copy.)

Yes/No (see point on CRB earlier on p.2)

(If yes, please

### Addressing dilemmas

Even well planned research can produce ethical dilemmas. How will you address any ethical dilemmas that may arise in your research?

It's difficult to be too specific about dealing with ethical dilemmas prior to the research project. However, following are some of the resources that may be used in dealing with any issues arising during the research project and beyond. After first trying to understand the nature of the issue fully, the following people may be consulted for advice in an order appropriate to the issue at hand:-

- the research supervisors at WIE

the participant concerned

University of Warwick's Research Ethics Committee member

the immediate managers at the colleges concerned

## Ethical Approval Form Page 6

While doing so, emphasis will be on retaining confidentiality and anonymity of information as much as the severity of the situation allows.

### Misuse of research

How will you seek to ensure that the research and the evidence resulting from it are not misused?

All collected data from both the piloting and the main research will be kept in confidential and anonymous form. The names of the colleges and some of the anonymous data may be shared with the research supervisors for guidance purposes, and this fact will be stated in the research information sheet. Coding of all data, including data from the governor interviews (Lindsay, 2010:120-121) and accompanying notes in the ethics and research diary, would negate the need to attach participant identification to such information and will enhance data security. The data will be stored remotely in password-protected digital cloud-based accounts in Dropbox (2012) accessible through the researcher's personal account. A home computer and a laptop will synchronise the data to local folders on the machines, both of which are password protected. This treatment and storage of research data during and beyond the research will be in line with the UK's Data Protection Act (GREAT BRITAIN, 1998) and BERA (2011:8).

The data and findings from the research will be only used for the purpose originally intended for and for future research purposes in line with the Data Protection Act.

### Support for research participants

What action is proposed if sensitive issues are raised or a participant becomes upset?

Any occurrences and the researcher gaining access to knowledge that poses threat to the participants will be discussed with the relevant participants. If the safety-related aspects of the incidents require the researcher to discuss/report the occurrences to other relevant parties, he will do so in line with the requirements of BERA (2011) Article, 29 on disclosure.

If participants become upset during an interview, for instance, depending on the seriousness of the situation, the researcher will terminate the interview and will discuss with the participants the possibility of rearranging the interview.

### Integrity

How will you ensure that your research and its reporting are honest, fair and respectful to others?

As in the case of data in storage, the reports from the research will contain anonymised data. The pilot study's report's main focus will be on lessons learnt from the pilot (Yin, 2009:94), for instance, how data tools worked. The findings from both the pilot and the main research will be forwarded to the governors, written in language appropriate to all (BERA, 2011:10), including the student governors. The reports will protect anonymity of the college and governors by:-

- avoiding revealing the 'insiderness' of researcher in the pilot as it may compromise anonymity of participants (Floyd and Arthur, 2012:176, Pirrie et al., 2012:43) in specific governance roles.
- not using searchable direct quotes (Gregory, 2003:53) from public documents (e.g.: Ofsted reports).

What agreement has been made for the attribution of authorship by yourself and your supervisor(s) of any reports or publications?



## Ethical Approval Form Page 7

By discussing with the supervisor in a supervisory meeting, the writer has established that the authorship rights to any outputs and publications will be determined by the amount of input into each piece of work.

Other issues?

Please specify other issues not discussed above, if any, and how you will address them.

On the issue of the ethics of getting an access from Ofsted Grade 3) college, it may not be easy to get access as colleges may be apprehensive in presenting themselves to research as a Grade 3 college. However, it is hoped that with the colleges remaining anonymous, access will be obtained.

However, in case it is not possible do not get access from lower-graded college for comparison of teacher governor roles at such colleges and outstanding colleges, as an alternative focus of the study, the case study will research teacher governance at 2 outstanding colleges.

Signed:

*Abdulla Sodiq*

Research student: **Abdulla Sodiq**

Date: 5/12/12

Supervisor

*I. D. Abbott*

Date

*7/12/12*

Action

Please submit to the Research Office (Louisa Hopkins, room WE132)

Action taken
☒

Approved

☐

Approved with modification or conditions – see below

☐

Action deferred. Please supply additional information or clarification – see below

Name: **Abdulla Sodiq**

Date:

*17/12/12*

Signature:

*Coff*

StampedNotes of Action

*This is an excellent submission - well done!*  
*Just one point - I'm not entirely clear about coding. You will need to keep the coding sheet (names against codes) separate from the coded data.*



## Appendix G. Interview Consent Form



### CONSENT FORM

One copy of this completed form should be given to the participating interviewee and the other retained by the interviewer

**Title of Research Project: Academic Staff Governor Roles at Outstanding General Further Education Colleges in England**

**Name of Researcher:** Abdulla Sodiq

**Department:** Centre for Education Studies, University of Warwick

(to be completed by participating interviewee)

**I agree to take part in the above study and am willing to** (please tick

those you agree to): Be interviewed ☐

Have my interview audio recorded ☐

**I understand that:**

- Data will be stored securely, under the terms of the 1998 Data Protection Act.
- No individual or institution will be identified by name, nor be identifiable.
- Any data which we might use when reporting the findings of our research will be **carefully anonymised**.
- No one outside of the research team (researcher and his supervisors) will have access to any of the data collected and any data accessible this way will still be anonymised.

**The anonymous information** may be used in:

the production of a written report of the research ☐

live or recorded performance or presentation of the anonymous findings ☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I wish for my data to remain anonymous. ☐

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date      Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date      Signature

**Researcher Detail: Abdulla Sodiq** Tel: +44 (0)781 383 1909  
a.sodiq@warwick.ac.uk

## Appendix H. The Link between Questionnaire, Research Questions and Theoretical Perspectives

Question No in Questionnaire	Question's Relevance to sub-Research Questions		Relevance to Theoretical Orientation	
	sub-Research Questions	Sub-Research Question Focus (SUB-RQ 1-4)	Shortened Theory labels & Exploratory Theme Labels (see end of table)	Pre-determined Theoretical or Exploratory Focus
9	SUB-RQ1-2, 4	ASG Role activities; understanding of ASG roles in 3 colleges;	G_r1-2; ASG_rA2,3,5,6; Explr_ASG3_Conf	ASG roles; Role Confusion
10	SUB-RQ4	Understanding of ASG roles	Explr_ASG_Sel	Selection of ASGs
11	SUB-RQ1-4	ASG Role activities; Understanding of ASG roles	G_r1-4; ASG_rA1-3;5-6	ASG roles;
12	SUB-RQ1-2, Q4	ASG role activities; Understanding of ASG roles	G_r1-4; ASG_rA1-3;5,6 Explr_ASG1_Pow	ASG roles; Power status
13	SUB-RQ4	Understanding of ASG roles	Explr_ASG2_Prof	ASGs as Professionals
14	SUB-RQ1-2	ASG Role activities	ASG_rA1-5; Explr_ASG2_Prof	ASG Roles; as professionals
15	SUB-RQ1, Q4	ASG Role activities; Understanding of ASG roles	G_r1; ASG_rA1 & 6; Explr_ASG1, 2 & 4	ASG Roles; Power; as Professionals; Role Confusion
16	SUB-RQ1-4	ASG Role activities; Understanding of ASG roles	especially ASG_rA3-6; Explr_ASG1,2, 3	ASG Roles; power & as professionals; Role Confusion
17	SUB-RQ3	- ASGs' understanding of their roles	Explr_ASG1 & 2;	ASG Power; as Professionals
18	SUB-RQ1-4	Role activities; Understanding of ASG roles	Explr_ASG1_Pow	ASGs' Power
19	SUB-RQ4	Understanding of ASG roles	Explr_ASG_Sel	ASG Selection
20	SUB-RQ1, 3-4	Understanding of ASG roles	Explr_ASG1,2	Power, as Professionals,
21	SUB-RQ1-4	ASG role activities, Understanding of ASG roles	all general governance roles, esp.G_r1 (college resources); all ASG-specific roles, esp.ASG_rA1; Explr_ASG1,2 & 3	ASGs; as Professionals; Power; Role Confusion
22	SUB-RQ1-2	ASG role activities; Understanding of their roles	G_r1-4; ASG_rA1-3; 5-6;	
23	SUB-RQ1-2 and 4	ASG role activities; Understanding of ASG roles	G_r1-4; ASG_rA1-2; Explr_ASG2_Pro	ASG roles

Table H.1: Mapping of the questionnaire (Appendix C) against sub-Research Questions and Theoretical Concepts / Exploratory Themes

Key to Theoretical & Exploratory Concept Labels

(See Column 4, Table H.1, above)

**Concepts: ASGs' general & ASG-specific Role-related activities**

1. **G\_r1\_St**: General, statutory roles relevant to all FE Governors in FE Governance Instrument of 2007 (DIUS, 2007)
2. **G\_r2\_CommN**: Responding to local community's needs
3. **G\_r3\_ChSMT** challenging SMT's ideas
4. **G\_r4\_SupSMT** supporting SMT's ideas
5. **ASG\_rA1\_Prof**: contribution related to professional information - based on teaching & learning expertise, experience & knowledge
6. **ASG\_rA2\_PO**: contribution based on personal opinion, interest / experience - NOT specialist knowledge
7. **ASG\_rA3\_GTVw**: presentation of general teachers' views
8. **ASG\_rA4-TU**: Based on a teaching trade union's stance
9. **ASG\_rA5\_SpTVw**: Based on specific teacher(s)' views
10. **ASG\_rA6-L**: linking governance & teaching/learning

**Exploratory Themes (explored without pre-determined theories):**

1. **Explr\_ASG1\_Pow**: ASG's power-relations in college GBs
2. **Explr\_ASG2\_Prof**: ASGs' roles as professionals
3. **Explr\_ASG3\_Conf**: confusion / uncertainty about ASG role