

Processes and Practices of Governing in Colleges of Further / Higher Education in the UK

PROJECT NEWS



Dear Impact Group Member,

Welcome to our latest newsletter.

We're just a week away from the next meeting of the Impact Group on Wednesday 25 September 2019, to be held at the ICSA Offices once again at Saffron House, Kirby Street, Holborn, London EC1N 8TS. We're very grateful for the support from ICSA (the Governance Institute) for this continued support. A programme has been prepared for the day which tries to balance contributions about data gathered so far with space for the Impact Group to consider how to make the best use of emerging themes.

It's always interesting to find new insights to help us consider what happens in boardrooms. The terminology can add to the interest level. Let's consider 'clueless governance' (www.forbes.com; originally accessed 9/12/2015). 'Clueless governance' is an expression that was used in a Public Agenda report on university governance in the U.S. To quote from the website commentary '.... Often trustees feel clueless. They get tons of information dumped on them by university presidents shortly before board meetings... It's the biggest shortcoming of the board that we don't have a professional staff capable of analysis that works just for us'.

Whatever we choose to call it, 'data dumping' is a potential problem in all educational governance settings because of the necessity to cultivate and place value on educational metrics. Where would you put this issue in your list of ways to improve the effectiveness of college governing?

Looking forward to seeing you on Wednesday 25 September.

Prof. Ron Hill

RESEARCH ACTIVITY

An update from Scotland and Northern Ireland



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Fieldwork continued apace prior to the summer recess, with multiple observations and ‘policy actor’ interviews being undertaken in Scotland and Northern Ireland. In addition to recording the governing body meetings held in all four colleges during May and June, we continued to observe selected committee meetings in order to gain a first-hand view of the processes and practices underlying the business of the board. It is hoped that this additional data will enable us to develop a more nuanced understanding of the spaces, structures and behaviours which shape governing within colleges.

Seeking to raise the profile of the project and stimulate interest in the college research agenda, in May the University of Stirling hosted a seminar by Professor Jim Gallacher, Emeritus Professor of Lifelong Learning at Glasgow Caledonian University. Jim, who is also a current member of the City of Glasgow College Board of Managements and Convenor of its Learning and Teaching Committee, spoke on ‘New Frontiers for college education: reconciling competing agendas’ and sparked some interesting discussions.

Following this, Cate accepted an invitation from the Association of Colleges (AoC) National Governance Professionals Special Interest Group to update them on the project. This was well-received and confirmed that the research is gathering significant interest within the sector. Cate and Helen also gave a presentation at the University of Stirling’s Faculty of Social Sciences Research Away Day, with a focus on the nitty-gritty of conducting a complex collaborative research project.

With just four months of data collection left, thoughts are now turning to the analysis phase and various avenues are starting to be explored. This includes practices around risk management and the significance of differing policy landscapes across the four nations.

An update from Wales



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Steve Garner and David James led a well-attended seminar in the Cardiff University School of Social Sciences on 17th July entitled *Dialogue, Challenge or Victory Parade? First steps in a UK-wide study of FE governing and governance.*

An update from England



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Fieldwork in England is taking place in two colleges: South and City College, Birmingham and The TEC Partnership, Grimsby. The research team for England includes Professor Ann-Marie Bathmaker and Dr Jodie Pennacchia from The University of Birmingham.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork is now past the halfway point in the two English colleges. Since January 2019 the research team has observed and recorded a total of 8 corporation meetings and 5 other committee meetings. In addition, they have attended the strategic planning away days for governors at each college and undertaken interviews with Principals/CEOs, chairs and clerks. A number of interviews with other stakeholders have also been completed, including with a national policy representative from The Department for Education, a representative from a national sector body, and a representative from a Local Enterprise Partnership where one of the colleges is based.

Presentations

Ann-Marie Bathmaker and Jodie Pennacchia presented work-in-progress from the FE Governing project at the biennial conference of The Journal of Vocational Education and Training. This is an international conference attended by researchers and practitioners from a range of countries including Canada, Australia, South Africa, Germany and Australia, as well as from across The UK. The conference included keynote speeches from Professor Alison Wolf and Professor Stephanie Allais.

Other news

In other news, Professor Ann-Marie Bathmaker is delighted to have become a trustee of The Edge Foundation, an independent educational charity committed to promoting and developing a holistic education system that promotes equitable education and supports all young people to reach their potential.

IMPACT ACTIVITY



Co-Investigator and Impact Group Lead
Prof. Ron Hill
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During this period Ron Hill has been involved in the following work:

- Development of on-line induction modules for new board members (for CDN)
- Support for Glasgow Colleges' Regional Board re strategic thinking
- Attending Colleges Scotland board meeting on 4 September 2019 - project update
- Preparing two papers :-
 - remunerating governors of educational institutions
 - the observed role of clerks/secretaries in the college governance space
- Assisting DfE on aspects of governing schools/academies and colleges
- Reviewing the Chairs' Development Programme provided by Oxford University for ETF
- Working with Altus Education Partnership (Rochdale) re development of a range of educational provision, including a sixth form college
- Working with Stone King Solicitors on ways to support college governing bodies, especially supported board reviews.

PROJECT TEAM NEW

Project Administrator Emma Gilbert is currently on maternity leave following the birth of her daughter. Nicki Blair will be providing maternity cover until May 2020.

Research Fellow Helen Young will be leaving us this month to take up a new post at the University of Strathclyde. We are very sad to see Helen leave and wish her well in her new role.

We are delighted to welcome Aileen Ireland to the team to replace Helen in our Research Fellow role. Aileen has just completed her PhD and will be joining us in October.

Don't forget to keep up to date with our website. The FE news updates may be of particular interest.

<https://fe-governing.stir.ac.uk/>

If you are not doing so already, follow us on Twitter (@FE_Governing) for updates on any new content appearing on our website.



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