# DEMOCRATIC AGENCY AND NEO-LIBERAL RESPONSIBILISATION: LEADERSHIP IN ACADEMY SCHOOLS

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## Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed …………………………………………

Date…………………………………………

**Abstract**

**Title: Democratic agency and neo-liberal responsibilisation: leadership in academy schools**

**Purpose:**

To explore how much *democratic agency* Academy Leaders have in *practice* in the *field* of education to work democratically in the public interest with those within their own academies and others within wider educational networks, and from this understanding inform the United Kingdom government's education reform agenda

**Design:**

This qualitative research involves semi-structured interviews with 10 Academy Leaders who are directly involved in leadership in academies.

**Findings:**

At a conjuncture that is characterised by uncertainty and precariousness, Academy Leaders take up different positions on a spectrum of possible positions in the *field* of education in response to what is interpreted as the United Kingdom's neo-liberal education reform agenda.

The findings highlight that Academy Leaders who have a high commitment to neo-liberal *responsibilisation* of self feel they have *agency* to input into the government's education reform agenda but Academy Leaders who oppose neo-liberalism, show a low commitment to neo-liberal *responsibilisation* of

self and instead show a high commitment to *democracy* or *public values*, feel that they are given very little, if any, *democratic agency.*

**Contribution:**

This thesis makes a contribution to the existing body of knowledge in education by building on the work of Gunter (Gunter, 2001, Woods et al., 2007, Gunter et al., 2008, Gunter, 2011, Gunter, 2016) and Courtney (2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c and 2017), and using Bourdieu's thinking tools to analyse Academy leaders' *habitus* and the *agency* that they feel they have in *practice* in the *field* of education, to create new understanding of the emerging issues of *democratic agency* and neo-liberal *responsibilisation* of self, as discussed by Keddie (2015,2018), from the perspective of Academy Leaders at a particular conjuncture in the formation of academy schools in England.

It does this by encouraging Academy Leaders to articulate how they respond to the United Kingdom government's education reform agenda and the way that they carry out their work and analyses this in terms of: types of response to change and the extent to which Academy Leaders have a *Commitment to Democracy or Public Values* and/or a *Commitment to Responsibilisation* of self.

## Acknowledgements

**Tables**

| Table | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| Table 1 | Sample Percentages Compared with National Percentages | 90 |
| Table 2 | Ten Academy Leaders | 92 |
| Table 3 | Academy Leaders' Relationships with Others in Own Academy and in Wider Networks | 289 |
| Table 4 | Examples of Coding for Data Analysis | 108 |
| Table 5 | Strength of Commitment to Democracy/Public Values | 113 |
| Table 6 | Strength of Commitment to Responsibilisation | 114 |

**Figures**

| Figure | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| Figure 1 | Conceptual Framework | 74 |
| Figure 2 | Plotter Showing Commitment to Democracy/Public Values and Commitment to Responsibilisation | 115 |
| Figure 3 | Adopted Research Design | 119 |
| Figure 4 | Academy Leaders' Commitment to Democracy/Public Values and Commitment to Responsibilisation | 300 |
| Figure 5 | Academy Leaders' Commitment to Democracy/Public Values and Commitment to Responsibilisation by Response to Change | 301 |
| Figure 6 | Strength of Commitment to Democracy/Public Values or Strength of Commitment to Responsibilisation and Agency | 303 |

# Glossary

Convertor Academies are schools that have chosen to convert to academy status.

Federations are groups of Academies and other institutions that work together in a federated structure.

Multi-Academy Trusts are groups of Academies.

Sponsored Academies are schools that are directed by the Department for Education to become academies, this usually happens because schools have received the Ofsted rating of Requires improvement or in Special Measures.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Chapter 1. Introduction to the Research**

Academy schools were first launched in England in 2000 and were constituted as publicly funded state schools that were independent of local authority control and directly accountable to the Department for Education (Adonis, 2012).

This suggested tension arising from a change away from local democratic accountability via elected councillors and towards state control via financial and other administrative measures and my research explored this from the perspective of Academy Leaders.

My study took place in England between 2013 and 2018 and did not examine education in the other parts of the United Kingdom (Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland), because the reform of schools to become academies are English reforms.

**1.0 Introduction to Chapter 1**

Within this historical context, the Research Objectives for my thesis sought to gain an insight into leadership in academies and focussed on whether Academy Leaders had *democratic agency,* that is whether they could maintain a commitment to public values ('the common good') and develop their academies as participative cultures within the ideals of *democracy* or whether they had *agency* only within a commitment to what is interpreted as the government's neo-liberal education reform agenda.

## 1.1 Research Objectives

<u>Research Objective 1</u>. To explore the interplay between *democracy* and *neo-liberalism* in publicly funded state education.

<u>Research Objective 2</u>. To explore Academy Leaders' responses to the government's position in publicly funded state education, including exploring their relationships with others in their own academies and in wider networks*.*

<u>Research Objective 3</u>. To explore the extent to which Academy Leaders can retain a *Commitment to Democracy,* seen here as public values or the common good, and have *democratic agency* in the field of education within a social and political context in which neo-liberalism is a powerful ideology.

<u>Research Objective 4</u>. To explore how Academy Leadership is currently constructed by government and by Academy Leaders.

The research questions are posed to meet those research objectives.

**1.2 Research Questions**

<u>Research Question 1</u>. What is the inter-play between *democracy* and *neo-liberalism* in publicly funded state education?

<u>Research Question 2</u>. How do Academy Leaders articulate how they carry out their role, including their relationships with others in their own academies and in wider networks*?*

<u>Research Question 3</u>. To what extent do Academy Leaders have *Commitment to Democracy or Public Values* and *democratic agency* in the field of education within a social and political context in which neo-liberalism is a powerful ideology?

<u>Research Question 4</u>. How is Academy Leadership currently constructed by government and by Academy Leaders?

## 1.3 Definition of Concepts

The constructs of *Democracy, Democratic Agency* and *Neo-liberal Responsibilisation* of self are used in this research. They are all contested constructs and, as such, they have multiple significations and meanings and, need further definition and clarification as to how I have used them in my research, and I will do this in the next sections.

### 1.3.1 Democracy for Academy Leaders

*Democracy* for Academy Leaders might mean that in common with other members of the electorate they simply have *agency* to elect their representative Members of Parliament and trust them to make decisions in education on their behalf.

There seems to be no reason why, in principle, Academy Leaders might not either already be or become part of local *democracy* on a range of issues, so that leadership in academies is not divorced from legitimate stakeholders in their community, such as governors, parents and teachers and in wider networks, such as those in other schools and academies, higher education, further education and with local and national employers, but rather uses those connections to improve education in the academies based on public values and the common good.

So, alternatively, *democracy* for Academy Leaders might mean that in addition to electing their Members of Parliament, they have a commitment to public values and to discussing education with legitimate stakeholders, both within their own academy and in wider networks.

My research uses the second of these conceptualisations of *democracy*, as it is felt that this is most relevant, however, there may be tensions between this type of local *democracy* and the educational reform agenda that is currently being implemented by government, and my research is a contribution to understanding what happens in practice in leadership of academy schools.

## 1.3.2 Agency

McAnulla (2002) defines *agency*:

> Agency refers to individual or group abilities (intentional or otherwise) to affect their environment (McAnulla, 2002, p. 271).

McAnulla (2002) goes on to define *structure*:

> Structure usually refers to context; to the material conditions that define the range of actions available to actors (McAnulla, 2002, p271).

He explains what is known as the *structure* and *agency* problem:

> Fundamentally the debate concerns the issue as to what extent we as actors have the ability to shape our destiny, as against the extent to which our lives are structured in ways out of our control: the degree to which our fate is determined by external forces (McAnulla, 2002, p271).

## 1.3.3 Democratic Agency

*Democratic Agency* is the *agency* that Academy Leaders should have in a pluralist *democracy* to shape the destiny of their academy by working with others within their own academy and in wider networks in education in

pursuit of the interests of the demos, as defined by Brown (Brown, 2015, p19).

My thesis deployed the construct of *democratic agency* at a conjunction in the establishment and development of academy schools in England.  It did this through firstly exploring the government's education reform agenda since the 1980s and analysing how the ideologies of neo-liberalism and social democracy have influenced this, and then analysing data collected by encouraging Academy Leaders to articulate who they are and how they carry out their role and develop coping strategies to respond to the government's education reform agenda.

My research analysed how Academy Leaders based their responses at least to some extent on pre-existing values that formed the basis of their identity and the extent to which they had or desired to have *democratic agency,* within what I infer is an increasingly powerful set of neo-liberal constraints, as discussed further below.

**1.3.4 Neo-liberal Responsibilisation of self**

Shamir (2008) suggests that the contemporary tendency to economise public domains and methods of governments dialectically produces tendencies to moralise markets in general and business enterprises in particular.  An example of this is the contemporary focus on corporate social responsibility in the corporate world.   Shamir (2008)  uses the concept of *responsibilisatio*n to account for the consequences of this, and suggests that this further sustains neo-liberal governmentalities and neo-liberal visions of civil society, citizenship and responsible social action.

Brown (2015) highlights that the ideas and practices of *responsibilisation* force the subject to:

> become a responsible self-investor and self-provider and reconfigure the correct comportment of the subject from one naturally driven by satisfying interests to one forced to engage in a form of self-sustenance that meshes with the morality of the state and the health of the economy (Brown, 2015, p84).

In other words, an individual becomes responsible for their own actions and development, and this supports what the state wants to achieve, to benefit the national economy.

Keddie (2015) builds on Foucault (1991) and the concept of "governmentality" and Shamir (2008) and the concept of "responsibilisation" to conduct research into one of England's top performing academy chains and uses the notion of "neo-liberal responsibilisation of self" to understand the way four head-teachers describe their work and their academy chain's expectations of them. She explores how head-teachers assume "moral agency" and argues that responsibilisation of the self is apparent in head-teachers' construction of themselves as ideal neo-liberal workers – self-determining and autonomous, performing and enterprising subjects who readily accept the business principles and results-orientation of their data-driven environment (Keddle, 2015, p. 1191), and who are committed to a philanthropic agenda, business principles, standards and accountability, systems and performativity (Keddie, 2015, p 1202). She argues that these

characteristics are crucial to re-professionalising head-teachers actively to pursue the government's narrow standards agenda. (Keddie, 2015, p1203).

Keddie's (2015) work focuses on one academy chain and my research develops the concept of responsibilisation to analyse Academy Leaders from different types of academy; their articulation of their response to the English government's educational reform agenda, and whether they demonstrate a *Commitment to Responsibilisation*; developing their identity as ideal neo-liberal leaders.

Keddie (2018) seeks to broaden the current scholarly understandings of the responsible neo-liberal subject and provide a counter-story to the tendency within public and political discourse for responsibility to be constructed in largely neo-liberal terms. Keddie's (2018) work critically examines the implications of different conceptions of responsibility in their production of different versions of professionalism. She highlights how subjectivity for head-teachers sits within and alongside relations of care and concern for the welfare of students and teachers.

Courtney (2015a, p14-15) suggests how scholarship on academies has not kept pace with the rapid educational reforms that have been taking place and because of this my research is both relevant and timely.

**1.4 An Introduction to Each Chapter**

Chapter 2 introduces the historical context for the study, and begins by exploring the inter-play between democracy and neo-liberalism in society: Runciman (2013), Brown (2015), Streeck (2014), Crouch (2004), Crouch (2011), Harvey (2005).

The Chapter then further contextualises the study by analysing government decisions that have been made in education in the United Kingdom since the 1980s, and focuses on Education Acts (1988, 1992) and the academies development from 2000, which includes:  an analysis of the Education Acts (2006, 2011) and the Academies Act (2010); White Papers, DfES (2001), DfES (2005), DfE (2010), DfE (2016), and policy documents DfE (2013) for the period.

This suggests that since the Education Reform Act in 1988, the United Kingdom government has continued to adopt what is interpreted as a; "hegemonic", as discussed by Gramsci (1971); "neo-liberal economic", as discussed by Hayek (1944), and critiqued by Mirowski (2009, 2014); "discourse" as discussed by Foucault (1972).

The associated educational research includes: critiques of neo-liberalism in education (Ball, 2013a, 2013b); research on entrepreneurialism in the academies (Woods et al., 2007); the challenges of initiating and maintaining partnerships or alliances between schools in a "self-improving school system" (Hargreaves, 2010); democracy and neo-liberalism in public education (Woods, 2011, Apple, 2014); a tendency towards totalitarianism (Courtney and Gunter, 2015b); and literature specifically around democracy

and agency (Woods, 2016, Granger, 2008, Sugrue, 2009, Jenlink, 2010, Ranson, 2008, Thomson, 2003, Court, 2011, Chajet, 2007) and neo-liberal responsibilisation of self (Keddie, 2015, Tseng, 2015).

A gap in the research is identified in terms of the two constructs of *democratic agency* and *neo-liberal responsibilisation* of self.

The chapter ends by developing the conceptual framework for my research, that includes the two constructs of *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* and *Commitment to Responsibilisation* and the *agency* that Academy Leaders' have within that.

Chapter 3 develops a sociological theoretical framework for the research, utilising the theories of Bourdieu, who is relevant to the argument because of his work on the relational workings of society in the *field* of education (Bourdieu, 1977, Bourdieu, 1970/ 1990,Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992); Gunter, who uses Bourdieu's theories as a conceptual lens in education (Woods et al., 2007, Gunter et al., 2008, Gunter, 2011, Gunter, 2001, Gunter, 2016); and Courtney (2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2017), who uses Bourdieu's thinking tools in education, including Bourdieu's concept of hysteresis (Courtney, 2017, p. 153).

Chapter 4 outlines the research design that includes the research paradigm, the research strategy and the data strategy. My research takes a constructionist ontological and interpretivist epistemological position to explore leadership in academies. The research is based on 10 Academy Leaders in a sample of academies in England that includes examples of the range of types of academies that are currently in existence. The research

explored the government's educational reform agenda and used semi-structured interviews with Academy Leaders from each of the study academies to seek an in-depth understanding of how Academy Leaders responded to the government's agenda and the academisation of schools in England.

Chapter 5 presents the research findings for each of the 10 Academy Leaders' articulation of their role in terms of: what they think about the idea of academies; the "freedoms" of academy status; reducing the role of the local authorities; what else happens now in the middle ground between themselves and central government; the governance of their academy; whether they have sought ideas from parents and teachers; how their academy works with other schools and academies now; where they have done something significant with representatives from higher education, further education and from local or national employers; whether they have opportunities to discuss ideas with Regional Commissioners, Ofsted inspectors or the National College for Teaching and Leadership, and finally, whether they consider that they have *agency* to input into the government's education reform agenda.

Chapter 6 analyses the research findings using Bourdieu's thinking tools: the *habitus* of the different Academy Leaders, their *practice* and how they are positioned and position themselves in the *field* of education suggests a typology adapted from Beckhard, R and Harris, R.T. (1987) of Academy Leaders' responses to the government's education reform agenda for academisation that includes: "Make it Happen", "Help it Happen", "Let it Happen" and "Oppose it".

Academy Leaders are categorised in terms of their *Commitment to Democracy or Public Values* and their *Commitment to Responsibilisation*, illustrated on a plotter, adapted from Chatwin (2005) for use specifically for this purpose.

The four different responses to change are mapped onto the plotter.

Finally, how the responses to change to the government's education reform agenda relates to Academy Leaders' *Commitment to Democracy or Public Values* and their *Commitment to Responsibilisation* and the *agency* that they have within the *field* of education is suggested.

Chapter 7 summarises the research findings that academies are organised mainly based Academy Leader's agreement with the government's neo-liberal education reform agenda and the *neo-liberal responsibilisation* of self rather than on norms that are democratically agreed based on a commitment to public values.  Those who demonstrate a high *Commitment to Responsibilisation* of self and develop their *habitus* as ideal neo-liberal leaders consider that they are given *agency* within the government's education reform agenda in *practice* in the *field* of education, but those who demonstrate a high *Commitment to Democracy or Public Values* consider that they are given little if any *agency*.

A suggestion is made for a new possibility for leadership in the academies, which is *democratic agency,* where Academy Leaders have the ability to develop democracy and a commitment to public values within their own academy and community to inform their educational practice and also beyond their own academy, that is, with other schools, academies and other

organisations such as higher education, further education and local and

national employers, that emphasises valuing ideas from everyone whatever

their position and supports democratic, equal and shared decision-making.

**Chapter 2: Historical Context**

**2.0 Democracy and Neo-liberalism in Society**

This chapter addresses the first Research Question, which is "What is the inter-play between democracy and neo-liberalism in publicly funded state education?", firstly, by exploring literature on the inter-play between democracy and neo-liberalism in society, and then, by exploring literature on the inter-play between democracy and neo-liberalism in public education.

The concept of *democracy* or δημοκρατία pronounced Dēmokratía originated in ancient Greece; however, there are ambiguities in this concept. As Brown (2015) points out:

> Even the Greek etymology of "democracy" generates ambiguity and
>
> dispute. *Demos/kratia* translates as "people rule" or "rule by the
>
> people". But who were the "people" of ancient Athens? The
>
> propertied? The poor? The uncounted? The many? (Brown, 2015,
>
> p19).

Crouch (2004) highlights that the early twenty first century sees democracy at a highly paradoxical moment; although more nation states are currently accepting democratic arrangements and free elections, he argues that democracy thrives when there are major opportunities for the mass of ordinary people to participate actively, through discussion in autonomous organisations, in shaping the agenda of public life and that, whilst this is an ideal model, which can almost never be fully achieved, it sets a marker. He points out that democracy is increasingly being defined as liberal democracy that stresses electoral participation with extensive freedom for lobbying

activities, which means business lobbies and forms of polity that avoid interfering with a capitalist economy (Crouch, 2004, pp. 1-3).

Crouch's argument (2004), that providing opportunities for the mass of ordinary people to actively participate in shaping the agenda of public life allows democracy to thrive, is convincing. My research seeks to explore whether democracy in education can mean Academy Leaders shaping the agenda in education by providing opportunities for their academies communities to input into that agenda and providing government with a representation of what they consider to be the public values and common good of their communities.

In macroeconomics after the Second World War, the United Kingdom government was influenced by the policies of Keynes (1936), who advocated the use of fiscal and monetary policies to mitigate the adverse effects of economic recessions and depressions and suggested that:

> the succession of boom and slump can be described and analysed in terms of the fluctuations of the marginal efficiency of capital relatively to the rate of interest (Keynes, 1936, p93).

Crouch (2011) suggests that the policy recommendations that arose from Keynesian economics were arms led demand management, with the welfare state protecting the rest of the capitalist economy from major shocks to confidence (Crouch, 2011, p12).

Crouch (2011) writes that the influence of Keynesian economic policies waned in the 1970s, partly because of problems with inflation, with increases

in commodity and oil prices, and policy makers were generally persuaded to abandon Keynesianism (Crouch, 2011, p13).

In the late 1970s, Friedman (1993) challenged Keynesian economics with a theory of monetarism, which champions laissez-faire economics or minimal government intervention and a free market economic system. He believed that the "incentive of profit is stronger than the incentive of public service" (Friedman, 1993, p8).  This is questionable as for some people it may be the other way around and public service may be a stronger incentive than the incentive of profit.

From the 1930s to the end of the second world war, neo-liberalism (or in the original German, "ordoliberalismus"), based on liberal economics and a system of marketised competition, and individualism facilitated by free markets, developed in the Freiburg school (Mirowski, 2009, p27) and this included the ideas of Friedrich von Hayek (Hayek, 1944).

Harvey (2005) explains that neo-liberalism is, in the first instance, a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade.  He explains that, within neo-liberalism, the role of the state is to preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices and that if markets do not exist, for example, in education, then they must be created (Harvey, 2005, p2). Harvey suggests that it is the profoundly anti-democratic nature of neo-liberalism, backed by the

authoritarianism of neo-conservativism, that should be the focus of political struggle to oppose neo-liberalism (Harvey, 2005, p205).

Neo-liberalism was originally an "experiment" imposed on Chile by Pinochet after his 1972 overthrow of Allende, and supported by Chilean economists known as "The Chicago Boys" because of their attachment to the neo-liberal theories of Friedman, who was then teaching at the University of Chicago (Harvey, 2005, p8).

Hayek (1944) suggested that socialism set society on a course that he saw as the "road to serfdom". Hayek rejected socialism and played a pivotal role in setting up both the Chicago School of Economics in the United States in 1946, and the Mont Pelerin Society (MPS) in Switzerland in 1947 (Mirowski, 2009, p. 158). Mirowski (2009) highlights that the Mont Pelerin Society (MPS) emerged together with modernisation to form what he terms the "neo-liberal thought collective" (Mirowski, 2009, p240).

Hayek (1944) supports neo-liberalism and rejects social democracy and focuses on individualism and economic freedoms and believes that where effective competition can be created, it is a better way of guiding individual efforts than any other. He argues that collectivism refuses to recognise autonomous spheres in which the ends of the individual are supreme (Hayek, 1944, p44). Hayek (1944) believes that terms such as "social goal", "common purpose" or "common good" lack definite meaning (Hayek, 1944, p44), and that central planning creates a situation where it is necessary for people to agree on a larger number of topics than they have been used to before they can act (Hayek, 1944, p46).

The counter argument is that whilst "social goals", "common purpose" and "common good" may be difficult to define, as there are different interpretations of these constructs, they do exist and they may not be best served by the unrestricted activities of markets, market relationships and privatisation, but may be better served by social democracy that allows everyone to have a say in deciding what the "social goals", "common purpose" and "common good" of their communities might be.

Mirowski (2009) suggests that neo-liberalism is a pervasive intellectual movement or current rather than a monolithic organisation. It does not have an organisation form similar to a political party or a scholarly society. It is concerned to capture and retain minds, to saturate the key institutions of society with neo-liberal thoughts and perspectives and to replace completely any ideas of collectivism and the common good. Mirowski (2009) argues that a primary ambition of the neo-liberal project is to redefine the shape and functions of the state and highlights some key characteristics of neo-liberals: neo-liberals treat politics as if it was a market and promote an economic theory of democracy; neo-liberals extol freedom as trumping all the other virtues but the definition of freedom is recoded and heavily edited within their framework; neo-liberals presume that capital has a natural right to flow freely across national boundaries; neo-liberals see pronounced inequality of economic resources and political rights as a necessary functional characteristic of their ideal market system; for neo-liberals, corporations can do no wrong, or at least they are not blamed if they do; neo-liberals argue that the market (suitably re-engineered and promoted) can always provide solutions to problems, even those that are  seemingly caused by the market

in the first place; and neo-liberals have struggled from the outset to make their political/economic theories do dual service as a moral code (Mirowski, 2009, p434-440).

A criticism of neo-liberalism is that it gives more power to those in society with, after Bourdieu (1977), greater economic *capital* than to those with less economic *capital* and an economic form of democracy may descend into a plutocracy, where decisions are made by those with greater economic *capital*, which is to say the wealthy.

Indeed, Harvey (2005) highlights that redistributive effects and increasing social inequality have been such a feature of neo-liberalism as to be regarded as structural to the whole project and points to the evidence that strongly suggests that the neo-liberal turn is in some way and to some degree associated with the restoration or reconstruction of power of economic elites and that the theoretical utopianism of neo-liberal argument has primarily worked as a system of justification and legitimation for whatever needed to be done to achieve this goal. (Harvey, 2005, pp16-19).

Neo-liberalism is interpreted here as a framework for thinking about how the economy works; however, it is more than that: it does not have a singular realisation but rather it has a range of different influences, it is fluid and dynamic and appears to proceed through trial and error, revisions and modifications, with any issues being addressed within a framework and set of assumptions around the primacy of markets, market relationships and privatisation.

Runciman (2013) has written about crisis in democracy, including the global financial crisis of 2008, and suggests that in the aftermath of democracy's triumph in the cold war and the victory of the free market over the planned economy, economists came to believe in democracy at the same time that politicians came to believe in markets, and as a result, in the 2008 financial crisis no-one wanted to say that things were getting out of hand (Runciman, 2013, p.311).

This is a neat argument but there is little evidence that economists came to believe in democracy prior to the 2008 financial crisis; the 2008 crisis seems rather to suggest that economists continued to pursue neo-liberal ideas, that were not essentially democratic and that counter arguments that questioned the dominance of free markets and neo-liberal economics were not being listened to.

Streeck (2014) argues that in the economic crisis of 2008 the banks presented themselves as "too big to fail" and this paved the way for a "reverse Keynsianism bail-out of the banks" and that the crisis was a financial crisis rather than a surfeit of democracy.

Crouch (2011) argues that following the 2008 global financial crisis, the forces that gain most from neo-liberalism – global corporations, particularly in the financial sector - have maintained their importance more or less unchallenged and the continued payment of bonuses to some banking staff, despite being controversial, was still being justified after the financial crisis as necessary to return the financial sector to solvency (Crouch, 2011, p1-2).

Even though the global financial crisis tested neo-liberalism, the dominant ideas of neo-liberalism have not been much affected by the global financial crisis. Mirowski (2014) asks the question "how did neo-liberalism apparently come through the crisis unscathed?" (Mirowski, 2014, p89). He argues that neo-liberalism has become entrenched at a very personal level of existence and that:

> the tenacity of neo-liberal doctrines that might otherwise have been refuted since the 2008 financial crisis is rooted in the extent to which a kind of 'folk' or 'everyday' neo-liberalism has sunk so deeply into the cultural unconscious that even a few rude shocks can't bring it to the surface long enough to provide discomfort (Mirowski,2014 p. 89).

This suggests that neo-liberalism has become immanent or inherent within and saturating people's consciousness.

Heideman (2014) reviews Mirowski (2014), and argues that what appears to be happening is less the general populace's incorporation into neo-liberalism and more their exclusion from any institutions that would allow them to change it, which suggests that if individuals do become aware, self-reflective, and critical of neo-liberalism, there is a lack of forums for an alternative public discourse based on clear analysis and thought about the alternatives.

The question is whether democracy itself is being undermined by free markets and neo-liberal economics. Streeck (2014) argues that it is and that the debt that has accumulated in Western democratic nation states since the second half of the 1970s is bound up with the penetration of "neo-liberalism"

35

into post-war capitalism: a victory that he sees as accompanied by a political emasculation of mass democracy (Streeck, 2014, p. 51).

Brown (2015) offers a theoretical exploration of the neo-liberal triumph of "homo oeconomicus" or economic man, where humans are consistently rational and narrowly self-interested agents and argues that this undermines democratic practices and a democratic imaginary by vanquishing the subject. She argues that:

> A neo-liberal iteration of 'homo oeconomicus' is extinguishing the agent, the idiom and the domains through which democracy – any variety of democracy – materializes (Brown, 2015, p. 79).

She points out that whilst neo-liberal rationality has altered over time and place, neo-liberal techniques of governing have usurped "a democratic with an economic vocabulary and social consciousness". (Brown, 2015, p20-21).

Using the phrase "neo-liberalism's stealth revolution", Brown (2015) argues that the expansion of markets to every feature of life, including education, produces everything in the image of a market and the transformation of democracy itself into a market literally undoes democracy because it gets rid of the fundamental principles of democracy that include: equality as a first principle; sharing political power equally and having people themselves decide what to value and decide what a polity ought to do.

Brown (2016) argues that the reason that these disappear when democracy is converted into a market place is that market places are not premised on have people ruling they are intended to have people pursuing their own interests and they are not premised on equality but are intended to have the

naturalness of inequality that comes with competition. So, she argues, some of the most basic features of democracy get undone by markets (Brown, 2016).

Brown's analysis of democracy within neo-liberalism warrants empirical work that considers whether, in education, neo-liberalism destroys democracy, transforms subjects and extinguishes the agent altogether or whether any form of democracy still exists within education, and that is what I intend to do in this thesis.

Standing (2009) argues that the neo-liberal economic model has transformed the character of economic risk, from a predominance of idiosyncratic, contingency risks that hit individuals, the basis of labourist social security, to systemic risks and a heady mix of shocks, hazards, uncertainty and risks. He identifies the following economic groups in the twenty-first century: the Elite, who are shaping social policy around the world, taking up the space left by shrinking state spending; the Salariat, who are high income earners in stable full-time employment; the Proficians, who are independent contractors or consultants; the Core, who are those in manual jobs or stably employed in service jobs – a withering working class; the Precariat, who are flitting between jobs, unsure of their occupational title, with little labour security; the Unemployed, who are typically depicted as having particular traits and responsibilities; the Detached, who are in chronic poverty. He argues that the Precariat is substantial in the United Kingdom (Standing, 2009, p112).

The growth of both the Proficians and the Precariat is interpreted as being a result of neo-liberal governmentality, which has created a labour market

characterized by the prevalence of zero hours and fixed-term contracts or freelance work as opposed to permanent jobs. This carries with it uncertainty, and that may bring to the fore the need to tackle social inequalities and to achieve social democracy.

In "State of Insecurity", Lorey (2012) builds on Foucault's theories of power relations (Foucault, 1977). In the Foreword to Lorey's work, Butler outlines that Lorey allows us to consider the "emergence of a neo-liberal form of regulation and power that is at once prefigured by Foucault and exceeds his own theory of power" (Lorey, 2012, Foreword). Butler suggests that the discourse of precarity consolidates power among those who wield power and says that Lorey (2012) asks us to think about the alternatives to accepting fear and insecurity as the basis for a political mobilisation (Lorey, 2012, pp. Foreword ix-x).  Lorey argues that neo-liberalism uses a form of governing that proceeds primarily through regulating the minimum of assurance, while simultaneously increasing instability, and uses the concept of precarization, which means living with the unforeseeable, with contingency and can be felt as a pervasive sense of insecurity.  She questions how we understand precarity as a mode of life or principle for the process in which we are governed and by which we come to govern ourselves.  She argues that:

> Individualisation means isolation and this kind of separation is
> primarily a matter of constituting one's "own" inner being, and only
> secondly and to a lesser extent by way of connections with others.
> Yet this interiority and self-reference is not an expression of
> independence, but rather the crucial element in the pastoral
> relationship of obedience (Lorey 2012, p3).

Lorey (2012) argues that with the neo-liberal demolition and restructuring of collective security systems, and the rise of increasingly precarious employment conditions, the possibilities for collectively organising in occupational groups are eroded (Lorey, 2012, p5-6).

In other words, within neo-liberalism, governance consists of individualising and isolating people and influencing their conduct.

My research considers the implications of this precarity, uncertainty and insecurity for Academy Leaders, and whether collectively organising in occupational groups of educationalists and democracy is eroded, with Academy Leaders constructing their identities as ideal neo-liberal subjects in line with a neo-liberal ideology.

Piketty (2014) discusses inequality in economic capital and writes about: the dynamics of wealth and income worldwide since the eighteenth century; the structure of inequality and its evolution over the long term and global inequality of wealth in the twenty-first century. He suggests that an over-concentration of wealth jeopardises democracy, and argues that:

> when the rate of return on capital exceeds the rate of growth of output and income, as it did in the nineteenth century and seems quite likely to do again in the twenty-first century, capitalism automatically generates arbitrary and unsustainable inequalities that radically undermine the meritocratic values on which democratic societies are based (Piketty, 2014, p. 1).

Piketty (2014) has been critiqued, for example for his definition of capital as wealth in general (Kunkel, 2014, pp. 17-20).

Hendrickson (2014) asserts that Piketty's thesis that government should exercise more control over a country's wealth is controversial and that Piketty's desire to change "the distribution of capital ownership, which is extremely in-egalitarian everywhere" (Piketty, 2014, p. 257) appeals to big government progressives in the United States, in a similar way that Keynes did in the 1930s.  He argues that Piketty's recommended policies of higher taxes would retard economic recovery today. Hendrickson does not disagree with Piketty's argument that the distribution of wealth is unequal but argues for the American principle of "equality before the law", with everyone having equal freedom to earn and accumulate however much wealth they lawfully and honestly can (Hendrickson, p29).  I interpret Hendrickson's position as coming from a neo-liberal perspective.

Piketty's analysis provides an alternative economic discourse to tackle the economic inequalities that jeopardise social democracy.  It remains to be seen whether Piketty's economic arguments are influential in determining the political landscape in education that is developed by governments in the future.

This section has raised the issue that neo-liberalism and marketisation is about rights for some and not for others, and that this creates or exacerbates inequalities in society, which fundamentally attacks democracy, and has introduced some alternative economic arguments that support greater democracy in society.

The next section will consider the inter-play between democracy and neo-liberalism in publicly funded state education.

## 2.1 Democracy and Neo-liberalism in Education

This section will explore historical developments that have led to the current national context in education (the Prime Minister and Secretaries of State for Education at each point in time from 1941-2017 are given in Appendix 8).

The key ideologies that are highlighted are neo-liberalism, as a commitment to introducing free markets and corporatisation into education; and social democracy, as a commitment to decisions in education being made democratically based on public values.  Neo-conservatism may also be a strong ideological influence in education but, that is not the focus of my research, and so it is not analysed in depth here.

Dewey (1966) wrote what can be considered a seminal text on democracy and education.  He saw the democratic ideal as consisting of two elements: firstly, numerous and varied points of shared common interest and the recognition of mutual interests as a factor in social control and, secondly, freer interaction between social groups and continuous re-adjustment of social habits through meeting the new situations produced by varied intercourse. A society that makes provision for participation of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible re-adjustments of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is what Dewey would interpret as a democratic society; an undemocratic society is one that sets up barriers to free intercourse and communication of experience between people. (Dewey, 1966).

Hegemony was a term used by Gramsci (1971) to analyse how the ruling capitalist class establishes and maintains control and legitimises the

capitalist state by ideological means and through passive revolution, where power is camouflaged rather than through overt coercion.

The first Research Question is addressed by considering whether the government has a: hegemonic, as discussed by Gramsci (1971); neo-liberal, as discussed by Hayek (1944) and, criticised by Mirowski (2009); discourse as discussed by Foucault (1972), in education and whether this undermines social democracy in academies by setting up barriers to free intercourse and communication of experience between Academy leaders and others or alternatively, whether academies demonstrate characteristics of Dewey's interpretation of a democratic society, with participation by all its members.

## 2.1.1 Post-Second World War.

Post Second World War until the mid-1970s, the British people demonstrated a determination not to want a return to pre-war conditions and the welfare state was established in the interests of the British people and welfarism became a component of the ideology of western democracies. Whilst education has never been unproblematic or totally democratic, Hargreaves and Shirley (2008) suggest that school leaders at that time had *agency* to develop the curriculum to meet the needs of their students and develop teaching that was more child-centred (Hargreaves and Shirley, 2008, pp3-5).

## 2.1.2 The Conservative Government (1979-1997)

The ideas of monetarism and a free market system with minimum intervention, outlined by Friedman (1993) and the ideas of neo-liberalism, outlined by Hayek (1944), influenced cabinet minister Keith Joseph and the

decisions made in the United Kingdom from 1979 by the Conservative government under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (Chitty, 2014).

Kenneth Baker introduced a major reform to the Education system in the Education Reform Act 1988 (1988). Woods (2014) points out that this was a turning point in educational policy (Woods, 2014, p. 325).

The Education Reform Act 1988 was a watershed moment in that it introduced neo-liberalism and market forces into education, by the compilation of league tables that measured the ability of schools to teach the same National Curriculum, and allowed parents to choose a school based on the school's performance.

Using Bourdieu's (1977) thinking tools to analyse a system based on parental choice: parents with greater economic, social and cultural *capital* in the *field* of education have a greater range of choices available to them, which reproduces inequalities, and these inequalities jeopardise social democracy.

The Education Reform Act 1988 prescribed a traditional curriculum, that saw national identity and national culture as fundamental and introduced the "knowledge, skills and understanding which pupils of different abilities and maturities were expected to have achieved by the end of each key stage", which were referred to as "attainment targets" (1988, p2). This suggests that, rather than the focus being on an education designed and tailored to meet the individual needs of the child, whatever stage they are at, the focus was on meeting "targets", which engenders "performativity", as discussed by Lyotard (1984), who sees the goals of a system as the optimisation of the

global relationship between input and output (Lyotard, 1984, p. 11) and Ball (2003) whose interpretation of "performativity" is a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change based on rewards and sanctions (Ball, 2003, p. 216).

Philosophically, Lyotard (1984) argues that:

"Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold, it is and will be consumed in order to be valorised in a new production: in both cases, the goal is exchange.  Knowledge ceases to be an end in itself, it loses its 'use value'" (Lyotard, 1984, pp. 4-5).

The philosophical question to ask oneself is whether the focus on knowledge as valuable purely because it is of benefit to the economy and private individuals is how we would like public education in England to be or whether we would like public education in England to value knowledge as an end in itself and value education as a public good that is of benefit to us all.

Through the Education Reform Act 1988, the Conservative government introduced the Local Management of Schools, which is based on the concept of the "self-managing school", developed just before this time by Caldwell and Spinks (1988) in Australia, who define this as:

> One for which there has been significant and consistent delegation to
> the school level of authority to make decisions related to the allocation
> of resources [knowledge, technology, power, material, people, time
> and finance]. This decentralisation is administrative rather than
> political, with decisions at school level being made within a framework

of local, state or national policy guidelines. The school remains

accountable to a central authority for the manner in which resources

are allocated (Caldwell and Spinks, 1988, p5).

The construct of the "self-managing school" might suggest the involvement of

the school's community in the development of the school, which might have

been welcomed by some head-teachers at the time because it could

potentially increase their *agency* to act and develop their schools within a

*Commitment to Democracy and Public Values.*

The Education Reform Act 1988 brought neo-liberal thinking into education

with the introduction of "independent schools to be known as City

Technology Colleges" (1988), which Whitty (2002) has highlighted were

intended to be new secondary schools for the inner city, with a curriculum

emphasis on science and technology, run by independent trusts with private

business sponsors (Whitty, 2002, p48).

The Education Reform Act 1988 also introduced grant-maintained schools,

which were existing state schools that had 'opted out' of their local education

authorities, after a parental ballot, and run themselves with direct funding

from central government (Whitty, 2002, p48).  Whitty highlights that some

grant-maintained schools reverted to being overtly academically selective

and some were covertly so (Whitty, 2002, p54).

Mortimore (2013) writes that:

the introduction of grant-maintained was ostensibly to create greater

diversity in provision, but also to reduce the educational influence of

local government. With enhanced funding came powers over

admission and semi-independent status. Grant-maintained status was abolished in 1998 by the incoming Labour government. Schools either reverted to their former type or became voluntary controlled or foundation schools (retaining much of their former independence). Even with extra funding and much cajoling the majority of governors declined to go down the grant-maintained route (only 9% of secondaries and 3% of primaries did so. (Mortimore, 2013,p75).

Whitty (2002) suggests that the Local Management of Schools gave schools more control over their own budgets and day-to-day management, receiving funds determined by the number and ages of their students and open enrolment allowed state students to attract as many students as possible, at least up to their physical capacity  and that "this was seen as the necessary corollary of per-capita funding in creating a quasi-market in education" (Whitty, 2002, p48).

Ball (2013b) argues that neo-liberalism has become the dominant discourse in education (2013b, p132) and this involves the:

> transformation of social relations and practices into calculabilities and exchanges that is the market form, with the effect of commodifying educational practice and experience (Ball, 2013b, p139).

Ball (2013b) goes on to say that "the neo-liberal subject is malleable rather than committed, flexible rather than principled (Ball, 2013b, p139) and that:

> neo-liberalism is made possible by a new type of individual formed with the logic of competition – a calculating, solipsistic, instrumentally driven 'enterprise man' (Ball, 2013b, p139).

Niesche (2012) uses Foucault's framework of ethical practice (Foucault, 1992) as a framework through which an "ethical self" can be purposely constructed. He examines the case study of one principal as she negotiates her way through the new schooling accountabilities (Niesche, 2012).

A criticism of Niesche is that his research discusses just one principal and more empirical work is required to consider how other principals negotiate their way around the education reform agenda.

Keddie (2015) builds on the work of Foucault, and mechanisms of governmentality (Foucault, 1991), to develop the construct of neo-liberal responsibilisation of self.

A criticism of Keddie (2015) is that she considers just one academy chain and more work is required to consider how principals and head-teachers from other types of academies negotiate the education reform agenda.

Ball (2013b), Niesche (2012) and Keddie (2015) all suggest that ,within a neo-liberal economic form of governing, individuals are re-shaped as ideal neo-liberal subjects and social relations are transformed, leading to more competition and individualism in education and less social democracy and I explored this further in my research by considering whether Academy leaders are being re-shaped as ideal neo-liberal leaders.

### 2.1.3 Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)

The Education (Schools) Act 1992 introduced the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), a non-ministerial government department, which adopted a quality assurance model. Prior to Ofsted most local education authorities (LEAs) had teams that both inspected and advised schools in their area and

this was increasingly seen by Conservative ministers as part of the problem in education, with Kenneth Baker claiming they had encouraged "a 1960s liberal, egalitarian consensus" (Lee and Fitz, 1997) cited in (Elliott, Adrian, 2012, p1).

The counter argument is that an egalitarian consensus that allows people to decide for themselves what needs to be done to improve their school is more democratic and should be encouraged.

Perryman (2006) builds on the work of Foucault (1977) to discuss panoptic performativity in education, and how teachers perform the normal to escape the inspector's gaze.

Courtney (2014) moves Bentham's notion of the panopticon (Bentham, 1791) on, by arguing that post-panopticism depends on subjects having become disciplined through panopticism and that post-panopticism is:

> Designed to wrong-foot school leaders, disrupt the fabrications they
> have constructed to withstand the inspectors' gaze, and make more
> visible the artifice of the performances that constitute their identities
> (Courtney, 2014, p623).

Courtney (2014) argues that, as an expression of power, "post-panopticism is concerned not so much with school leaders' compliance as with the exposure of their constructed and differential 'incompetence'" (Courtney, 2014, p623).

Courtney (2014) suggests that:

This frequent change is purposively constitutive of a post-panoptic

regime characterised by, *inter alia*, fuzzy norms, neo-conservatism

and subjects' ontological uncertainty (Courtney, 2014, p623).

The work of Perryman (2006) and Courtney (2014) suggest a lack of

*democratic agency* for Academy Leaders to discuss issues from their

communities with Ofsted inspectors, as this brings them under the panoptic

gaze of Ofsted inspectors.

**2.1.4 The New Labour Government (1997-2010)**

The New Labour Government refers to a period in the history of the British

Labour Party under the Prime Minister Tony Blair who advocated a "Third

Way", which was a political position with a synthesis of right-wing economic

and left-wing social policies. Tony Blair wrote that:

The Third Way draws vitality from uniting the two great streams of left

of centre thought – democratic socialism and liberalism – whose

divorce this century did so much to weaken progressive politics across

the west (Blair, 1998).

The Blair government continued with policies that were ideologically similar

to those of Margaret Thatcher.  As Lister (2010) argues:

The 'Third Way' was simply a continuation of the neo-liberal and

social authoritarian philosophy of the New Right: 'the wolf of neo-

Thatcherism in social democratic sheep's clothing' (Lister, 2010).

My research explores this tension between social democracy and neo-

liberalism that lies at the very heart of the academies programme.

Ball (2013a) suggests that there are differences between neo-liberalism and the Third Way, in that neo-liberalism rests on an un-reflexive belief in the markets, which regards state intervention as counter-productive, whilst the Third Way rests on the adoption of a "flexible repertoire", with an inclination towards individualism (Ball, 2013a, p97).

Tony Blair 's focus was on the "modernisation" of education and making it more efficient and Michael Barber became the head of his Delivery Unit and outlined the rationale and detail of this education reform implementation through a delivery chain from Whitehall to school (Barber, 2008), known as "deliverology" (Barber, 2010), which is interpreted as archetypical "instrumental rationality" as discussed by Habermas (1987). Barber (2010) has said that he "loves league tables" (Barber, 2010, p96) and argues that how much freedom a school should have depends on its performance (Baber, 2010, p23).

Raffo and Gunter (2008) question the over-emphasis in New Labour's reforms of change conceptualised as rational and capable of technical delivery and suggest scoping the opportunities to develop a rationale and series of narratives that are more socially critical.

I interpret the concept of "modernisation" as apolitical and do not dispute the idea of raising standards in education however, the risk is that those from low performing schools are not treated democratically and given a voice in the discourse.  In the implementation of the educational reform agenda, rather than the focus being on the democratic involvement of all educational professionals, the implication was that educational professionals were

somehow lacking, and this was to the detriment of gaining a subtle understanding of all perspectives and developing a greater focus on social democracy in education.

The academies were based on the City Technology Colleges (Adonis, 2012, p 58), as introduced in the Education Reform Act 1988. Adonis writes that:

> Instead of seeking to recast the legal framework for schools we relied largely on existing statutory powers in relation to City Technology Colleges, and legislated anew only for the  critical additional powers required for the academy model, mainly pertaining to the leasing and transfer of land (Adonis, 2012, p76).

In England, legislation passed into law and academies were set up, initially under the name "city academies", in The Learning and Skills Act 2000.

As Ball (2013a) points out, English education reform has played a role in "global policy speak" and exporting global education policy through English education businesses and "policy entrepreneurs" however, English education has also been an "importer" of policies (Ball, 2013a, p1), and Adonis (2012) writes that he was "also influenced by international experience in introducing independently managed state schools" (Adonis, 2012, p58).

In the United States, the belief was that expanding school choice by providing Charter Schools would improve equity by extending to disadvantaged families the same types of options that were available to middle and upper-class families however, Lubienski and Weitzel (2010) highlight that thus far neither the most pessimistic nor the most optimistic expectations on equity, innovation and competition have been realised and

most large-scale studies indicate that Charter Schools are performing at a level about equal to or somewhat lower than public school comparisons (Lubienski and Weitzel, 2010, p20). Lubienski and Weitzel (2010) argue that whilst some Charter Schools can be more entrepreneurial in terms of marketing and management, they tend to be more traditional about innovation in teaching as they are still accountable for examination results and so there is a tendency to "teach to the test" (Lubienski and Weitzel, 2010, p74).

Sarason (1998) argues that the degree of success or failure of a new setting is largely determined by its pre-history and what happens in its first operational year, and concludes that Charter Schools will not improve unless and until the difference between contexts of productive and unproductive learning is recognised and considered (Sarason, 1998).

This suggests the importance of gaining an understanding of the Charter School experience, with the democratic involvement of Academy Leaders and others from their communities to ensure that differences in context between the US and the UK are appreciated and understood.

Adonis (2012) writes that the original aim for academies was to tackle disadvantage in society by investing in schools in disadvantaged areas that were failing or seriously underperforming, with sponsors from business, faith-based groups, further education or universities. The first sponsor was Frank Lowe a sports marketer and other early sponsors were Clive Bourne, a businessman; David Garrad, a property entrepreneur and Peter Shalsom, another entrepreneur (Adonis, 2012, pp. 66-67).  Early academies were

sponsored by separate sponsors on an individual basis and the first

sponsored academy (Bexley Academy) opened in September 2002 (Adonis,

2012, p81-2, 95, 98).

Tony Blair wrote that, "what matters is what works" (Blair, 1998, p. 4), which

is avowedly pragmatic however, the question that is raised here is "what

works for whom and by what measure?" and whether the academies

programme is based on "what works" based on a commitment to neo-liberal

values or "what works" based on a commitment to social democratic values.

By September 2002, the United Learning Trust academy chain (where the

sponsor sponsored more than one academy) was coming into being and

Lord Harris was developing an academy chain in south London (Adonis,

2012, p92).

The original academies required a £2million investment from business, but

for later sponsored academies firms and sponsors could run publicly funded

schools without a mandatory financial investment. Adonis has written that the

decision to remove the £2m investment was a pragmatic decision because it

made it difficult to recruit enough first-rate sponsors, particularly existing

schools and Universities, who were prepared to commit the time but not cash

on top (Adonis, 2012, p. 120).

Wilkins (2012) writes about New Labour government's commitment to setting

up the academies as a radical piece of policy legislation that:

> Captured New Labour's commitment to (further) private sector
>
> involvement in public sector organisations – what might be termed a
>
> neo-liberal or advanced liberal approach to education reform. A

consequence of this has been the expansion of school-based definitions of "public accountability" to encompass political, business, and other interest groups, together with the enlargement of the language of accountability itself (Wilkins, 2012, p11).

Wilkins (2012) discusses the kinds of citizens who are pre-supposed by neo-liberalism, namely citizens who revere competitiveness, tolerate precarity and evince flexibility (Wilkins, 2012, p18).

My research built on this and explored the kinds of leaders who are pre-supposed by neo-liberalism and the position they take in the *field* of education.

From 2004, the New Labour government introduced the idea of "systems leadership" as a suggestion for how school and academy leaders should work together (Fullan, 2004).

Pont and Hopkins (2012) points out that co-operation among school leaders working in school systems that have been based on competition might not be easy, that there is a dilemma of democracy and that systems leadership is not widely accepted by schools, who worry that collaboration may lead to a dilution of excellent practice in leading schools (Pont and Hopkins, 2012, p263).

In an argument against systems leadership, Hatcher (2012) argues that the structural constraints of hierarchical management structures driven by state power are relayed through systems leaders in networks and suggests that there is a need to continue to critique the dominant view, and to develop

credible alternatives based on what he would see as more authentic, collective participation in decision-making (Hatcher, 2012).

Cousin (2018) evaluates systems leadership and "how far the reality of the use of public sector leaders to deliver system reform has matched the rhetoric that this heralded a new relationship between government and professionals" (Cousin, 2018, p1). She concludes that:

> while the governance environment of the English education system remains mixed, contested, and is currently in a state of transition, there is evidence to suggest that, overall, some systems leaders have been aligned more closely with government than with their fellow head-teachers, and have been instrumental in steering the system towards government objectives (Cousin, 2018, p15).

The 2005 White paper: Higher Standards: Better Schools for All – More Choice for Parents and Pupils (DfES, 2005), appears to promise greater democracy, as Tony Blair writes:

> In this new system, improvements will become embedded and self-sustaining within schools, because the changes will be owned and driven by schools and parents (DfES, 2005, p9).

In an argument counter to neo-liberalism, Hatcher (2009) makes a socialist case for local, community involvement in the new diversity of schooling, the potential benefits of bottom up diversity (as against centrally driven diversity) resulting from local population participation, and says that this greatly outweighs the dangers.

Glatter (2013) asserts that the academy model is essentially based on the governance structure of private schools with a top-down model that allows for minimal engagement on the part of key stakeholders and argues that there is a need to achieve a better balance between upward, lateral and downward accountability and argues that a new settlement is required, based on a shared ownership model that emphasises trust and collaboration and incorporates local communities and stakeholders in an inclusive multi-level system.

One key concept introduced into the academies programme was entrepreneurialism. Woods et al (Woods, Woods and Gunter, 2007) develop a more subtle understanding of entrepreneurialism in education by distinguishing four "types" of entrepreneurialism: three of which are, business, social and public and they introduce a fourth new dimension, termed "cultural entrepreneurialism", which they explain is concerned with creating and taking opportunities to innovate but also includes values of the deepest importance to personal and social development, so that individual and social actions have some meaning and a guiding ethical position (Woods, Woods and Gunter, 2007, p243).

Under the New Labour government, by 2008 there were 133 academies in operation, with another 300 planned (Adonis, 2012, p. 121).  The next section explores what happened to the academies programme under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government (2010-2015).

## 2.1.5 The Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government (2010-2015)

The Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government came to power in 2010, with David Cameron as Prime Minister and presented the economy as still recovering from the global financial crash of 2008, with the necessity for a period of austerity to clear the United Kingdom's national deficit and debt.

The Academies policy was revised by the then Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, to mean that schools judged Outstanding or Good by Ofsted could be fast-tracked through the process and, for the first time, primary and special schools could convert to academy status.

This creates an incongruity in the academies programme as there is a fault line between the New Labour version of the academies programme, that focused on disadvantaged areas, with schools that were under-performing being pressed into becoming sponsored academies, and the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition's version of the academies programme, that focused on repositioning high attaining schools that had obtained an Ofsted grading of Outstanding or Good schools as convertor academies.

As an extension of the academies policy, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government also imported the idea of Free schools from Sweden, where parents, teachers, charities and businesses establish new schools. The first Free schools in England opened in autumn 2011 but few Free schools have yet been approved (68 by 2015/16 – see Appendix 4).

Hatcher (2011) suggests that Free schools represent the most overtly market-orientated policy within the schools reform programme and this policy

has provoked intense controversy centring on issues of, inter alia, privatisation and social democracy.

The Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government's policies advocated increased freedoms for Academy Leaders on issues such as setting teachers' pay and conditions, diverging from the National Curriculum and freedoms over the school day and year.

As Courtney (2015a) points out, these freedoms are governed by contract law; each contract being between an academy trust and the Department for Education, following a business model. My research will explore whether Academy Leaders have *agency* to use these freedoms in *practice*.

One of the first Acts introduced by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government was The Academies Act 2010 (2010), that eliminated the requirement for there to be local consultation, which was criticised as undemocratic by education lawyers as it was thought to concentrate the fate of the country's schools in too few hands (Shepherd, 2010). This criticism suggests a reduction in opportunities for Academy Leaders to work democratically and consult locally with legitimate stakeholders and have *agency* to act within that, to aid decision-making in their academies

The foreword to the Schools White Paper: The Importance of Teaching (DfE, 2010) by the then Prime Minister, David Cameron and Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, uses hyperbole and grandiosity to suggest that the English education system should become "world class" and says that:

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has shown that countries which give the most autonomy to head-teachers and teachers are the ones that do best (DfE, 2010).

It is very clear from this that what matters are the verdicts of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the aspiration that this country should be the best, so any freedom for head-teachers is freedom within the constraint of ensuring that education in the United Kingdom tops the international league tables of results, whatever the limitations of such tables might be.

In this White Paper (DfE, 2010), they go on to say that Finland and South Korea are the highest performing countries in Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and that they have clearly defined and challenging universal standards, however, they did not appear to look too closely at the type of education that is provided in Finland, as this differs in many ways from that provided in the United Kingdom. Sahlberg (2011) points out that Finland's success in education was not created by politicians and authorities alone but involved many others, including both school practitioners and academics, and that the role played by Finland's civil society organisations was particularly significant. Sahlberg (2011) recognises that:

Reforming schools is a complex and slow process. To rush this process is to ruin it. The story of Finland's educational transformation makes this case (Sahlberg, 2011, p3).

In Finland, teachers are trusted and highly qualified and head-teachers are elected by their staff, and I infer from this that they have a high *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values.*

The Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government directed all capital funding for new schools to be used only for academies (Ladd, 2016), that shows they were pushing the agenda towards academisation, which I infer is a power-coercive, rather than a democratic approach.

The White Paper: The Importance of Teaching, (DfE, 2010) suggests that:

> Our best schools will be able to convert directly to academy status but will have to work with less successful schools to help them improve. Other schools will be able to become academies by joining Federations or chains (DfE, 2010, p. 3).

The suggestion is that the best schools become academies and the social and cultural *capital* gained from this is based on meritocracy, because they are the best schools, whereas the social and cultural *capital* gained may be based on Academy Leaders' agreement with the government's suggestion that schools should convert to academies.

This White Paper, The Importance of Teaching 2010 (DfE, 2010) says that:

> The National Curriculum will increasingly become a rigorous benchmark against which schools can be judged rather than a prescriptive strait jacket into which all learning must be squeezed (DfE,2010, p10).

There is an internal contradiction here, in that if the National Curriculum provides a "rigorous benchmark" against which schools can be judged then, despite the declared aim that it should not be, it does indeed become a prescriptive straight-jacket and discourages the democratic involvement of teachers in developing the curriculum.

David Hargreaves (2010) discusses the challenges of initiating and maintaining partnerships or alliances between schools, which are taken as the building blocks of a "self-improving school system". He outlines the evolving "maturity model", (Hargreaves, 2011) and gives further guidance on "collaborative capital", which is the state in which leading schools have established the mature partnerships that for him are at the core of a "self-improving school system" (Hargreaves, 2012).

Woods (2011) has considered democracy in education, and argues that:

> The tectonic plates that constitute the underlying structure of society are moving in the direction of democracy that is the nurturing ground for the exploration and generation of enduring meaning and education is at the heart of this opportunity (Woods, 2011, p1).

Woods (2011) argues that:

> Education has a sacred task that is not reducible to the demands of the economy or blind subservience to dominant ideas (Woods, 2011, p1).

He sees the superiority of private business and market models being dented by the global financial and economic crisis of 2008, and that a change in capitalism is required.  The change that he favours is the transformation of

capital through a holistic democracy and the enhancement of, for example, co-operatives, workplace democracy and spirituality (Woods, 2011, p4).

Woods distinguishes between "marketising meta-governance" that is about controlling from a distance to steer education in the direction of people-formation for the economic system, which he sees as part and parcel of the neo-liberal education agenda (Woods, 2011, p64) and "organic meta-governance", which fosters a more democratic, self-organising system (Woods, 2011, p.57).

Woods is making a philosophical argument about values, and his transformative approach towards a holistic, democratic, self-organising system with "organic meta governance" is a democratic ideal.

A criticism of Woods (2011) is that he does not explore the degree to which school leaders wish to, and are able to a greater or lesser extent, to achieve this democratic ideal and whether they have different responses to what he terms "marketising meta governance".

Taking a different viewpoint from Woods, Benn (2014) argues that education is moving in the direction of less democracy. She argues that poor oversight of schools is the

> Result of a school system that has been fatally fragmented, partly privatised and substantially removed from democratic scrutiny (Benn, 2014, p5).

Apple (2014) argues strongly for greater democracy in schools and points out that: currently, under the influence of those with increasing power in education and society, what is public is supposedly bad and what is private is

supposedly good; corporate models of competition, accountability and measurement have been imposed and continual insecurity for the teaching profession has become the norm. He sees the loss of respect for the professionalism of education as striking and raises the point that principals and teachers have the right to publicly consider the crucial issues that affect their lives and the lives of their students at a time when the policies and pressures being imposed on them are ever more powerful (Apple, 2014,).

In 2012 Ofsted changed the "Satisfactory" label for schools to "Requires improvement". Ofsted's chief inspector, Sir Michael Wilshaw, sent a message that "Satisfactory" was now unsatisfactory and that more schools should be pushing for the higher rating of "Good" (Coughlan, 2012).

This suggests that schools who do not receive at least an Ofsted "Good" rating, are not given *symbolic capital* in the *field* of education.

On 1 April 2012, The National College for Teaching and Leadership (originally established in 2000 as The National College for School leadership, a non-departmental public body) became an executive agency of the United Kingdom's Department for Education.

Simkins (2012) has written that the National College for School Leadership's publications and programmes embody the core ideas of government policy.

I will explore Academy Leaders' current relationships with The National College for Teaching and Leadership and, their conceptualisation of leadership, from Academy Leaders' perspectives, in Chapters 5 and 6.

In July 2014, there was a change in Secretary of State for Education to Nicky Morgan (Morris, 2014), which I infer was a time of uncertainty and precarity for Academy Leaders.

The Department for Education Policy "Increasing the number of academies and Free schools to create a better and more diverse school system" (DfE, 2013) (see Appendix 4) was published on 22 April 2013 and updated on 4 September 2014 and there did not appear to be any changes to the policy other than the change from Michael Gove's name to Nicky Morgan's, which indicated that Morgan as the new Secretary of State for Education would continue with the education policies that Gove had previously outlined.

From September 2014, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government appointed eight Regional Schools Commissioners, who have responsibility for taking decisions on applications from schools wanting to become academies or from those wanting to set up Free schools or sponsor an academy and for acting when an academy is judged to be under-performing.

Ladd (2016) highlights that the credibility of the Regional Schools Commissioners is undermined by a lack of transparency in how they operate, meetings are not open to the public, and minutes, when published at all, are usually cryptic and long delayed. She quotes one Regional Schools Commissioner, who said that "We are totally un-transparent, there is a complete reticence to be open. This hurts us" (Ladd, 2016, p232).

There is a lack of research exploring the relationship between Academy Leaders and Regional Schools Commissioners, and how democratic it is

from the perspective of Academy Leaders, and I explore this in Chapters 6 and 7.

## 2.1.6 The Conservative Government (2015-   )

The period after a Conservative government came to power with a majority government in May 2015 is interpreted as a time of uncertainty and precarity for Academy Leaders around the Acts of Parliament that government were likely to introduce based on their manifesto, which included more schools that were designated by Ofsted as Requires Improvement being forced to become academies (McInery, 2015).

In the Education and Adoption Bill 2015 (2015), the discourse had been moved on to include the notion of "coasting schools", which, although this utterance had not been clearly defined, implied a lack of effort on the part of the school leaders to achieve improvements, whereas the lack of the ability of the school or Academy Leaders to achieve improvements may be because of several factors, including the local context of their school or academy, and issues in their local community.

In June 2015, Education secretary Nicky Morgan defined "coasting schools" as secondary schools that failed to ensure 60% of pupils gain five good GCSEs and said that those that did not meet the target would be ordered to improve or face being turned into academies (2015b).

This hyperbole suggests that academies are better than maintained schools, even though there is no current research evidence that shows this.

To explore whether Academy Leaders could have input into the education reform agenda of government in the *field* of education, I wrote to the Right

Honourable Nicky Morgan MP, in July 2015 (see Appendix 10) and asked to give an example of where the "wise words" or ideas of an academy leader had influenced her in policy development and the following reply was received:

> Education can be life-transforming, and our children deserve an education that prepares them for a happy and fulfilling life, regardless of their background. Ensuring that we have excellent schools and highly skilled people is essential for our long-term plan for Britain.

> The Secretary of State works closely with head teacher bodies; head teacher reference groups and receives views from leaders on the select committee for the Education and Adoption Bill.  It is important we recognise the views of our dedicated and professional teachers and school leaders as these form our policies for the Government's education reform.

This rhetoric invokes the language of democracy to suggest that, in theory, the government welcomes ideas from Academy Leaders to influence the development of policies for educational reforms.  In this research, I will explore what happens in *practice* in the *field* of education.

In 2015, David Cameron said that he wanted "every school in the country to have the opportunity to become an academy and to benefit from the freedoms this brings" (Dominiczak, 2015) and this commitment is outlined in the White Paper: Educational Excellence Everywhere, 2016 (DfE, 2016).

The compulsion for schools to become academies takes away any *democratic agency*, with school leaders and their community deciding for

themselves to become an academy and an element of power and coercion is introduced, with the government directing schools to become academies.

A tendency towards totalitarianism has been highlighted by Courtney and Gunter (2015b), who discuss the popularisation of Jim Collins' book (Collins, 2001) and draw on Arendt (1958) to identify totalitarian tendencies and authoritarian practices, misrecognised as leadership, and disconnected from traditional sources of legitimacy and authority, including the discourse of professional codes of practices.

Courtney and Gunter (2015b) argue that "Within public education a catastrophe is unfolding through a banality of leadership" (Courtney and Gunter, 2015b, p10).  They suggest that, as identified by Arendt,

> 'banality' is following orders or 'thoughtlessness' rather than 'evil' or 'stupid' with vision and visioning preventing a person from engaging with the world from another point of view"(Courtney and Gunter, 2015b, p10).

Courtney and Gunter's (2015b) identification of totalitarian tendencies suggests a lack of democracy; accepting different points of views and a "plurality" of opinions, and, in my research, I explored whether Academy Leaders had a *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* and the *democratic agency* to engage with their communities based on that.

The reforms announced in the White Paper: Educational Excellence Everywhere, 2016 (DfE, 2016), included removing the requirement for school governing bodies to retain democratically elected members, namely parent

governors, which decreases the opportunity for Academy Leaders to work democratically with parents.

The policy for all schools to become academies was criticised on the basis that it would be wrong to require schools that were currently under their local authority control and had Ofsted grades of Good or Outstanding to convert to academy status.

In her response, in May 2016, Morgan changed direction:

> I am today re-affirming our determination to see all schools to become academies, however having listened to the feedback from Parliamentary colleagues and the education sector we will now change the path to reaching that goal (Whittaker, 2016).

This demonstrates opportunities to oppose government policies based on a *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* and to present alternative arguments to government however, it also indicates that there was insufficient democracy before launching the policy and that the government were either unaware of public values or chose to ignore them and try to force through their policy.

The 2012/13 Ofsted Annual Report shows that, in 2013 when this research began, there were more academy secondary schools at 1584 (51%) (total for Convertor, Sponsor led, University Technical Colleges and Studio Schools) than local authority controlled secondary schools at 1532 (49%) and during the period of my research, the number of academy secondary schools had risen to 1994 that is 63% of secondary schools, with only 1149 (36.5%) of secondary schools being local authority controlled by 2015/16 (Source:

Ofsted Annual Report (2016). See Appendix 3 for numbers of local authority schools and academies.

By 2016, a diverse range of academies existed: sponsored academies; convertor academies; chains of sponsored academies; Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs); Federations; and Free schools. There were also 43 operational University Technical Colleges (UTCs) with more due to open in the future (http://www.utcolleges.org/), which are a type of academy where the sponsor university appoints most of the governors and key members of staff and, in theory, they are designed to support curriculum development, provide professional development opportunities for teachers, and guide students to foundation and full degrees.

By 2016 there were also 36 Studio Schools (http://studioschoolstrust.org/), which are academies for 14-19-year olds of all abilities that are designed to give students practical skills in workplace environments.

These different types of academy co-exist alongside many other types of school from previous administrations. Courtney (2015a) identifies a total of between 70 and 90 different school types.

The United Kingdom government represents the reformation of the education system in England as increasing diversity and a choice of school for parents, however, Simkins, Coldron and Crawford (2014) point out that this diversity leads to:

> Increasing complexity and increasing fragmentation as schools take a variety of routes towards academy status and new forms of formal and informal collaboration between schools emerges (Simkins, 2014, p1).

In the education system in England, Courtney (2015c) has suggested that:

> Corporatised leadership is characterised *inter alia* by the promotion of business through the curriculum, school structure, learning materials and pupil experiences, and the adaption of business derived leadership practices and identities (Courtney, 2015c, p1).

Courtney (2015c) argues that "corporatisation reconstitutes non-economic fields and relations as having the goals, practices, motivations and instincts of the private sector" (Courtney, 2015c, p12).

Following the European Union referendum in June 2016, Theresa May became Prime Minister and appointed Justine Greening as Education Secretary. Theresa May announced the proposal for schools to become grammar schools, which is interpreted as a neo-conservative suggestion that involves a more overt differentiation between schools in England and, whilst this may not happen in practice, the debate has come full circle. My research covers the beginning of the academies programme, the middle of that programme and what could be seen to be the beginning of the end of the focus on academies but it will remain relevant as it captures the position of Academy Leaders in the *field* of education at a certain moment in time.

This section has shown how the educational terrain from the 1980s onwards has been characterised by complexity, contradiction and tension between events, actors and positions, with attempts to generate and implement solutions to perceived problems.

Since the 1980s both the right and the left in politics have embedded what Mirowski (2014) terms 'everyday' neo-liberalism into education and this has

remained unchanged by the financial crisis of 2008 and I interpret this as being a hegemonic (Gramsci, 1971), neo-liberal economic (Hayek, 1944), discourse (Foucault (1972), in education.

Academy reforms, including pay deregulation has resulted in soaring salaries for some Chief Executives.  In 2017, it was reported that Sir Dan Moynihan, Chief Executive of the Harris Federation's pay rose from £395,000 in 2015, to £420,000 in 2016 (Dickens, 2017), which indicates massive pay disparities arising from the government's commitment to a neo-liberal education reform agenda and this leads to the question of whether this undermines social democracy.

More empirical work is warranted that focuses on leadership in academies and considers whether the immanent and saturating nature of neo-liberalism makes it difficult for Academy Leaders to maintain a *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* in their academies, and I explored that in this research.

## 2.2 Gap in the Educational Research

As well as general searches of library catalogues and databases using the search terms, democracy and neo-liberalism, academy or academies and leadership, I carried out two very specific literature searches around *democratic agency* and *responsibilisation* and these are shown below.

The educational databases (ERIC and Education Source) were searched for academic journal articles using the following search strategies.

Literature Search – Search Strategy 1

(academy OR academies OR school*) in abstract

AND

(leader* OR principal* OR head-teacher* OR headteacher*) in abstract

AND

(democracy OR democratic OR "public values") in abstract

AND

Agency in abstract

ERIC returned 41 abstracts and these were hand-searched for relevance from which, 7 were selected as relevant to this research.

Education Source found 16 abstracts and 1 of these was selected as relevant to this research in addition to those uncovered by ERIC.

A summary of the 8 articles (Woods (2016, Granger (2008), Sugrue (2009) Jenlink (2010), Ranson (2008), Thomson (2003) Chajet (2007), Court (2011)), their contribution and criticisms of each is given in Appendix 1.

Literature - Search Strategy 2

(academy OR academies OR school*) in abstract

AND

(leader* or principal* or head-teacher* or headteacher*) in abstract

AND

(responsibilisation or responsibilization) in abstract

ERIC returned 2 articles.

Education Source returned the same 2 abstracts.

A summary of the 2 articles (Keddie (2015), Tseng (2015)), their contribution and criticisms of each is given in Appendix 2.

Whilst the literature suggests that the dominance of neo-liberal thought in educational reform is consistent across continents (in the United States, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom) both *democratic agency* and *neo-liberal responsibilisation* of self are under-researched areas in the educational research.  A gap is identified in terms of a lack of empirical work exploring the construct of a *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* and the *agency* to act on that, and the construct of a *Commitment to Responsibilisation* of self, from the perspective of Academy Leaders.

## 2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for my research is offered as below:
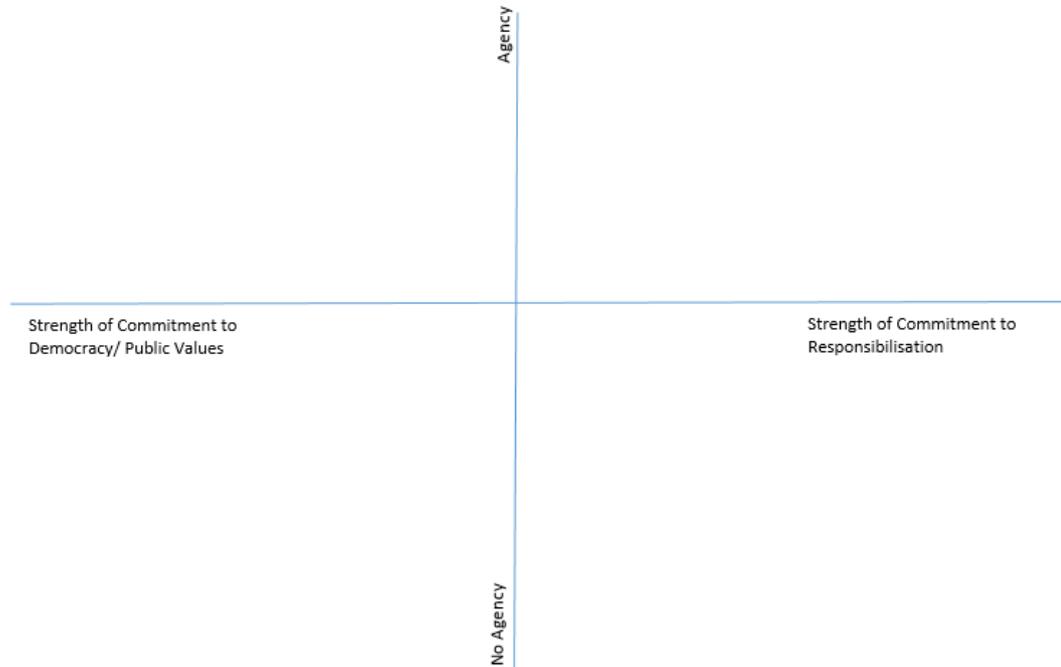


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

My conceptual framework is derived from the idea that social democracy and neo-liberalism are in tension in the academies programme. Academy Leader's may have different responses to change towards academisation and my research seeks to gain an insight into how Academy Leaders are dealing with this tension between democracy or public values and neo-liberalism in reality. I see *Commitment to Democracy or Public Values* (intellectual, social, cultural and civic values) as antithetical to *Commitment to Responsibilisation* and, I am interested in exploring how Academy Leaders are positioned within that dichotomy. Academy Leaders may show a *Commitment to Democracy or Public Values,* or they may show a

*Commitment to Responsibilisation*, developing their identities as ideal neo-liberal leaders.

This conceptual framework is used in Chapter 6 to analyse where Academy Leaders can be positioned on a spectrum of possible positions regarding their *Commitment to Democracy or Public Values* and their *Commitment to Responsibilisation*.

The question addressed is whether Academy Leaders, as professionals in touch with the demos (the people), consider that they have *agency* within the structures, relationships and processes of education that have been introduced by government, to interpret policy, and to use local intelligence in terms of wider social needs and purposes to inform government in the construction of education. Alternatively, whether Academy Leaders have *agency* only within a Commitment to *Responsibilisation* of self, as discussed by Keddie (2015), and an acceptance of the business principles and results orientation of their data-driven environment, with the government and its agencies making all decisions in education and Academy Leaders being so tightly constrained that they are obliged to carry out the government's policies with little if any contextual variation.

The next chapter explores the sociological theoretical perspectives of Bourdieu because, as well as exploring research that is positioned inside education,  I  consider it helpful to take a wider perspective and bring a philosophical underpinning to bear against this educational background.

**Chapter 3: Sociological Theoretical Perspective**

**3.0 Introduction to Chapter 3**

This chapter outlines the sociological theoretical perspective of Bourdieu that I use in my research: Bourdieu's work built on Marx's theory of historical materialism by adding theories on the role of cultural and social reproduction (Murphy and Allan, 2013, p5).

**3.1 Pierre Bourdieu**

Bourdieu (1977) critiques the objectivist paradigm as ignoring the process of social construction by which people think about and construct structures.

Bourdieu (1992) moved beyond the binary of *structure* and *agency* and is concerned with the relational workings of society in a *field,* which is defined in analytical terms as:

> A network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations, they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (situs) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the *field*, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, etc.) (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 97).

Bourdieu (1992) argues that a *field* can be compared to:

> A game with stakes, which are for the most part the product of the
> competition between players who have an investment in the game
> (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p98).

The *field* is a type of competitive marketplace where power is based on various types of *capital*: *economic capital* (wealth and possessions), *cultural capital* (knowledge), *social capital* (connections and relationships) and *symbolic capital* (prestige or reputation) (Bourdieu, 1977).

The hierarchy of the different species of *capital* varies across the various *fields* and their value depends on the existence of a *field* in which the competency can be employed and allows its possessors to wield a power (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 98).

A position in the *field* is a result of power derived from the various types of capital and a source of influence, with power struggles between those who take up different positions within the *field*, as Bourdieu writes, "the field is also a field of struggles" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p101) and as such it is contested and unstable.

Bourdieu (1990) uses the concept of *practice*, which is characterised by the logic, flow and contest of practical activities and their connections in time and *habitus*, which is the collection of the sets of dispositions that allow individuals to engage with and make meaningful contributions to *practice* and can be described as a "feel for the game" (Bourdieu, 1990, pp. 52-65).

Bourdieu (1977) argues that people's actions are guided by their *habitus* that is "systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*" (Bourdieu, 1977, p72) that

are developed through a lifetime of social interactions. Future action is embodied through historical precedents and deployed in combination with a consideration of the current situation.

Bourdieu (1992) sees the state as the site of struggle over what he called *symbolic violence*, which is "violence that is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 167).

Murphy and Allan (2013) elaborate that *symbolic violence* is a mismatch between moves and the flow of *practice* in a *field* where individuals are taken out of the collective and individual histories that provide "a feel for the game". (Murphy and Allan, 2013, p. 124).

Bourdieu sees the education system is a major institution through which *symbolic violence* is practised on people (Bourdieu, 1970/ 1990).

Bourdieu (1977) argues that inequalities are legitimated through *misrecognition* of cultural differences as differences in individual ability and uses the concept of *doxa* or *taken for granteds* for things that are perceived as self-evident and natural (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 169).

Crossley (2004, p101) highlights that Bourdieu effects a framework in which we can analyse systematically distorted communication, so for example we can see that *doxa* is not neutral, that it reflects the interests of dominant groups, whose rise to dominance has enabled their views and interests to achieve a *taken for granted* status, beyond opinion and beyond question so, for example, even those who are disadvantaged accept other people's privilege as *taken for granted*.

Bourdieu (1990) argues that in education the curriculum and pedagogies help reproduce the class structure, class codes and class relations.

Ritzer and Stepnisky (2012) argue that the *field* of power (or politics) is the most important: the hierarchy of power relations within the political *field* structures all the other *fields*.

### 3.1.1 Educational Research that uses Bourdieu's Theories

Gunter (2001) elaborates Bourdieu's concept of *field* as a competitive arena where "struggles are not just about material gain but also about symbolic capital, or authority, prestige and celebrity status" (Gunter 2001, p12). She argues that this is linked to "who is accepted as having legitimate views, who is listened to, who is published, who is read and who is talked about" (Gunter, 2001, p13).

Gunter (2001) explains that a hierarchy of *fields*: political *field*; economic *field*; cultural *field* and educational *field*, structures social structures and positions and positioning is about domination and subordination (Gunter, 2001, p 13). She argues that the education field can seek to be dominant through struggles over, for example, pedagogy, however the education field is dominated through the workings of the market and by the political and economic *fields* (Gunter, 2001, p13).

Gunter (2001) uses Bourdieu's thinking tools to see leadership codified by the New Labour government (1997-2010) as the dominant game to play in education with a centrally designated and regulated form of leadership where the London government held policy strategy, with head-teachers left with tactical options about efficient and effective implementation (Gunter, 2001).

Gunter (2016) takes a critical view of the increased adoption of the discourse of "leadership" in education, whereby professional titles such as Head-teacher or Principal are subsumed by the leadership lexicon and leadership is a symbolically rhetorically powerful process whereby the leader is given authority and legitimacy (Gunter, 2016, p. 5).

Alison Elliott (2012) has written about current government policy and how public management and the broader neo-liberal project presents a threat to the strong values system of a school with an authentic community orientation and she uses Bourdieu as a lens to analyse how government policy challenges this school's firmly held beliefs (Elliott, Alison, 2012).

Courtney (2017) uses Bourdieu's concept of *hysteresis*, where the relative values of *symbolic capitals* are altered, to discuss the way in which the *field* is moved on in ways that disadvantage players in the game whose *capital* is insufficient or (newly) insufficiently valorised and over-privileges *agency* for better positioned actor. He argues that:

> hysteresis is no longer simply an effect of an out-of-sync habitus; it is the state's desired outcome for those it seeks to de-privilege through its agentic reproduction of unequal power structures and re-inforcement of neo-liberal ideology (Courtney, 2017, p1055).

Bourdieu has been critiqued because he gives no clear definition of the concept of *habitus* and therefore the concept is theoretically incoherent and of no clear use to empirical researchers (Sullivan, 2002); because the notion of *habitus* may be seen as entirely deterministic (Di Maggio, 1982) and

because there is a lack of clarity with regard to the concept of *cultural capital* (Goldthorpe, 2007).

Despite these criticisms of Bourdieu, his conceptualisations of *capital*, *habitus, field* and *practice* are all felt to be useful to the task that is being undertaken by my research.

### 3.1.2. My Research and the Use of Bourdieu's Thinking Tools

My research built on the work of Gunter (2001, 2016) and Courtney (2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2017.) and used Bourdieu's thinking tools to explore leadership in academy schools from 2013-17 at a time when the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government (2010-15), and then the Conservative government (2015 -) were in power.

My research used Bourdieu's thinking tools of *habitus, practice* and *field* (Bourdieu, 1990) to explore whether Academy Leaders' *habitus* allowed them to engage with and make meaningful contributions to practice in the *field* of education or whether policy strategy was still being held by the national government, and those whom the government privileged.

My conceptual framework, mapped the terrain for my research and is indicative of Bourdieu's *field* of *practice* or *field* of *struggles* and the contested and discursive space in academies.

My research explored whether the current national context of a commitment to neo-liberalism undermined democracy that is a commitment to public values for Academy Leaders in academies or whether Academy Leaders had *democratic agency* to input into the development of the national government's policy strategy

I developed Bourdieu's concept of the *field* of *practice* to consider that Academy Leaders are at the intersection of several different *sub-fields* of practice within the *field* of education, including interactions with governors, parents and teachers within their own academies and interactions with those in wider networks, such as other schools and academies, higher and further education institutions, and local and national employers, as well as with those in agencies (Regional Commissioners, Ofsted and the National College for Teaching and Leadership), and with government itself.

My research analysed how Academy Leaders positioned themselves in these various *sub-fields* and how they are positioned in relation to others; the social and cultural *capital* that is at play and whether this reproduced inequalities in education and, in doing so, reproduced the class structure.

The research design that will be employed to best set about meeting the research objectives and answering the research questions that have been posed will be outlined in the next chapter.

**Chapter 4: Research Design**

**4.0. Introduction to Chapter 4**

This chapter is concerned with the philosophical, methodological, and methodical choices that were made. My research design was determined systematically, by first establishing the research paradigm, then the research strategy and finally the data strategy. I consider ethics and the limitations of my research at the end of this chapter.

**4.1 Research Paradigm**

Different philosophical positions were considered, and positions were chosen based on their suitability to answer my research questions.

**4.1.1 Ontology (Theory of Reality)**

Crotty (1998) explains that Ontology is the study of being and is concerned with "what is", with the nature of existence, with the structure of reality as such (Crotty, 1998, p10).

Objectivism holds that reality exists independently of consciousness – in other words that there is an objective reality "out there" and that research is about discovering the objective truth. Constructionism rejects this view of human knowledge: so, truth and meaning do not exist in some external world, but are created by the subjects' interactions with the world.

Bryman (2012) writes that the central point is whether social entities can and should be considered as objective entities that have a reality external to social actors (objectivism) or whether they can and should be considered as

social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors (constructionism) (Bryman, 2012, p32).

### 4.1.2 Ontological Position

I take a constructionist ontological position in this study because the reality of the "academy" does not exist externally and independently from the social actors, rather the "academy" is a social construct built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors, such as government ministers and Academy Leaders.

### 4.1.3 Epistemology (Theory of Knowledge)

Epistemology is concerned with "how we know what we know" (Crotty, 1998, p8), the philosophical theory of knowledge. Broadly speaking there are two epistemological positions, and these are positivist and interpretivist. A positivist epistemological position advocates the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the study of social reality and beyond, whereas an interpretivist epistemological position is critical of the application of the scientific method to the study of the social world and shares the view that the subject matter of the social sciences is fundamentally different from that of the natural sciences (Bryman, 2012, p27-32).

I could take a positivist epistemological position to my research, such as that taken by Hallinger and Heck (2010, p. 227), who examine the relationship among the three organisational constructs of collaborative leadership, capacity for school improvement and, growth in student learning in elementary school mathematics. The aim of their research was clearly stated, which was to develop and test a series of longitudinal models that

posed the possibility that the effects of leadership on school improvement could be either unidirectional or reciprocal.  They took a positivist approach that requires the operationalisation of constructs, which means being able to quantify constructs. A criticism of their research is that the major constructs of "collaborative leadership", "school improvement" and "growth in student learning" are not amenable to quantification and it might have been more appropriate for them to take an interpretivist epistemological position.

### 4.1.4 Epistemological Position

My view is that education in academies is part of the subject matter of the social sciences and that this is fundamentally different from that of the natural sciences.

In my study, it is not possible to operationalise and quantify the constructs of *democratic agency* and *neo-liberal responsibilisation* of self and it is more appropriate for me to take an interpretivist epistemological position.

The way in which the academies are developing is difficult to predict and Academy Leaders' sense of the reality in which they find themselves and their responses to the government's policies are likely to be different from each other, what strikes each Academy Leader as significant is likely to be affected by their own characteristics, in terms of experience in different academies and environments, age, personality, class, and gender.  The best way for me to explore this is to interpret and analyse the way that each academy leader is making sense of and responding to their reality, and that is what I do in Chapter 5.  This will add insight and depth to the understanding of leadership in academies, including exploring some of the

deep structures of meaning within the current political discourse, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Some disadvantages of an interpretivist epistemological position and how they are mitigated in this study are:

a) Research that is too impressionistic and subjective with findings that rely too heavily on the researcher's own view about what is significant and important (Bryman, 2012, p. 405), with difficulty in replicating the study because what strikes the researcher as significant and the responses of research participants is likely to be affected by the researcher's characteristics (personality, class, gender, age) (Bryman, 2012, p405). To counteract this, I have kept a self-reflexive diary, analysing my own characteristics, thoughts and feelings.

b) Developing close personal relationships with those being studied (Bryman, 2012, p405). This is guarded against in the current study because I do not work in the academies and my role is as a researcher, where I visit purely to interview research participants.

## 4.1.5 Axiology (Theory of Value)

Axiology is the philosophical theory of value.  The word derives from the Greek ἀξίᾱ, pronounced axiā, meaning value or worth and discusses the very nature of value.

## 4.1.6 My Axiological Position

The reasons behind my axiological position can, I believe, be found in my own biography; I come from a working-class background and went to

University in the early 1980s to study chemistry and education, which I believe improved my life chances considerably and heightened my awareness of the benefits of education and class differences in being able to access those benefits.

My axiological position can be interpreted as coming from a philosophical and ethical stance that is egalitarian, democracy and advocacy orientated; that emphasizes the value and *agency* of human beings, both individually and collectively, and affirms their ability to improve their lives and the lives of others by engaging with them and my study is, in that way, value laden.

My axiological position should not unduly influence my research through me seeing what I would wish to see and, as every researcher should, I challenged and criticised my own perspective and endeavoured not to succumb to hubris and think that I already knew the answers to my research questions and reached the conclusions that I had already decided to reach before I started.  Instead, I took measures to avoid this by taking multiple perspectives for the data collection and used these perspectives to gain understanding and insight into leadership in academies.

In the next section, I will consider the research strategy that will best answer the research questions that have been posed.

## 4.2 Research Strategy

My research employed a qualitative research strategy to explore how each of the Academy Leaders in a sample of Academy Leaders responded in practice to the same national context, as this added depth to the picture of leadership in academies, with the unit of analysis being each individual Academy Leader (Principal or Head-teacher).

### 4.2.1 Sample

To carry out my research, it was necessary for me to gain access to those who were directly involved in leadership in the academies in England. A group who were able to give that access was the Association of Secondary Schools in the area. I made an initial approach to the chair of that group to request attendance at one of their meetings to present my research and ask for research participants because it was important to me that the group had given their permission for the research to be conducted. My request for attendance was rejected on the basis that the Association had packed agendas and was too busy to allow time at their meetings however, the chair of the group suggested that I contacted individual Academy Leaders directly to invite them to participate in my research and sent the members of the Association of Secondary Schools in the area an introductory e-mail himself, thus facilitating access for my research.

Purposive sampling is often used when working with very small samples and when the researcher wishes to select cases that are particularly informative (Neuman, 2006) or relevant to the research questions that are being posed (Bryman, 2012). I used purposive sampling of Academy Leaders (with a variety of professional titles, such as Head-teacher or Principal), who are

directly involved in secondary school leadership in academies in England. There is an element of convenience sampling in that Academy Leaders of academies that it was convenient for me to visit were invited to participate in the study.

To select the sample, 38 Academy Leaders, who were directly involved in secondary school leadership in academies in England were contacted in writing by post and by e-mail and 10 respondents agreed to take part in the research and these were interviewed. The sample is self-selecting in that it only includes those who were willing to participate in my research. At the time of my research there were continuing discussions around the academies and it is possible that many Academy Leaders did not wish to discuss their academies publicly at that time because they were still developing their positions, and this may account for the fact that many Academy Leaders that were contacted did not respond to the invitation to participate in my research.

The sample is broadly representative of the types of academies nationally, however, there are some weaknesses. Two academies that had over 11 academies in Multi-Academy Trusts were invited to take part in the research but did not respond to the invitation, despite follow-up requests, so 100% of the sample are from academies that have fewer than 11 academies in Multi-Academy Trusts and this reflects the fact that nationally only 2.1% of academies have over 11 academies in Multi-Academy Trusts. Half of the sample are from Convertor academies and this reflects the fact that nationally there are more Convertor academies (71%) than Sponsored academies (23%). There were no Free schools or University Technical

Colleges in the sample and this reflects the fact that nationally less than 1% of schools are Free schools and less than 1% are University Technical Colleges (see Appendix 3 for a detailed breakdown of numbers of local authority and academy schools).

The sample for the data collection and how it compares with academies nationally can be seen below:

| Type of Academy | Sample | | Nationally | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| Stand-alone | 5 | 50% | 1861 | 68.5% |
| Multi-Academy Trust 2 Academies | 1 | 10% | 270 | 10.7% |
| Multi-Academy Trust 3-5 Academies | 3 | 30% | 365 | 13.5% |
| Multi-Academy Trust 6-10 Academies | 1 | 10% | 145 | 5.3% |
| Multi-Academy Trust 11+ Academies | 0 | 0% | 57 | 2.1% |

Table 1: Sample Percentages Compared with National Percentages

**Source:** https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-academies-and-academy-projects-in-development

My research involves ten Academy Leaders.  The sample includes a spread of academies across urban and rural areas, ranges from small to larger academies, as outlined above, and represents the range of types of academy in existence, including sponsored academies, convertor academies, Multi-Academy Trusts and Federations as there were likely to be differences between the different types of academies.

The Academy Leader's pseudonmys and the type of academy that they led is given in the table below.

| Pseudonym (Academy Leader) | Historical Description of School | Type of Academy | Age Range | Area |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tom King (AL1) | Co-educational comprehensive school, then a foundation school. | Convertor Academy 1 Stand-alone | 11-18 | Town |
| Harriet Vale (AL2) | Co-educational high school with sixth form. | Multi-Academy Trust that sponsors 5 academies. | 11-18 | City |
| Neil Masters (AL3) | Boys' grammar school, became co-educational then grant-maintained, then a foundation school. | Convertor Academy 2 Stand-alone | 11-18 | Town |
| Kate Green (AL4) | Large Co-educational secondary modern, became a comprehensive school, then a co-operative. | Federation of a Secondary school and a primary school | 11-16 | Rural |
| Paul Parks (AL5) | Two Co-educational high schools and a further education college. | Federation and Multi-Academy Trust. Two academies and a further education college | 11-19 | Town |
| Peter Church (AL6) | Co-educational comprehensive school, with foundation status. | Sponsored Academy 1 | 11-16 | Rural |

| | | Multi-Academy Trust with 6 academies. | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ruth Potter (AL7) | Girls' grammar school, with a mixed sixth form. Became a community school, then a foundation school. | Convertor Academy 3  Stand-alone | 11-18 | City |
| Simon Brown (AL8) | Co-educational secondary school and sixth form. | Convertor Academy 4  Stand-alone | 11-18 | Town |
| Anna Hanley (AL9) | Co-educational primary school, and two secondary schools. | Sponsored Academy 2  Multi-Academy Trust with 3 academies | 3-16 | City |
| Siobhan Riley (AL10) | Co-educational voluntary-aided Catholic school. | Convertor Academy 5  Stand-alone | 11-18 | City |

Table 2: Ten Academy Leaders

**4.3 Data Strategy**

In choosing the data strategy for my research, I considered various methods. The first method that I considered was focus groups as these combine both interviewing and observation (Hussey and Hussey, 1997, p155) and this would capture the feelings and opinions of a group of Academy Leaders, who were all involved in the common situation of Academy Leadership within the current reality of academies. The advantage of this method is that being in a group and listening to other Academy Leaders' viewpoints encourages Academy Leaders to voice their opinions and bounce their ideas off one another, which adds depth to the picture. A disadvantage is that individual viewpoints are less easily analysed from this and focus groups might develop a consensus view with people being reluctant to express more extreme viewpoints. So, differences would not be captured as well as with individual interviews. Another difficulty with focus groups is the logistical one of bringing together groups of busy people at a specified time and place and partly because of an assessment of the difficulty of achieving this for Academy Leaders in this study, focus groups were discounted.

Another possible method that I considered for my research was a survey of Academy Leaders by questionnaire (Hussey and Hussey, 1997, p64), delivered either by post or on-line. The potential advantage of this method would be that a larger number of Academy Leaders could be included. The disadvantage of a survey by questionnaire of Academy Leaders is that it does not align with the ontological and epistemological positions adopted because of the in-depth nature of the data sought, and so a survey by questionnaire was discounted.

Individual interviews were also considered as discussed by Hussey and Hussey (1997, p156) . An advantage of individual interviews is that Academy Leaders are more likely to talk frankly about their leadership in a one to one, face to face interview, where trust can be established, rather than asking them to answer personal questions about their leadership in a highly controversial and politicised area in for example, a survey by questionnaire administered by post or on-line.  A disadvantage of the interview method is that it is likely to include a smaller number of Academy Leaders than could be included in a survey by questionnaire.

### 4.3.1 My Choice of Method for Data Collection

My study sought to understand the response that Academy Leaders make to the government's education reform agenda and the current reality of the academies from the perspective of those who are directly involved in leadership in academies.

I chose an interview method for the data collection because this provided in-depth insights into what is happening in practice in terms of leadership in academies from the perspective of Academy Leaders and, as Hussey and Hussey (1997, p158) suggest, this allowed me to ask complex questions with follow up questions where necessary.

### 4.3.2 Data Collection

Some issues were encountered in the initial two interviews that I undertook, which presents some limitations for those two interviews and these will be discussed below:

For the first interview with Tom King (AL1), my plan was to introduce the questions by showing him clippings from policy documents and media reports; the first being a clipping from the policy document entitled "Increasing the number of academies and Free schools to create a better and more diverse school system" (see Appendix 4). I intended this to elicit a response that would ascertain what he thought about the idea of the academies and would encourage him to talk frankly and give me a more unprepared response that was closer to his true feelings on the topic rather than providing a response that he was practised in giving that "toed the party line" in accordance with both the government's position and his organisation's vision and ethos or providing an opinion that he felt that I would like to hear. The potential disadvantage of this method was that the use of clippings from policy documents may have inadvertently influenced the outcome of ascertaining his position in the *field* of education because I had pre-selected the clippings and my own judgement of suitable clippings had been imposed before the interview began. The clippings also suggested the opinions of those in positions of power, who had prepared the policy documents or had written the media reports, which may have influenced the research participant to feel that he should agree with those positions rather than being able to state his own position.

Subsequent interviews addressed these issues by dispensing with the idea of using clippings and instead simply used the interview schedule (see Appendix 5) on its own. Braun (2013) suggests that developing an interview schedule enables the researcher to build trust or rapport with the participant so that they feel comfortable disclosing personal information and sees this as

is a key component in interactive data collection (Braun, 2013) and this is the approach that was taken.

In my first interview, in the participant's introduction of himself and the background to his school, he talked about his school's conversion to academy status; what he thought about the academies and what had prompted his decision to move to academy status.

I felt that he gave a frank response that indicated his feelings on the subject and it seemed un-necessary at this point to introduce a clipping to ask him to talk about what he thought about the idea of the academies when he had in fact just been talking about that very thing and instead the discussion flowed naturally into discussing the questions that were of interest to the research (see Appendix 5 for Interview Schedule), including the freedoms that he had such as  the freedom not to teach the National Curriculum and to change pay and conditions for staff, his relationship with other schools, higher and further education and institutions such as Ofsted and the National College for Teaching and Leadership, and directly with government and whether he was able to discuss issues on an equal footing with representatives from those institutions, with ideas being accepted from both sides.

In this first interview a good rapport was built up with the research participant but this meant that my own views were more self-evident.  For example, the research participant was asked if as a school that had been graded by Ofsted as Outstanding he was able to influence governments, which may have suggested that as an Outstanding school he should have been able to influence government, but this might also have implied that schools that were

not Outstanding should not have been able to. This is certainly not what I thought, and the phrasing of the question was just what had come naturally at the time in showing empathy for the research participant's position, rather than giving the exact question as on the interview schedule. This first interview gave more indication of my point of view by me offering non-verbal support for some of the things that were being said, which would have made it clear where I agreed with the views being expressed and where I was more surprised. In this initial interview building a rapport with the participant sat uneasily with the objective of not influencing the participant with the imposition of my own point of view. The difficulties encountered in this first interview demonstrate the difficulties involved in interviewing for a novice interviewer. It was felt that the data gathered was rich and that the difficulties encountered did not amount to much more than inexperience and nervousness on my part. There was no reason to exclude the data and I felt that it was important to include it in the final analysis.

For the second interview, with Harriet Vale (AL2) after she had given her introduction of herself, my first question was "What do you think of the idea of the academies?" and she asked to pause and introduced herself in more detail by talking about her own career history as she felt that her experience was relevant to the question being asked and that what she thought about the idea of the academies depended upon the experience that she had. I interpreted this as her needing to say more about her "habitus" that is her disposition, which she had developed through a lifetime of experience and social interactions. It therefore seemed important for future interviews to expand on the academy leader's introduction of themselves and allow them

to give their narrative, which may account for them adopting the position that they took, based on their experience and to get an indication of their "habitus", so the first question was developed as:

Question 1. Could you tell me briefly about your career history and what brought you to this point?

This interview also appeared to end rather abruptly with a discussion of whether the academy leader had been able to discuss issues with Ofsted and a final question was added to finish off the interview and ensure that everything had been covered.

Question 16. Any final thoughts or any things that you would like to follow up or on things that I haven't asked you.

The interview questions were devised to address Research Question 2, How do Academy Leaders articulate how they carry out their role, including their relationships with others in their own academies and in wider networks?.

The interview questions were chosen to explore how Academy Leaders articulate how they carry out their role in terms of how leadership in their academy is developing: what freedoms they have; how they work with others in their own academy and in wider networks and whether they can use the understanding that they have gained to inform governments. (See Interview Schedule in Appendix 5).

Each interview question and its specific purpose will be outlined next.

Interview Question 1. Could you tell me briefly about your career history and what brought you to this point?

This question was devised to begin to understand the research participant's *habitus*, their dispositions, developed from a lifetime of social interactions.

Interview Question 2. Could you name one highlight at your academy since you have been leader of the academy?

This question was devised to understand more about the research participant's *habitus* and what was important to them, revealed through what they considered to be a highlight at their academy.

Interview Question 3. What do you think about the idea of academies?

This question was devised specifically to understand where each Academy Leader could be positioned in the *field* of education; whether they supported and embraced the academisation of schools; accepted or acquiesced to it or opposed it.

Interview Question 4. Have you been able to use the freedoms of academy status?

a. Have you used the freedom not to teach the national curriculum?

b. Have you used the freedom to change pay and conditions for staff?

c. Have you used the freedom to change the length of the school days and terms?

This question was devised to understand the *agency* that Academy Leaders had within the academies environment, whether they had been able to use

the freedoms that had been promised with academy status or alternatively, whether those freedoms were largely rhetorical with Academy Leaders being constrained by the *structures* that they worked within.

<u>Interview Question 5.</u> What do you think about reducing the role of the local authorities?

This question was designed to elicit more about where the Academy Leaders could be positioned in the *field* of education in terms of whether they supported a move towards the academisation of schools, with academies reporting directly to the Department for Education or alternatively, whether they regretted the demise of the local authority, in terms of democratically elected councillors and their representatives providing support for school leaders.

<u>Interview Question 5 a.</u> What else happens in the middle ground now?

This sub-question was designed to discover what support was available for Academy Leaders now in the middle ground between themselves and central government; whether Academy Leaders were isolated from others in their profession or whether there were opportunities for Academy Leaders to collaborate democratically with other Academy Leaders and what was happening early on in the appointment of Regional Schools Commissioners, from the viewpoint of Academy Leaders.

<u>Interview Question 6.</u> Could you tell me about the governance of your academy?

    a.  How are governors at your academy elected?

    b.  Are the governors at your academy on fixed terms?

c. Do the governors need any particular qualifications?

This question was designed to discover how democratic academies were: from a consideration of whether governors were elected democratically or whether they were co-opted and selected by the Governing Boards of academies.

Interview Question 7. Could you give me an example of where you have taken on board ideas from parents?

This question was designed to discover whether ideas had been sought from parents, to enable an analysis of whether parents were involved democratically in the development of academies.

Interview Question 8. Could you give me an example of where you have taken on board ideas from teachers?

This question was designed to discover whether ideas had been sought from teachers, to enable an analysis of whether teachers were involved democratically in the development of academies.

Interview Question 9. Could you tell me about how your academy works with other schools or academies now?

This question was designed to understand how academies worked with other academies and whether Academy Leaders were able to collaborate and work together democratically and equally with other Academy Leaders or alternatively, whether there were power relations between Academy Leaders.

Interview Question 9a. Are they competitors or can you work together?

This question was designed specifically to discover whether the relationship between Academy Leaders was competitive or whether it was a more democratic and equal relationship.

Interview Question 10. Could you tell me about a situation where you have done something significant with representatives from higher education? This question was designed to understand the relationship between Academy Leaders and representatives from higher education and whether this was a democratic and equal relationship or alternatively whether there was a power relationship between them.  The question was also designed to consider whether there were inequalities in Academy Leaders ability to develop relationships with higher education.  The analysis is based on a real-life example of something that had actually been done, which Academy leaders thought was significant, rather than on a hypothetical situation or something that might be done in a certain situation.

Interview Question 11. Could you tell me about a situation where you have done something significant with representatives from further education? This question was designed to understand the relationship between Academy Leaders and those in further education; whether this was a democratic and equal relationship; whether further education was seen as a competitor and whether there was a power relationship between Academy Leaders and those in further education.  The question was also designed to consider whether there were inequalities in Academy Leaders ability to

develop relationships with representatives from further education.  The analysis is based on a real-life example of something that had actually been done, that Academy leaders thought was significant, rather than on a hypothetical situation of something that might have been done in a certain situation.

Interview Question 12. Could you tell me about a situation where you have done something significant with representatives from local or national employers?

This question was designed to understand the relationship between Academy Leaders and local and national employers; whether this was a democratic and equal relationship or alternatively whether there was a power relationship between Academy Leaders and representatives from local or national employers. The question was designed to consider whether there were inequalities in Academy Leaders ability to develop relationships with local and national employers.  The analysis is based on a real-life example of something that had actually been done, that Academy leaders thought was significant, rather than on a hypothetical situation of what might have been done in a certain situation.

Interview Question 13. If you could talk about something to government what would it be?

This question was designed to reveal more about the position that Academy Leaders took in the *field* of education and any issues that they had with the government's current education reform agenda.

<u>Interview Question 14</u>. Do you have any opportunities to influence governments?

This question was designed to consider the *agency* that Academy Leaders had to influence governments and have input into the government's education reform agenda.

a) Do you have opportunities to discuss ideas with the National College for Teaching and Leadership?

This sub-question was designed to understand the current relationship between Academy Leaders and the National College for Teaching and Leadership whether this was a democratic and equal relationship and whether the National College for Teaching and Leadership was an agency that Academy Leaders could use to inform governments democratically of issues that were arising in their academies in the implementation of the government's education reform agenda.

b) Do you have opportunities to discuss ideas with Ofsted inspectors?

This sub-question was designed to understand the current relationship between Academy Leaders and Ofsted inspectors:  whether this was a democratic and  equal relationship and whether Academy Leaders could discuss issues that were of importance to them democratically with Ofsted inspectors or whether there was a power relationship between Academy Leaders and Ofsted inspectors.

c) Do you have any opportunities to influence governments directly?

This sub-question was designed to discover whether Academy Leaders had *agency* to have direct meetings with governments and to influence them in the development of the education reform agenda.

Interview Question 15. Who provides professional support for you now?
This question was designed to discover more about Academy Leaders professional support networks and whether Academy Leaders were self-directed and autonomous or whether they operated democratically within professional networks.

Interview Question 16. Any final thoughts or any things that you would like to follow up or on things that I haven't asked you.
This interview question was designed to ensure that everything had been covered and that anything that was important to Academy Leaders had not been over-looked.  It provided another opportunity to analyse what was Academy Leaders' *habitus*, what was important to them and the position that each Academy Leader took in the *field* of education.

I considered doing second interviews with the research participants one year after the interviews had taken place. By that time 4 of the 10 Academy Leaders (AL1, AL4, AL5 and AL6) had all left their posts and so this was not possible.  I felt that interviewing the remaining 6 would have meant that all respondents were not treated equally.  Despite this limitation, the positions of different Academy Leaders at a certain point in time had been captured from the interviews that had been done.

### 4.3.3 Data Analysis

Gray (2009) outlines the differences between deductive and inductive approaches in data analysis.   The deductive approach selects a theory and then moves towards hypothesis testing, after which the principle is confirmed, refuted or modified. The inductive approach makes plans for data collection, after which the data is analysed to see if patterns emerge that suggest relationships between variables and from these observations it may be possible to construct generalisations, relationships and even theories (Gray, 2009, p6). Gray (2009) points out that inductive and deductive processes are not mutually exclusive (Gray, 2009, p7).

My study combined an initial deductive analysis of the literature with an inductive analysis of data collected.  The deductive analysis of the literature identified a start list of relevant concepts around leadership in education and these are: neo-liberalism, social democracy, agency, autonomy, performativity, power, field, practice, habitus, capital, surveillance, examination, normalising judgements, hierarchical observation, collaboration, precarisation, precarity, uncertainty, insecurity and responsibilisation.

I chose a semi-structured interview method for data collection, which imposed some structure on the data before it was analysed because of the questions that were asked.  I then conducted a final inductive analysis of data collected, using a process of systematic analysis to make meaning (Gay, 2009).

NVivo software was used to conduct the analysis of the data collected. Words or short phrases from the transcript were highlighted and assigned a particular code. For example,

| Transcript | Code |
|---|---|
| *We were happy to be an academy and voluntarily moved to academy status when it was offered to Outstanding schools because of the financial incentives offered (Tom King, AL1)* | Response to Change |
| *Schools had no choice before; schools now effectively choose to be part of an academy; the ideology, culture and ethos that will provide the right support to enable the school to improve (Hannah Vale, AL2).* | Commitment to Neo-liberal ideology |
| *Those, I don't know what they are, are they factors, I believe gives me a disposition to approach things in a radical manner, because I am certainly not steeped in thinking that the way education has been* | Habitus |

| | |
|---|---|
| *organised is the way it should be organised (Kate Green, AL4).* | |
| *Context as understanding how to move this particular community forward, with this set of circumstances (Kate Green, AL4).* | Commitment to Democracy |
| *Yes, I sit in a very privileged position as [position] in [Association] to meet with the key stakeholders (Simon Brown, AL8).* | Agency |
| *More reliance on self-assessment within schools and colleges working together to drive up standards (Paul Parks, AL5).* | Commitment to Responsibilisation |

Table 4: Examples of Coding for Data Analysis

### 4.3.4 Response to Change

The key theme of "Response to Change" emerged because Academy Leaders responded differently to the same changes that were being introduced by government.

To analyse Academy Leader's response to change towards academisation, an adaptation of Beckhard's (1987) four types of response to change (Beckhard, 1987, p. 94) was used, developed here for use in a specifically educational change setting. This was intended as a heuristic, a way of framing which supports analysis and understanding rather than as a precise metric.

The four adapted types are: "Make it Happen", "Help it Happen", "Let it Happen" and "Oppose it".

1. **Make it happen**

"Make it Happen" Academy Leaders are totally committed to the academisation of schools and are key players in making it happen.  It is interpreted that they embrace the neo-liberal ideology behind the academies programme, although they may be unaware of this; they accept that the academies are managed  "scientifically", based on "instrumental rationality"; their language is performative and frequently demonstrates an assumption of a linear means-ends relationship between what is done and the results that are achieved; they demonstrate neo-liberal responsibilisation of self as discussed in Chapter 2 by  Shamir (2008), Brown (2015) and Keddie (2015) and construct themselves as ideal neo-liberal leaders – performing and enterprising subjects who readily accept the business principles and results-

orientation of their data driven environment, standards and accountability, systems and performativity.

2. **Help it Happen**

"Help it Happen" Academy Leaders want to be positive about the academies and have pragmatically decided to accept the academisation of schools and help the academies happen. They tend to be leaders of convertor academies who have decided for various reasons to convert to academy status, often for reasons of increasing finances for their school or because of the likelihood of increasing their agency in their relationship with government.

3. **Let it Happen**

"Let it Happen" Academy Leaders have acquiesced to becoming academies for various reasons, for example if their school has been designated as Requires Improvement by Ofsted and directed to become an academy.

4. **Oppose it**

"Oppose it" Academy Leaders are opposed to the academisation of schools and interpret the government's education reform agenda as implementing a set of neo-liberal assumptions, and feel that this is what is behind the academisation of schools.

Academy Leader's response to change was also considered in terms of their relationships in wider networks, as shown in the next section.

**4.3.5 Academy Leaders Categorised by Their Response to Change Towards Academisation and Relationships in Wider Networks**

1. **Make it Happen**

"Make it Happen" Academy Leaders employ their cultural and social *capital* to develop relationships within the different *fields* of higher education, further education and with local and national employers in the first place and their cultural and social *capital* is increased by developing these relationships, which allows the possessors to increase their power. If they can access economic, social and cultural *capital* to develop relationships in all those *fields,* this has an upward spiralling effect that increases their *agency* and power further and increases their *symbolic capital* (prestige or reputation).

2. **Help it Happen**

"Help it Happen" Academy Leaders employ their social and cultural *capital* to develop relationships in some of the different *fields*, particularly in higher education if they are judged by Ofsted as Outstanding or Good schools. Their social and cultural *capital* is increased by developing these relationships, which allows the possessors to increase their *agency* and power.

3. **Let it Happen**

"Let it Happen" Academy Leaders develop relationships with others in networks but this is being directed by others, including their sponsor and the Department for Education, which is not increasing their *agency* and power.

4. **Oppose it**

"Oppose it" Academy Leader develop relationships with others in her own community in line with democracy and public values as opposed to neo-liberal and market values.

### 4.3.6 Democratic Agency and Neo-Liberal Responsibilisation of Self

*Democratic agency* and *neo-liberal responsibilisation* of self emerged as key patterns from the data.

The data analysis addressed Research Question 3, as given on p17.

Whether academy leader's articulation of themselves demonstrated a *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values*, with local community input or whether academy leader's articulation of themselves demonstrated a *Commitment to Responsibilisation* of self, with Academy Leaders developing their identity as ideal neo-liberal leaders was analysed, based on the tables given below.

### 4.3.7 Strength of Commitment to Democracy/Public Values

The strength of the Academy Leaders' Commitment to Democracy that is to

Public Values can be categorised according to the following characteristics.

| Strength of Commitment to Democracy/Public values | Characteristics |
|---|---|
| High | Gives legitimate stakeholders a voice and recognises the importance of community and context.<br><br>Includes parents and teachers in all decisions that are made for the academy.<br><br>Constructs identity as a public servant. |
| Medium High | Includes parents and teachers in many of the decisions that are made for the academy. |
| Medium Low | Includes parents and teachers in some of the decisions that are made for the academy. |
| Low | Views parents as customers for the academy, who ultimately express their preferences by deciding to which academy they send their child. |

Table 5: Strength of Commitment to Democracy/Public Values

## 4.3.8 Strength of Commitment to Responsibilisation

The strength of the Academy Leaders' *Commitment to Responsibilisation* can be categorised according to the following characteristics.

| Strength of Commitment to Responsibilisation | Characteristics |
|---|---|
| High | Embraces all aspects of the business principles and results orientation of data-driven environment.<br><br>Constructs identity as an enterprising and entrepreneurial ideal subject. |
| Medium High | Accepts most aspects of the business principles and results orientation of data-driven environment and has few reservations. |
| Medium Low | Accepts some aspects of the business principles and results orientation of data-driven environment but has reservations about other aspects. |
| Low | Opposes all aspects of the business principles and results orientation of data-driven environment and has major reservations. |

Table 6: Strength of Commitment to Responsibilisation

## 4.3.9 Commitment to Democracy/Public Values and Commitment to Responsibilisation

Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) discuss the ways data can be made to talk by imposing frames on it and how this can best be displayed. In my research, I suggest a way to map the terrain on a plotter adapted from Chatwin (2005), as shown below:
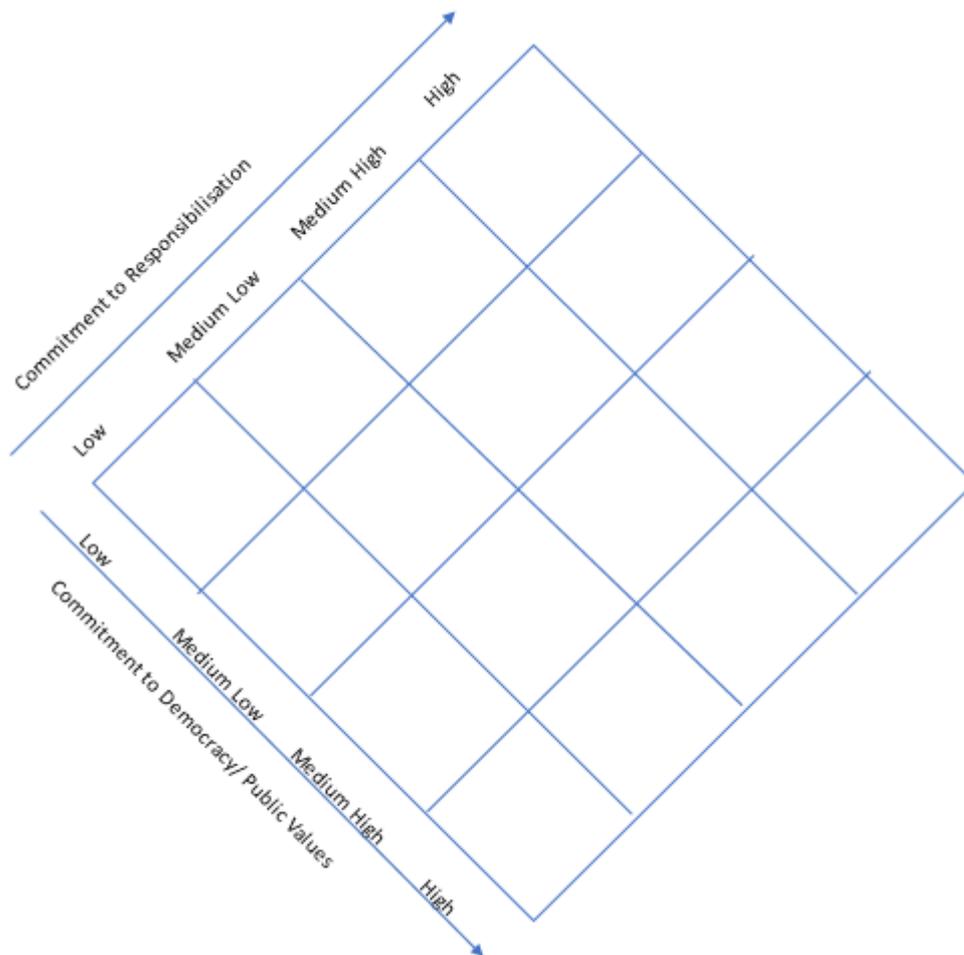


Figure 2: Plotter showing Commitment to Democracy/Public Values and Commitment to Responsibilisation

Chatwin (2005) used the plotter as a simple diagnostic for work that he did with senior teams, that acted as a starting point for discussion about the senior teams' stage of development, in terms of the typology of top teams, which included "brittle", "blocked", "blended" and "blind".

My research moved the idea of the plotter on by analysing where each of the Academy Leaders in my sample could be positioned on a plotter, in terms of their Commitment to Democracy/Public Values and their Commitment to Responsibilisation.

A quadrant could have been used to complete this analysis, with the Commitment to Democracy/Public Values being categorised as either High or Low and the Commitment to Responsibilisation being categorised as either High or Low.  The plotter was used as it added subtlety and nuance to the analysis, as it was felt that there were subtle difference in how High or Low each Academy Leaders' Commitment to Democracy/ Public Values and Commitment to Responsibilisation was and these differences could be categorised as either Medium High or Medium Low.  .

A criticism of this approach to data analysis is that academies and Academy Leaders may not be perfect fits for the categories into which they are assigned. My argumemt is that models are always an approximation of reality and a best fit approach has been taken to categorising Academy Leaders to illustrate an approximation of reality. Categorisation has been made on the data collected from the Academy Leaders' articulation of their roles and is based on a comparison with others in the sample.

I provide a diagrammatic representation using the conceptual framework outlined at the end of Chapter 2, to display the findings in an at-a-glance format on p301.

## 4.4 Ethics

Fully informed consent of those under study was obtained by asking them to complete an Informed Consent form prior to commencing the interviews (see Appendix 6).

My research was openly acknowledged and the research participants were told that: the interviews were being undertaken as part of a PhD and that, through this, dissemination of the research might inform leadership in the academies. The nature and aims of the research were explained in an information sheet (see Appendix 7).

The research participants were made aware of their right to refuse participation, including withdrawal from the research project at any stage, although none did. I explained how research participants would be afforded anonymity and confidentiality as it was felt that this would mean that research participants were more likely to give their honest opinions.

Research participants have been given pseudonyms and any information that might allow individuals to be identified such as job titles or names of organisations have been deleted and replaced by generic terms.

The research participants' replies were recorded and transcribed verbatim and they had the option of rejecting the use of audio recording devices, although no-one did.

It was expected that social, cultural and political issues surrounding education would arise for the research participants as this is a current debate with many different positions that are still in the process of being developed and I was sensitive to that.

All personal information relating to research participants has been kept confidential and secure and the provisions of the Data Protection Act complied with. The digital recordings of interviews and paper records will be kept for twelve months post-viva in a secure location before destroying them.

## 4.5 Identified Limitations in My Research

In my research, only one perspective was explored as I made the choice to interview only Academy Leaders, rather than including all the others who are involved in the academies, such as governors, non-executive directors of boards, parents, teachers, students, representatives from other schools, representatives from higher and further education and representatives from local or national employers. Further research will be needed to consider the perceptions of all stakeholders holding all those positions, analysing this specifically in terms of *democratic agency* and neo-liberal *responsibilisation* of self, and the further research required is outlined in Chapter 7.

A limitation of this analysis is that, because it was conducted as a PhD, the analysis was done by me as a single researcher and this makes bias more likely. My interpretation of each Academy Leader's position, based on data gathered from each Academy Leader's articulation of their role may be interpreted differently by different researchers.

It could be suggested that another limitation of my research is the small sample size. The research participants were extremely eloquent and articulate, the data gathered was rich, and I felt that the majority of issues in academies at this time have been raised by the Academy Leaders interviewed and saturation had been achieved.

Another limitation is that the data was collected in 2015. Since then, the emphasis in education has moved towards the suggestion of introducing more grammar schools and technical schools, with more selection in education. This research is 'conjunctural', that is to say that it is frozen at a moment-in-time in a dynamic environment and has validity only at that conjuncture.

The adopted research design is illustrated below, the areas highlighted by oval shapes showing the adopted path.

| Reality/ Objects | Ontology (Philosophical Theory of Reality) | Axiology (Philosophical Theory of Value) | Epistemology (Philosophical Theory of Knowledge) | Methodology | Methods | Data Analysis | Theory Development |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Physical | Objectivism | Value-free | Positivism | Quantitative | Experiments  Questionnaires | Hypethetico -Deductive | Generalisation |
| Conceptual | Constructionism | Value-laden | Interpretivism | Qualitative | Semi-structured Interviews  Unstructured Interviews  Focus Groups | Inductive | Analytic Generalisation |

Figure 3: Adopted Research Design

The next chapter outlines the different responses by each of the Academy Leaders to the national context for education, within which all the research participants operated.

**Chapter 5: Research Findings**

**5.1 Tom King (AL1)**

Tom King (AL1) was an Academy Leader of a convertor academy, that had historically been a Foundation school that was judged by Ofsted as Outstanding and had converted to becoming an academy for 11 to 18-year olds under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government.

He talked about his decision to become an academy:

"*Yes, well, we had quite a lot of autonomy before as we were a Foundation school. We were happy to be an academy and voluntarily moved to academy status when it was offered to Outstanding schools because of the financial incentives offered of around £600,000, which is quite substantial, however the funding has decreased in subsequent years*" (Tom King, AL1).

This suggests that Tom King had *agency* to decide that his school should convert to academy status and he had not done that because he thought that he would gain greater *agency* from the conversion, but because of the power of a compelling financial argument in favour of the conversion.

Tom King felt that:

"*I think they* [the government] *thought that they had completed the job, once the Outstanding schools had moved to academy status, the rest would follow*" (Tom King, AL1).

This is interpreted as suggesting that Tom King was aware of the government's agenda to move all schools to academy status and re-position Outstanding schools in the *field* of education and that whilst his *habitus*,

based on his disposition and social interactions and his long-term *practice* in his previous schools, suggested some reluctance to accept some of the associated neo-liberal ideas, financial arguments had convinced him that this would be best for his school.

In terms of the freedom not to teach the National Curriculum that came with academy status, he said:

"*Some schools have 'dumbed down' or gone for less academic qualifications that are equivalent, but this school has, correctly in my opinion, not gone down that route. I think Michael Gove was right to insist on academic rigour*" (Tom King, AL1).

This suggests that Tom King had *agency* to decide what qualifications his academy offered and that he had made those decisions based on his *habitus*, which was disposed towards the importance of high academic standards and academic rigour in education.

To explore more about what is interpreted as his *habitus* and what was important to him, I asked Tom King to name one highlight at his academy since he had been its leader.

**"***Since it was an academy, I was the head-teacher before it was an academy, but since it has been an academy both the GCSE results and the A Level results this year were the best ever, a highlight is also that we are a teaching school and we are part of Schools Direct***"** (Tom King, AL1)**.**

From this it is reasonable to conjecture that Tom King had a commitment to maintaining Outstanding status for his school and that he accepted the results orientation of his data-driven environment and the idea that exam

results should be used to judge the success of his academy and had some *Commitment to Responsibilisation* of self.

This suggests that his *habitus* or disposition was to value the work that he did working with other schools and academies as a teaching school and he was asked to say more about that:

"*In terms of working in partnership with other schools, this school is able to work in partnership with other schools in our role as a teaching school and is a hub for maths, art, etc. Some schools choose not to participate and just remain independent.They are entitled to do so as there is no compunction for them to join*" (Tom King, AL1).

This suggests that his *habitus* was that he felt that other schools should have *agency* to decide for themselves whether it was best to join the partnership with his teaching school.

He was asked whether there was competition between schools in the partnership.

"*No, because the partnership is for teacher development and curriculum where teachers from across the partnership feel able to share practice and learn from one another.  It is for those sorts of issues, not about issues around student enrolment or leadership development, for example. We are also a member of [Name], which is a school-centred initial teacher training partnership between secondary head-teachers and schools, whose aim is to recruit and train teachers in their partnership schools in the delivery of the School Direct routes into teaching*" (Tom King, AL1).

This suggests that Tom King had *agency* to work with other schools but that, whilst he could work in partnerships with other schools on teacher and curriculum development, I infer that he perceived that there was more competition between academies in term of student enrolment and developing leadership.

Tom King's academy had a direct partnership with one other school. He explained this:

**"***We are in partnership with [another local school], who have benefitted from the pupil premium because they have a large number of disadvantaged children.  So, this school is an Outstanding school and is a teaching school and we are in partnerships because of that and are a hub for Maths, Art, Computing, Geography, History, Languages***"** (Tom King, AL1).

His *habitus* was disposed towards working in partnerships with other schools for the development of high academic standards for several subjects in education.

To explore where Academy Leaders might have issues with the current educational reform agenda, Tom King was asked if he could talk about something with government what it would be.  He said that:

"*The main issue for us is the level of funding, in particular for the 6th form. The financial committee have just discussed this issue.  Further education colleges had been under-funded for many years but rather than raise their funding, the government seems to have lowered the funding of school sixth forms to match that provided for further education colleges.  Further education colleges are able to enrol large numbers of students, perhaps 30*

*students to commence the year and receive that proportion of their funding but then many of the students might drop out.  The school 6th form is unable to do that as we don't have the capacity to accommodate those numbers in the first place"* (Tom King, AL1).

He explained more about how the level of funding for his academy was decided:

"*In terms of 11-16 funding, we have not benefitted from the 'pupil premium', which was a key policy of the Liberal democrats in the Coalition government, as a large number of our intake are from 'ordinary' backgrounds, not from very disadvantaged homes so, the school does not benefit much from the 'pupil premium'"* (Tom King, AL1).

He also explained how school funding was not something that he could really discuss with other schools and that this was something that the local authorities would previously have been involved in*:*

"*It is not really possible to work with other schools on issues such as this, as they may not have those specific issues.  It is something that the local authorities would previously have taken forward"* (Tom King, AL1).

Tom King was asked whether as the head-teacher of an Outstanding school, he had opportunities to discuss these issues with governments.  He said that:

"*We can obviously use the media to put point of view across. Issues around levels of funding are really for national government, and there isn't really a forum for that"* (Tom King, AL1).

He did think that the Education Funding Agency might be the appropriate body to discuss funding issues with but he did not think that that there would be a forum for discussions around levels of funding:

*"There's the Education Funding Agency but they are just concerned with the allocation of funding on the basis of numbers of students, and not with levels of funding"* (Tom King, AL1).

Tom King was asked whether he had the opportunity to discuss ideas with the Department for Education.

**"***Someone from the Department for Education is due to spend some time in the school to just come in see what happens and issues that are affecting the school on a day to day basis, so that is good***"** (Tom King, AL1).

This suggests that Tom King had *agency* to discuss issues with the Department for Education but whether this issue around the levels of funding for a sixth form making it unviable influenced the decision-making by the Department for Education needs further research.

Tom King was asked whether he had the opportunity to discuss ideas with the National College for Teaching and Leadership and he felt that:

*"They are very difficult to get hold of, and it is difficult to know who to speak to"* (Tom King, AL1).

This suggests that for him the National College for Teaching and Leadership was not a powerful body that he could use to discuss issues around education and use them as a forum to inform governments of any issues in academies.

Tom King was asked if he had the opportunity to discuss ideas with Ofsted inspectors, and said:

"*No not really, if something wasn't right or if a judgement was unfair then we could raise this with Ofsted, but we couldn't talk to them about issues of funding for example*" (Tom King, AL1).

### 5.1.1 Summary of Tom King (AL1)

The data here suggests that Tom King (AL1) is one of those people whose response to change towards academisation can be categorised as "Help it Happen" because his school has converted to an academy, mainly for reasons of increasing finances for his school.

Tom King (AL1) is developing relationships within his own convertor academy and with other schools as a teaching school, and directly in his partnership with one other school and with higher education, for the progression of students on to higher education.

His *habitus* or disposition is to value partnerships with other schools to develop high academic standards for the subjects that are taught in his academy.

Whilst Tom King (AL1) has accepted many aspects of the data driven environment of the academies and competition in terms of exam results, he has some uncertainty in accepting a neo-liberal form of governing that has left him isolated with little support from other schools and agencies with regards to funding issues for his sixth form.

I interpret this to mean that Tom King (AL1) has a medium low commitment

to the *neo-liberal responsibilisation* of self as he had accepted some aspects

of the neo-liberal education reform agenda but had reluctance to accept

others. He can be categorised as medium high on his Commitment to

Democracy/ Public Values because, as a teaching school, he includes

teachers in networks to develop high standards for the teaching of subjects.

## 5.2 Harriet Vale (AL2)

Harriet Vale (AL2) was the Academy leader of what was historically a high school with a sixth form that became a Multi-Academy Trust that sponsors 5 academies

She was asked what she thought about the idea of academies and she thought that:

*"The concept is amazing. What it means to be an academy has changed over time. It is different depending on the nature of how the school chooses to become an academy, which academy they join. The background and context is different. The ideology of greater autonomy and greater freedoms, the ability of the most successful to be trusted, innovative and make a difference, that is fundamental"* (Harriet Vale, AL2).

Her response gives an indication of her position in the *field* of education and her *habitus*, developed from her previous experience and social interactions, and, I infer that, she is disposed to agree with the neo-liberal and free market ideology behind the academies programme.

Harriet was asked if she had been able to use the freedoms of academy status, she felt that:

*"Yes, those freedoms are valuable"* (Harriet Vale, AL2).

In terms of her freedom not to teach the National Curriculum, she had used curriculum freedoms with younger children.

*"In the Primary school, we changed the curriculum to the [Academy] curriculum"* (Harriet Vale, AL2).

With respect to her freedom to change teachers' pay and conditions she said:

*"We changed the pay and conditions, which enabled a self-improving system.  Investment in people, that is key"* (Harriet Vale, AL2).

As far as her freedom to change the lengths of the school days and terms, she felt that:

*"In my experience schools being able to change the day is valuable.  So, we had Studio Schools, so we changed the days to be more like a working day. We changed the year so that each year we had two weeks' summer school"* (Harriet Vale, AL2).

Her answers suggest that Harriet Vale, AL2 sees preparing students for the world of work with students becoming mini-entrepreneurs to meet the needs of the market as a key part of education in Studio Schools.

When asked what she thought about reducing the role of the local authorities.  She said that

*"There were some good local authorities and some bad local authorities. Your perception is different depending on your experience, depending on the quality of the local authority.  There is greater choice than there was. Schools had no choice before; schools now effectively choose to be part of an academy; the ideology, culture and ethos that will provide the right support to enable the school to improve".*  (Harriet Vale, AL2).

From her perspective, a free market in education, and schools being able to choose to be part of an academy had resolved any differences in terms of

the quality of local authorities and that she supported a form of governing driven by free markets in education.

This begs the question of how much *agency* other school leaders have in *practice* to choose to be part of an academy or whether, in practice, they are directed to be sponsored by a Multi-Academy Trust.

Harriet Vale was asked what else happens in the middle ground between her academy and central government now.

*"The academy groups or the Multi-Academy Trusts are in the middle tier now. For convertor academies, of course, the middle tier doesn't exist".* (Harriet Vale, AL2).

The implication of this is that Multi-Academy Trusts now hold power in the *field* of education in the middle ground between the academies and central government but for convertor academies there is very little support in the middle ground between themselves and central government.

Harriet Vale was asked about governance of her academy. From her perspective**:**

"*Nationally there is a big issue with governance. There are lots of different governance models. Humbly, I think that the best governance structure is to have a Board of Directors, a top tier, with a diverse set of people, a diverse set of views/ support group who provide challenges and checks and ask really good questions. As well as legal and financial duties, there are ethical and moral duties to make sure that the Board is improving, to ensure that the academy trust is true to what it stands for, to see real change and real improvement. It depends how the Multi-Academy Trust is set up but the best*

*is to have learning communities, including primary and secondary schools with local governance structures such as local advisory boards or local governing bodies with collaboration between and across"* (Harriet Vale, AL2).

This response suggests that her Multi-Academy Trust had hierarchical governance structures, with some people having more power in the structure than others and that for her academies a high level of *neo-liberal responsibilisation* of self was expected from governors in terms of the business of the academy.

Harriet Vale was asked if she could give an example of where she had accepted ideas from parents and she said that as well as parents being voted onto local governing bodies, which is interpreted as parents having *representational democracy*, there was an avenue for *direct democracy*, with parents being asked to complete parent surveys.

She was asked about how her academy works with other schools or academies now and whether they are competitors or whether they could work together. She felt that:

*"We provide in school support and school to school support, unlocking personal and social potential for children.  You need to use the tools that you have to do this and these are some of the tools to use in whatever way it helps"* (Harriet Vale, AL2).

The partnership working that she is describing here relates to in school support and school to school support within a single Multi-Academy Trust and Harriet Vale thought:

*"There seems to be least co-operation between Multi-Academy Trusts"*
(Harriet Vale, AL2).

This suggests that Harriet Vale had *agency* to work with other schools and academies within her own Multi-Academy Trust, but that Multi-Academy Trusts were competitive with each other, and there were few democratic relationships between them.

Harriet Vale was asked if she could talk about a situation where she had done something significant with representatives from higher education and gave three examples of this.

Firstly,

*"We developed a master's degree with the [University].  It was a collaborative Master's to develop leadership and capacity.  Development is needed because we have too many practitioners* (Harriet Vale, AL2).

Secondly,

*"We organised [University] visits for students to raise aspirations.  We did student leadership work – leadership conferences and camps.  The idea of 'someone like me' to raise aspirations, produce better leaders and build capacity"* (Harriet Vale, AL2).

Finally,

*"[Name of Multi-Academy Trust] has a business centre for Professional learning with a unique, moral purpose to unblock academic and personal potential. Teaching and learning principles, leadership and professional development are central and enrichment is key. To find your passion, explore*

*and develop enterprise. There is a pathway to leadership development for teachers, support staff, individual or collaboratives. We collaborate with other partners, including providers of higher education"* (Harriet Vale, AL2).

This suggests that Harriet Vale has a commitment to developing enterprise and leadership for both the students and the staff at her academy and uses relationships with higher education to develop that.

She was asked if she could talk about a situation where she had done something significant with representatives from further education. She had not done any work with further education because her academy had its own sixth form. This is interpreted as suggesting that, within a neo-liberal and free market form of governing, further education colleges are competitors for those academies who have their own sixth forms, in terms of student numbers enrolled.

Harriet Vale was asked about a situation where she had done something significant with representatives from local or national employers. She gave three examples*:*

Firstly,

*"In [Multi-Academy Trust], we work with year 7 every year to develop enterprise experience. Firstly, to discover passions and interests, secondly to look at career dreams, then at leadership skills and employability. So first discover who they are and then try and develop leadership skills and enterprise. We are working with the school, communities and business centre companies that are based at the business centre and businesses do engage"* (Harriet Vale, AL2).

Secondly,

*"Students through the sixth form start on enterprise/ commercial start – ups. We try to create a circle. We present packages to businesses to engage and commission enterprise projects, we use mentors and work-based placements. We develop "flight path to futures" and "transition to the world of work"* (Harriet Vale, AL2).

Finally,

*"We have used the power list - the 100 most successful black people - with the sixth form. Developing the leadership capacity of young people in the sixth form to gain experience of leadership development"* (Harriet Vale, AL2).

This suggests that Harriet Vale had a commitment to developing leadership and enterprise for the students at her academy and worked with local and national employers to develop this.

When asked what she would talk to government about if given the opportunity, Harriet demonstrated some uncertainty.

*"It's intriguing, I still don't know the answer. There is something fundamentally wrong with education. I'm a bit of a radical. We have a system based on the ideology of freedom and autonomy. So much is because of the government's measure of success of schools and performance targets. It is the antithesis of what the government hoped for. It is a system based on fear. It's bonkers. It's the opposite of what the government wants. A lot of head-teachers are resigning and a lot don't want to be head-teachers. We need to ask them why they went into teaching in*

*the first place. We need to empower them, to enable people to create*

*systems"* (Harriet Vale, AL2).

This response suggests that Harriet Vale was aligned with the government's

position however, she recognised issues of performativity for academies and

pressures on head-teachers.

Harriet Vale was asked if in practice she did have opportunities to influence

governments. She felt that she did have some opportunities, she said that:

*"You earn the right to influence.  Brave leaders get there and get beyond*

*there. To say there are better ways, because this is the right thing to do and*

*it can be done. We took a group of kids to Downing Street to talk to the*

*Education Select Committee in Parliament. They had never spoken to kids.*

*We did it because it was morally right for millions of kids.  To pull them [the*

*government] up to above expectations"* (Harriet Vale, AL2)*.*

She also felt that:

*"Government do listen to people, they create organisations. For example,*

*National College for Teaching and Leadership"* (Harriet Vale, AL2).

Harriet Vale was asked if she had opportunities to discuss ideas with the

National College for Teaching and Leadership.  She said that her academy

was franchised to deliver courses for the National College:

*"We are licensed to deliver courses for the National College for Teaching and*

*Leadership for National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership,*

*National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership courses as part of a*

*self-supporting system"* (Harriet Vale, AL2).

When asked if she had opportunities to discuss ideas with Ofsted inspectors, she answered:

*"It takes a courageous leader to say we are not going to aim for Outstanding in Ofsted.  A lot of it is bureaucratic, tick boxes to achieve standards.  It takes a brave leader to say 'let's focus on great teaching and learning, the potential of staff, best leaders, and kids'. That way you get Outstanding and you get way more than that"* (Harriet Vale, AL2).

The implication of this is that there is performativity for many leaders in ensuring that their academy receives an Outstanding grade from Ofsted and I infer that Harriet Vale, AL2 feels that it is 'brave' not to be responsibilised towards performativity.

### 5.2.1 Summary of Harriet Vale (AL2)

Her responses suggest that Harriet Vale (AL2) fully supports the academisation of schools.  She is a relatively inexperienced but highly motivated Academy Leader in a Multi-Academy Trust and is one of those people whose response to change can be categorised as "Make it Happen".

Harriet Vale is developing relationships with others in line with her response to change of "Make it Happen": she is developing partnerships within her own Multi-Academy Trust and with other schools to expand her Multi-Academy Trust; working with others in higher education and with local and national employers to develop leadership and enterprise for both her students and staff. She does not have relationships with those in further education as she sees them as competitors for student numbers.

I categorise Harriet Vale (AL2) as medium high on her *Commitment to Responsibilisation* as she accepts most of the business principles and the results orientation of her data-driven environment and she is in the process of constructing her identity as an ideal neo-liberal worker and performing and enterprising subject.

I categorise her as medium low on Commitment to Democracy/ Public Values as she includes parents in surveys to inform some of the decisions that are made for her academy, but it seems that parents are viewed more as customers for her academies, with parents making their positions known by ultimately choosing to which academy they send their children.

## 5.3 Neil Masters (AL3)

Neil Masters (AL3) was the Academy leader of what had historically been a selective boy's school; then a grammar school that became co-educational; then a grant-maintained school; then a Foundation school that had been graded by Ofsted as Outstanding and converted voluntarily to grammar school with academy status under the Coalition government. It is categorised as a Convertor Academy.

To ascertain the position that he took in the *field* of education in respect to the academies programme, Neil Masters was asked what he thought of the idea of the academies. He said that:

"*The premise that you will provide more opportunity for schools to make their own decisions is sound, I think decentralisation of decisions with regard to, curriculum in particular, to make sure that the curriculum is appropriate for the needs of the children that makes absolute sense*" (Neil Masters, AL3).

This is interpreted as a politically careful response suggesting that by becoming an academy he felt that he was being offered *agency* to make his own decisions and to develop the curriculum and he was disposed towards this, although I infer that he also recognised that the school's conversion to academy status might be controversial for some people.

He thought that an academy was just a different type of school in terms of the way in which, essentially, he was accountable, and it had not changed anything in terms of those freedoms.

This suggests that he recognised that his *agency* was controlled by the structures that he worked within.

He felt that:

"A*s an academy, there is more accountability around finances*". (Neil

Masters, AL3)

The implication is that the academies are driven more by financial

considerations than schools were previously and a discourse around

finances and accountability has become more prominent.

To explore the freedoms that he had gained with academy status, Neil

Masters was asked whether he had used the freedom not to teach the

National Curriculum. For him there had been very little change in that

respect, he had the freedom to broaden the curriculum beyond the confines

of the National Curriculum even before his school had become an academy

and he had done that. He felt that he was free from prescription but that he

was accountable for the subjects taught and the performance in those

subjects. His response suggests that, whilst he had the freedom to change

the National Curriculum, he is controlled by the structures that he works

within, and he is driven by performativity that is accountability for the

performance of his academy as discussed by Lyotard (1984) and Ball (2003).

He was asked whether he had used the freedom to change pay and

conditions for staff and he said that:

*"I haven't changed pay and conditions; they are at least as good as they*

*were previously and that is what we've said to staff" (Neil Masters, AL3).*

This suggests that, in *practice,* in considering changing staff pay and

conditions, Neil Masters considered the opinions of staff and what they might

think of those changes and that staff would not want their.pay and conditions to be worse after a change to academy status.

When asked whether he had used the freedom to change the length of the school days and terms that he had gained with academy status he said that he had:

"*fiddled with holidays to a certain degree to try and create more time at different times of the year, to try and give more time back to staff if I'm being honest, and to the children.  So, I've fiddled around the edges of that perhaps one or two days here and there essentially, we follow what we've done before*" (Neil Masters, AL3).

This suggests that whilst he had the *agency* to change the length of days and terms slightly, he was controlled by the structures that he worked within and the requirement for children to be in school for a certain amount of time.

Neil Masters was asked what he thought about the demise of the local authority and he suggested that a head-teacher's attitude to having freedom from the local authority depended on their school's position. For an Outstanding school, then "*that was all well and good*" but the local authority had provided opportunities to collaborate with others to develop ideas, and he felt this had been beneficial and he missed it.  He said that:

"*What I really miss is … we had an amazing research and development and training centre …  that was run by the local authority for the benefit of schools within the county and …  it gave you the opportunity to meet lots and lots of staff from other schools*" (Neil Masters, AL3)

He explained how those opportunities had led to him gaining a greater understanding of the entirety of education within his county and the importance of a school's context.  This ability for Academy Leaders to gain a greater understanding of their academies and the context in relation to other academies and schools is seen to be important in providing opportunities for a *Commitment to Democracy* and *democratic agency* for Academy Leaders and, from Neil Masters' perspective, this ability has been lost.

He recognised the lack of power that the local authority now had to impact on school improvement because so many schools in his area had become academies and consequently the funding for the local authority had changed quite markedly. He thought that was "*a shame*" and he did not feel that the local authority had quite decided what their role was and he himself was not sure that he quite understood what the local authority's role was. He recognised the uncertainty of the picture in the future and felt that the demarcation had its disadvantages for his school because he was not sure whether it was understood what education was going to look like in four or five years' time.

This suggests that the current situation leads to *uncertainty* for this Academy Leader, where the certainty and security provided by the local authority is removed, and the future becomes insecure and this could be seen to be a feature of a neo-liberal form of governing.

Neil Masters was asked what else happens for him now in the middle ground between himself and central government.  He talked about the alliances that exist between teaching schools.  He explained that he was on the steering

group of [Association] and that was important to him because of the particular niche into which his academy fitted. He explained that his academy was also a "Leading Edge" school, so his academy was part of a group of 300 Outstanding schools that was formed as a result of the special schools' trust work.

This suggests that he had *agency* to operate in the middle ground between central government and academies to discuss ideas in education with other schools democratically and that he could put forward his point of view across and discuss the context and position of his academy with others.

When asked about the Regional Schools Commissioner's role he said that:

"*I think the regionalisation of education under [Name of Regional Schools Commisioner] in the [Region] that will be interesting to see how that dynamic changes. Now, already, we have been asked to talk to various schools in the locality and the region to think about how we can help them to improve but above that, how are we going to work as a collective in the [Region] I am not quite sure. That will be, you know, a key part of his [the Regioanl Commissioner's] role* (Neil Masters, AL3).

This indicates that there is *uncertainty* for him about how the Regional Commissioner's role would work and what this would mean for him.

Neil Masters was asked about the governance of his academy. He felt that this had not changed significantly since becoming an academy and that there would not be noticeable differences between being a maintained school and an academy. He explained that they had several different types of governor;

parent governors, staff governors, foundation governors and, what he saw

as:

"*In effect a throwback to the old times, a so say, local authority governor,*

*which tends to be someone who comes in from another school*" (Neil

Masters, AL3).

For him, the most obvious change was the fact that one of his governors was

now a responsible officer who looked at their financial propriety to make sure

that his academy was doing everything that it should be doing and the

governors now talked to the auditors more about financial records and

whether they were following due process. He thought that:

"*The financial side of things has changed quite markedly for the governors*

*and that's been good. I don't think that that's a bad thing, they ask more*

*challenging questions of the head and the bursar than they used to*

*previously*" (Neil Masters, AL3).

This highlights that financial considerations have become more important in

the governance of academies than was previously the case for the

governance of schools and a financial vocabulary is being used within the

academies, which could be seen as a consequence of governance for the

academies becoming part of an agenda for education based on economic

neo-liberalism, as discussed by Hayek (1944), and free markets, as

discussed by Friedman (1993).

Neil Masters highlighted that governors had a greater responsibility for

Ofsted inspections in terms of school accountability and he did not think that

was a bad thing because this enabled his governors to understand how his

academy worked fundamentally and the questions they need to be asking of him to challenge the direction that the academy was going in.  He was not sure whether this was because of becoming an academy or whether it was a result of the changes to the accountability measures in the country generally but he certainly felt that the role of the governors had changed quite markedly in terms of accountability over the course of the last five or six years.

I interpret him as suggesting that the governors of his academy are now driven by *performativity,* that is accountability for the performance of their academies,as discussed by Lyotard (1984, p11)  and Ball (2003, p216).

Neil Masters explained how governors at his academy were elected:

"*What the chair of governors tends to do is when there is a gap she tends to look at what kind of background that person's come from, so for example if we have a chief executive from a financial firm who doesn't, you know, for whatever reason want to be a governor any more they tend to replace them with someone from that kind of background.  So, no qualifications are required, you would hope that some of them would have some qualifications, but we tend to try and look for a range of different skills and background, so could be Human Resources or legal background and we are blessed with a governing body that has that wide range of backgrounds at the moment and that does help*" (Neil Masters, AL3).

The appointment of governors to his academy board relies on the cultural *capital* (knowledge) and social *capital* (connections and relationships) that the chair of the board of governors has in knowing others who could sit as

governors and the social, cultural, political and economic *capital* of the academy to attract good governors.

Neil Masters was asked if he could give an example of where he had accepted ideas from parents. He said that, as well as having parents on his governing body, he gave parents the opportunity to have a say directly as he had parental surveys every year to see how well his academy was doing. He discussed how they had used electronic medium to engage with parents by working on aspects of their Virtual Learning Environment and their website to engage further with parents because that was a medium where they felt that they could engage with parents almost immediately and because of that they now had on-line and live assessment data that parents could access when they were at home to gauge progress and he felt that had been a real advantage. He talked about how they had handed out evaluation forms at their parents' evenings asking "*how the evening was*" and "*what else they would like to see done within the school*" and he felt that had worked effectively to accept the opinions of parents. He also said that he had produced a headmaster's memo, so he sent home a letter each week electronically to all parents to keep them up to date with what was going on within the school and he received a lot of suggestions that came back via personal e-mails to him and he felt that this kept the communication with parents going.

This response suggests that parents influenced many of the decisions that are made in his academy.

To further explore democracy in the academies, Neil Masters was asked if he could give an example of where he had accepted ideas from teachers and he said that he accepted ideas directly from teachers:

"*We've got a staff room body that will make suggestions on the fabric of the school, how we can enable them to work more effectively, could be in the staff room, could be in their work areas and we take those on board*" (Neil Masters, AL3).

He discussed ways in which his academy operated in a democratic way with teachers:

"*We also have a curriculum working party, a Teaching and Learning working party, all of which feed in to strategy, so it's not a top-down diktat that you have to adhere to, it's formed as a result of what staff come to, and what staff consider*" (Neil Masters, AL3).

He explained that the school development plan was created democratically by asking staff for their ideas:

"*I wanted to change the school development plan from a year on year plan to one that was a 3 and a 5-year plan, not in any kind of Stalinist model, but it just made sense to have a 5 or 7-year plan and that was formed in conjunction with the staff.  So, we sat down, 30 of us together, and put together the bare bones of what the ethos, the aims, the values of the school should be and as a result of that what strategy should this look like and that was really insightful, because they see the school in a very different way to the head* (Neil Masters, AL3).

Neil Masters was asked how he worked with other schools and academies now and whether they were competitors. He held the concepts of competing and working together concurrently:

"*We can work together and yes we are competitors; it works both ways*" (Neil Masters, AL3).

Stacey (2003) talks about the nature of paradox and the ways in which we deal with the contradictions that we encounter in our thinking. The first way is to regard them as a dichotomy, which is a polarised opposition requiring an "either"/"or" choice; the second way is to think of the choice as a dilemma, which is a choice between two equally unattractive alternatives and the third way is to think of them in terms of a dualism or duality, which considers the options of "both"/"and".

Neil Masters can here be seen to be dealing with the paradox between competition and collaboration by taking the option of 'both': He felt that in some areas it was a lot easier, so he held sessions through being a teaching school, that he said that people were more than happy to come along to. He had run and been along to sessions about changes to the curriculum and external examination arrangements, which he felt were both collaborative and used to generate new ideas, so for example they would ask questions like:

"*'What are you going to do with GCSE?', 'Well I'm going to do this', 'that's interesting, I might try that as well'*" (Neil Master, AL3).

This suggests that Neil Masters encouraged the contribution of ideas from all of those involved from other schools and academies.

At the same time, he accepted that:

"*We are all competitive*" (Neil Masters, AL3).

He felt that there had always been an element of competition between schools, and wondered if that was different from how it used to be as there was:

"*Always a pecking order of schools in the area where I grew up*" (Neil Masters, AL3).

He explained how he felt that this competition was now more overt because of the way in which things were publicised it was much more obvious now and head-teachers and senior leadership teams tended to be much savvier when it came to marketing or promoting their course or school. He felt that this had changed the balance in his area over the course of the last five or six years.

As a head-teacher he met with his colleague head-teachers and found that very useful. He also recognised however, that there was perhaps not enough working together at lower levels:

"*If I am a Newly Qualified Teacher, I don't necessarily collaborate as much as I used to, certainly, if I am three or four years in or a Head of Department, I don't meet with other Heads of Department across the county. I think that's a major problem*" (Neil Masters, AL3).

Neil Master's perception is that there has been a decrease in the amount of collaboration between academies and other academies and schools at lower levels of leadership. It is suggested here that there are fewer opportunities to develop democratic relationships between academies.

Neil Masters was asked to talk about a situation where he had done something significant with representatives from higher education.  He had worked with higher education for progression for students in that he held a Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) evening twice a year when he had over 40 universities and colleges of higher education come in to talk to his students and their parents about next steps. This was also done at his academy for children lower down the school where they had people come in from higher education to talk about what the children should be considering and some of the sorts of things they should be thinking about when they are making their choice of options. He was also able to work with higher education internationally and he had a UCAS advisor who worked with universities in this country and in Europe and the United States to ensure that they were on top of all the right information and guidance that filters down to the children.  He thought that:

*"We work very closely with higher education because it would be crazy if we didn't because that is one of the ways in which we are judged"* (Neil Masters, AL3).

These responses suggests that he had the knowledge and understanding of how the system for students entry in to higher education worked and that he had connections with people who understood more about this and so he had

the social and cultural *capital* that enabled him to work with higher education, whereas other Academy Leaders may not have had the social and cultural *capital* to work with higher education, and so inequalities are reproduced.

Neil Masters was asked about a situation where he had done something significant with representatives from further education. He worked less with further education than with the university although his academy did have relatively close links with [Name of Colleges]. He said that because of the nature of the children that he had at his academy he tended not to be looking at further education. He had two or three students a year who wanted to go to further education colleges and he had just one student this year who wanted to do photography, so he did have links but they were not as strong as they were with universities.

He was asked about his relationship with representatives from local or national employers and said that he was happy with the range of experiences that the children in his academy saw from a whole host of industrial, commercial and marketing backgrounds and he felt that this worked well. He had around about 30 or 35 employers who came in two or three times a year to do mock interviews, and all their year 12s did work experience. He had close links with some of the big engineering companies in the area and commercial companies came and talked to the children in his school about regeneration, green values, and what it takes to build a multi-million-pound business, along with the blue-chip companies from city of London who came in to "*sell their wares*" (Neil Masters, AL3).

The implication of this is that Neil Masters' position in the *field* of education allowed him to work with local and national employers in *practice* in the field of employment and he had developed a "feel for the game" in the *field* of employment.

Neil Masters was asked to name one highlight at his academy since he had been the Academy Leader and he chose:

"*Exam results are always a highlight when the children have got fabulous results* "(Neil Masters, AL3).

He also felt that the judgements of Ofsted were important and that Outstanding in every category was a highlight for him, although he did qualify this with the suggestion that internal community relationships were also important to him, so he thought that was:

"*An endorsement rather than what we want to hang our success around and the staff panto last year was brilliant as well*" (Neil Masters, AL3).

This data suggests that whilst Neil Masters could consider other aspects that he felt were important to his community once he had secured an Outstanding judgement from Ofsted and he has a medium high *Commitment to Responsibilisation* of self in terms of the results orientation of his data driven environment and a medium high *Commitment to Democracy/Public Values*.

To explore an area where Neil Masters was less likely to agree with the government agenda, he was asked if he could talk about something to

government what it would be and he would like to talk to government about the difficulties that occurred in *practice* in the *field* of education:

"*I guess the biggest issue I have is an acknowledgement from them that what they are doing has significant implications on a day to day basis that probably they haven't thought through*" (Neil Masters, AL3).

He thought that discussions with government were valuable to inform governments of the operational realities within schools and that some of the government's strategic level thinking was sound and was done with the best intentions but it sometimes concerned him that policy was made in sound bites. He wanted particularly to talk to the government about funding:

"*I think that what we are seeing with post-16 funding is a prime example of that, moving from nigh on £5,000 to £4,000 may seem sensible because it brings us in line with higher education but actually it doesn't work like that in schools we run things in a very different way and now we are going back to ministers and saying well we told you this was going to be the case and now it is going to be the case, and small school sixth forms are going to close as a result, why didn't you listen in the first place*" (Neil Masters, AL3).

Neil Masters demonstrates a great deal of cultural *capital* in terms of understanding the issues regarding the funding of education in the *field* and *practice* of education.

Neil Masters can be seen here to be showing some reluctance in terms of *neo-liberal responsibilisation* of self and accepting the business principles for his environment.

Neil Masters was asked if he had opportunities to discuss ideas with the National College for Teaching and Leadership. He said that 2 or 3 years ago the National College for Teaching and Leadership was a really powerful body for him to consider where issues were going in particular in this country, and, because they were independent of government he found that really empowering because he could talk to them frankly, he thought that the National College was now very much under the guidance of the Department for Education and it did not have its own website any more or run any Leadership courses, because they had all been franchised off, so he felt that it was now all one and the same:

*"I would love to be able to say that what we had [that opportunity], which was gold standard 4-5 years ago, and I think would have had a significant impact but it's not there anymore"* (Neil Masters, AL3).

In terms of whether he had opportunities to discuss ideas with Ofsted inspectors, he said that he did have that opportunity:

"*I speak to Her Majesty's Inspectors at various conferences that I go to and they are normally relatively human and willing to listen but I think they, like many school Leaders, have been frustrated at the level in which they are able to engage in the process and constructively, informatively, give their views on where a school should go next. They have to follow due process and that process is very constricting in what they are able to do. I think it is a real shame that we have a group that should be a force for good because they have the training background, insight, context to be able to see a wide range of different schools and then feedback their thoughts on where a*

*school should go next, but we are not allowed to engage with them over that, and it is very much a defensive mechanism, when you have an Ofsted call then you go into Ofsted mode and that is very different from day to day mode and that seems bizarre*" (Neil Masters, AL3).

To explore whether he could have any input into the education reform agenda, Neil Masters was asked whether he had any opportunities to influence governments.  He said that he was in a fortunate position because of the nature of his school and the groups that he worked with to talk with ministers and shadow ministers quite regularly about education, and the biggest issue that he had was an acknowledgement from government that what they were doing had significant implications on a day to day basis. He felt that government did listen, but only if arguments were developed carefully:

"*I think they do, to an extent, but the way in which you talk to them has to be done very carefully, and if it's just rhetoric then they're not going to listen.  If you've got facts and figures, then you do tend to get somewhere. Having a secure body of head-teachers that the department of education talks to all of the time I think would solve quite a few problems, not necessarily be dissenting voices all of the time*" (Neil Masters, AL3).

He explained that there were forums for talking to government and that the Department for Education did sometimes have a core group of teachers but he felt that certain people were invited to attend the forums more than others:

*"They tend to be a particular type, often super heads who have run inner city or urban comprehensives, who have taken the school from there to there and therefore seen as paragons of virtue, and often they are"* (Neil Masters, AL3)*.*

He highlighted that some Academy Leaders do not get the opportunity to talk face to face with government ministers*:*

*There's a whole range of different schools across the country, who will be affected in different ways and, yes we can report back our thoughts on consultation documents or through our professional bodies, but it doesn't necessarily have the same impact as if we are able to talk to them face to face"* (Neil Masters, AL3).

These thoughts suggest that Neil Masters had *agency* to engage with the government to inform them about issues in education, but that this was not the case for all Academy Leaders.

Neil Masters was asked who provided support for him now and he said that he had what used to be called a school improvement partner, who oversees his professional development and feeds back to the governors a report which is based on his partner's understanding of the national context, data that is provided by the academy each year, the strategic vision and priorities for the academy. He had also done a Master's degree, which he thought was an excellent example of Continuing Professional Development. He thought that it was a "*shame*" that now the National College of Teaching and Leadership, seems to be "*dying a death*" there isn't a natural forum for head-teachers to join that will enable them to learn from each other.

In terms of democracy, this suggests a lack of neutral forums for head-teachers to share ideas, which reduces the opportunities for democracy, that is a commitment to public values in the development of education.

When asked if he had any final thoughts, Neil Masters said:

"*I would like to see what happens in other countries, to enable people to be more co-operative. I don't know whether head-teachers are as parochial and insular as they are in this country*" (Neil Masters, AL3).

### 5.3.1 Summary of Neil Master (AL3)

The responses from Neil Masters (AL3) suggest that he is one of the people whose response to change can be categorised as "Help it Happen". He is helping academisation to happen by his school converting to becoming an academy and the main reasons for this were the offer of *agency* to make his own decisions and the de-centralisation of decisions regarding the curriculum.

Neil Masters is developing relationships within his own convertor academy; with other schools as a teaching school; with higher education and with local and national employers. He does not have strong relationships with further education.

Neil Masters can be categorised as medium high on his *Commitment to Responsibilisation,* as he accepts most aspects of the business principles and the results orientation of his data-driven environment, although he misses the opportunities to liaise with colleague head-teachers that was provided by his local authority.

Neil Masters can be categorised as medium high on *Commitment to Democracy/ Public Values* as he includes parents and teachers in many of the decisions that are made for his academy.

I interpret that Neil Masters as "*playing the game*" of academisation and he is balancing his response to the government's education reform agenda by having both a medium high *Commitment to Responsibilisation* and a medium high *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values*.

**5.4 Kate Green (AL4)**

Kate Green (AL4) is the leader of a Federation between a secondary school and a primary school. The school was formerly a large secondary modern with a grammar school on the site that formed a comprehensive school and then became a co-operative, and is in the process of becoming an academy.

In answering a question about her experience, Kate Green gave an indication of what motivated her as an educator:

"*It's a matter of absolute enthusiasm for other people's lives, which has sustained me and led to promotion, but also a critique from when I was very young as to how schools were organised. Those, I don't know what they are, are they factors, I believe gives me a disposition to approach things in a radical manner, because I am certainly not steeped in thinking that the way education has been organised is the way it should be organised*" (Kate Green, AL4).

Kate Green is talking here about the collection of factors and a lifetime of social interactions that have led to her developing what I interpret as her *habitus* or disposition, which she herself describes as "radical" and which can be seen to be critical of educational policy. She contrasted her *habitus* with that of other Academy Leaders:

"*I find it quite tricky, therefore to relate with some colleague heads because those colleague heads are perhaps people who like the way it was always done and then find any notion of radical approaches too revolutionary and*

*alien with power bases based in tradition rather than in any new forms of thinking*" (Kate Green, AL4).

This illustrates a *field* of power struggles between this academy leader and others in positions of power within the academies, whom she felt held more traditional approaches.

Kate Green believed that there was a neo-liberal ideology behind the academies programme and she opposed it.  She said:

"*My fear was the steady march of the neo-liberal agenda forcing people down a route that might not be right for their context. That the academy movement is all about money, it's all about saving money, it's all about private investors making profit out of privatising the education system, so ideologically, I am vehemently opposed to it*" (Kate Green, AL4).

Kate Green's position in the *field* of education and her practice is informed by her *habitus,* that is, her disposition to be opposed to the neo-liberal agenda and her commitment to public values, community and context and she took that position in the *field* of education.

She gave an example of where she thought that an emphasis on making money had occurred:

"*We were in at least one instance prey to a consultant who wanted to make money out of school*" (Kate Green, AL4).

As Mirowski (2009) writes the "neo-liberal thought collective" asserts the centrality of competitive markets to the preservation of individual freedom and if that approach is taken in education then there is individual freedom for

a competitive business to make money out of an academy, which could become arbitrary and I question whether this individual freedom should be allowed in education, as the money is public money and all schools do not gain equally from this.

Kate Green was asked whether she had used the freedom not to teach the National Curriculum that came with academy status. She felt that the freedom not to teach the National Curriculum was unhelpful, she saw the National Curriculum as an entitlement for students and felt that teachers should work on what the National Curriculum was, rather than denying that it should exist (Kate Green, AL4).

When asked about the freedom to change pay and conditions for staff, which was a freedom that came with academy status, she said that she also saw this as unhelpful because changing terms and conditions would simply undermine the morale of staff and that responsibilities could be negotiated within existing terms and conditions.

She believed that changing the school days and terms was in many ways a very good idea but she felt that inter-relating with everyone else did not need the academy freedom to do that, and you just need an enlightened local set up for all primary and secondary schools to change. She felt that local authorities could have instigated such a change and would have been far more effective if they had talked in terms of radical change with schools, and guided them towards it.

Kate Green felt that her local authority had become ineffective over time and had contributed to the reduction in its own role by becoming ineffective. She

explained further that this had happened in her locality by most schools becoming grant-maintained, so she felt that there was no infrastructure to be challenging or supportive to schools, so she felt that the local authority might as well reduce its role.

Kate Green recognised the need for a body in the middle ground:

"*We need something as an alternative [to the local authority]. To have a more localised alternative, which linked up nationally but actually held people to account, showed some understanding of context, not as an excuse but context as understanding how to move this particular community forward, with this set of circumstances, would be a far more healthy and helpful way to move forward*" (Kate Green, AL4).

This suggests the importance of community and context to Kate Green and she felt that the Regional Schools Commissioner should be developing their understanding of this. She felt that the government was now backtracking on the idea of independent schools reporting directly to the Department for Education, by appointing Regional Schools Commissioners and that in many ways the Regional Schools Commissioners were being given an almost impossible job to do. She hoped that the Regional Schools Commissioners would be given enough autonomy to listen to communities and re-iterated that she did not want the Regional Schools Commissioners to accept excuses, because she did not feel that this should be about collusion with mediocrity, but she felt that the Regional Schools Commissioners role should be working out what would work in any given circumstance.

When asked about the governance of her academy, Kate Green identified an issue with governance for her:

"*Right, that's a very hot issue to talk about and I would be very concerned about being over critical right now.  In an area of deprivation, finding effective governance is another deprivation factor and challenge for the school*" (Kate Green, AL4).

She had struggled for years to find people of the ability to really understand the complexity of a secondary school, who also had the time to do it.  She hoped that setting up as a co-operative would help the governance of her school and enable her to set up a trust, so that the trustees would back up the governance but explained about the difficulties she had encountered in attracting trustees.

"*So, our trustees have virtually imploded because again there aren't enough people with enough time to devote to being a trustee*" (Kate Green, AL4)

She highlighted the difficulties of finding trustees, governors and clerks of the right calibre in an area of socio-economic deprivation and she had reduced to a small number of governors, but felt that the governors that she had were pro-active, had the level of skill and intelligence that she required and were doing a better job than a larger group might.  She felt that attracting good governors remained a tremendous challenge for her.

To explore how Kate Green worked with parents, she was asked if she could give an example of where she had accepted ideas from parents.  She believed that parental opinion was core to her school:

"*Now you see because we are working through the voice groups and we are working in a co-ordinated way on Saturdays, it is hard to remember exactly where ideas come from but I would say that the move of the under 5's facility to be on our site has been a very important parental move*" (Kate Green, AL4).

She discussed more about how her academy was involved with her local community and felt that, fundamentally, the whole inclusion agenda was extremely important to her and she worked extremely hard to include everybody from her local community. This illustrates that in her case parents were involved directly in the development of her academy rather than having a voice only through representatives on a local governing body.

Kate Green was asked if she could you give an example of where she had accepted ideas from teachers.  She believed that taking on ideas from teaching staff was central to the way she worked:

"*It's the way leadership is conceptualised here, which is as the head being at the bottom of the pyramid, the person, and there is a pyramid, trying to flatten the pyramid but the head's role being seen as the person who challenges. I describe it as a fountain method, rather than a cascade.  My fountain method is that you squirt it upwards from the bottom of the heap and if it works it stays up there and if it doesn't you land up sitting in the puddle at the bottom of it because it comes back straight on your head*" (Kate Green, AL4).

She revealed more about her own *habitus*, which was her disposition towards listening to the views of people from her community and flattening

hierarchies wherever possible.  Her position in the *field* influenced how she did things in her educational practice.  She said:

"*This is a really interesting contrast with a partner primary who we have been trying to work with but finding the culture very difficult because it is so different. The joining together with the other school for joint staff voice group, they said that there isn't any point because the head does that and we won't be listened to*" (Kate Green, AL4).

I infer that for Kate Green, listening to teachers is part of the culture of her school and this suggests adherence to a set of beliefs and a high *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values*.  She said:

 "*So, it just sort of is totally woven through school, big, middle, little. Just happens*" (Kate Green, AL4)

This was not in Kate Green's opinion the case for her partner primary. Kate Green saw what she interpreted as the other leader's *habitus* and *practice* and the culture of the primary school as very different from her own and she saw this leader as taking a more dominant opinion that came to be seen as natural, *taken for granted* and part of the *doxa* for that school.

For Kate Green, there was less collaboration with other schools than there used to be and far more competition. She said that:

"*That's a really painful issue from my perspective*" (Kate Green, AL4).

She explained how she used to work with other schools several years ago, at the stage before the academies movement: they were operating as a group of 6 secondary schools working cohesively together, offering 14-16 courses,

some GCSEs, a whole broad range of courses, which they shared because they could mini-bus youngsters around so they worked to their school's specialisms, plus they got together to make college courses viable.

She elaborated further how for them they were now at the stage where there were only youngsters going to [college for hairdressing and buildings services] and [college for animal care] and that the infrastructure had died a death and they got to the point where there was no point in them meeting as secondary schools because they were forced to be in competition and people did not want to say things about where their individual academies were going. She felt that they had been able to develop real advantages through working with others prior to the academies movement. At various stages, they had made shared appointments in areas of deprivation, for example, appointing an assistant head-teacher to work across 5 schools, so that person could develop expertise and share it and the schools would not have so much duplication, with different individuals carrying out the same initiative in different schools (Kate Green, Federation).

She felt that this has been demonstrably not possible when the idea for the academies had been proposed:

"*We also appointed a shared co-ordinator to run the diploma programme but the diploma programme never got off the ground because there was a change in government and it was at that point that we lost heart, the academy movement arrived, and we just gave up*" (Kate Green, AL4).

She felt that there may recently have been moves towards possibilities for this to start up again as the person who had been leading the Pupil Referral

Unit had asked her to try and draw people back together as they felt that it was a nonsense that they had to go and visit 6 schools to negotiate and what they wanted to do was just come and see all the secondary heads at one meeting. Kate Green felt that:

*"We'd do it together and we have missed out so much"* (Kate Green, AL4).

For Kate Green, there is currently very little opportunity for her to work with other schools or academies now:

"*We are not, virtually not at all. We think that some people who have gone as independent academies may not want to know because they see themselves as in competition*" (Kate Green, AL4).

The benefits of working *democratically* with others was clearly seen by Kate Green who felt that they had previously done a lot of work together, on sharing difficult situations with students and they had still worked out their rules between schools to try to give students fresh starts.

For Kate Green, it is interpreted that there is now a pervasive sense of insecurity and uncertainty, leading to more precarity and isolation for her.

Kate Green was asked about a situation where she had done something significant with representatives from higher education. For her, opportunities to work with higher education had occurred mainly through luck because one of her staff had the social and cultural *capital* to work with higher education:

"*We have at school an absolutely wonderful vocational learning co-ordinator. Incidentally that's another sort of radical appointment because she came to cover, she applied for a job for maternity leave cover in the library, having*

*been originally a [Company] engineer and then promoted to being a trainer.*

*She arrived and it was obvious that she had a future in careers and*

*vocational learning. So, we said fine you can stay in the library for a little*

*while but I want to hire you to continue in a different role. She has countless*

*links with all sorts of higher education providers*" (Kate Green, AL4)

For Kate Green, some opportunities to work with higher education had been
lost because of the work involved in academisation for her school and socio-
economic factors. She explained that one of her trustees was an Emeritus
professor from [Name of University] and he resigned from the Board of
trustees because he realised that the trustees were so bogged down in the
politics of academisation that he could make no input about teaching and
learning. That for her school was a deprivation factor because she no longer
had a professor who was a specialist in Special Educational Needs having
any chance of having any input into her school.

She felt that this was: "*from my point of view a complete disaster*" (Kate
Green, AL4).

Kate Green had experience of a difficult relationship with further education
because of power dynamics and unequal relationships. One of the things
which caused a major problem for her locally was the, now retired, Principal
of the local further education college deciding that he would try to stop
another local school having a sixth form of its own, and would try to force
them to join in an academy set up with him. She felt that:

"*It was a totally managerialist bully boy approach, which we were not willing*

*to do but that again mitigated against our inclination to work with that school*

*because we felt that we were going to be forced to do it, to an agenda that wasn't ours, and to ditch our own value system. So, we didn't do it, so that's an example of refusing to work with further education if that wants to take over"* (Kate Green, AL4).

This data is interpreted as attempts being made to *subordinate* Kate Green by others from the *field* of further education.

Kate Green was asked if she could name one highlight at her school since she had been the head-teacher of the school. For her a highlight was being awarded a certificate for the local area for the county community of the year award, by the local neighbourhood development plan steering group chair, for their integrated planning because that involved her attending all the meetings and also involved the head student and the student voice group inputting into the neighbourhood plan for how things were going to be for their whole parish in the future.  That for her was the most significant thing and this suggests the strength of her C*ommitment to Democracy/Public Values*, and how important engaging with her strong local community was for her.

Kate Green said that she would like to talk to governments about recognising that contexts are very different and that one size fits all is never going to engage everyone and that that notion would not have any impact on the masses. This suggests the importance for Kate Green of informing government to help them to gain an understanding of local communities and to understand difference and the needs of different communities.

Kate Green said that she would have liked the National College for Teaching and Leadership to take a more research-orientated approach and that she found their courses very formulaic, and that was not to say unhelpful, but she felt that it was about ticking boxes rather than getting people to carry out their own action research and grow as professionals.  She was:

*"Absolutely dedicated to action research and challenging people to look at their situations from different perspectives"* (Kate Green, AL4)

In terms of Ofsted, she said:

"*I have to say that I have always found inspectors extremely helpful as far as they can be.  Once they realise that you are working as effectively as you can within limitations, they are incredibly helpful people to talk to. They are completely hamstrung by the narrowness of the criteria within which they have to work.  And, having had someone say, as a personal friend, 'I might as well inspect from my desk', that would tell you that the data is most important (Kate Green, AL4).*

This is interpreted as pressure on Ofsted inspectors as well as on Academy Leaders for the performance of academies to meet targets or *performativity* as discussed by Lyotard (1984) and Ball (2003).

Kate Green said that she had not had any opportunities to inform governments and explained:

"*No, because we are a school which is deemed Requires Improvement. We are just subjected, in theory, to regular onslaughts, but if you are aware of the data background the regular onslaughts from the Department for*

*Education are supposed to be via a Her Majesty's Inspector who has responsibility for a massive portfolio across the [Region]"* (Kate Green, AL4).

She explained further:

*"because we are deemed Requires Improvement our voice doesn't count and that is part of my concern that if you are dedicated to making a difference but you happen to be somewhere which isn't labelled good, there is no listening done, but, if you are in that kind of circumstance, you are probably best placed to advise because you will know from the sharp end what really works and what doesn't"* (Kate Green, AL4).

This suggests that Kate Green perceived she had no *agency* to inform governments about her community and the local context of the academy and reasons behind any difficulties encountered.

An alternative that was attractive for Kate Green was to work as a co-operative and she felt that being part of a co-operative offered her more opportunities in line with her own values.  She saw the co-operative model as offering an alternative to the academies model rather than co-operatives simply being another interest group that was seeking influence:

"*Co-operatives being not for profit, co-operatives being a movement which doesn't hive off such a high percentage for the central costs, so that we could protect the values system*" (Kate Green, AL4).

Kate Green was asked who provided professional support for her now and she said:

"*Ah, right I found the most wonderful Master's degree programme. That was very tough to complete, but the whole cycle of action research, reflecting on your practice, and talking to a professional who was not steeped in New Public Management, who could see that one was doing an incredibly conscientious and sincere job, reinforced me wonderfully. Now we have an able chair of governors, I am getting professional support from chair of governors. But otherwise basically there isn't any*" (Kate Green, AL4).

She went on to explain further:

"*I find myself as a female head either thinking that I am being patronised or feeling patronised, by a lot of men in suits.It is overwhelmingly a male profession, and to be a radical thinker in the middle of it, particularly when most of them are academised and consider themselves to be Good or Outstanding. I find that an alien environment. So, that is not good, so isolation goes with the territory at the moment and that to my mind is very, very sad because I am very keen and eager to learn with other people*" (Kate Green, AL4).

This suggests a lack of support for Kate Green from others in the teaching profession, which leads to a feeling or precarity, isolation and uncertainty for her.

Kate Green raised the issue of the teaching unions:

"*I think and this is because of where we stand as a school at the moment, we have never been a school run by unions but at the moment we have a little bit of union twitching. And that is all about, despite trying to use, what is a*

*superficial analysis, Investors in People, and getting gold because of being adamant about looking after teaching morale*" (Kate Green, AL4).

For her there was:

"*This overwhelming feeling of pressure and people twitching and, my final thought is, I am well aware that the government are trying to reduce the effectiveness of unions to resist but the teachers' unions aren't resisting the cause, they are actually more inclined to attack the people, and I would that every union to do with education was campaigning to the government rather than criticising head-teachers who are trying the best they can, to manage limited resources and lead people in a positive way*" (Kate Green, AL4).

This observation suggests that for Kate Green there is a democratic deficit for some individual teachers in informing the direction that government takes, that teaching unions are not being listened to and that as an Academy Leader who has a commitment to public values and who is trying to involve teachers democratically in the development of her academy she is getting the brunt of teachers' dissatisfaction.

### 5.4.1 Summary of Kate Green (AL4)

Greenleaf (1977) developed the concept of servant leadership, with the leader taking the function of servant (often associated with followers) and putting the interests and needs of followers first and moves away from a concern for the organisation's and the leader's own interests.  I suggest that Kate Green is a servant leader who moves towards putting the ideas of her very strong community first with her organisation being there to meet the community's needs. It is reasonable to conjecture that she has constructed

herself as having a very strong identity as a public servant and is opposed to the private business and neo-liberal discourse.

The data here suggests that Kate Green (AL4) is one of those people who can be categorised by her response to change towards academisation as "Oppose it". She believes that there is a neo-liberal ideology behind the academies programme and that academisation is forcing people down a route that might not be right for their context.

Kate Green is developing relationships in line with her response to change towards academisation of "Oppose it": she has strong relationships within her own school and community, but has few relationships in wider networks. She has relationships with higher education mainly through luck because she found that she had a member of staff with the skills required.

Kate Green can be categorised as low on her *Commitment to Responsibilisation* as she does not accept any of the business principles for the academies or the data driven environment.

She can be categorised as high on *Commitment to Democracy/ Public Values,* as she values the inclusion agenda and gaining an understanding of the context of her academy.

In summary, Kate Green's *habitus* was the disposition to be opposed to the neo-liberal agenda and she took up that position in the *field* of education. The possession of this position means that her success is not re-confirmed, and her position is weakened, she is not given *agency* and for her the *field* of education is a *field* of struggles.

**5.5 Paul Parks (AL5)**

Paul Parks (AL5) was the leader of a Federation with a further education college and a Multi-Academy Trust.

He was asked what he thought of the idea of the academies and said:

"*The original idea was excellent and the original idea was Tony Blair and Lord Adonis who wanted businesses to better engage with schools and so they established the academy scheme where they were encouraging philanthropic, multi-millionaire, highly successful business people to inject their business DNA into schools and turn them around*" (Paul Parks, AL5).

He can here be seen to support the idea of the academies that was suggested by New Labour. He went on to say that:

"*So, the concept in the beginning was an excellent one. I think it is still excellent and has generally worked and what it's doing is giving head-teachers and schools, the autonomy and the freedom to make decisions that are right for their children and the staff within their organisations*" (Paul Parks, AL5).

This data is interpreted as him agreeing with the dominant neo-liberal position and believing that the academies programme had given head-teachers the freedom to make decisions based on what they considered to be right for those within their own academies.

Paul Parks recognised that there were controls and that he did not have total freedom but rather:

"*You've got freedoms within a framework*" (Paul Parks, AL5).

He is here making sense of the dominant discourse by recognising that his space for *agency* is controlled by the *structures* that he works within.

Paul Parks was asked whether he had used the freedom not to teach the National Curriculum, he felt that most academies followed the National Curriculum because:

"*Although academies have got freedoms to innovate and do things in a different way, Ofsted have a different view, so, if you decided to ignore half of the National Curriculum, Ofsted … would be probably critical of you for not following the National Curriculum*" (Paul Parks, AL5).

This suggests that his *agency* to develop ideas for the curriculum was controlled by the *structures* of Ofsted that he works within.

When asked whether he had used the freedom to change the pay and conditions for staff and explained that he felt that changing terms and conditions was difficult because what happened when you converted from a school to an academy was that terms and conditions were protected through TUPE [Transfer of Undertakings, Protection of Employment] arrangements. He felt that:

"*You then have a situation where, if staff are doing a really good job, what you don't want to do is erode their terms and conditions, you in fact want to improve them*" (Paul Parks, AL5).

For him, to do that the issue was about affordability and the complications that were created.  As he said:

"*Although teachers have the freedoms after the TUPE [Transfer of Undertakings, Protection of Employment] period is past, to change terms and conditions, they generally stay with the terms and conditions that were in the place before. One because it creates too much disruption, two because unions get involved heavily and three because they often don't have the resources to do it*" (Paul Parks, AL5).

It is interpreted that for him changing pay and conditions was strongly associated with a neo-liberal economic discourse with vocabulary around affordability and financial considerations.

Paul Parks highlighted that academies are governed by the Department for Education who develop financial policy,

"*So, for example there is a financial handbook, which is designed by the Department for Education, so the academies have to follow that financial handbook*" (Paul Parks, AL5).

This suggests that the *agency* for financial freedom that Academy Leaders have is controlled by the *structures* of the Department for Education that Academy Leaders work within.

Paul Parks was asked what he thought about reducing the role of the local authorities.  He said that

"*I think some local authorities in parts of the country have done a really, really good job in supporting the schools and some local authorities haven't done a very good job and those local authorities that have done a good job are the areas in the country where not many have converted to academies, they have stayed as schools within that group*" (Paul Parks, AL5).

This is interpreted as him feeling that essentially the market has resolved any issues that schools had in deciding whether to convert to academy status.

He thought that:

"*a lot of schools have lost touch with, or have been pleased to move away from local authorities that have often interfered but not supported and not added any value*".

Mirowski (2009) highlights that in neo-liberalism, the market (suitably re-engineered and promoted) is assumed to always provide solutions to problems (Mirowski, 2009, p439). Paul Parks is suggesting that the market has provided a solution to any problems and he uses the idea of "added value", which is a term taken from business and part of an economic vocabulary, which is associated with a neo-liberal discourse.

Paul Parks was asked what happened now in the middle ground between himself and central government.  He pointed out that

"*academies are still, effectively governed by the Department for Education who develop policy*" (Paul Parks, AL5).

He is here highlighting that his *agency* is controlled by the *structures* from the Department for Education and that he works within that.

Paul Parks felt that the question of what happened now in the middle ground was a difficult question for him because there were so many varied types of academies now and he pointed out the complexity of the picture where there are some individual academies; some academies that are part of a group, Federation or chain, either sponsored or voluntarily; some Federations that

were loose Federations; some Federations that were tighter; some sponsors who did not add their branding to the schools within their groups and some who did.

He suggested what he considered to be the best model for him and made it clear where the room for *agency* within this lay:

"*My view is that the Federation that I created, where I believed in the 80/20 rule where there are 80% freedoms but there's 20% of corporate practice so you do things together as a group. Therefore, you have your individual strategic and operational plans, that is your uniqueness and then you have the group's strategic plan where you do things together for the benefit of the whole group rather than just yourself. That for me is critical, if you don't have the group plan, what's it about*?" (Paul Parks, AL5).

This is interpreted as him suggesting that, to work with other schools in a Federation, each individual academy leader needed to give up some *agency* for the benefit of the Federation.

Paul Parks was asked about the governance of his academy and he recognised the complexity of the governance structure for his academies. He explained that initially it had started off with a college sponsoring two secondary schools and then they moved to a position where they created two other trusts: one trust was simply in place to expand the Federation and at the same time and in parallel they set up a Multi-Academy Trust with one Board for all the academies that were in the Federation.

This shows that for Paul Parks, a key part of the governance for his academies involved the expansion of his Federation.

He explained that their academy schools also had local governing bodies but that they didn't have so much power at a strategic level:

"*Schools also had local governing bodies that really were then in an advisory capacity not in a strategic decision-making capacity*" (Paul Parks, AL5).

Bourdieu (1992) was primarily concerned with the dynamics of power, and this suggests that those on the main Board in Paul Parks' academy had more power to influence strategic decisions than those on local governing bodies who can be seen to have less power: the local governing body only has the power that the main Board decides to give them.

Paul Parks gave details of how, through the financial handbook or good governance code for academies, the governors for his academy were on two-year fixed term contracts but normally, if they were good governors, it was extended for another two years and he felt that the governors should then be leaving. The power that the governors have can here be seen to be circumscribed by them being on fixed term contracts, which potentially prevents individual governors from gaining too much power.

To explore how democratic the academies were, Paul Parks was asked if he could give an example of where he had accepted ideas from parents. He explained that for his academies, he had two parent representatives on each local governing body and as well as him having democratic representation of parents on local governing bodies there were other ways that he communicated with parents directly and he talked about how parents had been involved and the type of decisions that they were involved in:

"*there was a big debate about what the school uniform should be for girls in the summer and their views were taken on board and it was based around practicality of clothing and of cost*" (Paul Parks, AL5).

He talked in terms of parents being involved in raising money for the academy:

"*They were involved in raising money, you know so sponsorship, they acted as ambassadors really for the Federation*" (Paul Parks, AL5).

This involvement of parents in raising money for the academies can be seen to be based on free markets, as discussed by Friedman (1993).

Paul Parks was asked if he could give an example of where he had accepted ideas from teachers. He said that he was keen to accept ideas from teachers:

"*We wanted to develop a new set of core values so we asked, over a period of time, the teachers to, through a sort of communication link, to e-mail values so they put the most important values that they had and then we put them all together and we had a staff away day and we had voting sticks, so we had the 10-12 values that had been identified and got everybody to vote against those values, so we determined our 5 values, so they were owned by them*" (Paul Parks, AL5).

This shows that he involved teachers democratically in the development of values for his Federation.

Paul Parks was asked how he works with other schools or academies now or whether they are competitors. He held the concepts of competing and partnering concurrently:

"*I think sometimes you compete, and sometimes you partner*" (Paul Parks, AL5).

He expresses the relationship between his Federation and other academies and schools as a dualism:

"*We were competitive in that we wanted to be the best but then we were prepared to help others along the way*" (Paul Parks, AL5).

Paul Parks takes the option here of "both" competing and partnering and holds the two contradictory ideas concurrently. He is dealing with one of the contradictions that emanate from the academies policy, as interpreted currently by the Department for Education, that stresses individualism and competitiveness in a market environment, but also encourages academies to collaborate.

He gave an example of how he had become a teaching school and through that he could bring in teachers out of schools that were out of his Federation into the Federation and help refresh them and take them through; if they weren't qualified they could get qualified teacher status. He brought head-teachers and deputies together to share good practice and to identify how they had altered the culture and turned things around and, for example, how they were monitoring student performance through various tracking systems.

This is interpreted as him working with other schools and academies to develop ideas on a basis that is in line with a *neo-liberal responsibilisation* of self in terms of an acceptance of the data driven nature of his environment and improving the performance for his academies that is *performativity*, as discussed by Lyotard (1984) and Ball (2003).

Paul Parks was asked to talk about a situation where he had done something significant with representatives from higher education. He said that he worked directly with higher education because his Federation is an all through Federation that offers higher education courses, mainly foundation degrees, with the local university. He is unusual in that his Federation focusses on vocational as well as academic education and he works with representatives from higher education in designing vocational degrees around what students said they needed and what local employers said they needed and he had worked with the university to marry the two together in terms of progression rates for the universities to degree and post-graduate level.

The implication is that he had the social and cultural *capital* to work with those from higher education. More research is needed into whether these were equal and democratic relationships with those from both sides inputting ideas and suggestions or whether one side was dominant in the relationship. Paul Parks was asked to talk about a situation where he had done something significant with representatives from further education. His Federation included a further education college and so he worked directly with further education.  He outlined what he considered were some of the similarities between academies and further education:

"*In 1993 further education colleges incorporated, which is virtually the same thing as what the academy programme is doing and over that period of time, 20 years, colleges have generally flourished.  They had a bit of a rocky period but generally they flourished. They are more entrepreneurial, more business-like and more successful*" (Paul Parks, AL5).

He explained that he had:

"*worked alongside [Name] and my objective was to encourage further education colleges to employ apprentices and his objective was to encourage universities to employ apprentices*" (Paul Parks, AL5).

This suggests that he had the *cultural capital* to work with representatives from further education.

Paul Parks explained that he could work with local and national employers directly as part of being in a Federation with a further education college:

"*We worked with [National Company in Town] and with [Local Company], developing a range of short courses around customer service, around a range of skills courses, health and safety, that was bespoke to them, so designed with them and accredited with major awarding bodies*" (Paul Parks, AL5).

He is seen to have the social and cultural *capital* to work with national and local employers and he had a position in the *field* of education that enabled him to do this in practice within the *sub-field* of employment.

Paul Parks was asked what had been a highlight for him since he had become an academy leader. He valued the improvement in the exam results for his academy:

"*I think the key part/ element for me was GCSE achievement, coming from a low base of 11% and moving to 77%, number 1 in the town and attending the day when they open their envelopes, seeing happy smiley children's faces who under previous regimes had failed*" (Paul Parks, AL5).

I interpret this as him being given *symbolic capital* or recognition for the examination results for his academy.

This suggests a high *Commitment to Responsibilisation* of self in that he readily accepts the results orientation of his data-driven environment.

When asked if he could talk to government about something what he would talk about, Paul Parks referenced the ability to be entrepreneurial and innovative as encouraged by the New Labour government for the early academies:

"*I think the main thing that I would want to talk to them about is how you encourage entrepreneurial activity but then support them if it doesn't quite go to plan*" (Paul Parks, AL5).

He questioned whether the leaders of the original academies had been enabled to fully embrace the concept of entrepreneurialism and operate as businesses would:

"*There are issues about when some head-teachers and principals have been too entrepreneurial coming unstuck*" (Paul Parks (AL5).

The implication of this is that he understood what it meant in practice in the *field* of education for an academy to develop entrepreneurial activity and that the very nature of entrepreneurial activity meant that risks needed to be taken, and things might not always go according to plan.  His concern was that the academies programme did not provide as much support for entrepreneurialism as it should have.

A counter argument would be that introducing entrepreneurialism into the academies introduces risk, which introduces uncertainty and precarity into the school environment and that uncertainty and precarity are not what is needed in the school environment, but rather what is needed is certainty and stability.

Paul Parks position in the *field* of education and his practice is informed by his *habitus* that is his disposition to agree with the idea of free markets in education and the suggestion that academies should be more entrepreneurial and business-like.  He has developed a *feel for the game* of entrepreneurialism in the academies.

He can be seen to embody Foucault's theorisation of "homo-oeconomicus" (Foucault 1978/9) as discussed by Brown (2015, p80). He embraces the neo-liberal ideology behind the academies programme, although he may be unaware of this, and is man as entrepreneur of himself.

His responses imply that Paul Parks has a high *Commitment to Responsibilisation* of self and constructs himself as an ideal neo-liberal worker and a performing and enterprising subject.

Whether Paul Parks had *agency* to inform governments and other agencies and the implications for Academy Leaders of implementing the government's policies in practice in the *field* of education will be discussed in the next section.

He was asked whether he had opportunities to discuss ideas with Ofsted and he explained how his relationship with Ofsted operated:

"*No. You don't get... No, no… and that's one of the issues with Ofsted. Ofsted changes the rules in year. It's a bit like changing the rules within a game of football. All of a sudden, the off-side rule has changed and you're not aware of it. So, I think that, I would say that one of the issues with Ofsted is that it changes too much in year, instead of planning, allowing people to be ready for when they visit. And also, you have inconsistencies with the inspection teams that attend. Some interpret the rules in one way and some interpret them in another*" (Paul Parks, AL5).

He felt that:

"*We need to transform Ofsted into a different organisation and there needs to be more reliance on self-assessment within schools and colleges working together to drive up standards*" (Paul Parks, AL5)

This suggests that Paul Parks understood how Ofsted worked in practice from the perspective of one of those who was being inspected and that it

would be beneficial for Ofsted to work more equally with leaders within schools and colleges as they were all in positions where they were trying to improve education for all children.

Paul Parks was asked if he had any opportunities to inform governments, He said that:

"*Yes, majorly, I have worked with ministers of all parties at all levels. I have attended a range of sort of workshops to advise them. I have had a direct line to ministers to give them ideas on how they could improve performance within schools and colleges*" (Paul Parks, AL5).

This data is interpreted as him feeling that he had *agency* to inform government in the development of the academies and the structures for education.

When asked who provided professional support for him, he said:

"*I haven't particularly had any mentors. I had one really excellent chair about 5 years ago, but he left. I took a principals' leadership course and I did my master's degree but I guess I learned on the job*" (Paul Parks, AL5).

This suggests that he is autonomous and self-determined and has a high *Commitment to Responsibilisation* of self and an acceptance of his individualistic and competitive environment.

Paul Parks was asked if he had any final thoughts or any things that he would like to follow up on or things that had not been asked and he talked about education in the United Kingdom and its links to globalised education reform and said that:

"*I think that the UK is still held in high esteem, that is why Dubai, the Middle East want to transport our education systems into their countries and I think we are unduly critical sometimes.  I also think though that it is not acceptable that some areas of the country are under-performing massively. The children within those areas, like [County] and others, parts of [County] interestingly. But I do think that what we need some stability. In China, they have a 10-year strategic education plan and ours is too erratic and changes for political reasons. We need to transform Ofsted into a different organisation and there needs to be more reliance on self-assessment within schools and colleges working together to drive up standards. So, that's what I'd say really*" (Paul Parks, AL5).

This is interpreted as Paul Parks positioning himself in the *field* of education as being in support of the United Kingdom operating as an exporter of education in a globalised market.

### 5.5.1 Summary of Paul Parks (AL5)

The data here suggests that Paul Parks (AL5) fully supports the original idea of the academies from the New Labour government. His response to change towards academisation can be characterised as "Make it Happen".

Paul Parks is developing relationships within his own Federation, with other schools as a teaching school and to expand his Federation and developing direct partnerships with higher education, further education, and with local and national employers.

I interpret that Paul Parks embraces all aspects of the business principles and results orientation of his data-driven environment and he can be categorised as high on his *Commitment to Responsibilisation.*

He agrees with the idea that the leaders of the academies should be entrepreneurial as suggested for the original academies programme, and it is interpreted that he constructs himself as an autonomous, self-determined, performing and enterprising subject; an ideal neo-liberal leader.

Paul Parks encourages the involvement of parents and teachers in his academies within a free market discourse, where he sees parents as customers and ambassadors for his academies and encourages teachers to be fully on board in his Federation by developing the values for themselves however, it is interpreted that for him the most important aspects are the business and financial needs of the Federation and that these should be prioritised and come first in any decisions that are made.

Paul Park's position is aligned with the New Labour Government's original position in the *field* of education and their suggestion for developing entrepreneurialism in the academies and he continues to take a position in the *field* that is aligned with the Coalition and Conservative Governments' position in the *field* of education.

Taking up this position re-confirms his success, gives him *agency* within the academies programme and commands access to any specific profits that are at stake in the field of education.

**5.6 Peter Church (AL6)**

Peter Church (AL6) was the leader of what was historically a co-educational comprehensive school with foundation status in a socio-economically deprived rural area that had been pressed into becoming a sponsored academy.

He said that he liked the idea of greater autonomy however, for him the increased autonomy that was promised for the academies programme had not materialised in practice.  He said that:

"*I probably couldn't name you any area in which we have greater autonomy now than we had when we were a Foundation school*" (Peter Church, AL6).

This suggest that, in *practice* in the *field* of education, since his Foundation school became an academy, Peter Church has no greater *agency* than he had held previously, although this does not suggest how much *agency* he held previously.

Peter Church said that he had always kept to the National Curriculum, largely because:

"*There has been no reason to abandon it, in part or completely and because whenever we have wanted to teach things that are outside of the National Curriculum we have*" (Peter Church, AL6).

He had introduced an Outward-Bound course at Key Stage 4 that was not accredited when he first introduced it but that had subsequently become accredited, which he felt had been hugely successful.

This is interpreted as Peter Church having some *agency* to work with others to develop ideas for the curriculum beyond what is currently in the National Curriculum.

Peter Church was asked if he had used the freedom of academy status to change the pay and conditions of staff. He explained that the company that took on his school made it very clear that they had no intention of changing teachers' pay and conditions, certainly in the foreseeable future, so everybody's contract was transferred under the "Transfer of Undertakings and Protection of Employment" (TUPE'd) straight across, so that was not an option that was taken up by his sponsor.

This response suggests that Peter Church did not have *agency* to determine pay and conditions for staff himself but that, if this was done, this would be decided by his sponsor.

Peter Church said that he did not know of any school where changing pay and conditions had happened and he acknowledged that did not mean to say that it had not happened, just that he was not aware of any school that had, in his words, "*taken that plunge*" (Peter Church, AL6).

From his perspective:

"*it is quite a controversial thing to do and I suspect that, for the vast majority of head-teachers, when they are going through a conversion process, they want to get the process running smoothly and so don't want to decide to change teachers' pay and conditions*" (Peter Church, AL6).

Peter Church said that he had changed the length of school days internally to end the school day at 3.15pm rather than at 3.30pm but that this was done

before he became an academy and he felt that was a good illustration of the fact that he had those powers anyway and that he could change the school day and just had to consult and give parents a reasonable notice, which normally is a year.

This is interpreted as Peter Church having *democratic agency* to change the length of the school days with the *democratic* involvement of parents.

Peter Church was asked how he felt about reducing the role of the local authorities and he had real anxieties about losing local authorities overall because he felt that once that expertise had gone it would never be re-assembled and his real fear was that the time would come when people would say that we have lost something very valuable. He did not feel that the local authority was always perfect and they felt that there were areas that could have been improved but he recognised that the local authority was an organisation with a great deal of expertise and a great deal of desire.  He valued the support he had received from his local authority and said that:

"*I think head-teachers will always say we want greater autonomy but they would also say but we also want access to support when we need it and of course effective local authorities, always provided that kind of support*" (Peter Church, AL6).

He did point out some reservations in principle about the local authority in that he felt that the money wasn't necessarily shepherded as carefully as it might be because it wasn't the local authorities' own money. He valued particularly human resources services provided by the local authority and felt

that they did not want the support that was available from private companies, he said:

"*I don't want tough HR support, I want effective, accurate, permanent, HR support that is not going to come back to haunt me or to leave me feeling as though I have not dealt with people kindly*" (Peter Church, AL6).

He pointed out the downsides of using private companies:

"*I think people can get carried away with all the ideas of autonomy and independence and the opportunity to buy in all their own services and so on that are not necessarily going to turn out to be what you were expecting*" (Peter Church, AL6).

This data suggests that an emphasis on independence for academies and the use of private companies to provide services in education had increased uncertainty, precarity and insecurity for Peter Church and is interpreted as suggesting that his commitment to *neo-liberal responsibilisation* of self is low.

Peter Church explained that the governance structure for his academy consisted of a local governing body with some of the traditional mix of parent and staff governors but representatives from their sponsor replaced the local authority governors and they also had a layer above that, which was the Board of Directors and another layer above that, which was the trustees of the academy. Peter Church found that in *practice* his local governing body did have the power to make decisions:

"*In reality, our experience while [Sponsor] were with us was that the local governing body had completely free range, and although the powers of delegation were very clear on paper and there were powers that were not*

*delegated to the local governing body, those powers in practice <u>were</u>*
*delegated to the local governing body.  So, all decisions even those where in*
*principle they should have been taken by one of the other levels were not,*
*they were taken at local governor's level* (Peter Church, AL6).

He felt that they were unusual in this because [Sponsor] took them on and
then announced that they were withdrawing from sponsorship of all schools
so they had only been with the academy for just over a year and then beyond
that point the support and intervention was wound down to nothing.

This data illustrates the very dynamic and changeable nature of governance
for academies and, using the concept of *precarisation*, this is seen to
increase uncertainty and precarity for Peter Church.

When asked if he could give an example of where he had accepted ideas
from parents, Peter Church talked about his academy's communication with
parents:

"*There are so many means by which we can communicate with parents, and*
*fairly early on with parents, text messaging has been enormously successful"*
*(Peter Church, AL6)*.

He explained the benefits for them were that parents felt that they were being
listened to and parents were now being communicated with far more
effectively as there was such an immediacy about it and highlighted that this
idea had come from parents:

"*So, texting was a parental suggestion, great idea and it works fantastically*
*well.*" (Peter Church, AL6).

This data illustrates that he had engaged with parents and that parents have direct democracy in his academy with parents being given the opportunity to input suggestions for improvements to his academy. This data is interpreted as suggesting that Peter Church has a medium high *Commitment to Democracy* in terms of accepting ideas from parents.

Peter Church was asked if he could give an example of where he had accepted ideas from teachers and he talked about how his original sponsor had failed to provide continuous professional development and that this was a serious concern for all his staff.  He explained that staff at his academy had therefore taken the initiative themselves:

"*We had a member of staff who talked to us about wanting to create a real professional learning environment and could we create professional learning teams and meet regularly, set up a blog, share best practice and ask staff to get involved in a professional learning initiative and it could be for a whole range of different suggestions. She was prepared to organise it all, set up the blog, come up with the materials, she put together the teams to lead on it the whole thing was introduced at a series of meetings and it's taken off and is going to be a real success*" (Peter Church, AL6).

He backed up what they had done by citing evidence from the Sutton Trust (Hutchings, July 2014) that talked about people learning from each other and he felt that this is what his colleague was doing and that everything that his academy did should be under-pinned by Continuing Professional Development that was driven by staff, for staff and chosen by staff not by the academy leader or the Senior leadership team.

This data is interpreted as Peter Church working democratically with teaching staff and him having a medium high *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values.*

He summed this up:

*"That's been a great start to this academic year and I would love to be able to say it was my idea, but it certainly wasn't"* (Peter Church, AL6).

Peter Church was asked how his academy works with other schools or academies now and whether they are they competitors or whether they could work together. He recognised the importance of working with other schools for the current government agenda, especially in what they would see as support for schools that they consider to be failing:

"*When the Department for Education came to see us in the summer to say look what are we going to do now that [Sponsor] is leaving, they only asked me one question to prepare before they came and that was what schools had we been working with since we became an academy. Just so that you know, this school went into Special Measures in 2011.  So, that was one of the reasons why we were looking for support from other schools*" (Peter Church, AL6).

He explained that he had been working with 15 schools, 8 of whom had been providing support for him and 7 of whom he had been providing support for. He explained the type of work that had been possible in that they had devised their own literacy strategy and implemented it and when Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) came in they asked if he would you be

prepared to share it with other schools. He explained why he thought it was valuable for all schools to have an equal voice in collaboration:

"*So, we started to share this literacy strategy with them. It is all over the place now and it has been great because it is something that really does give the lie to the idea that schools in Special Measures are hopeless and dying and are in need of massive intervention because you have got ideas here that you are sharing with schools elsewhere*" (Peter Church, AL6).

This observation suggests that schools that are in Special Measures do have something that they could share with other schools, for example they might be best placed to develop a literacy strategy because they have students who struggle with literacy and it is *misrecognition* to infer that they do not and *symbolic violence* is being practised on them.

Peter Church was asked if he could talk about a situation when he had done something significant with representatives from Higher education and for him his only real contact with higher education was through his involvement in teacher training:

"*Other than our involvement with teacher training… no is the answer.*" (Peter Church, AL6).

His academy was an 11-16 academy, and I interpret that this as meaning that he did not have *agency* to work with higher education in terms of progression for students for his academy and it is suggested here that this leads to inequalities for students in education.

Working with higher education for the development of teacher training is currently a very dynamic situation with the development of Teach First and direct involvement of schools with the training of teachers with School Direct. The power in initial teacher training appears to be moving away from higher education and towards academies and schools themselves.

Peter Church was asked about a situation where he had done something significant with representatives from further education. He had worked with further education providers for alternative provision for some of his students and he thought that could be very successful because further education could often offer things that he could not possibly offer at his academy, particularly as his academy was in a rural area, land-based opportunities.

When asked about whether he could work with local and national employers he said that he had done a lot of work over the years with different companies and apprenticeships and he felt that had been particularly helpful. He gave more details about one project

"*We had a fantastic project that went on for some time with [Energy Company] they came in and did a very small bit of work with a small group of students on sustainable energy. At that time, [Name] was linked to [Energy Company], I think they sponsored her and she came in and it grew and they eventually started providing opportunities for apprentices and we had some fantastic opportunities for a small numbers of students and that went on for some time and I think what came out of that what was more important was that a lot of things that we have done has been based around green energy and renewables and sustainable projects so, for example, this building is*

*carbon neutral and that would not have happened without that initial project*"
(Peter Church, AL6).

This data is interpreted as showing that he had a medium high *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* in working with national employers to benefit his local community.

Peter Church was asked if he could name one highlight at his academy since he had been the leader of the academy and he thought that the examination results were a highlight as when he arrived at the school in Sept 2003 the school had never been chosen to be anything other than Satisfactory, which is now Requires Improvement and the results at that time had never been above 48% and at that time the measure was 5A*'s to C so, he thought that an early highlight for him was that in 2005 their results went up to 72% and they were named nationally as one of the most improved schools in the country.  For him that was quite a highlight for his school and quite an achievement for his staff.

He is unlikely to question the idea that the success of academies should be judged by their examination results as he had achieved *symbolic capital* and recognition for this.

When asked if he could talk to government about something what would it be, Peter Church wanted to discuss several things with government but at the top of his list would be how to recruit teachers and to get at the very heart of the recruitment process and the idea that the people that he needed were the people who would choose to work with children and young people, not,

as an initial pre-requisite, people who had high academic achievements such as first class degrees and high 2.1s and so on. Having been directly involved in teaching himself for many years he had a great deal of cultural *capital* in the *field* and *practice* of education and understood what was required to be a good teacher and the sense of teachers having a vocation to work with children, whether this understanding meant that he was listened to by governments and other agencies in the political *field* will be explored in the next section.

Peter Church was asked if he had opportunities to discuss ideas with the National College for Teaching and Leadership and he said that he had not had recent contact with them but he suspected that he may not have been able to discuss issues when his school went into Special Measures:

"*I haven't done for some time, I used to be a local leader in education. Of course, when the school went into Special Measures, I don't know if I would have been asked to stop doing it but I resigned because people would have said 'oh the school has gone into Special Measures', so recently no but I did have*" (Peter Church, AL6).

This suggests that Peter Church felt that leaders of schools that are in what Ofsted judges as Special Measures may not be listened to by the National College of Teaching and Leadership even though, if Bourdieu is used to theorise this, this academy leader had previously held a great deal of cultural *capital* in the *field* of education and that his school going into Special Measures could be due to a variety of different contextual factors. This raises the question of whether there is equality in terms of whom the National

College for Teaching and Leadership might listen to and it is interpreted that in Bourdieu's terms, *symbolic violence* is being practised.

When asked if he had opportunities to discuss ideas with Ofsted inspectors, Peter Church felt that he could discuss ideas with Ofsted and said that he had recently completed a questionnaire from Ofsted because he had felt that it was important to get his views across. He explained that Ofsted did hold briefings that he could attend, and he did feel that Ofsted seemed to be listening and he had sympathies for Ofsted's position:

"*I do believe that they are listening, I do believe that there has been a real tension… for Ofsted. I think they are caught between the devil and the deep blue sea quite honestly… they are trying to remain as autonomous as they can*" (Peter Church, AL6).

Peter Church explained the changes that were being made at Ofsted that he thought would be beneficial:

"*What they are trying to do to make the inspection process more balanced I think and inclusive and I think the early indications from September who have been inspected recently and the conversations I have had with Her Majesty's Inspectors recently, they are more inclusive and they are saying what do you think the strengths of the school are, what do you think the area of development are , oh that seems to match what our early indications are and let's talk about what we are going to do about these things now*" (Peter Church, AL6).

This data is interpreted to suggest that recent changes to Ofsted have meant that *democratic agency* for Academy Leaders is increasing slightly.

When asked whether he had the opportunity to influence governments directly, Peter Church said that he only had the opportunity to inform government through questionnaires, which he felt were at a very generic level, but he always did take that opportunity particularly when he had the chance to write something.

His response suggests that some Academy Leaders are given more *agency* to input into the government's education reform agenda through direct face to face meetings than others, who are only consulted in a somewhat tokenistic way through asking them to complete questionnaires rather than them being asked to attend face to face meetings.

Peter Church was asked who provided professional support for him now and he said that he had received good professional support from his sponsor and that he personally just took the initiative himself.

This data suggests that for Peter Church, there is professional support from his sponsors, however, this support may not be available widely across the board for all Academy Leaders and may vary between sponsors.

When asked if he had any final thoughts or things that he would like to follow up or that he had not been asked, Peter Church raised the issue of schools working together more closely.  He said:

"*Schools are interesting organisations because you have schools where I think they can risk being quite inward looking.  They can be effective but they are fairly introspective and that is a real shame because they have a lot of expertise to share and no doubt the Sutton Trust make the point that the most effective are those that share*" (Peter Church, AL6).

Peter Church suggested that:

"*For me the way forward has got to be schools, particularly without local authorities, schools work together more closely. We have had so much benefit over the last 3 years from working with other schools and we have derived a great deal of benefit from being able to offer expertise to other schools and I think even if what could be out there is a real belief that even schools who are struggling still have a lot to offer and expertise too. There are all sorts of reasons why organisations struggle that would have an impact on where all schools will be. I don't know politically what will happen but [if they] provide less and less support for secondary schools they will have to look to one another for support because I don't think they will be as successful as they might be otherwise*" (Peter Church, AL6).

This suggests that for Peter Church the way forward is for Academy Leaders to provide support for each other in what could be seen to be a fast-changing and uncertain political environment, which is interpreted as suggesting that he has a medium high *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values.*

### 5.6.1 Summary of Peter Church (AL6)

Peter Church (AL6) is from a sponsored academy and the data here suggests that he had little choice in becoming an academy and is one of the people whose response to change towards academisation can be characterised as "Let it Happen". He liked the idea of greater autonomy however, for him increased autonomy has not materialised in practice.

Peter Church is developing relationships in line with his response to change of "Let it Happen": within his own academy and with other schools and he has

been asked about this by the Department for Education. He has developed relationships with further education in terms of vocational routes, and with local and national employers.

Peter Church is categorised as low on his *Commitment to Responsibilisation* of self as he accepts very few aspects of the business principles for the academies, for example, he has reservations about the demise of local authorities, and the use of private human resources companies.

He can be categorised as medium high on *Commitment to Democracy/Public Values* because he includes parents and teachers in many of the decisions that he makes for his academies.

## 5.7 Ruth Potter (AL7)

Ruth Potter (AL7) was the Academy Leader of a selective girls school with a mixed sixth form that had been graded by Ofsted as Outstanding.  Historically, it was a maintained girls' grammar school, then a community school, then a Foundation school that chose to convert to a grammar school with academy status under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government.

she felt that for her moving to academy status:

"*Has been a fantastic way forward because it has given us those extra curricula freedoms and also given us financial freedom*" (Ruth Potter, AL7).

This is interpreted to suggest that Ruth Potter's *habitus* is that she is broadly disposed towards academisation.

When asked if she had been able to use the freedom not to teach the National Curriculum, Ruth Potter felt that one of the highlights for her had been that she had been able to use curriculum freedoms with younger age groups as she felt that the girls at her academy were not risk takers and she had brought that to the senior team and come up with a new curriculum for part of year 7 that she called "Discover, Explore and Learn" or "The Deal". She explained that this had been done in a mixed ability way by suspending some humanities time to deliver "The Deal" which was cross-curricular and was taught in forms rather than different types of ability. She explained that this was something that she could do beyond GCSE results as:

"*That wasn't the main concern, improving the results because the GCSE results are brilliant anyway but it was to try and make the girls more resilient,*

*more self-managers to try to decrease the amount of doubt that girls tend to have*" (Ruth Potter, AL7)

This is interpreted as her having *agency* to develop ideas for the curriculum with younger age groups.

Ruth Potter was asked if she had been able to use the freedom to change the pay and conditions for staff and she had introduced a new pay scale system, which was very much based on the government one. She felt that it worked for them and that there was a degree of flexibility because staff could now request to go up two points if they could provide her and the governors with evidence of why they should be considered for that. She felt that she could reward very good teachers and that this freedom had been good for her. This is interpreted as transactional with progression being based on the argument of the case for a progression of two points.

Ruth Potter had looked at the length of terms and she had changed that. She hadn't varied the length of the school day and explained that

"*I think it's quite tricky because parents have children in other schools and it's the same with holidays so we haven't stepped out of line but that doesn't mean to say we won't in the future*" (Ruth Potter, AL7).

She recognised that different schools operate in different contexts and have different requirements and approaches that are more individual may be beneficial.

She valued the additional financial freedom that she had gained from becoming an academy:

"*It has also given us financial freedom, which has been particularly important at this school whereby I can use the money in the best way possible for the students here and it will be different, the requirements here are different from other schools*" (Ruth Potter, AL7).

Ruth Potter had found freedom from her local authority to be helpful to her. This was mainly because her local authority had not been that involved in her school other than when she first came to the school on human resources issues. She felt that as a new head-teacher she needed to learn that trade quite well as she was dealing with people, however, apart from that she really had not had the local authority in to the school very often at all in the past, as she put it:

"*We sorted things out. We tended to do it ourselves*" (Ruth Potter, AL7).

This illustrates that she felt that she had *agency* to resolve issues for herself.

Ruth Potter was asked what else happens now in the middle tier between herself and central government. For her there was very little in the middle ground. She pointed out that admissions went through the local authority but a group of grammar schools decided on the sort of test they used to select students and they got the results from an independent source and then let the local authority know which students had met the required standard for their school. She felt that this worked better for them because the local authority used to tell them how many students they were going to get into their school and now they oversaw that.

She hoped that what would come from the role of the Regional Schools Commissioners was improving education for all students. She pointed to the

potential for Regional Schools Commissioners to provide opportunities for educational professionals to learn by developing continuing professional development opportunities, organising conferences and attracting eminent educationalists to speak.

This is interpreted as suggesting that she had a medium high *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* and working democratically with other educational professionals in her region.

When asked about the governance of her academy, Ruth Potter, explained that the governance structure for her academy involved many players: her academy had three members who oversaw the academy, and directors or trustees of the academy. She elucidated further the committees' structure within the governance of her academy, they had 5 committees and this included: Human Resources and Pastoral, Teaching and Learning, Business Management, Admissions Committee, and Communications and Engagement (this was a new committee since they had become an academy).

The inclusion of committees for Business Management and Communications and Engagement suggests that managing the academy as a business with customer focus and engagement with others had become more prominent in academies than it was in schools previously. This is consistent with academies are being governed by an agenda based on neo-liberalism as discussed by Hayek (1944) and free markets, as discussed by Friedman (1993).

Ruth Potter, explained that the governors of her academy were elected in different ways. In the past, governors had been co-opted and this year they had held elections for the first time for the governing body.   She now had two elected governors to the governing body and these had been parent governors.

To explore how democratic the academies are, Ruth Potter was asked if she could give an example of where she had accepted ideas from parents and she gave an example of where parents of the children in her academy were heavily involved:

"*For a long time, the girls wanted a horse riding team to compete at school sports. Our head of physical education is allergic to horses and we really had to have somebody who could actually look after horses as they can actually be quite dangerous beasts and under health and safety I was quite concerned that we did it properly and we have had parents come forward now and they will lead a team for the high schools*" (Ruth Potter, AL7).

This suggests that Ruth Potter worked democratically with parents to develop ideas for her academy.

When asked if she could give an example of where she had accepted ideas from teachers, she talked about Continuing Professional Development sessions in her academy that involved a variety of teaching and learning strategies that staff had been using, or trialling, which they tended to share amongst themselves and other staff would take those on board and they were quite happy to put those ideas into their portfolio. She talked about other methods that they used to develop ideas with teaching staff:

"*We do also do something, they are called Green Shoots so we look at key areas for us within the school and we try to write down everything that we do in those key areas*" (Ruth Potter, AL7).

She would look at what they had done, for example, to develop student voice and would log it all round and usually used a spider diagram that they kept and reviewed every year to see what they had done and whether things had fallen off now because they had come to the end of their tenure and whether they had introduced new things.

This is interpreted as Ruth Potter having a medium high *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* because she takes on ideas from "all round" and her staff would test these ideas and review them the following year.

When asked how her academy works with other schools or academies now, Ruth Potter, said that she had worked with other schools in a variety of ways, firstly they had a grammar school heads meeting where all the grammar schools in [county] got together.  She offered some courses at her academy that they couldn't offer at other grammar schools, particularly in languages and her students had gone to another grammar school for drama and theatre.  She was part of a group of schools, including a special school and a college and they worked together. She was organising a mini-convention at her academy for all [Name of Group] Year 10, 11 and 12 students, trying to increase the number of students going to Russell group universities. She explained that this group worked together on a variety of different things, they were looking at employing a mental health nurse, and in the past, they had employed careers advisors across several schools.

Ruth Potter was asked if these were competitive relationships, and she felt that they were not, she said that:

"*I think there is a really lovely feel amongst the [City] heads. We take the approach that we are in it together and we are trying to provide the very best education for the children in [City] irrespective of our designation, it is just one of those things that there are grammar schools here but we've also worked with [special school] for example*" (Ruth Potter, AL7).

This is interpreted as a medium high *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* because she could work together with those from other schools and academies to develop ideas and suggestions from all of those involved. She understood that the relationship between her academy and other academes and schools was influenced by power however, she felt that the heads in her city could understand the context in which they operated, critically reflect on this, see education as a public good and work together democratically for the benefit of all children within that city.

In terms of schools working together, Ruth Potter elaborated on how the government had suggested that systems leaders should work with other schools and academies:

"*As an Outstanding school, we were invited to a meeting to see whether we would be able to support another school*" (Ruth Potter, AL7).

She pointed out the difficulties for her in that at this moment she had a brand new senior leadership team, so she was having to settle her senior

leadership team in but she felt that this was something that she could explore in the future.

When asked about a situation where she had done something significant with representatives from higher education, Ruth Potter said that students from her academy had been involved with higher education in that they had been taking part in the skills sessions that [University] offered for sixth formers.

When asked to talk about a situation where she had done something significant with representatives from further education, Ruth Potter was uncertain what was meant by further education and the distinction between that and higher education. This illustrates the current complexity of post 16 education and how it is important for the researcher to define the terminology used.  It was clarified that the term "further education" was used in this case to mean technical and vocational education in further education colleges rather than education in the academies own sixth forms.  Once this was clarified, Ruth Potter explained that:

"*We have very few students who go for vocational education*" (Ruth Potter, AL7).

Ruth Potter was asked about a situation where she had done something significant with representatives from local or national employers and she said that she worked with employers through apprenticeships where she encouraged some of her students to go for apprenticeships:

"*I was talking to one of the girls today and she was saying she has been interviewed for an apprenticeship in accountancy for example.   We have had*

*students who have had apprenticeships at [Engineering Company] or at [Aviation company] or [Government Organisation]"* (Ruth Potter, AL7).

To explore whether Academy Leaders had *agency* to input into the government's education reform agenda, Ruth Potter was asked if she could talk about something to government what it would be and she said that she wanted to talk to the government about finances and the drop in the funding that had been quite significant for her and she was quite concerned about it. She also raised the amount of changes that were occurring concurrently and the lack of joined up thinking as an issue.  The example that she gave was in curriculum reforms where she felt the government did not seem to be able to go either one way or the other, so she gave the suggestion of starting with changes to GCSEs, then to AS level and then to A level or the other way around and felt that this would give her staff some stability.  She felt that her staff worked extremely hard but were struggling with the amount of change that was currently coming through and explained about the operational difficulties that this caused them, for example at a meeting they had to explain to students and parents that some of the subjects would be on the old specifications and some would be on the new specifications, some would have AS's some would not and she felt that:

"*Those are two things that I would really wish the government would get their act together on*" (Ruth Potter, AL7).

Ruth Potter was asked if she had opportunities to discuss ideas with the National College for Teaching and Leadership.  She had not been particularly involved with the National College for Teaching and Leadership personally but she said that it if any of her colleagues did the National

Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) then that was an avenue for her to raise issues.

She was asked if she had the opportunity to discuss ideas with Ofsted she said that she had not had a recent opportunity to do this:

"*No not particularly, I keep them at arm's length. They haven't been here for a while, touch wood*" (Ruth Potter, AL7).

This data is interpreted as suggesting that the relationship with Ofsted was not a democratic one but that Ofsted inspections were a time of *performativity* where Academy Leaders were judged on the performance of their academies as discussed by Lyotard (1984) and Ball (2003) and that if, as an Outstanding school, she could be left alone to continue with less frequent Ofsted visits this was beneficial to her.

This is interpreted to suggest that Ruth Potter's *habitus* was disposed towards having *agency* to make decisions for herself.

Ruth Potter was asked if she had any opportunities to inform governments and said that she had been given the opportunity to speak at a Westminster forum about buildings because she had temporary classrooms on her site that had been there for the last 25 years and she did get invited from time to time to speak at other forums.

She explained that as a grammar school head she had avenues to talk to government:

"*As grammar school heads, we have had an opportunity, in the past to talk to Michael Gove and to Nicky Morgan we do have, our chief executive*

*together with the chair of Grammar School Heads Association have regular meetings with Gove on issues that are pertinent to grammar schools and that is the main avenue*" (Ruth Potter, AL7).

This data is interpreted as suggesting that Ruth Potter had *agency* to raise issues and thoughts directly with government.

Ruth Potter was asked who provided professional support for her now and she said that:

"*I had a mentor. Unfortunately, at this moment in time  I don't have a mentor but the governors are looking into getting me a mentor because I think it is really important that you do have someone, sometimes just to run ideas past, sometimes a little bit of help, a little bit of moral support because it is not an easy job and you get hit from all sides metaphorically speaking but you get squashed by the government, some of the governors have got particular agendas, the staff, you can't please everybody all the time, the students sometimes because we encourage our students  to be quite vocal and sometimes you get that back from them, in the nicest way*" (Ruth Potter, AL7).

This data is interpreted to suggest that her role was isolating and that professional support or mentoring was helpful in alleviating some uncertainty and insecurity.

When asked if she had any final thoughts or any things that she would like to follow up or on, Ruth Potter felt that a key issue for her was the amount of change happening currently:

"*so much change and I think that it really is hard on staff and you have to keep that morale going*" (Ruth Potter, AL7).

This data illustrates uncertainty and precarity, which is inherent to a neo-liberal form of governing.

She thought that from her perspective there were some positive aspects to the changes that had taken place:

"*I do think one fantastic thing that has happened in education is that I think we have become more professional. And that is not to say that we weren't in the past but there seems to be just that added edge now and there is greater accountability at all levels it's not just accountability from the head but we are expecting it from our middle managers, our teachers are expecting it from us*" (Ruth Potter, AL7)

This data is interpreted to infer that more was being expected in terms of performativity and delegation at all levels, with the teaching profession being expected to raise standards.

According to Ruth Potter's account, another positive aspect of the changes was:

"*one area that I think is just fabulous for new people coming in is all the research.  We do have research panels looking at different things that interest staff and that was never the case when I started teaching and we are going to be working with [Name of College] on developing a research group*" (Ruth Potter, AL7).

This suggests that research agendas in Universities and colleges are being driven democratically by the interests of staff from the teaching profession.

**5.7.1 Summary of Ruth Potter (AL7)**

The data here suggests that Ruth Potter, (AL7) is one of the people who is helping academisation to happen by converting to becoming an academy and she can be categorised as "Help it Happen". The main reasons for her school converting to an academy were because of the suggestion of extra curricula and financial freedoms.

The data is interpreted to suggest that her *habitus* from her experiences and a lifetime of social interactions is the disposition to have independence and *agency* to make decisions for herself.

Ruth Potter is developing relationships in line with what is interpreted as her response to change of "Help it Happen": within her own convertor academy; with higher education and with local and national employers. She may be about to develop her relationships with other schools through systems leadership. She does not have strong relationships with further education.

Ruth Potter can be categorised as medium high on her *Commitment to Responsibilisation* as she has embraced many aspects of the business principles and results orientation of her data driven environment, such as greater financial freedoms.

She can be categorised as medium high on *Commitment to Democracy/Public Values* as she includes parents and teachers in many of the decisions that are made for her academy and develops democratic relationships with others within her area.

It is interpreted that Ruth Potter (AL7) is playing the game of academisation. She is balancing her response to the government's education reform agenda by having both a medium high *Commitment to Responsibilisation* and a medium high *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values.*

## 5.8 Simon Brown (AL8)

Simon Brown (AL8) was the leader of a co-educational secondary school with a sixth form that had the Ofsted grading of Good that chose to convert to an academy under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government.

He liked the idea of more autonomy for his school. This supports the findings of Thomson, after Bourdieu, that head-teachers are disposed by virtue of the game they are in, to desire more autonomy and that this has been relatively constant over a long period of time across school sectors and in several different places, mainly Australia and England (Thomson, 2010).

Simon Brown had doubts however, about the amount of autonomy that he had gained and felt that the idea was predicated on political thrust from the Coalition government:

*"There is a gap between the rhetoric and the reality and the rhetoric is increased autonomy. The reality is that very little of that autonomy has been realised for us as a school"* (Simon Brown, AL8).

This data is interpreted to suggest Simon Brown's *habitus*: he is disposed from his previous experience and social interactions to agree with the idea that Academy Leaders should have *agency* to make their own decisions and this informs his practice in the *field* of education.

He said that his academy operated as a business: that they had made the business decision to become an academy and had received some financial uplift because of that.

This is interpreted as him accepting the business principles of his data-driven environment and having a medium high *Commitment to Responsibilisation*.

He felt that he had already had autonomy as a Foundation School before becoming an academy and recognised that some Academy Leaders in larger academy chains had less autonomy than they had held previously and felt that unlike them:

"*We are not shackled by the need to adopt the corporate image of an academy chain; we can do it our way*" (Simon Brown, AL8).

This data highlights the corporatisation of education and the branding of some academies. Simon Brown can be seen here to be taking advantage of what is on offer from the government, such as *agency* to make decisions and manage his individual academy for himself, in return for some of the conditions that are attached to becoming an academy, such as an acceptance of corporatisation and the neo-liberal economic discourse behind the academies programme.

Simon Brown was asked whether he could use the freedoms that came with academy status not to teach the National Curriculum, to change the pay and conditions of staff and to change the length of the school days and terms.

He gave what he termed a "*nutshell view*" that his academy hadn't exercised autonomy in any of those three areas and explained that it would concern him to move away from the National Curriculum because of

"*the intrinsic link between the National Curriculum and output performance, as measured by GCSE*" (Simon Brown, AL8).

He said that this did not mean that his curriculum was static, because he felt that his academy had "*complete freedom*" over the number of hours they taught to allocated subjects and as the children got older, they had a wide array of courses that supplemented the National Curriculum and they had considerable autonomy in what they put on in 40% of their curriculum for their years 10 and 11 and they exercised that. This data suggests that his *agency* to make changes to the National Curriculum was controlled by the structures that he worked within and that he has accepted that and exercised agency only within those parameters.

Simon Brown said that his academy did operate by school teachers pay and conditions and he felt that there were reasons for that decision and that there were implications in terms of the environment that he was in. He said that it was part of an agreement with the teaching unions in terms of his workforce. He felt that they need not have done this and that they could have abandoned teachers' pay and conditions but that he had kept that framework. He felt that it was supportive of staff by and large but felt that he had significant increased flexibilities in the way that he could interpret teachers' pay and conditions and he did exercise those. This data is interpreted as suggesting that Simon Brown had a medium high *Commitment to Democracy/Public values* and supporting teacher's perspectives.

In terms of the timing of the school day he felt that he could have changed that anyway and that he would not have to be an academy to do that and it was something that his academy was thinking about but not simplistically in terms of adding hours, because he did not necessarily believe that to provide more hours would improve the output, but he thought that there may be more

efficient ways of using his building stock and he was exploring the possibility of phasing the timings of the school day so that the timings of the school day would not necessarily be the same for all staff and for all students.

From his perspective:

"*this is fairly long-term strategic thinking, there's little that's tangible about it and there isn't even a timescale around when we may do it, it's just part of a conversation piece*" (Simon Brown, AL8).

This data is interpreted as suggesting Simon Brown has a medium high *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* and is exploring the possibility of extending the school day by having conversations with those who would be effected and considering their opinions.

Simon Brown was asked what he thought about reducing the role of the local authorities. He thought that the local authority had shrinking resources and that this had caused problems and pointed to the fact that his academy had not been affected by this because schools such as his would never have felt beholden to buy in the local authority services necessarily anyway and he had gone out to the market. He felt that the function of the local authority to provide a device for school improvement was virtually moribund because the local authority did not have the skill set, the experience or the credibility and he had not bought that service from the local authority.

This data is interpreted as suggesting that Simon Brown had a medium high commitment to *neo-liberal responsibilisation* of self as he had accepted many aspects of free markets and the marketisation of education, such as the idea of buying of educational services in a market.

He thought that he needed to work with the local authority in special educational needs, as this was critically important to him. He felt that if there were risks that downsizing meant that the local authority cut resourcing in that area that would be a problem for him because there were massive changes currently in terms of the legislative framework for Special Educational Needs and imperatives in terms of how the academies met those needs.

When asked what was in the middle ground between himself and central government now, he felt that the Education Funding Agency occupied that ground. He explained that academies are funded directly from central government and the Education Funding Agency are the gatekeepers through that. He felt that they exercised considerable financial accountability over him and he recognised that, as a state funded private school in the public arena and a company registered at Companies House, there should be considerable transparency over the spending of a lot of public funds. He felt that the capital funding through the Education Funding Agency gave his academies opportunities from the fact that there are bidding rounds so that they bid for capital monies and that he was able to draw funds into his academy with great success and that this was a new world for him since he converted to academy status. He recognised some unfairness in this:

"*Now I don't speak for all schools, we have a very shrewd business head on our shoulders to make it happen, for this reason we have probably drawn in more funds to this school than any other [county] school. So, the broader view is that it is an unfair system, its dog eat dog. We're eating a dog*" (Simon Brown, AL8).

This is interpreted as suggesting that Simon Brown had a medium high *Commitment to Responsibilisation* as he had accepted the entrepreneurial and business aspects of his environment but that he also had a medium high *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* as he recognises the unfairness inherent within a neo-liberal form of governing.

Simon Brown talked about the Regional Schools Commissioners and explained that they had a negligible impact on his operation currently and that most of the Regional Schools Commissioners work was now taking the decision making over further academy conversions and academy chains away from the centre and giving this a regional dimension and capacity. He explained that Regional Schools Commissioners and head-teachers were working on Outstanding schools outsourcing their quality in terms of uplifting schools that needed it. He explained that

"*We are very much in the middle as a school we are not judged as Outstanding by Ofsted but we are judged as Good across the board so there is no compunction for us to engage with that, so this organisation is fairly satellite in a way for the Regional School Commissioners and the South West is a huge area*" (Simon Brown, AL8).

He felt that the Regional Schools Commissioners were likely to have a greater impact through working with his regional Ofsted and recognised that there were difficulties because Ofsted and the Regional Schools Commissioners were not co-terminus, which he felt was a bit clumsy as he felt that there needed to be joined up thinking with Ofsted.

This suggests that, as there are now both Regional Schools Commissioners and regional Ofsted, there is the potential for Academy Leaders to receive contradictory advice from the Regional Schools Commissioners and Ofsted and this introduces greater precarity, uncertainty and insecurity for Academy Leaders.

In terms of governance of his academy, Simon Brown explained that his governors did not require formal qualifications but that he had a growing determination and action to skills audit. There was consideration by the governing body as a whole over the relevance and skills set for the co-optees, and comparison with the skills audit in terms of what would be helpful, what skills they had and what they were short of. He explained that his governors were on 4-year fixed terms and explained that there was no limit on the terms of office of the chair or vice chair.  He knew that the National Governors Association ([http://www.nga.org.uk/Home.aspx](http://www.nga.org.uk/Home.aspx)) were quite keen on some form of a limit of a six-year maximum term of office for Chairs and Vice Chairs and he felt that there could be strength in that.

As can be suggested from this data, the power of the Chair and the Vice Chair of Boards for academies is not usually circumcised in terms of length of office and there is therefore the potential for their power to become uncontrolled.

To explore how democratic the academies were, Simon Brown was asked to give an example of where he had accepted an idea from parents. He said that he went out to full democratic election for his parent governor contribution and approximately a quarter of his governing body of 20

governors were parent governors.  He thought that it was important that he knew what his pupil's parents felt about the quality of his provision and because of that his academy used the on-line facility that is run by Ofsted, called "parent view".  He explained that his academy linked it through their own systems. He gave his opinion that forthcoming Ofsted Inspections increased the likelihood of gaining opinions from parents:

"*Now the habit in schools is that parents don't really give a school a view of the quality of what the school is doing until the stakes are raised the day before a school is inspected because that is about the only notice you've got*" (Simon Brown, AL8).

He explained how his academy was pro-active in engaging with parents and that they looked at the dynamic of "parent view" and it provided them with continuous monitoring information and told them about the quality of their provision across 12 different domains and he felt that this was important leadership and management information that they took seriously in terms of both governance and senior leadership and that it helped them to be responsive to some of their key priority areas about what might be appropriate.

This data in interpreted to suggest that Simon Brown has a medium high *Commitment to Responsibilisation* as he accepts many aspects of his data-driven environment, such as performance in terms of data to be provided for Ofsted.

He gave an example of where he had accepted an idea from parents:

"*Our parents said, "Oh it would be really interesting if you could offer us maths GCSE with you because we look at what our children are doing and we think my goodness how can we help*"

He explained that they had thought about that and they were teaching a sub-set group of their parents out of hours who would sit maths GCSE alongside students in June.

This data is interpreted to suggest that Simon Brown had a medium high commitment to *democratic agency* or public values as parents were involved in many of the decisions that he made for his academy.

When asked for an example of where he had accepted suggestions from teachers, Simon Brown talked about his Continuous Professional Improvement programme that was 90% focussed on the quality of teaching and learning so he had a range of what he thought were brilliant teachers and supported them in terms of their own research for higher degrees and he offered training sessions to staff to explore what they thought were exciting and innovative approaches to teaching. He explained further that what works well for them is that they had the opportunity for what netted out as 4 full training days as an entitlement for every member of staff. He described how for those days, they had complete flexibility, which means that his academy had a mixed economy programme, out of hours for staff. Some of the programme was compulsory where they needed to ensure that they had a consistent messaging across all staff but it gave staff the flexibility to attend what they were interested in. He explained that a huge amount of that work

would be with teaching staff, not necessarily senior leaders, leading it. He elaborated:

"*There is that complete dynamic and flow if you like where, does this sound a bit clichéd or pompous?  We are teaching ourselves. So, there is a huge and rich dynamic, there's masses*" (Simon Brown, AL8).

This data is interpreted to suggest that Simon Brown felt that teachers in his academy were working together democratically, with engagement, inter-relationships and dialogue between themselves.

When asked how his academy worked with other schools and academies now, Simon Brown felt that his academy could work with other schools and academies on their own terms as they were not part of an academy chain or Federation:

"*Yes, in a very relaxed way we don't have any hard Federation, more in the opportunities to work with a teaching school alliance in [county] but mostly it's incredibly flexible: we network*" (Simon Brown, AL8).

He explained that they would network with academies not just in [county] but nationally, so, it may be that there was an area of interest, for instance the quality of verbal feedback and marking through teaching and learning, and he would look to those who he felt was cutting edge and succeeding nationally and he thought that with the facility of on-line media he could very quickly work out where the very best practice in the field of education was and he would link with those people.

He elaborated that they could work together better nationally and indicated that there was competition locally that affected collaboration:

"*We can work better beyond [town]. We are competitors within [town] for children in school places ultimately so that does limit the effectiveness with which we can get really deep relationships very, very locally*" (Simon Brown, AL8).

Simon Brown talked about systems leadership and explained that this would not be a requirement for him as he felt that his academy was very much in the middle as a school, as they were not judged by Ofsted as Outstanding but they were judged as Good across the board, so there was no compunction for him to offer systems leadership as this would only be a requirement for Outstanding schools.

This data suggests that systems leadership is being viewed more as a compunction in response to a direction from government rather than a democratic choice being made from within the teaching profession to work with other Academy Leaders.

Simon Brown talked about how he had worked with higher education in terms of progression to university:

"*We have taken younger students to Russell Group universities to give them a taste of what that might mean. We bring people from admissions authorities in universities to speak to our students. To help us understand all of that*" (Simon Brown, AL8).

He talked about how they had worked with higher education as a facet of their initial teacher training work where there was a local consortium, which was school-led but they worked with the [Name of University] in terms of their teaching departments and bringing people in to trainee teach with them. He also talked about their staff being involved with research:

"*We have currently upwards of half a dozen staff who we support financially with their own research, which is all higher education based*" (Simon Brown, AL8).

Simon Brown's academy had its own sixth form and he explained that he did far less work with further education because he felt that locally they were competitors for students, although he felt that this was not as much as with other sixth forms.  He did liaise in terms of careers advice and progression for their student body for whom an AS or A2 curriculum may not be appropriate.  So, he had what he himself described as "*convivial relationships*" with further education and his academy invited representatives from further education to their careers fairs so that they could connect with his students, but he said, in his words, that he did not "*oversell it*" (a term taken from business). He confirmed that he did not have much technical and vocational education at his academy.

Simon Brown said that work placements were extensive for his academy and another thing he did was preparation for work-based interviewing where they had a huge range of employers who give their time voluntarily to mock interview people and engage with the academy at his academy's careers fairs and events.

This data is interpreted to suggest that preparing students for the world of work is a key part of education in his academy.

When asked about a highlight for his academy, Simon Brown chose capital investment. He saw this in terms of the quality of the environment for learners and the sense of the significant investment and therefore the experience and access to appropriate resources that the learners in his academy now had.

Simon Brown felt that the main political issue that no party had grasped was a national fair funding formula and he would want to talk to the government about that in his words "*long and hard*" and as part of that he would like to talk to the government about the fact that he thought that current funding levels were "*unsustainable frankly",* although he felt that at his school he was fine because they managed their finances well and there was no sign of them going into deficit in the short to mid-term, he knew that there were a huge number of schools that had in-year deficits and wanted to reject unsustainable funding. He would also like to talk to government about a piecemeal approach by the government and he would want there to be much more stability that he felt should not to be confused with no change as he accepted the need for change but he felt that there were what he called "*some real nonsense things that had gone on*", he gave the example of a problem that he had with post 16 education now, with the de-coupling of AS and A2 and the fact that for the next couple of years there was what he described as:

"*Utter instability and confusion between schools and parents and higher education and it's a mess and I'd talk to them about that*" (Simon Brown, AL8).

Using Lorey (2012) to interpret this data suggests Academy Leaders being held in a state of insecurity, uncertainty and precarity within a neo-liberal form of governing.

Simon Brown wanted to talk to government about a phrase that he felt was coming into common parlance, which was "*school-led improving systems*" and how did they unravel a better future so that government and key stakeholders were planning together in a meaningful way across the whole range of policy development and how it hit the ground.

This data indicates that working with government to develop the ideas of "self-improving school systems" as discussed by Hargreaves (Hargreaves, 2010) had some currency but that in *practice* these ideas had not yet been thoroughly debated between government and Academy Leaders with government accepting ideas from Academy Leaders.

Simon Brown did have the opportunity to meet with the National College for Teaching and Leadership and discuss issues with them but he saw the National College for Teaching and Leadership as becoming almost a spent force since they were drawn in and had become an Executive agency for the government and that the positioning of them was much more fragile and they had a much more diminishing influence and relevance, which he did think that was sad (Simon Brown, AL8).

When asked whether, in practice, he had the opportunity to discuss ideas with Ofsted, he replied:

"*Yes, I do. In a number of ways. I am able to attend the standing group of teacher associations regular meeting with Her Majesty's Chief Inspector and other key Ofsted people. So, I am also able to have less formal exchange with a number of people who work within Ofsted and also the [Association] Ofsted specialist. Yes, and there is formal opportunity through Ofsted's consultation. They are constantly renewing their framework and I am part of it. I contributed to the most recent consultation response*" (Simon Brown, AL8).

Simon Brown said that he had the opportunity to talk to government because of his position:

"*Yes, I sit in a very privileged position as [position] in [Association].to meet with the key stakeholders, so I have met with recently the Secretary of State for Education, the Shadow Secretary of State, the lead education minister for the Liberal Democrats. I can meet with special advisors for them and various other think groups and key influencers and stakeholders so it's unlikely, and this is not bigging myself up in any way but it's just the circumstance, you are unlikely to find many people in such a privileged position and to have that much connectivity. I take that responsibility very seriously. I find it a little daunting*" (Simon Brown, AL8).

When asked who provided professional support for him now, he replied that there were three groups of people: the professional association that he belonged to; his governors and a wide range of people with whom he

worked, including his staff who he felt provided him with day in day out professional support however, he did feel that he was largely self-driven and provided his own support and self-responsibility.

This data suggests that Simon Brown has the cultural and social *capital* to develop networks that provide support for him, both within this own academy and within wider networks in education.

### 5.8.1 Summary of Simon Brown (AL8)

The data here is interpreted to suggest that Simon Brown (AL8) is one of the people whose response to change can be characterised as "Help it Happen" by his school converting to becoming an academy.  The main reason was that his school had made the business decision to become an academy and had received some financial uplift because of this.

The data suggests Simon Brown's *habitus*: from his previous experience and social interactions is that he is disposed to agree with the idea that Academy Leaders should have *agency* to make their own decisions and this informs his *practice* in the field of education.

Simon Brown (AL8) is developing relationships in line with his response to change of "Help it Happen": within his own convertor academy and with other schools in wider networks who are further afield than his own local community; with higher education and with local and national employers.  He does not have strong relationships with further education.

Simon Brown can be categorised as medium high on his *Commitment to Responsibilisation*, as he accepts many aspects of the business principles for the academies and the results orientation of his data-driven environment

and considers himself to be self-driven. He can be categorised as medium

high on *Commitment to Democracy/Public Values* as he includes parents

and teachers in many of the decisions that are made for his academy.

It is interpreted that Simon Brown (AL8) is playing the game of

academisation and is balancing a medium high *Commitment to*

*Responsibilisation* and a medium high *Commitment to Democracy and*

*Public Values.*

**5.9 Anna Hanley (AL9)**

Anna Hanley (AL9) was the leader of a secondary academy that was previously a primary school, and two secondary schools, based in a socio-economically deprived area of a city and is now a sponsored all-through academy with children aged between 3 and 16 years.

She had reservations about the idea of sponsored academies because of her experience in a previous academy, which was a sponsored academy with a private investor and she felt that:

*"The governing body were the sponsor's friends and they lived miles away. It always felt as if the Principal did not actually run her school necessarily the way she wanted it run. There was always a different agenda and even when things went really, really well she did not necessarily get the recognition.  It was somebody else and there were lots of inappropriate things that happened at inappropriate times, because the sponsor wanted it and he had no history of education and that really put me off that model (Anna Hanley, AL9).*

She felt that some academies were persuaded to become academies by the financial incentives:

"*There is no ideology in it there is no politics in it they just want more money to spend on the kids*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

She thought though that her current academy provided a good experience because the chair of the governors was part of the local community and in her opinion the old school and the primary school had not been communicating well previously and the children in the schools had been

repeatedly let down.  From her perspective, becoming an academy had made one united school that had improved the outcomes for the children in her community.

This is interpreted as Anna Hanley having a medium high *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* as she is concerned with developing outcomes that benefit her community.

Anna Hanley was asked whether she had used the freedoms of academy status, such as the freedom not to teach the National Curriculum, to change the pay and conditions of staff and to change the length of the school terms and days and she said that:

"*We haven't done too much of that and one of the reasons for that is that I genuinely know that academisation probably scares teachers more than it scares leadership teams because leadership teams and governors have in their head why you want to become an academy…but we haven't really played around with that too much just because I think to avoid scaring staff, keeping the base stable*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

She thought that, in terms of the National Curriculum,

"*there's a recognition that ultimately you sit the exams and actually yes you can play around with what you have to teach but actually you need to get to a point where the kids can perform at their best in year 11*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

This data is interpreted to suggest that she had little *agency* in this and essentially taught the National curriculum, which demonstrates performativity to meet the requirements of the examinations.

In terms of changing teachers' pay and conditions she talked about the effect that might have on teaching staff.  She thought that teachers would think that they were going to change their pension or that they were going to have to "*work three times harder*" and that could have an impact on the quality of staff she recruited and retained, so she had not done that.

This is interpreted as Anna Hanley having a medium high Commitment to Democracy / Public Values as she is concerned about the effect changes in pay and conditions might have on teaching staff.

Anna Hanley felt that her academy had benefitted because their funding was no longer top-sliced by the local authorities. She said:

*"I used to work as a [position] in [county] and I saw so much wastage.  We were ½ a mile up the road in [city], if we didn't have the local authority we would have an extra £600 per year per child, this is ridiculous, this is crazy. So, in terms of money, yeah that's absolutely fine"* (Anna Hanley, AL9).

She also talked about the allocation of funding from her local education authority being slow:

*"I think there was a thing in [city] as well a few years ago, talking to people where they kept the money for as long as possible and come and only give it to you occasionally*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

Anna Hanley raised issues with safeguarding children as the local authority retains accountability for the welfare of the child.  She felt that

"*There are an awful, awful lot of children that are very, very vulnerable there's now probably quite a lot of to-ing and fro-ing in terms of who is responsible for this child because each academy can have its own admission.  Nobody told you two years ago, that the child had failed; they had been out of education for 2 years. No one has actually had any kind of hold on them.  The whole safeguarding thing is a huge issue and a huge concern*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

She felt that this had become a greater problem because of the reduction in the capacity of the local authority and that the local authorities were overwhelmed by this and thresholds had gone up so there were fewer children that the academy leader could refer to the local authority.

Using Lorey (2012) to interpret this data illustrates insecurity, precarity and uncertainty for her and the feeling that vulnerable children are in positions of insecurity and the local authority are unable to provide certainty in supporting those children. This increases precarity for her because she is aware of issues and feels that they are not being addressed to her satisfaction.

In terms of gaining an understanding of what else happens in the middle tier between the academies and central government, Anna Hanley explained what happened for her now:

"*That buffer between us and government, there isn't really one at all*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

She discussed the contact that they had with the Regional Schools Commissioners in terms of the Regional Schools Commissioners supporting her school:

"*Because we were below floor target in the summer results, he's been involved, he's got a team, obviously the [Region] is a ridiculously large team in terms of miles and miles*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

Anna Hanley was asked about the governance for her academy and explained the complexity of her governance structure:

" *It's kind of complicated because there is [Name of Sponsor] and [Name of Sponsor Academies] and I think for the [Name of Sponsor Academies] one of the sponsors is [Name of Sponsor], which I think is a charitable body but we've also got [Name of University] and [Name of Further Education College]"* (Anna Hanley, AL9).

She explained the makeup of her Multi-Academy Trust where they had [Name of Academy], which was one all through school aged 3-16, and [Name of another Academy] and [Name of another Academy] and the Board had just recently voted to join with [Name of another Primary School] so they were going to be one an all through Multi-Academy Trust.

Anna Hanley elaborated that there was a Board that oversaw all of this for her Multi-Academy Trust:

"*the governance is that there is a tiller Board that includes I think the chair of the governors from the schools, it includes the Chief Executive Officer and includes a couple of other people, including [Name] who is a core part of the*

*local authority, she has always been a champion for schools really and particularly for schools in City], she strikes me as a very good person and on the side, on the side of right*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

Anna Hanley demonstrated a little uncertainty about how the Board for her academy were elected:

"*To be honest I am not entirely sure, the actual main tiller board. I think, when it was established a few years ago, and I am probably not as au fait with it as I should be, it was, I think the proposal was that it would be made up of particularly interested parties. I know they intervened, there was a change in who chaired it earlier on this academic year and the one person stepped down from that role, maintains his place on the Board but he wasn't the chair of it anymore and I think they just kind of sorted it out by themselves, in terms of voting I don't think it was open to anyone to get onto it as it were*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

This data illustrates a lack of *agency* for her in electing who sat on the main academy board for her academy, which has issues for democracy in that if governors are not elected, then to whom are they accountable?

Anna Hanley explained that each of the academies had local governing bodies who were more democratically elected, where they were nominated and voted for by those in the academy. They met as a team of governors and dealt with issues around individual governance but she recognised the limits of power for her local governing body:

*"I suppose in a way although they talk about improving the school and moving it forward and holding us accountable, I suppose in a way ultimately they are not the people who govern"* (Anna Hanley, AL9).

Bourdieu (1992) is mainly concerned with power, Anna Hanley's local governing body are not given as much social and cultural *capital* and so do not have as much power as the main Board; it is the members of the main Board who are given the social and cultural *capital* and so hold the power for her academy.

Anna Hanley's work with parents was important to her and she had achieved an Outstanding rating from Ofsted for the work that her academy did with parents. She explained the work that they had done:

*"We have a parents group that meets probably once a full term, so about 3 times a year. They said that when they went to parents' evening with their younger children, the books were there but they didn't get that in secondary and often the kids didn't bring their books home.  So, what I said I would do for them is arrange a parents' work scrutiny.  So, for everybody that's part of a parents' group, we got all their books, and our subject teachers took them up and they spent the first half an hour of the meeting going through them and looking through them and from that we asked the teachers to make sure at parents' evening all the books for that year group are there so if the parents want to have a look at them either while they were waiting or to illustrate points while they were there. So, I think that's quite a small thing but I think it's quite significant"* (Anna Hanley, AL9).

This data is interpreted as Anna Hanley having a medium high *Commitment to Democracy/Public Values* as she values the work that is done with parents having an input into their child's education.

Anna Hanley talked about the type of work that she did with teachers that included changes to some of her Quality Assurance procedures and changes to lesson observations. She explained further about how she organised lesson observations and performance management:

"*Some of them were saying well you know I know you are always going to want to come and see me with Year 11 but its bottom set year 11 and they always seem to be in the afternoon.  So, we offered them you could either have one half an hour observation per term or two 15-minute observations and we would make sure they were different key stages and different ability groups but obviously, we wouldn't be able to give them 24 hours' notice for that and a lot of people said yes, I really want that one, so we offered it to them and they gave it a go*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

This data is interpreted to suggest that Anna Hanley has a medium high *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values*, with teachers having input into how they are performance managed.

Anna Hanley was from a sponsored academy and felt that the relationship between herself and other academies in her area was competitive:

"*Competitors.  It is really difficult.  I come from a place where although we were academies there was more collaboration*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

She explained that they thought the problem was because they had a falling birth rate in [city] for a few years, every place was being fought for and in terms of what they were doing with their nearest schools it was very little. She said that there were some schools not far from where she was that had actively tried to poach some of her better staff. She felt that:

*"It's not feeling very welcoming and it's not feeling very collaborative. Actually, I think sometimes, the [city] heads when they meet they really don't seem to like one another very much"* (Anna Hanley, AL9).

She elaborated further that this was quite difficult because when the children were failing what she tried to do was negotiate transfers but a couple of the schools had just said that they were not doing that anymore and that meant that she couldn't take their children either, which left her with limited options. She summarised this as:

"*I think there is a growing appreciation that no-one wants to share anymore*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

Anna Hanley talked about how "systems leadership" was working for her:

"*So, we have been linked with a head-teacher down in [town] … we can choose where we go to for our Specialist Leaders in Education and those sorts of things but actually, practically, that does kind of mean [Name of Academy]*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

Anna Hanley could work with higher education directly, as her local university were one of the sponsors for her academy. She talked about how she had worked with the university in terms of progression for students in that she

had some current students at the university coming in do a message showing ambition to her academy's students. She also discussed the fact that parents of children from her academy were often unfamiliar with university themselves:

"*We are planning to take a group of parents out to the universities to show them what they are like because most of them haven't been to university*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

This is interpreted as parents from Anna Hanley's academy not having the social and cultural *capital* to engage with higher education, which leads to the reproduction of inequalities in education. Anna Hanley is here attempting to address this and she had recently appointed [Position] with the remit to raise aspirations. She also talked about how her sponsors had been helpful in this:

"O*ur kids since Oct have been going down … to do mentoring with [Name of solicitors] hopefully to raise aspirations and to develop their oral literacy skills and debating skills*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

This demonstrates that Anna Hanley had *agency*, to develop ideas for raising student's aspirations and literacy skills.

Anna Hanley had difficulties working with further education because of unequal relationships that arose from the planning for buildings that were meant to be shared between her academy and a further education college but which did not reach fruition:

*"Well there is a little bit of history between [college] and ourselves in the sense the big wing that is out there was originally built for them to use and then they decided to build [Name of College Site] and move over there. There's a wing, that we are not allowed to use and if we open the door, it's going to cost us something like £250,000 per year. Even if we unlock the door and go in they'll go 'right now you have taken ownership of it' and the facilities over there are amazing"* (Anna Hanley, AL9).

Anna Hanley went on to talk about how she worked more productively with further education, the example that she gave was a representative from the further education college showing children how to fillet a fish. She knew that there were apprenticeships that were available and that hospitality and catering was a growth spurt in [City] and so she felt that there was potential for working with further education in similar ways to this and that this would have a big impact both ways.

Bourdieu (1992) was concerned with the dynamics of power and thinking about this through the lens of power dynamics, Anna Hanley could work with further education but this was a difficult relationship because of power relationships between herself and further education and this was not an equal and  democratic relationship.

In terms of working with local or national employers, Anna Hanley could work with their academy sponsors who were quite large employers and had been doing mentoring for the children at her school.  She explained that there were some difficulties involved:

"*It can be difficult because if you are using school time for it they are missing out on lessons and it can sometimes be difficult out of school hours to make it happen*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

This indicates that working with local and national employers was not something that was viewed as part of the core activity of the academy but was considered as an extra curricula activity.

Anna Hanley explained about the work that she had done with employers in terms of the students understanding of careers that were available to them:

"*We have had two mock days for our year 11 where they come and get results as if it is a real results day as well. And for both of those we have had employers, those who offer apprenticeships and colleges there, with stands, well if these are your grades you can get into this training programme or you can go on and do this or if you want to come and work for the police this is something else you can do*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

When asked about the National College for Teaching and Leadership, Anna Hanley replied that she had done the National Professional Qualification for Headship herself and said that there were conferences and debates that she could attend but felt that:

"*They [The National College] only have influence as a body and I don't know how much their advice or influence is actually taken on board, I am quite sceptical about that*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

From her perspective, she felt that she could engage with Ofsted:

"*In forums like twitter and I know a number of Ofsted inspectors individually and there are people they engage; they hear the views*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

She also felt that:

"*I think they have more influence in government. Obviously, certain things take an Act of Parliament. Other things Mr Wilshaw just changes an inspection schedule. Actually, if you change an inspection schedule you don't need an Act of Parliament and then you can change what schools are doing because they will do what they are being inspected on, which is very cynical*" (Anna Hanley, AL9)

Anna Hanley considered some of the judgements of Ofsted to be a highlight for her as her academy had received a Good rating in Ofsted with 4 areas of Outstanding leadership, including senior leadership.

According to Anna Hanley, she did not have the opportunity to talk to government directly:

"*Officially probably no. I mean Nicky Morgan will send out a thing or writes to me or there's a competition or you can come and talk to me something along those lines. There's the head's round table and a couple of organisations that do that*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

She questioned how much the government did in practice listen to the thoughts of Academy Leaders.

"*You may offer advice, but they are not actually going to be influenced by anything. I know some people who are involved in politics and can talk to some politicians but sometimes you think it is too wrapped up in the*

*practicalities and the financial stakes to actually matter. I think well these are children's lives. No, not really, I feel quite disempowered at a national level*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

This is interpreted as suggesting that she did not have *agency* to talk directly with government about issues that affected her community that she considered were important.

Anna Hanley wanted to talk to the government about safeguarding children and felt that not enough was being done in this respect.

"*I am very aware that I have got a lot of children who are exceptionally vulnerable and no-one seems to do anything about it. Because you can't prove it or because there's a blocker or a threshold hasn't been met. And you think oh, it's ridiculous*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

She thought that

"*We are not keeping our kid's safe. Quite often by the time they come to us even aged three it's too late. We are spending a fortune on speech and language communication therapy for our youngest children and have been spending a fortune because they come in unable to communicate, unable to speak clearly and it takes an awful lot to get it right so they are already behind when they join us"* (Anna Hanley, AL9).

She felt that some of the problems with safeguarding children lay with poor parenting but she had the insight that it was down to parents who were suspicious of the people who were there to support them. She had issues around the thresholds for looking after children.

Anna Hanley is here demonstrating a great deal of cultural *capital* about the issues around safeguarding children in the *field* and *practice* of education however, she did not feel that she was being given *agency* to raise this issue and be listened to, so that her understanding did not appear to be being communicated to government in the political *field*; her cultural *capital* did not enable her to be influential in the political *field*.  *Symbolic violence* is being practised and she is being taken out of the collective and individual histories that provide "*a feel for the game*".

Anna Hanley was asked who provided professional support for her now and she said:

"*The rest of my team do.  They are a fantastic team and they have all got their own skills.  And they still help me learn and grow as a professional.  In terms of everything from teaching onwards, I've got my fellow head-teacher colleagues*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

This suggests that she received support from her colleagues and other head-teachers within her Multi-Academy Trust and was developing her social *capital* in this way.

She also pointed to receiving support from social networking:

"*I know it's going to sound a bit strange but Twitter, I've got a group on Twitter.  Some of whom are head-teachers, some of whom aren't, some senior leaders, some not in education...you are not trying to phone someone and you are not trying to e-mail someone and it's immediate and I think that has been really useful as well*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

It is interpreted that Anna Hanley is increasing her social *capital* through social networking sites.

When asked if she had any final thoughts or any things that she would like to follow up or on any things that she had not been asked that she would like to discuss, Anna Hanley talked about her own personal position:

"*In terms of the academies agenda I think I am very lucky where I am.  I think I have colleagues at larger academy chains and they are on £110,000 per year which is very nice but if you don't do this by this date you don't have a job any more*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

In terms of the elimination of teachers, this data talks to the research carried out by Gunter and Courtney (2015).

Anna Hanley also thought that:

"*So, I think I am very lucky I don't have people that are necessarily tell me how to run my school from the outside and I genuinely feel it's part of a team here and a couple of the other places I've been and a couple of the other nightmare horror stories I hear, I know that I am very lucky I've gone the best way you can go really*" (Anna Hanley, AL9).

### 5.9.1 Summary of Anna Hanley (AL9)

The data here suggests that Anna Hanley (AL9) is one of the people whose response to change can be categorised as "Help it Happen". From her perspective becoming an academy has made one united school that has improved the outcomes for the children in her community.

Anna Hanley (AL9) is developing relationships in line with what is interpreted as her response to change of "Help it Happen": within her own academy and with higher education and local and national employers through her sponsor. She has difficult relationships with other schools and with further education.

Anna Hanley can be categorised as medium low on her *Commitment to Responsibilisation* as although she had embraced some aspects of the business principles of her data-driven environment, she is reluctant to accept others because of her previous experience and issues with sponsorship of academies. She can be categorised as medium high on *Commitment to Democracy/Public Values* as she includes parents and teachers in many of the decisions that are made for the academy.

It is interpreted that Anna Hanley is working pragmatically within what is interpreted as a medium low *Commitment to Responsibilisation* and a medium high *Commitment to Democracy and Public values*.

**5.10 Siobhan Riley (AL10)**

Siobhan Riley (AL10) was the leader of a voluntary-aided Catholic school that had received an Outstanding Ofsted grading and had chosen to convert to academy status under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government.

She gave an indication of, in Bourdieu's terms, her *habitus* and her position in the *field* of education:

"*So, everything I do is to try and make sure that the children in my care, regardless of their socio-economic background, regardless of their ability, get a leg-up so that when they leave here they are well-equipped for the challenges that they face after school*" (Siobhan Riley, AL10)

She went on to say more about what is interpreted as her *habitus*:

"*I believe wholeheartedly in further education and higher education. I don't think it's for everybody but I think it's for more children than they realise and I think that we have to try and make sure that the obstacles that are in place as a consequence of fees and all of those things do not stop children from poor families accessing higher education because I do believe that even if they get maybe less than glamorously paid jobs, having had academic study at third level will change their horizons but I do agree that it is not for everybody and it shouldn't be for everybody but anybody who has the ability to follow an academic route should be encouraged to do so and we should try to do what we can to remove the obstacles and particularly the financial ones. So, that's where I am coming from* (Siobhan Riley, AL10).

Siobhan Riley gave financial reasons for her academy's decision to convert to academy status. She saw herself as one of the highest performing schools in [city] but because some of her budget was determined by the level of deprivation, she was getting the lowest amount of money (she did not benefit from the pupil premium) and she felt that she was getting nothing for the money that was being retained by the local authority at the centre.

For Siobhan Riley, this confirms economic arguments as influential in her conversion to academy status.

Siobhan Riley was asked whether she had used the freedoms of academy status in *practice*. She felt that although she did have freedoms and was free from the local authority control, she was controlled in exactly the same way as a local authority school in that she was accountable to the government for the same things, she said that:

"*I think that the autonomy is a myth"* (Siobhan Riley, AL10).

On her conversion to academy status she felt that:

"*I think it's been a bit like buying a pig in a bag and you are not quite sure what shape it is going to be or how well fed it is until you open the bag*" (Siobhan Riley, AL10).

Using Lorey (2012.) to interpret this, there was uncertainty for Siobhan Riley around the idea of becoming an academy and she was living with the unforeseeable and being held in a state of insecurity.

In terms of the academy freedom not to teach the National Curriculum, she explained that:

"*If you look at all the measures that are used externally to compare school with school, a school really that is aware of its status doesn't really have a huge choice about what it is going to teach and what it is not going to teach. We are all measured in relation to 5A\*-C English and maths or we are all measured in relation to the E Baccalaureate*" (Siobhan Riley, AL10).

She felt that it was becoming more controlled through the measurements that are being brought in that is Progress 8 and Attainment 8. Progress 8 aims to capture the progress that a pupil makes from the end of primary school to the end of secondary school (where pupil's results are compared with the actual attainment of pupils with the same prior attainment). Attainment 8 is the pupil's average achievement across eight subjects.

This data is interpreted as showing a move towards a greater emphasis on the performance of the academy or performativity as discussed by Lyotard (1984) and Ball (2003).

Siobhan Riley felt that this was reducing further the freedoms that schools were:

"*Initially naïve enough to think that they had*" (Siobhan Riley, AL10).

Siobham Riley had not changed the pay and conditions for her staff.  She believed that some big chains had gone down that route but it was not something that she had considered.  She included financial considerations in her reasoning in that her budgets curtailed any kinds of freedoms of that nature because they have not been increased over the last couple of years to keep pace with inflation. She also considered the effects on staff that would entail through changing their pay and conditions and felt that she

could not possibly expect to change the conditions of teachers so they were less favourable and expect them to do longer hours and not pay them any more for that and continue to have a harmonious working relationship with those colleagues. In her words, she felt that this was:

"A *nonsense really*" (Siobhan Riley, AL10).

This data is interpreted as suggesting that Siobhan Riley had a medium high *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values*, and considered teachers views in her decision-making.

In terms of the demise of the local authority, Siobhan Riley's academy had decided that they did not need the local authority to have a controlling role over them and that they would be as good or better if they were independent of the local authority but that:

"*In becoming independent we would not shirk our responsibilities to other schools for the greater good of education within [city]*" (Siobhan Riley, AL10).

This data is interpreted as demonstrating a medium high *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values*, as she is working together equally with other schools in the city.

Siobhan Riley pointed out that the local authority was now in an unenviable position with regards to responsibility and accountability for children within their area as it had lost responsibility for some schools within its area so that it couldn't control them but it was still held to account for children in that area. She felt that her local authority was still trying to seek ways of enticing Academy Leaders to work with the local authority rather than be independent

of it and she felt that the relationship over the last 18 months had shown evidence of that.

Siobhan Riley felt that what was happening in the middle ground between her academy and central government was going around in circles and felt that they had come nearly full circle, she felt that:

"*We could easily find ourselves back in a position that the local authority assumes control over the academies and the rest of its schools within a very short period of time*" (Siobhan Riley, AL10).

In terms of the governance of her academy, Siobhan Riley explained that there were some differences in governance for her academy because her school is a church school and the majority of her governors or trustees are determined by the diocese, and she felt that her role is to secure the academic standards to make sure the children have a good quality education but also that the school remains a Catholic school in harmony with the Catholic church.

This data is interpreted as her showing a medium high *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* and democratic engagement with her Catholic community.

Siobhan Riley explained that some of the rest of the governors of her academy were parents and some were people who had a relationship with the school through being parents over the years and they were elected, which demonstrates the democratic involvement of parents in the school and is interpreted as a medium high *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values.*  Other governors at her academy were recommended to the diocese

and the bishop had the ultimate say over whether the person could become a foundation governor. She explained that they had a balance of expertise of people who could understand the different aspects of governing a school so, somebody from an academic background, somebody from a legal background and somebody from a financial background.

She felt that there were some issues with the relationship between the governors and the head-teachers of the academies:

*"I think that the government has lost its way in relation to governance of schools. I think that about three years ago, the chair of governors had to be a critical friend to the head-teacher somebody who could support and challenge. The friend and the support piece was missed out of the next set of regulations and they had to be there to challenge rather than to support and challenge and be a friend to* (Siobhan Riley, AL10).

Siobhan Riley also felt that:

*"Too much is being expected of governors and governors are being held to account for the performance of schools. I think to the detriment of having good people working in schools as governors because if you've got a school in difficult circumstances and as soon as it goes into that category the first thing they say is the school is not being well led and managed and governors are called in to account because of that. There are not many people who would want to do that job"* (Siobhan Riley, AL10).

She felt that this led to a difficult relationship between the governors and the head-teachers;

*"Then you find a situation where the governors are trying to run the school and there are plenty of examples around of that type of situation. I actually believe that less should be expected of them* [governors] *and when things go wrong more of the negative criticism should be going to the leadership within the school rather than the governance and I think there will be a change within the next 18 months of how the department looks at governors because the current situation can't continue"* (Siobhan Riley, AL10).

This suggests that the governance of the academies is driven by the requirement for *performativity* as discussed by Lyotard (1984) and Ball (2003), with governors having responsibility for the performance of their academy rather than governors being a "critical friend" to Academy Leaders.

It is interpreted that the higher levels of governance in the academies is directed and held to account by government rather than Academy Leaders and governors democratically developing outcomes based on public values that have meaning for those within their own academies and communities.

In terms of the democratic involvement of parents in her academy, Siobhan Riley was asked to give an example of how she had accepted ideas from parents:

"*Well we do a parent survey every year and we ask them for suggestions on how we can make improvements. So, every year we pick up some of those ideas. I suppose a simple example would be the way that we have moved towards electronic communication with parents. It probably would have happened but when you get a survey and a number of parents are saying if you would be able to text me that would be so much easier. I suppose the*

*electronic communication would be a typical one that we did two years ago,*"
(Siobhan Riley, AL10).

She gave another example of how she had worked to develop parent's
suggestions:

"*We have the library open until 4.30 in the evening for any child who has
difficulty doing homework at home or if a child hasn't got the internet access
so simple things sometimes have bigger spin offs*" (Siobhan Riley, AL10).
Siobhan Riley did think that teachers at her academy had democratic
opportunities for input into the academy and had a "*big say in how things
were done*". This is interpreted as her having a medium high *Commitment to
Democracy and Public Values.*

She talked in more detail about how she encouraged her junior staff:

"*I think we are probably exclusive in that we have what's called a junior
leadership team and these are self-nominated, what I call fast legs and these
are youngsters in the profession that are very able, very good and likely to go
far but they don't hold senior leadership roles. That team actually is self-
regulated they come up with their own ideas about what projects they want to
run*" (Siobhan Riley, AL10).

She discussed Jim Collins book,  Good to Great (Collins, 2001) where he
used the analogy that great leaders make sure that they have the right
people on the bus and the wrong people off it and said that this had been
influential for her. She discussed this further:

"*then he talked about the direction that the bus takes can be determined by those on the bus*" (Siobhan Riley, AL10)

She explained that she wanted to control things:

"*So, I wasn't happy with this that the people on the bus determined the direction the bus took until I realised that the terminus is determined by the leader so what you are trying to achieve is non-negotiable. The direction the bus takes depends on the people on the bus and on this bus at the moment I have my junior leadership team and they are taking it on a circuitous route because of the type of people they are but we will get to that destination because they are not losing focus of what is our objective here*" (Siobhan Riley, AL10).

This data shows how Siobhan Riley is working with colleagues who are less experienced than herself and allowing them to have democratic involvement in education but leading them to the outcomes that she would like and that are required. This suggests that she is balancing a medium high commitment to *democratic agency* and meeting the needs of her staff with a medium high commitment to *neo-liberal responsibilisation* of self and meeting the government's education reform agenda.

Siobhan Riley talked about how her academy works with other schools or academies now and felt that she was central to the work with the local authority as she was the treasurer of the [group] and she had worked extensively on training others in the teaching profession at her academy and she had mentored a new head who had taken up a secondary school position within [city]. She had worked with two nominees in schools and she

had shared her expertise with them and learnt from them. She had worked across the private and public sector and said that she had:

"*No qualms about stealing good ideas and I have no qualms about sharing good ideas*" (Siobhan Riley, AL10).

Siobhan Riley was heavily involved in leadership across the education sector and felt that every week she could give an example of outreach work that she was doing that would contribute to the government's suggestion of "systems leadership" and the way that academies should work with other schools and academies now.

This data is interpreted as her having *agency* to work with other academies and schools to share ideas democratically between schools and academies for the development of education that it is done in a way that aligns with the government's suggestion of "systems leadership" and that she is balancing those two forces.

Siobhan Riley worked with higher education on teacher training and explained that she had been involved with several projects with [University] where she had several people at her academy who had developed very good Information Technology resources for the teaching of mathematics and she had worked with the [University] on that. She also talked about her involvement in Teach First as she had been responsible for working with the local authority and others to bring Teach First to [city] and had worked with higher education and top graduates from universities.   She believed that the Teach First programme was a fantastic programme and that it was already starting to prove itself within [city].

This data suggests that Siobhan Riley had *agency* to work with higher education to develop ideas for Teach First in relation to teachers coming from higher education into academies.

She said that she had been working with higher education on several different projects and the one that she was involved in now was trying to get the National teaching college established and she knew that this had the backing of higher education.

The establishment of a new National College illustrates that teachers are looking towards more democratic involvement and input into, in Bourdieu's terms, *practice* in the *field* of education.

In terms of her relationship with the National College for Teaching and Leadership, Siobhan Riley said that she had, as a National Leader in Education, been accredited and she had trained people to become local leaders in education on behalf of the National College.

She elaborated more fully on the moves to introduce a new National College:

"We are trying to see whether we can establish a National College of Teaching which would be run by professionals for the profession without political interference" (Siobhan Riley, AL10).

She developed this idea in more detail:

"I think one of the biggest concerns about education is that it is so politicised and changed at a whim as a consequence of one individual rather than evidence-based on authentic forensic research and I think if we had a way of trying to encapsulate what actually does work without the political

interference we would probably become a much more competitive nation in relation to education and I think that would be part of the remit of the Royal College" (Siobhan Riley, AL10).

From this data, it can be suggested that having democratic input into the direction that education takes, based on evidence from research, is something that would be desirable for her.

Siobhan Riley was asked to talk about a situation where she had done something significant with representatives from further education and she talked about how she had worked with a local Catholic sixth form college, which would be the provider within her Catholic diocese for further education. This was a route for many of her students rather than the local further education college and this continued even though she had now established her own sixth form and she also had links with other further education providers although these were more tenuous.

This data suggests that Siobhan Riley has *agency* to work with a Catholic sixth form college for the benefit of her local Catholic community.

Siobhan Riley was asked if she could talk about a situation where she had done something significant with local or national employers and said that her academy did a lot of work with employers and gave a couple of concrete examples:

"*We are involved in youth enterprise and this is children that have volunteered to be part of a group that set up their own company, decide on what they are going to make, decide on how they are going to market it, decide on how they are going to sell it, look to see if they can make a profit*

*decide then how they are going to use that money and we established this. I think this is our second year now of running it. We have a fantastic group of children now*" (Siobhan Riley, AL10).

This data is interpreted as showing that Siobhan Riley has a medium high *Commitment to Responsibilisation* as she accepts the business principles for the academies and developing enterprise and business principles for the pupils.

She explained how this relied on having members of their academy board who could offer this kind of support:

"*One of the members of the Board is [Name of group] and they have voluntarily given this person to help this group of children to stay on the right path so that they remain solvent and prompt them with ideas and question their thinking and that I just think is a fantastic example*" (Siobhan Riley, AL10).

This data suggests that Siobhan Riley had members of her academy board who had the social, cultural, political and economic *capital* to work with others in the *field* of employment.

When asked If she could talk about something to government what would it be, Siobhan Riley said that she wanted to talk to government about Ofsted and explained that she was a promoter of holding schools to account but she also believed that if she was being held to account it should be by someone who knew more than she did and who was credible, authentic, principled and acted with integrity and she believed that whilst there were many Ofsted

inspectors out there who were doing a very good job there were some that were inept and that Ofsted was unwilling to accept the inadequacies within its system and to acknowledge when things went wrong (Siobhan Riley, AL10).

This data is interpreted as her having the expectation that in the field of education, Ofsted inspectors were expected to have greater cultural *capital* in the *field* of education than Academy Leaders themselves.

Siobhan Riley was asked whether she had the opportunity to discuss things with Ofsted Inspectors.

 "*That relationship doesn't exist.  If the rhetoric matched the experience, then I think that Ofsted would be more credible but although it says that it wants to listen and respond I think it only wants to do that when what it hears is what it likes.  So, I think that the system for complaining about poor Ofsted experience is a closed system where there is a terror of acknowledging when things go wrong*" (Siobhan Riley, AL10).

This data is interpreted as suggesting that Siobhan Riley did not feel that she had *agency* to discuss ideas democratically with Ofsted:

Siobhan Riley felt that she did have the opportunity to talk with government because of her position in the field of education:

"*Yes, as a national leader for education and I was part of London Challenge and other things.  I have often been in sanctuary buildings; I have often been consulted about things over the years*" (Siobhan Riley, AL10).

This is interpreted as suggesting that, as she is successful in the government's terms she is being given *agency* to be involved and to input into the government in the development of the education reform agenda and national structures for education.

When asked who provided professional support for her now Siobhan Riley said that over the years there had been a number of different sources and that:

"*I get some of the most enjoyable challenge from youngsters and sometimes cutting through the naivety but listening to the kernels and then the wisdom that I have, helps us to put in place some of those new ideas and I enjoy that*" (Siobhan Riley, AL10).

This data suggests that Siobhan Riley is part of a learning community that democratically engages with and learns from each other, whatever their position in the hierarchy and is interpreted as her showing a medium high *Commitment to Democracy or Public Values* that she balances with a medium high *Commitment to Responsibilisation.*

### 5.10.1 Summary of Siobhan Riley (AL10)

The data here suggests that Siobhan Riley (AL10) is one of those people whose response to change can be characterised as "Help it Happen" by converting to becoming an academy. The main reasons behind her school's decision to convert to an academy were financial.

Siobhan Riley is developing relationships in line with what is interpreted as her response to change of "Help it Happen": within her own convertor academy and with other schools through systems leadership; with higher education and

with local and national employers. She does not have strong relationships with further education.

Siobhan Riley can be categorised as medium high on her *Commitment to Responsibilisation* as she accepts most aspects of the business principles and results orientation of her data-driven environment. She can be categorised as medium high on *Commitment to Democracy/Public values* because she includes parents and teachers in many of the decisions that are made for her academy.

In the next chapter, an overall analysis of all the Academy Leaders and their position, in Bourdieu's terms, in the *field* of *practice* of education will be completed.

Firstly, the inter-play between democracy and neo-liberalism and the current national context for education will be outlined.

Secondly, the types of response to change by each of the individual Academy Leaders will be considered;

Thirdly, each of the Academy Leaders will be plotted on the plotter to indicate their position in the *field* of *practice* of education.

Finally, the *agency* that each academy leader had, depending on their type of response to change within the *field* of *practice* of education will be suggested, using the conceptual framework developed at the end of Chapter 2.

## Chapter 6: Analysis of the Research Findings

## 6.0 The Inter-Play between Democracy and Neo-liberalism in Publicly Funded State Education

The first research question is "What is the inter-play between democracy and neo-liberalism in publicly funded state education?"

As discussed in Chapter 2, democracy translates as "people rule" and is understood here as social democracy with decisions being made based on public values that reflect the intellectual, social, cultural and civic values of academies' communities.

Neo-liberalism is a modified form of economic liberalism as discussed by Hayek (1944), which tends to favour capitalism and free markets, as discussed by Friedman (1993).

In exploring decisions that have been made historically in education through an examination of Green Papers, White Papers, Bills and Acts of Parliament, arguments in favour of policies based on the values and tenets of neo-liberalism are seen to have influenced the government in England since the 1980s, and are particularly clear in the watershed Education Reform Act of 1988, and this has formed a framework of assumptions leading to the implementation of neo-liberal, market-led models in education that has continued from 2000 with a number of iterations of the academy model.

This has led to an education system strongly influenced by business principles and driven by "instrumental rationality", as discussed by Habermas (1987) with an agenda around data, standards, accountability, and associated performativity as discussed by Lyotard (1984) and Ball (2003).

"Normalising judgements", as discussed by Foucault (1977), are used to compare academies with the norm through the academy's position in leagues tables and for all schools and academies, the United Kingdom's position in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results.

Since the 1980s, the two competing ideologies of neo-liberalism and social democracy have been in tension in education, with neo-liberalism dominating the agenda and this raises the question of whether this fundamentally undermines social democracy in education.

This led towards the second research question:

"How do Academy Leaders articulate how they carry out their role, including their relationships with others in their own academies and in wider networks?"

This research question sought to discover how Academy Leaders responded to the paradox between neo-liberalism and social democracy and the reality within which they found themselves, during the academisation of schools,.

## 6.1 Academy Leader's Response to Change

Academy Leaders took a variety of different responses to the change towards the academisation of schools and this is analysed in this section.

### 6.1.1 Academy Leaders Categorised by their Response to Change

#### 1. Make it Happen (n=2)

"Make it Happen" Academy Leaders are totally committed to the academisation of schools and are key players in making it happen.

In terms of what he thought about the idea of the academies, Paul Parks (AL5) thought that "the original idea was excellent". Harriet Vale (AL2) felt that "the concept is amazing". They embrace the academisation of schools and their response to change towards academisation can be categorised as "Make it Happen".

#### 2. Help it Happen (n=6)

"Help it Happen" Academy Leaders have pragmatically decided to accept the change towards academisation.

Tom King (AL1), said that:

*"We were happy to be an academy and voluntarily moved to academy status when it was offered to Outstanding schools because of the financial incentives offered".*

Neil Masters (AL3) said that:

*"The premise that you will provide more opportunity for schools to make their own decisions is sound".*

Similarly, Ruth Potter (AL7), Simon Brown (AL8), Anna Hanley (AL9) and Siobhan Riley (AL10) have all pragmatically decided to convert to academy status for financial reasons or for the perception of extra curricula freedoms or freedom to make their own decisions and they have accepted the academisation of schools.  The response to change towards academisation for AL1, AL3, AL7, AL8, AL9 and AL10 can be categorised as "Help it Happen". The largest number of Academy Leaders in this sample are categorised as "Help it Happen".

### 3. Let it Happen (n=1)

"Let it Happen" Academy Leaders have acquiesced to becoming academies for various reasons. Peter Church (AL6) is from a sponsored academy and the data here suggests that he had little choice in becoming an academy and has acquiesced to it.  His acquiescence is demonstrated, for example, when he says that when his school went into Special Measures he resigned from the National College for School Leadership as a national leader in education. His response to change towards academisation can be characterised as "Let it Happen".

### 4. Oppose it (n=1)

"Oppose it" Academy Leaders are opposed to the academisation of schools and interpret the government's education reform agenda as implementing a set of neo-liberal assumptions and feel that this is what is behind the academisation of schools.

When asked what she thought about the idea of the academies, Kate Green (AL4) said that "*ideologically I am vehemently opposed to it".*  She believes

that there is a neo-liberal ideology behind the academies programme and that academisation is forcing people down a route that might not be right for their context and her response to change towards academisation can be categorised as "Oppose it".

The academies are constituted as independent (defined as free from hierarchical control), which in practice means that they are free from local authority control and report directly to the Department for Education. The data collected on each Academy Leaders' articulation of their role, as presented in Chapter 5, is analysed in the next section in terms of the extent to which Academy Leaders have *agency* to exercise the freedoms that are granted with academy status.

## 6.2 Freedoms of Academy Status

In terms of *agency* to exercise the freedom not to teach the National Curriculum, there is a tendency for Academy Leaders in this sample not to deviate far from the National Curriculum for the crucial years of children's GCSE examinations for children aged 14-16 years old and the reasons given include the intrinsic link between the National Curriculum and examinations and the judgements of Ofsted.

In terms of *agency* to exercise the freedom to change pay and conditions in the academies, for the most part this is controversial because it increases uncertainty for teachers' futures in terms of pay grades and progression, which previously had certainty attached to it. Transfer of Undertakings, Protection of Employment (TUPE) agreements and teaching unions have protected teachers' pay and conditions in many cases and, for the most part, Academy

Leaders in this sample had not gone down the route of changing pay and conditions for teachers.

In terms of freedom to change the length of school days and terms, most Academy Leaders in this sample felt that they did not need academy status to make changes to school days and terms but what they needed was the democratic agreement of their local community, which is an interesting example of the recognition that parents and the community can have power – if they decide to assert it.

As suggested by an analysis of the data collected, as reported in Chapter 5, the promise of *agency* to exercise the freedoms that are granted from becoming an independent academy is largely rhetorical and Academy Leaders are controlled as much as ever by Ofsted judgements and the performance of their academies in league tables, which engenders both performativity and 'fabrication' (or gaming) of results, as discussed by Lyotard (1984) and Ball (2003).

## 6.3 Academy Leaders' Relationships in Own Academy

### 6.3.1 Governors

Academies are set up under the Companies Act 2006 and from this sample of Academy Leaders' articulation of their role, Multi-Academy Trusts and Federations, to which some academies belong, have complex, hierarchised governance structures: with Members (who technically "own" the academy) at the top; main boards that include non-executive directors or trustees and local governing bodies for each individual academy.

Power is being exercised in the appointment of members and non-executive directors to sit on main boards of academies rather than them being elected to represent a body of people and public values. Local governing bodies of academies that belong to a trust do not have as much power as the main board and the power that they have depends on the power that the main board decides to give them, with some local governing bodies having the power to make strategic decisions and others not.

The hierarchical structure of governance in academies limits the opportunities for everyone involved to have equal input into the decisions that are made for the academy, which limits the opportunites for democracy and making decisions based on public values in academies.

The non-executive directors of an academy have legal and financial accountabilities for the academy as a company and consequently business, legal and financial skills are needed from the non-executive directors of academies.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency for the Department for Education have recently published the schools financial value standard (SFVS) that is a mandatory requirement for local authority maintained schools, designed to help schools in managing their finances and give assurance that they have secure financial management in place. Governing bodies of maintained schools have formal responsibility for the financial management of their schools, and so the standard is primarily aimed at governors or management committees of maintained schools, but this also applies to academies.

Governance of academies depends upon the political and economic *capital* of the academy to attract non-executive directors with the skills required and in areas of socio-economic deprivation this is not always easy, as being able to find non-executive directors with the skills required depends upon the social *capital* (connections and relationships) and cultural *capital* (knowledge and understanding) of the chair and the current members of the board and inequalities between academies are thus reproduced,. Academies usually appoint non-executive directors on fixed terms so that the individual's power is circumscribed. Some academies in this sample, Ruth Potter (AL7) and Simon Brown (AL8) said they were democratic in electing governors onto local governing bodies, especially parent governors, but this varies between academies.

As presented in Chapter 5, this research has found that one Academy leader (Simon Brown, AL8) was looking to be more open in outlining skills required of non-executive directors. This could be seen in two different lights: either it is a move towards greater transparency in the appointment of non-executive directors or it could be construed as a managerialist approach that will require performance management of non-executive directors by Chief Executive Officers of academies to ensure that non-executive directors are maintaining their skills. It should be borne in mind that non-executive directors are generally volunteers and subjecting them to a managerialist approach and performance management may deter them from becoming non-executive directors in the first place. Another consideration is that a skills-based approach could potentially exclude people from local communities in

disadvantaged areas where those in the community are less likely to have the skills required, leading to less democracy in governing bodies.

Chatwin (2017) suggests that the role of the Multi-Academy Trust board may simply be to provide little more than a superficial legitimacy for a behind the scenes development in which Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) have become de facto civil servants accountable to the Regional Schools Commissioners and thence to the Secretary of State for Education, which he argues suggests the possibility of an inversion of roles such that the CEO attempts to manage the Board. He argues that the forces at work are corporatizing, totalitarian, centripetal and currently overwhelmingly powerful.

### 6.3.2 Parents

All Academy Leaders interviewed gave good examples of where parents were involved in their academy, either through being elected onto local governing bodies or through direct communication with parents rather than parents only having a voice through representation on the local governing body. Use of Information Communications Technologies such as text messaging, Virtual Learning Environments and websites have provided the technologies to make the democratic participation of parents who have access to those technologies easier however, this reproduces inequalities for those students and parents who do not have access to those technologies and more research is needed into exactly how technology is being used to encourage democratic participation of parents. Some parents are keen to be heavily involved in their child's education and parents are sometimes drawn on as a resource to support the academies. Utilising Bourdieu's theories,

this reproduces inequality, as some parents have greater cultural *capital* and awareness of the benefits of education and greater economic *capital* to offer financial support to academies than others. It raises issues of whether parents' economic *capital* should be used to support what is a public service for all that should be funded by government. The findings suggest that parents are sometimes being viewed more as customers and consumers for what the academy has produced rather than being given a voice in developing education in their child's academy. There are however, some discussions where Academy Leaders work with parents to discuss ideas that are focused on improving education for their children, such as parents being able to see and discuss their child's workbooks (Anna Hanley (AL9) or parents taking exams alongside children (Simon Brown (AL8). It was beyond the scope of this research to interview parents directly to ask how far they feel that they are involved in decision-making in their child's academy and whether only certain parents who have higher cultural and social *capital* are listened to.

### 6.3.3 Teachers

Academy Leaders in the sample all gave good examples of where they had involved teachers democratically for example, in developing values in shared forums, Neil Masters (AL3) and Paul Parks (AL5). The decisions that teachers were involved in tended to be around issues such as Continuing Professional Development rather than discussions around what should be in the curriculum and there is a tendency not to deviate far from the National Curriculum for the crucial years of children's GCSE examinations.

Academy Leaders' position in the *field* of education and how they play the game in the academies relates to the *capital* that they already have in education and their *habitus,* based on their past *practice* and social interactions, which is related to what their academy had been prior to becoming an academy, how their school became an academy and whether it was under the original idea of sponsorship or as a convertor academy.

## 6.4 Academy Leader's Relationships in Wider Networks

This section will build on Bourdieu's theories to explore Academy Leaders' position in the *field* of education and how they *play* the *game* in the academies by analysing Academy Leaders' relationships in wider networks, based on the data collected on Academy Leader's articulation of their role.

### 6.4.1 Other Academy Leaders

Formerly equal Academy Leaders now partner and compete in the *field* of education. The *game* is a competition between Academy Leaders who have an investment in the *game* in terms of achieving success for their academies and the relationship is competitive in terms of competing for students and success for their academies. This establishes subjective positions as to who is dominant and who is subordinate in the relationships between Academy Leaders.

The language that is used by Ofsted to grade academies as Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement, in Special Measures or Inadequate establishes power relations between Academy Leaders.

Those Academy Leaders whose academies have been judged as Outstanding are seen to have the cultural *capital* (that is the knowledge

associated with education) and their academies often become teaching schools. This suggests that Academy Leaders from the academies that have the best results are the best Academy Leaders, which is recognised as legitimate even though there may be a variety of reasons why certain academies have better results than others and leadership is only one factor in this.

The data here suggests that Academy Leaders whose academies have been graded as Requires Improvement (Kate Green (AL4) and Peter Church (AL6) are *subordinated* in their relationships with other academies, even though they do have something that they can share with academies elsewhere, such as literacy strategies, and it is *misrecognition* and *symbolically distorted communication* to suggest that they do not.

Some Academy Leaders consider they can work together equally for the benefit of all children based on a *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values.* For example, Ruth Potter (AL7), says that:

"*We take the approach that we are in it together and we are trying to provide the very best education for the children in [City] irrespective of our designation*".

There are examples where Academy Leaders can work together with other Academy Leaders who are outside of their immediate locality for example Simon Brown (AL8) says that:

 "*We can work better beyond [town].  We are competitors within [town]*".

The data gathered here suggests that the government's suggestion for the way forward in terms of relationships between Academy Leaders, that is

"systems leadership", is more of a compulsionion than a choice and there is a power-coercive approach, with Academy Leaders whose academies have been rated as Outstanding being pressed to work with other academies and schools, rather the local authority having a role in encouraging Academy Leaders to enter democratic relationships with other academies and schools because they feel that they might learn about the other school and its context, might benefit from the relationship and be able to develop education based around commitments to democracy and public values.

There is a feeling of precarity, uncertainty and insecurity surrounding the move towards "systems leadership", with Academy Leaders being uncertain about what will be required of them if they are an Outstanding academy that is expected to provide systems leadership support for another academy or school or if they are an academy or school that will receive systems leadership support. These relationships are not based on democracy and a commitment to public values and systems leadership in practice amounts to nothing more than powerful academies taking over the leadership of smaller or weaker ones.

Buidling on Bourdieu, this research suggests that Academy Leaders are at the intersection of several different *sub-fields* of practice within the *field* of education that includes: higher and further education and local and national employment. Each of the *sub-fields* has different cultural and social *capital* associated with the *sub-field*.

Each of the *sub-fields* looked at in this research will be considered next.

## 6.4.2 Higher Education

The work that is done by Academy Leaders working with representatives in the *sub-field* of higher education is divided into work that is done for progression for students from academies on to higher education and the work that is done in supporting teachers coming from higher education into academies.

To analyse work that is done for progression for students from academies on to higher education, some Academy Leaders (Tom King (AL1), Neil Masters (AL3), Ruth Potter (AL7) & Simon Brown (AL8) position themselves in the *sub-field* of higher education by working with those from Russell Group Universities, which are the universities among those who have the highest cultural and social *capital* in the *sub-field* of higher education. The ability of Academy Leaders to work democratically with representatives from Russell Group Universities in the first place is very much dependent upon the social and cultural *capital* that Academy Leaders already have. Academy Leaders then develop their social and cultural *capital* further by working with these Russell Group Universities. Other Academy Leaders can build networks with other higher education institutions and develop their social and cultural *capital* in the *sub-field* of higher education, but this depends on context. For example, Peter Church (AL6), who is from an 11-16 academy in a rural community, has no contact with higher education, which leads to and reproduces inequalities for students in terms of their progression to higher education.

In terms of the differences in relationships with higher education, Paul Parks (AL5) is categorised as "Make it Happen" and he worked directly in his Federation with higher education to develop vocational degrees and courses through to post-graduate level.

Harriet Vale (AL2) is categorised as "Make it Happen" and had developed relationships with higher education to develop leadership and enterprise for her students and staff.

Tom King (AL1), Neil Masters (AL3), Ruth Potter (AL7), Simon Brown (AL8) and Siobhan Riley (AL10) are categorised as "Help it Happen".  They all already had good relationships with higher education before their school converted to academy status as they were Good or Outstanding schools and they brought those relationships with them.

Peter Church (AL6), who is categorised as "Let it Happen" is from an 11-16 academy and has no contact with higher education for progression for students.

Kate Green (AL4), who is categorised as "Oppose it" had relationships with higher education only through luck as she had a member of staff who possessed the cultural and social *capital* to engage with those in higher education.

In summary, some Academy Leaders have social and cultural *capital* in the *sub-field* of higher education and can develop their social and cultural *capital* further by developing relationships in that *sub-field*.  Other Academy Leaders do not have social and cultural *capital* in the sub-field of higher education and therefore do not have *agency* in the *sub-field* of higher education and

this reproduces inequalities in the *field* of education, which reproduces the class structure.

### 6.4.3 Further Education

Relationships between Academy Leaders and representatives in the *sub-field* of further education are more complex than relationships with representatives from higher education because, within a neo-liberal form of governing, further education colleges are seen as competitors for student numbers by academies with their own sixth forms.

In terms of relationships with further education, Paul Parks (AL5), who is categorised as "Make it Happen" is able to work directly in the *sub-field* of further education, to encourage further education colleges nationally to employ apprentices because further education is a part of his Federation.

Harriet Vale (AL2), who is categorised as "Make it Happen",  did not have contact with further education because she saw further education colleges as competitors for her students.  This is interpreted as competition being generated within a neo-liberal form of governing.

Tom King (AL1), Neil Masters (AL3), Ruth Potter (AL7), Simon Brown (AL8), who are all categorised as "Help it Happen" had very little contact in the *sub-field* of  further education, as very few, if any, of their students took vocational routes.  Siobhan Riley (AL10), who is categorised as "Help It Happen" had some contact with further education but had more contact with a local Catholic sixth form college.

Peter Church (AL6), who is categorised as "Let it Happen" had contact with further education for alternative routes for his students.

Kate Green (AL4), who is categorised as "Oppose it" had difficult relationships with further education as they dominated the relationship and attempted to take over her academy rather than there being democratic and equal partnerships between them and she was *subordinated*.

Only one of the Academy Leaders, Paul Parks (AL5), who was interviewed had the social and cultural *capital* to work with those in the *sub-field* of further education, as he had worked in further education himself; the other Academy Leaders did not have that experience and so did not have social and cultural *capital* in the *sub-field* of further education.

The differentiation of Academy Leader's social and cultural *capital* in the *sub-field* of further education and their *agency* to act within that reproduces inequalities in the *field* of education.

It is debatable whether developing relationships with those in the *sub-field* of further education increases Academy Leaders' *capital* because technical and vocational routes do not have such high cultural, social and economic *capital* as academic routes to higher education and this highlights inadequacies in the current education system in the United Kingdom where the lack of technical and vocational education and the esteem within which it is held can be contrasted with technical and vocational education in, for example, Finland (Sahlberg, 2011).

Wolf (2015) has written that: "Debates over higher education (HE) take place as though further education (FE) and adult training did not exist: the reverse also happens, albeit less often".

She goes on to discuss the finances of further education and writes that:

The current situation is financially unsustainable. It is deeply in-
egalitarian in its allocation of resources. It is also inefficient and bad
for 'human capital development', which increasingly drives and
justifies education policy (Wolf, 2015, p76).

Academy Leaders working with representatives from the *sub-field* of further
education could be interpreted as being in alignment with a neo-liberal form
of governing that sees education as beneficial to the United Kingdom
economy with children in schools being treated as "human capital", who are
to be developed as mini-entrepreneurs and shaped to meet the needs of the
market however, Academy Leaders could work together democratically with
those from further education colleges, showing  a *Commitment to
Democracy and Public Values*: with academies being given equal status with
further education colleges and further education being given equal status
with higher education institutions, with relationships that are equal on both
sides rather than being dominated by power from one side.

Chancellor Philip Hammond's spring budget statement in 2017 (Treasury,
2017) said that the government would "transform technical education for 16-
19 year olds, creating sector-specific routes to employment, including a work
placement for each student and fund maintenance loans for students
pursuing technical education at higher levels".

It remains to be seen what happens in *practice* in terms of relationships
between Academy Leaders and representatives from the *sub-field* of further
education in the implementation of that policy.

### 6.4.4 Local or National Employers

Academy Leaders' *agency* to liaise with national employers depends on their social and cultural *capital* and their context.

Academy Leaders, Harriet Vale (AL 2) and Paul Parks (AL5), who are categorised as "Make it Happen" take a position in the *field* of education that enables them to work with local or national employers in *practice* in the *sub-field* of employment. Paul Parks (AL5) had the social and cultural *capital* to work with local or national employers, having worked with the private sector through the further education college in his Federation. Harriet Vale (AL2) develops relationships with national employers through the business centre that is attached to her academy.

Neil Masters (AL3), who is categorised as "Help it Happen" develops relationships with national companies, including blue chip companies.

Tom King (AL1), Ruth Potter (AL7), Simon Brown (AL8), Anna Hanley (AL9) and Siobhan Riley (AL10), who are all categorised as "Help it Happen" all have *agency* to develop relationships with local and national employers, because of the social and cultural *capital* of their academies in the *field* of education.

Peter Church (AL6), who is categorised as "Let it happen" developed a relationship with a national employer around green and environmental issues.

Where academies are located is important, so Academy Leaders of academies that were in or near to large cities, Anna Hanley(AL9) and Siobhan Riley (AL10), were nearer to national employers in many sectors

and those Academy Leaders had more economic, social and cultural *capital* to engage with employers. Academy Leaders whose academies were in more remote areas of the country, Kate Green (AL4) and Peter Church (AL6) are not near to national employers in many sectors.

The cultural *capital* that Academy Leaders have in the *sub-field* of employment determines how much *agency* they have to develop relationships with local or national employers, and this reproduces inequalities in education, which reproduces the class structure.

Academy leader's relationships with others within their own academy and in networks is summarised in the following table (a tick indicates that the Academy leader has relationships with others in that *sub-field*):

| Relationships | AL 1 | AL 2 | AL 3 | AL 4 | AL 5 | AL 6 | AL 7 | AL8 | AL 9 | AL 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Within own academy | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Other Schools | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Further Education | | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Higher Education | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Local and National Employers | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Table 3: Academy Leaders' relationships with others in own academy and in wider networks

**6.4.5 Academy Leaders Categorised by Their Response to Change Towards Academisation and Relationships in Wider Networks**

### 1. Make it Happen

Harriet Vale (AL2 and Paul Parks (AL5) are categorised as "Make it Happen" Academy Leaders. They employ their cultural and social *capital* to develop relationships within the different *sub-fields* of higher education, further education and with local and national employers in the first place and their cultural and social *capital* is increased by developing these relationships, which allows the possessors to increase their power. If they can access economic, social and cultural *capital* to develop relationships in all those *sub-fields,* this has an upward spiralling effect that increases their power further and increases their *symbolic capital* (prestige or reputation).

### 2. Help it Happen

"Help it Happen" Academy Leaders, Tom King (AL1), Neil Masters (AL2), Ruth Potter (AL7), Simon Brown (AL8), Anna Hanley (AL9) and Siobhan Riley (AL10) all employ their social and cultural *capital* to develop relationships in some of the different *sub-fields*, particularly in higher education if they are judged by Ofsted as Outstanding or Good schools. Their social and cultural *capital* is increased by developing these relationships, which allows the possessors to increase their power.

### 3. Let it Happen

The one "Let it Happen" Academy Leader in this sample, Peter Church (AL6) is developing relationships with others in the various *sub-fields* but is being directed by others, including his sponsor and the Department for Education and so is categorised as "Let it Happen", which is not increasing his power.

### 4. Oppose it

The one "Oppose it" academy leader in this sample, Kate Green (AL4), is developing relationships with others in her own community in line with democracy and public values as opposed to neo-liberal and market values. For her, there are fewer democratic relationships with others in networks than there used to be, which she interprets as a neo-liberal governmentality bringing greater isolation and a pervasive sense of insecurity and uncertainty. She is prevented from developing relationships in all the different *sub-fields* of higher education, further education and with local or national employers because of the position of her academy in the *field* of education. In a downward spiralling effect, she become powerless in her relationships in these *sub-fields* and her position in the *field* of education becomes more and more isolated, precarious and uncertain, communication is *symbolically distorted,* and she is sub-ordinated.

From each of the Academy Leaders' articulation of their role, the general findings around relationships with Agencies and with Government will be discussed next.

**6.5 Academy Leaders' Relationships with Agencies and Government**

This section will analyse Academy Leaders' relationships with the Regional School Commissioners, Ofsted and the National College for Teaching and Leadership as well as Academy Leaders' relationships with government itself.

**6.5.1 Regional Schools Commissioners**

The findings suggest that the promise of freedom that is suggested by becoming an independent academy is merely rhetorical.  In practice, any freedom that Academy Leaders have gained comes from freedom from their local authorities and power has been almost entirely removed from the democratic control of local authorities, where councillors are elected and are accountable to their electorate and transferred to key individuals from the academies and the Regional Schools Commissioners, who have been appointed by government and as such are civil servants of the state.

Regional Schools Commissioners have been given a great deal of power over the middle ground between central government and academies and schools in their region. The findings show that there is uncertainty for the Academy Leaders in how the Regional Schools Commissioners' role will work out for them and Academy Leaders are governed in a way that increases their precarity, insecurity and uncertainty about the future.

As has been suggested, this is a top-down initiative from government via Regional Schools Commissioners to Chief Executives of academies that is driven by power.

"Make it Happen" and "Help it Happen" Academy Leaders may have the social and cultural *capital* to develop relationships with Regional Schools Commissioners and so develop their position in the middle ground in their regions within the *field* of

education in the future. It was too early in that process for this research to make definite inferences in that area.

There was very little evidence in this research of Academy Leaders collective organising in regional occupational groups that would contest the dominant neo-liberal education reform agenda. This has implications for *democracy* and a commitment to public values.  The likelihood that people will make suggestions and bring forward ideas that disagree with the dominant neo-liberal discourse decreases as individuals are protecting their position in the *field* of education. There is very little evidence of *democratic agency* for Academy Leaders regionally in the middle ground between central government and the academies, with Academy Leaders simply implementing the policies that are developed by government.

### 6.5.2 Ofsted

The findings are that Ofsted judgements matter, and have always mattered, deeply to Academy Leaders and Ofsted visits are a time of performativity for Academy Leaders and getting Outstanding judgements were highlights for some.  From this it is reasonable to suggest that Academy Leaders are least likely to contest the dominant idea that Ofsted judgements should be used to judge the success of their academies.  Academy Leaders get *symbolic capital*, that is, approval and recognition, from Outstanding Ofsted judgements and Ofsted judgements become part of the *taken for granteds* or *doxa* of academies.

Some Academy Leaders felt that they did have *agency* to discuss ideas with Ofsted at certain times but the main purpose of the academy's Ofsted visit was for Academy Leaders to perform to meet the requirements of the Ofsted inspection regime and not to discuss issues in education more broadly.

There was recognition that Ofsted inspectors had a great deal of cultural *capital* (knowledge) in the *field* of education, although whether they had greater cultural *capital* than Academy Leaders themselves was questioned by Siobhan Riley (AL10). There was potential for discussions with Ofsted to be developed to include more of a dialogue and it was felt that perhaps more recent inspections had moved in that direction however, this did not yet occur widely in *practice* in the *field* of education.

Ofsted inspectors possess more symbolic *capital* than Academy Leaders; they judge Academy Leaders and their academies and the relationship is based on the invisible exercise of power.  Recent moves towards Academy Leaders preparing self-assessments for Ofsted inspections compels Academy Leaders to become self-regulating; to behave as though they are constantly being watched and to develop their identity as ideal neo-liberal leaders, who perform to meet the requirements of the government's neo-liberal agenda, even when there is no inspection body present.

### 6.5.3 National College for Teaching and Leadership

The National College for Teaching and Leadership was not seen by the Academy Leaders as a powerful body for them to work with.  There have recently been moves to establish a new National College and the evidence in this research, from Siobhan Riley (AL10), suggests that there is an attempt to move towards using this as a forum to discuss issues and ideas in education more broadly and a system where Academy Leaders have more *democratic agency,* that is, a *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* and the *agency* to act upon that.

### 6.5.4 Government

The Academy Leaders who were interviewed had all taken traditional routes into teaching, through heads of departments, into heads of schools, deputy headships, assistant principals, headship or principal posts to become Academy Leaders of one or more academies. They had significant experience between them of working in a wide range of schools and academies and further education, including: working in grammar schools or secondary moderns, comprehensive schools, foundation schools or community schools, sponsored academies, Multi-Academy Trusts, convertor academies, independent schools, and Paul Parks (AL5), had experience in the further education sector.

Academy Leaders are well placed to make educationally significant contributions to practice in the *field* of education, as they have the cultural, and social *capital* associated with academies, schools and education that is required for them to do so.

In terms of their direct relationship with government, some Academy Leaders felt that they had *agency* to discuss issues in education directly with government, but this opportunity did not exist equally for all Academy Leaders. Some Academy Leaders (Harriet Vale (AL2), Neil Masters (AL3), Paul Parks (AL5),Ruth Potter (AL7),Simon Brown (AL8),Siobhan Riley (AL10), who have achieved success in government terms felt that they had *agency* to discuss education directly with governments but other Academy Leaders, such as Kate Green (AL4), Peter Church (AL6), who are directly involved in Academy Leadership but whose academies are currently judged by Ofsted as Requires Improvement, and so are not considered successful in government's terms, did not feel that they had *agency* to discuss education directly with government.

I ascertained from their answers to Interview Question 13 , which asked:  If you could talk about something to government what would it be, that the Academy Leaders interviewed all demonstrated a great deal of understanding and expertise in the *field* and *practice* of education.  The main issue for many Academy Leaders was around finance and funding, particularly for sixth forms and this is a common difficulty nationally.  Garner and Healy (2014), who is a head-teacher, have written about how state sixth forms might become a thing of the past as the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government's pledge to maintain education spending did not extend to post-16s and how, in their opinion, the funding formula for this just does not add up (Garner and Healy, 2014).

There was little further consensus around issues that Academy Leaders would like to discuss with government, with all Academy Leaders raising different issues including: contextual differences, lack of emphasis on the vocational, measures of success and targets, recruitment of teachers, Ofsted inspections, curriculum reforms and the amount of change in the education system.

This is interpreted as Academy Leaders being held in a position of uncertainty and precarity within a neo-liberal governmentality by many changes in the education system being introduced concurrently and the operational realities and difficulties in practice for head-teachers of implementing what is interpreted as the government's neo-liberal policies for the academies operating in a quasi-market.

The findings suggest that examination results mattered deeply to Academy Leaders and were highlights for many and it is reasonable to suggest that Academy Leaders are most likely to accept the dominant idea that examination results should be used to judge the success of their academies. Successful Academy Leaders gain

*symbolic capital* that is approval and recognition from their examination results and examinations become part of the *taken for granted* or *doxa* of academies.

For Kate Green (AL4), whose academy was in an area with more social disadvantage, a commitment to public values, an understanding of her community and the issues they faced and the democratic involvement of her community in planning for that community was the most important issue and this raises the question for me of whether Academy Leaders have what is termed *democratic agency,* that is, the *agency* that Academy Leaders should have in a democracy to raise these types of issues with government, which will be explored in the next section.

## 6.6 Democracy/ Public Values and Responsibilisation

The third research question is "To what extent do Academy Leaders have *Commitment to Democracy or Public Values* and *democratic agency* and/ or Commitment to *neo-liberal Responsibilisation* of self in the *field* of education within a social and political context in which neo-liberalism is a powerful ideology?"

There are qualitative differences in how Academy Leaders orientate themselves in relation to the government's position. The Academy Leader's position in the *field* of education and their practice depends upon their *habitus,* which is the collection of the sets of dispositions that allow individuals to engage with and make meaningful contributions to *practice* and can be described as a *feel for the game.* Some Academy Leaders have a *habitus* that is disposed towards a commitment to public values and the democratic involvement of their communities. Other Academy Leaders have developed a *feel for the game* of neo-liberalism in academies, and they have developed, or are developing, their identities as ideal neo-liberal leaders,

and demonstrate *neo-liberal responsibilisation* of self Foucault (1991); Keddie (2015).

From the data, each of the Academy Leaders is categorised by an interpretation of academy leader's "*Commitment to Democracy/Public values*" and/or their "*Commitment to Responsibilisation*".

To confirm the meaning of these concepts for my research; a *Commitment to Democracy/Public Values* means that Academy Leaders are committed to the value of democracy and see the importance of engaging with their local communities, understanding the local context for their academies and engaging in wider networks and using this to inform the decisions that are taken for their academy; a *Commitment to Responsibilisation* means that Academy Leaders embrace or accept the financial and business principles for academies and see the role of education as a producer of values such as entrepreneurialism, enterprise and leadership and develop their identities as responsible citizens who carry out the demands of their neo-liberal and data driven environment.

Whilst I infer that all schools and academies have a strong commitment and accountability to parents, a distinction is made in terms of whether this is done within a democratic discourse in education, for example, as discussed by Woods (2011) or whether this is done within a neo-liberal discourse.

My interpretation of a democratic discourse is one that sees parents as people for whom the academy provides a public service, who have a voice in the decisions that are taken, while a neo-liberal discourse is one that sees parents as customers or consumers for what their academy produces, who ultimately make their preferences

of academies known by exercising parental choice and deciding to which academy they send their child.

Academy Leaders in this sample, are categorised by their *Commitment to Democracy/Public Values*, according to Table 5 on page 113 and their Commitment to Responsibilisationon, according to Table 6 on page 114 and this is plotted below on a plotter, adapted from Chatwin (2005).

**6.6.1 Academy Leaders Categorised by their Commitment to Democracy/Public Values and their Commitment to Responsibilisation**
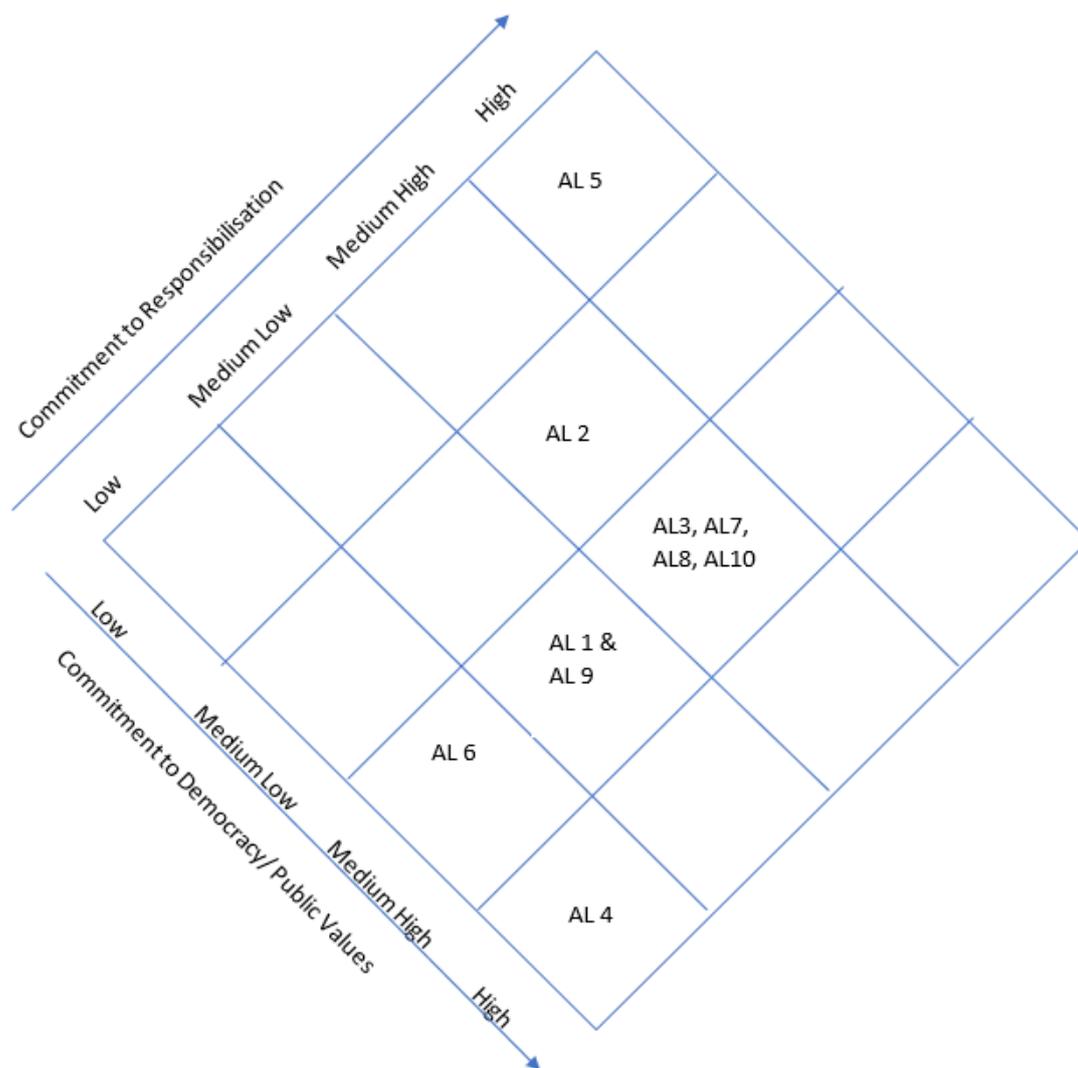


Figure 4: Academy Leaders' Commitment to Democracy/Public Values and Commitment to Responsibilisation

## 6.6.2 Academy Leaders' Commitment to Democracy/Public Values and Commitment to Responsibilisation by Response to Change

The four different Responses to Change are highlighted on the plotter as follows:
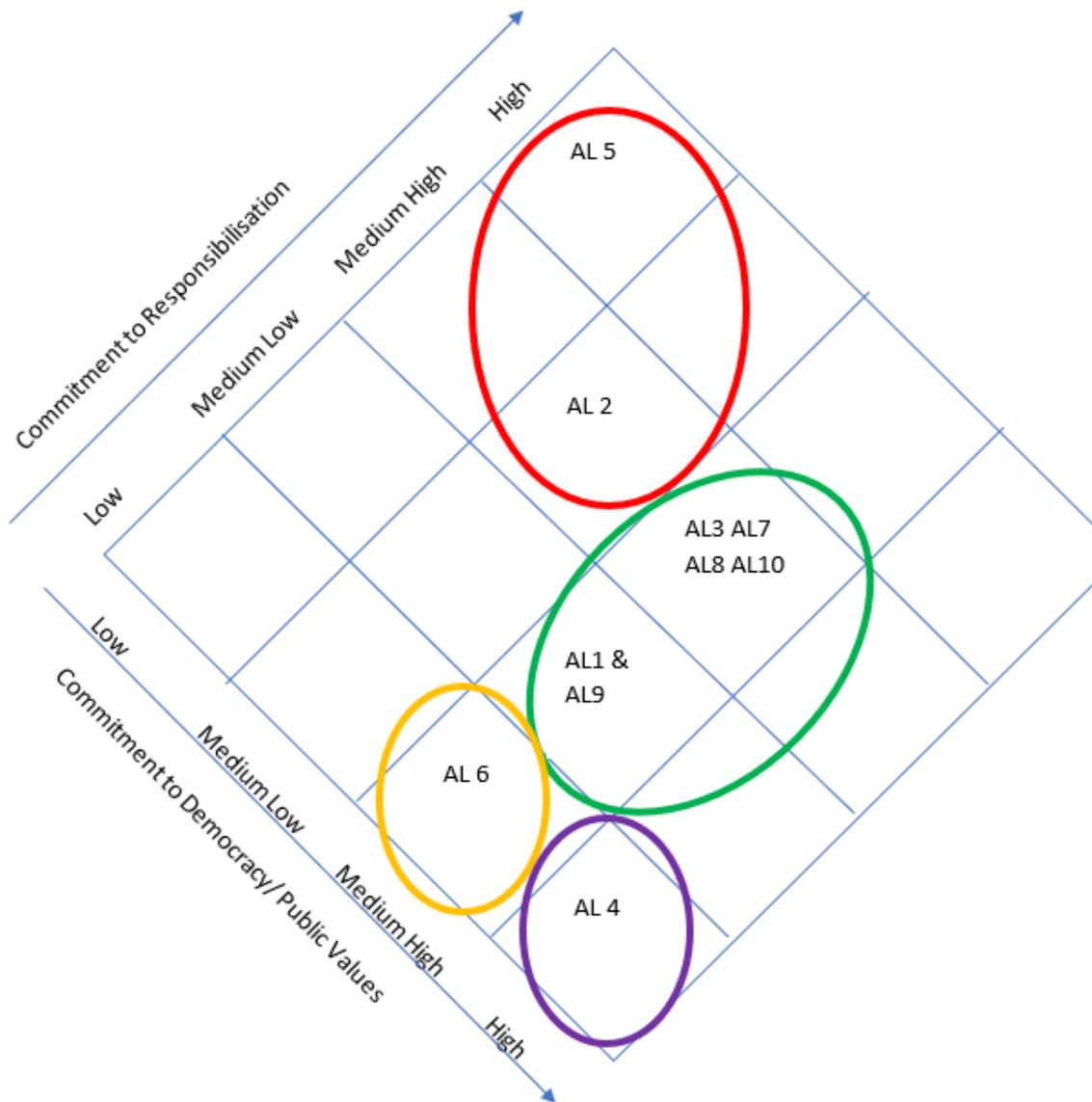


| Response to Change | |
|---|---|
| Make it Happen | — (red) |
| Help it Happen | — (green) |
| Let it Happen | — (yellow) |
| Oppose it | — (purple) |

Figure 5: Academy Leaders' Commitment to Democracy/Public Values and Commitment to Responsibilisation by Response to Change

## 1. Make it Happen

Those who are categorised as "Make it Happen" have at least a medium high commitment to *responsibilisation* of the self as discussed by Keddie (2015) and construct themselves as ideal neo-liberal leaders – performing and enterprising subjects who readily accept the business principles and results-orientation of their data driven environment and by doing this they maximise their *agency*. They have at most a medium low *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* and see parents as customers for their academies, who ultimately make their judgement on the academy by exercising parental choice and deciding to which academy they send their child.

## 2. Help it Happen

Those who are categorised as "Help it Happen" can be seen to be balancing their *Commitment to Responsibilisation* and their *Commitment to Democracy/Public Values.* They have at least a medium low if not a medium high *Commitment to Responsibilisation* and they also have at least a medium high *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values.*

## 3. Let it Happen

Those who are categorised as "Let it Happen" may have had no choice in becoming an academy and have a low *Commitment to Responsibilisation.* They have at least a medium high *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values.*

## 4. Oppose it

Those who are categorised as "Oppose it" have a low Commitment to R*esponsibilisation* and a high *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values.*

**6.6.3 Strength of Commitment to Democracy/Public Values or Strength of Commitment to Responsibilisation by Response to Change and Agency**

The four types of response to change can be placed on a chart showing the strength of their *Commitment to Democracy or Public Values* and the strength of their *Commitment to Responsibilisation* and the *agency* that they have within that, as below:
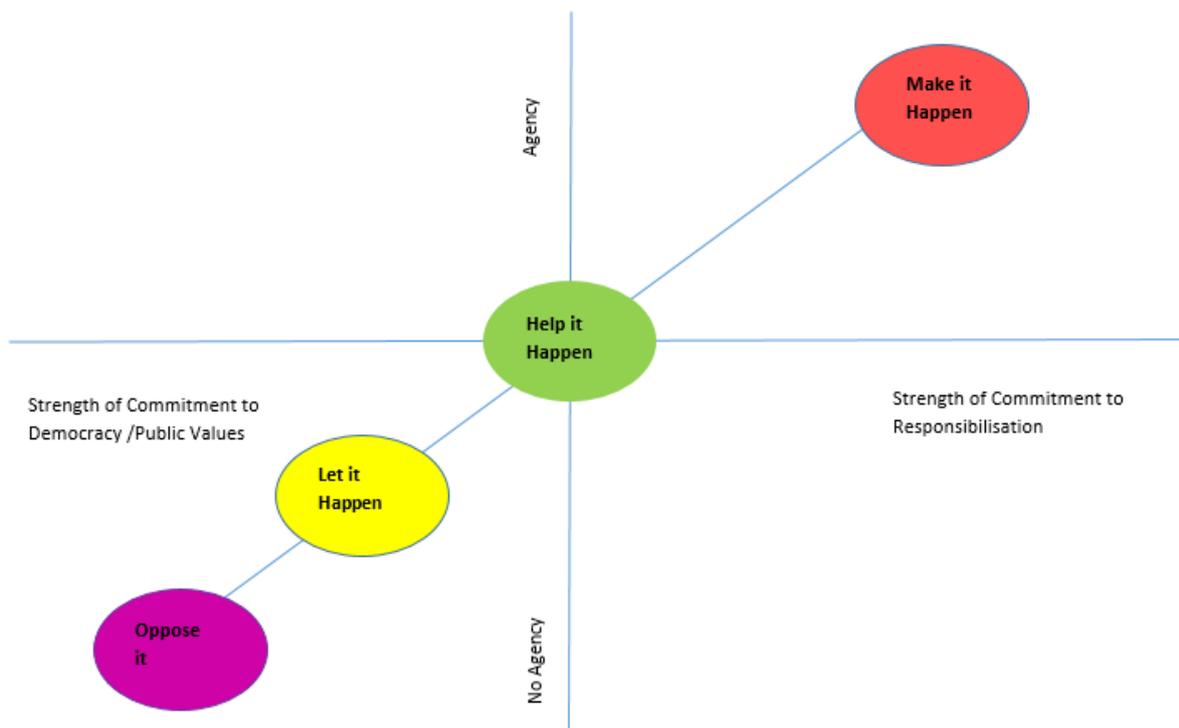


Figure 6: Strength of Commitment to Democracy/Public Values or Strength of Commitment to Responsibilisation and Agency

## 1. Make it Happen

"Make it Happen" Academy Leaders feel that they have *agency* within the education reform agenda.  It is interpreted that they are given *symbolic capital* and recognition from governments and made to feel that they have *agency* to shape the academies' environment because of their position in the *field* of education.

## 2. Help it Happen

"Help it Happen" Academy Leaders are balancing their *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* and their *Commitment to Responsibilisation* and feel that they have increased their *agency* within the education reform agenda by helping academisation to happen.

## 3. Let it Happen

"Let it Happen" Academy Leaders have acquiesced to academisation and currently have very little *agency* within the education reform agenda.

## 4. Oppose it

"Oppose it" Academy Leaders feel that they are denied *agency* within the education reform agenda.

Kate Green (AL4) opposes neo-liberalism and the academisation of schools and has a high *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* is not given *democratic agency* in the political field by those in government who hold the *symbolic capital*, and, in this way, *symbolic violence* is being practised on those who oppose neo-liberalism.

I infer that  the state's desired outcome is that Academy Leaders gain *agency* if they are committed to academisation and so the field is moved on to over-privilege *agency* for Academy Leaders whose response to change is "Make it Happen"; to privilege *agency* for Academy Leaders whose response to change is "Help it Happen"; to

reserve judgement on giving *agency* to Academy Leaders whose response to change is "Let it Happen" and to deny *agency* to Academy Leaders whose response to change towards academisation is "Oppose it".

## 6.7 Academy Leadership.

The fourth research question is:

Research Question 4. How is Academy Leadership currently constructed by government and by Academy Leaders?

From the findings, I infer that those in positions of power in government are influenced by the neo-liberal or private business discourse and favour communications with the successful academies, and those that agree with the neo-liberal or private business discourse.

Some Academy Leaders are enhancing their power through their interactions with governments. Those Academy Leaders who are given *agency* and a voice in the discourse are those Academy Leaders who either agree with a neo-liberal discourse, Harriet Vale (AL 2) and Paul Parks (AL5) and can be categorised as "Make it Happen", or at least are not vocally opposed to a neo-liberal discourse and can be categorised as "Help It Happen", that is, Neil Masters (AL 3), Ruth Potter (AL7), Simon Brown (AL8) and Siobhan Riley (AL10). Academy Leaders who have some reservations, Tom King (AL 1) and Anna Hanley (AL9), have some *agency* to input into the government agenda but as they do so they become complicit in the neo-liberal, free market and business ideals and so implicate themselves more deeply within that discourse. Academy Leaders who have been pressed, and can be categorised as "Let it Happen", such as Peter Church (AL6), or are being pressed into becoming academies, as their schools have been judged by Ofsted as Requires

Improvement, and can be categorised as "Oppose it", such as Kate Green (AL4), consider that they have no *agency* to input into the government's educational reform agenda.

Social and Cultural *capital* is being gained by some Academy Leaders. This consists of: knowledge of what being an academy means in terms of an agreement with the central tenets of operating as a business within a neo-liberal discourse in education; success or improvement in academic results; and developing relationships in wider networks in the *fields* of higher and further education and the *field* of employment. Ultimately, success is rewarded by *symbolic* capital being given by government in the political *field.*

This can be seen to be shaping the identities of Academy Leaders who are trying to increase their social and cultural *capital* and *agency* in the field of education. The subject of individual Academy Leaders is formed by power relations; the policy technologies of educational reform are mechanisms for reforming Academy Leaders and for changing what it means to be a successful Academy leader. To be a successful Academy leader requires an acceptance of the business principles and the results orientation of the data driven environment of academies, the need to improve the performance of their academy, the *neo-liberal responsibilisation* of self as discussed by Keddie (2015) and the development of themselves as ideal neo-liberal leaders.

There is *misrecognition* of Academy Leaders who oppose the government's neo-liberal discourse, and the *symbolic capital* that is given to some Academy Leaders relies on an agreement with the government's neo-liberal discourse in the political *field* and on the Academy leader's *neo-liberal responsibilisation* of self.

**Chapter 7: Summary**

This Chapter will consider how far the research questions that have been posed have been answered by my research and will identify the further research that is required.

Research Question 1. What is the inter-play between democracy and neo-liberalism in publicly funded state education?

An analysis of the literature for the period, the Education Acts (1988, 1992, 2006, 2011); the Academies Act (2010); White Papers, DfES (2001), DfES (2005), DfE (2010), DfE (2016), and policy documents DfE (2013) suggests that the ideology of neo-liberalism as expressed in the determination to unleash "market forces", "competition", "consumer choice", "adding value", adopting "business practices" and business discourse and introducing privatised schools and school chains, has been the general trend in the agenda of Conservative, New Labour and Coalition governments for the reform of publicly funded state education since the 1980s. Inherent within this is a hostility to democratically accountable bodies such as local councils and the governing bodies of schools and this suggests tensions between democracy and neo-liberalism, with neo-liberalism potentially under-mining democracy in academies.

This leads towards my second research question that seeks to ascertain how Academy Leaders respond to the neo-liberal influenced policy, the tensions between that and social democracy, and the reality within which they find themselves in academies.

Research Question 2. How do Academy Leaders articulate how they carry out their role, including their relationships with others in their own academies and in wider networks*?*

The data collected from Academy Leaders' articulation of their role is rich and suggests that they have different responses to what is interpreted as the government's neo-liberal education reform agenda.

An existing typology of responses to change form Beckhard, R and Harris, R.T. (1987) has been taken and adapted as a classificatory framework that identifies the attitudinal and behavioural responses of Academy Leaders to recent and current policy and these can be characterised in a way which distinguishes responses at least broadly, in terms of: "Make it Happen", "Help it Happen", "Let it Happen" and "Oppose it".

The data collected from Academy Leaders' interviews suggests that they have varying degrees of *Commitment to Democracy* in the form of allegiance to *Public Values*, the general good and equitable treatment for all and varying degrees of *Commitment to Responsibilisation* of self and this leads to the third research question.

Research Question 3. To what extent do Academy Leaders have *Commitment to Democracy or Public Values* and *democratic agency* in the field of education within a social and political context in which neo-liberalism is a powerful ideology??

The findings are that Academy Leaders take up different positions on a range of possible positions in the *field* of education in response to the government's education reform agenda and a plotter has been used to illustrate this.

A potential limitation of this analysis is that it comes from a single researcher's categorisation of each academy leader's position, based on data gathered from their articulation of their role and this may be interpreted differently by different researchers, so to counteract this, clear definitions of consturcts and the basis for my categorisations for Academy Leaders' *Commitment to Democracy/Public Values* are given in Table 5 on page 113 and for Academy Leaders' *Commitment to Responsibilisation* in Table 6 on page 114.

The findings lead to the fourth research question.

Research Question 4. How is Academy Leadership currently constructed by government and by Academy Leaders?

Figure 6 on page 303 has been used to illustrate how Academy Leaders' *agency* is dependent upon their *Commitment to Responsibilisation* of self.  If Academy Leaders have a high *Commitment to Responsibilisation* of self, they are given *agency* within the current education reform agenda but if they have a low *Commitment to Responsibilisation* of self they are denied *agency*.

A limitation of the research is that it is a small sample and the numbers of people demonstrating each type of response is small, so for example there is only one person who I categorised as "Oppose it", who worked with her local democratic infrastructure, through local groups. This one example does however suggest that there is an alternative discourse around local and community democracy and a high *Commitment to Democracy/ Public Values* that is being at best marginalised and at worst supressed by the dominant neo-liberal discourse.

As has been outlined in Chapter 4, a key feature of this research is that one year after these interviews, Academy Leaders AL1, AL4, AL5 and AL6 had all left their

posts.  I interpret this to mean that these Academy Leaders were all in vulnerable positions because of their position in the *field* of education, as can be seen from the plotter, they are all shown at the extremes of the plotter.

The weakness of this research is also its strength in that it captures a moment in time in the early formation of academy schools in England where Academy Leaders took a number of different positions in the *field* of education in response to the education reform agenda and this might never be repeated as I conjecture that the trend towards taking positions that demonstrate a high *Commitment to Responsibiliation* will gradually move so that all Academy Leaders take positions that demonstrate at least a medium high if not a high *Commitment to Responsibilisation* of Self.

The conclusion is that neo-liberalism is an ideology that it is individualistic and competitive and this encourages a *Commitment to Responsibilisation* of self.

Academies have been instrumentalised, in other words, used as tools to manage and lever change in relation to a set of values, which some Academy Leaders accept, others are inclined to vacillate and seek the best compromise for their schools, and others reject partially or wholly.

My study shows that the *field* of education currently displays characteristics of Dewey's (1966) interpretation of an undemocratic society with barriers to free intercourse between people and the communication of experience.  Neo-liberalism does not provide an environment for a *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* to flourish, but, instead threatens a *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* in academies and the *democratic agency* for Academy Leaders to act on that.

Democracy in education and *democratic agency* for Academy Leaders can be seen to be fragile: it has been strong in the past as there is a tradition of democracy in education (Dewey, 1966). It is fragile at this conjuncture because democracy depends upon groups of people developing shared "social goals" to meet a "common purpose" or "common good" and there are currently fewer connections between Academy Leaders and those in other academies, which weakens democracy and *democratic agency* for Academy Leaders and for those local councils and communities, who were previously better able to influence the schools in their locality.

The government currently makes decisions after discussions with some Academy Leaders but without extensive discussion with Academy Leaders coming from all perspectives.

Academy Leaders have the social *capital* (connections and relationships) and cultural *capital* (knowledge and expertise) in education but they are not given *democratic agency*, that is, the agency to lead in their own academies and in wider networks based on a *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* and from this present argument to governments that not only agree with the government's guiding neo-liberal values in the *field* of education, but might also challenge them.

From the findings on those who are currently given *agency* in the *field* of *education*, the government is it seems only really listening to those who agree with their values and given the marginalisation of local councils and local governing bodies, it might be argued that there are insufficient democratic influences in education and therefore an increasing danger of further slippage towards totalitarianism.

**7.1 My Contribution**

I build on the work of Gunter (2001, 2008, 2011, 2016) and Courtney (2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c and 2017), and use Bourdieu's thinking tools to conduct an analysis of the responses to change towards academisation for differerent Academy Leaders. My contribution to theory is that, in response to the neo-liberal project in education, Academy Leaders take a variety of positions in *practice* in the *field of* education: Academy Leaders, whose response to change towards academisation can be categorised as "Make it Happen", develop their *habitus* as ideal neo-liberal leaders and have at least a medium high *Commitment to Responsibilisation* and feel that they are given *agency* in *practice* in the *field* of education; Academy Leaders whose response to change can be categorised as "Help it Happen" balance their *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* and their *Commitment to Responsibilisation*, and in doing so feel that they increase their *agency* in *practice* in the *field* of education; Academy Leaders whose response to change towards academisation can be categorised as "Let it Happen" do not feel that they currently have any *agency* in the *field* of education; Academy Leaders whose response to change towards academisation can be categorised as "Oppose it" , who develop their *habitus* as public servants, with a high *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* consider that they are denied *agency* in *practice* in the *field* of education.

I have used the thinking tools of Bourdieu, to argue that academies are organised mainly based on Academy Leaders' agreement with the government's neo-liberal education reform agenda. This leads to a crisis of democracy in academies, with democracy being under-mined by neo-liberalism, as this situation makes it less likely that Academy Leaders will raise issues that disagree with the dominant neo-liberal

discourse in education because if they do so they lose the *agency* that they feel they have in the *field* of education.

My contribution highlights that the *field* of education comprises the *sub-fields* of higher education, further education and local or national employers.  Each *sub-field* is animated by different social and cultural *capital* and if Academy Leaders can access the social and cultural *capital* associated with each of these *sub-fields* they increase their social and cultural *capital*, and ultimately their *symbolic capital* in the *field* of education.

My work builds on the work of Keddie (2015).  Whilst Keddie's work demonstrates that Academy Leaders from a single academy chain have a high commitment to *neo-liberal responsibilisation* of self, and accept the results orientation of their data-driven environment, my research reveals that not all Academy Leaders in all situations have the same high *Commitment to Responsibilisation* of self but instead take up different positions in the *field* of education.  My research nuances and enriches the work of Keddie to show that, at this conjuncture, various degrees of *Commitment to Responsibilisation* are held by Academy Leaders and this, at least to some extent, moderates the full impact and success of, the neo-liberal project in the *field* of education.

Whilst the *Commitment to Responsibilisation* is dominant, the alternative ideology of a *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* is still present and is sometimes balanced with the *Commitment to Responsibilisation,* and the acceptance of the results orientation and data driven environment for academy schools.

My contribution here is *conceptual* in that it has developed a framework that adds depth to the understanding of the constructs of *democratic agency* and *neo-liberal responsibilisation* of self.

The use of Bourdieu's thinking tools leads me to the pessimistic conclusion that Academy Leaders' *agency* depends on the position that they take in the *field* of education and in the *sub-fields* of higher education, further education and employment. Differences in social, cultural, economic and political *capital* within the different *sub-fields*, are, by either an upwards or a downwards spiralling effect reproduced and magnified.

One of the original aims behind the academies movement for greater social democracy, in the sense of public values, has been over-shadowed by the competing aim of neo-liberalism, which dominates the educational reform agenda.

I would like to propose a new possibility for developing consensus and cohesion within the academies community, that is, governments allowing Academy Leaders *democratic agency*, which is a *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* and high levels of *agency* to act on that, to interpret government policy according to their own context, and to input into the government's education reform agenda.

This would mean governments encouraging Academy Leaders to further develop the understanding that they already have of the social and political conditions of their local community, and providing support for each other, which would develop a form of self-reliance that starts from connection with others in education, recognises differences in contexts and develops relationships that are equal and based on the principles of social democracy.

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**7.2 Identification of Further Research**

Further research is needed into whether the categorisation of leadership into the four types of response to change of: "Make it Happen", "Help it Happen", "Let it Happen" and "Oppose It" and the categorisation of Academy Leaders according to their *Commitment to Democracy and Public values* and their *Commitment to Responsibilisation* and their *agency* to act within that resonates with Academy Leaders and whether they would see themselves as fitting mainly into one or other of the types of response to change and how they would categorise their own *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values and their own Commitment to Responsibilisation*.

Academy Leaders could be asked directly where they would position themselves on the plotter in Figure 4 showing "*Commitment to Democracy/Public Values*" and "*Commitment to Responsibilisation*" and further questions could explore in more detail the *habitus* of each individual Academy leader and elucidate why they adopt the position that they do.

The disadvantage of asking Academy Leaders themselves to make the categorisation is that they may exaggerate their positions because they interpret this as suggesting that there is a value in scoring highly on all aspects and they may not speak so frankly about where the issues lie for them with the current education reform agenda.

Further research could be done on whether teachers, parents and other shareholders' recognise the way Academy Leaders represent themselves on the axes of *Commitment to Democracy/ Public Values* and *Commitment to Responsibilisation*.

Further research is required to consider whether all those involved in relationships in academies and between academies and other institutions are being treated equally. This could be analysed using theories of communicative action (Habermas, 1987), to consider whether development is being undertaken by individuals based upon the mutual search for understanding, and the compelling power of the better argument or whether it is those who are in dominant positions who are being listened to more than others, with decisions being made based on power and money.

My research did not interview non-executive directors or governors of local governing bodies of academies directly and further research is needed to explore how non-executive directors and governors see their responsibility for the performance of their academies and whether this engenders performativity within a neo-liberal discourse and leads to precarity in their situation and a pervasive sense of insecurity and uncertainty. More research is needed into the *Commitment to Democracy and Public Values* and the *Commitment to Resonsibilisation* for people at each level of the hierarchy of governance in academies.

My research did not interview parents directly and further research is needed into the involvement of parents in the different academies. This could include: how much parents are involved in key decision-making, such as decisions around the direction that their child's academy is taking in general or their child's education in particular; whether parents feel that they are treated democratically and viewed as people for whom the academies provide a public service or whether they feel that they are viewed more as customers and consumers for what the academy produces

My research did not interview teachers directly and further research is needed to ask teachers if, from their perspective, they feel that they are engaged with

democratically in academies and whether ideas that are accepted come from key teachers or whether they came more democratically and equally from all teachers.

Further research is needed into the relationships between Academy Leaders whose academies are judged as Outstanding and Academy Leaders whose academies are judged as Requires Improvement or in Special Measures or Inadequate. This could be analysed, using Foucault (1977) to explore whether Academy Leaders whose academies have been judged Requires Improvement or in Special Measures or inadequate feel that they are under the surveillance, examination and the 'panoptic gaze' of Academy Leaders from other teaching schools and academies that are judged as Outstanding.

Further research is needed into the relationship between Academy Leaders and representatives from higher and further education and local and national employers. This could raise the question of whether these relationships are democratic, involving representatives from either side being treated equally and making suggestions or whether one side dominates the relationship.

Whitty (2002) suggests that "Universities are particularly well placed to foster broader research literacy because we are not constrained by one particular definition of what counts as research", and quotes Mannheim to suggest that :

> A healthy education service, as part of a healthy democracy, requires that we, like Mannheim (1951, p199), should resist the tendency to "discuss problems of organisation rather than ideas, techniques rather than aims" (Whitty, 2002, p139)

The responses from Ruth Potter (AL7) and Simon Brown (AL8) suggest that more research is being done in academies by staff themselves, working with representatives from higher education and my recommendation is that this should continue, with relationships being developed between staff in academies and:

a) Higher education, who bring theoretical perspectives and academic rigour to the discussions and support the development of education through the development of leadership and management, bringing together the theoretical and the practical and encouraging debate.

b) Further education, who bring perspectives on technical and vocational education.

c) Local and national employers, who bring perspectives on public values.

d) Government, who bring perspectives on governing and improving standards in education.

This would have the aim of developing depth and shared meaning to any further research that is conducted, with research influencing the successful development of policies for academies and schools in the future.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Literature Search - Search Strategy 1

| Author | Reference | Contribution | Criticism |
|---|---|---|---|
| Woods, Philip A.; Roberts, Amanda | Distributed Leadership and Social Justice: Images and Meanings from across the School Landscape. International Journal of Leadership in Education,2016, v19 n2 p138-156 | A case study of a UK secondary school, which investigates distributed leadership and its relationship to social justice and democratic values using an arts-based method of data generation (collage creation) and interviews. Suggests that attention needs to be given not only to developing flexibility of institutional structures, but also core cultural values (social justice and democracy) and social environments in which relationships are fluid, supportive and encourage belonging and independent thinking. | Empirical evidence from one case study. |
| Granger, David A. | No Child Left Behind and the Spectacle of Failing Schools: The Mythology of Contemporary School Reform. Educational Studies: Journal of the American Educational Studies Association, v43 n3 p206-228 May 2008. | Discusses what David Berliner (2005) has called the perverse "spectacle of fear" surrounding issues of teacher quality and accountability in contemporary school reform. Concludes with some suggestions on how this destructive "spectacle of fear" might potentially be disrupted using the agencies of Deweyan "strong democracy." | Strong theoretical analysis however, supporting empirical evidence of a "spectacle of fear" is lacking. |

| Author | Reference | Contribution | Criticism |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sugrue, Ciaran | From Heroes and Heroines to Hermaphrodites: Emasculation or Emancipation of School Leaders and Leadership? School Leadership & Management, v29 n4 p353-371 Sep 2009 | Argues that the ordinary heroes and heroines who enact school leaderships, and from their practice contribute to contemporary leadership literature, are short changed by a tendency towards collective cultural amnesia that denies them ordinary hero status and that a more perspectival rendering of leadership literature is more likely to have an emancipatory impulse, while recognizing that individual agency, no matter how carefully choreographed in the dance of distributed leadership practices, continues to be indispensable. | Strong theoretical analysis however, supporting empirical evidence of "ordinary heroes and heroines" is lacking. |
| Jenlink, Patrick M.. | Leadership Education Priorities for a Democratic Society. Scholar-Practitioner Quarterly, v4 n4 p306-308. 2010. | Argues that determining the priorities for leadership education in a democratic society is a complex, challenging responsibility and suggests that to be a leader in schools today is to "understand a profoundly human as well as a professional responsibility" and that preparing leaders for the work of educating a democratic society draws to the foreground Dewey's (1916) argument that educators must always "remember that they above all others are consecrated servants of the democratic ideas in which alone this country is truly a distinctive nation." | Lack of empirical research evidence on priorities of leadership education for a democratic society. |

| Author | Reference | Contribution | Criticism |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ranson, Stewart. | The Changing Governance of Education. Educational Management Administration & Leadership, v36 n2 p201-219 2008. | Argues that a new re-constitution of the governance of education may be emerging: schools, colleges and agencies are encouraged not to compete, but to collaborate in creating a community of practice with families.<br><br>Concludes that only a wider reconstituting of the public sphere, one that restricts the power that the advantaged are accruing from the education market place, can enable very different purposes of learning, and conditions necessary for a cosmopolitan civic society to emerge. | Strong review of policy however, lack of empirical research evidence that the "movement of change is now transforming the practice of a child in a classroom detached from the community to create a more inclusive learning community embracing family and neighbourhood with teachers, health and social workers collaborating to support all the learning needs of the young people and adults throughout their lives" (p211)<br><br>Lack of evidence on the different response of colleges and agencies and their abilities to create a community of practice with families |
| Thomson, Pat; Holdsworth, Roger. | Theorizing Change in the Educational "Field": Re-Readings of "Student Participation" Projects. International Journal of Leadership in Education, v6 n4 p371-391 2003. | Uses Bourdieu to argue that the continued press from the political field and the wider field of power to increase levels of mass schooling produced a "principal opposition" in the schooling field between democratization and hierarchization that makes the field not only contested but also unstable, which produces further spaces and opportunities for both hierarchic and democratic changes. | Strong theoretical use of Bourdieu however, not clear what the connection was between the author and the Student Action Teams provided as cases of student participation. |

| Author | Reference | Contribution | Criticism |
|--------|-----------|--------------|-----------|
| Court, Marian; O'Neill, John. | "Tomorrow's Schools" in New Zealand: From Social Democracy to Market Managerialism. Journal of Educational Administration and History, v43 n2 p119-140 2011. | Uses one national case study of Tomorrow's schools in New Zealand to illustrate how diverse ideological agendas of central state agencies contest the discursive space.<br><br>To explain this shift, they examine selected policy text pre-cursors to the reforms and identify how contrasting forms of "principal" and "teacher" identity emerged within social democratic, neo-liberal and market managerial ideologies. | Uses only one national case study. Strong on analysis of policy texts but lack of empirical work. |
| Chajet, Lori | The power and limits of small school reform: institutional agency and democratic leadership in public education in Carlson, D and Gause, C. P. (Eds) Keeping the promise: essays on leadership, democracy and education (pp. 287-302). 2007. | For some educational leaders, the work of overcoming the odds is left to students themselves; for others overcoming the odds is the work of schools.<br><br>It is the latter group of educational leaders who create schools that enact institutional agency; that is, they work from a clear understanding and critique of the reproductive functions of education within the United States. | No clear statement of the aims of the research, no clear statement of the ontological and epistemological positions taken, evidence from just one case study and it is not clear how this was selected other than it "takes seriously the promise of democratic schooling" and is part of a larger study on the power and limits of public small school reform. Data analysis was not sufficiently described to ensure that it was rigorous. |

Appendix 2: Literature Search – Search Strategy 2

| Author | Reference | Contribution | Criticism |
|---|---|---|---|
| Keddie, Amanda | New modalities of state power: neo-liberal responsibilisation and the work of academy chains. International Journal of Inclusive Education; Nov 2015, Vol. 19 Issue 11, p1190-1205, 16p | Draws on interview data gathered as part of a broader study around issues of equity and schooling. It features the voices of the Executive Director and four head-teachers from one of England's top performing academy chains, 'CONNECT'.<br><br>The notion of neo-liberal responsibilisation is drawn on to examine, firstly, the ways in which head-teachers describe their work and, secondly, the chain's expectations of them as CONNECT leaders. Responsibilisation of the self was apparent in head-teachers' construction of themselves as ideal neo-liberal workers – performing and enterprising subjects who readily accept the business principles and results-orientation of their 'data-driven' environment.<br><br>The paper illustrates how such neo-liberal responsibilisation is both a crucial and highly troubling element in the work of academy chains as new modalities of state power. | Examines only one case study of one academy chain. Did not clearly examine her own role, potential bias and influence – was she the only person who did the data analysis or was there a team? Did not discuss ethics in a highly politicised area of research. |

| Author | Reference | Contribution | Criticism |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tseng, Chun-Ying | Changing headship, changing schools: how management discourse gives rise to the performative professionalism in England (1980s–2010s). Journal of Education Policy; Jul 2015, Vol. 30 Issue 4, p483-499, 17p | Focuses on the discursive shifts of emphasis of school headship since the 1980s in England, and the ways in which the repositioning of head-teachers has gradually transformed professional work and relationships in schools via a discourse of management. Specifically, the paper identifies a "trilogy of school headship in England" to indicate a process by which school headship has been repositioned – from head-teacher, to manager, and to leader from the Education Reform Act of 1988 onwards.

Drawing primarily on policy texts, the construction, within policy, of a head-teacher endowed with power, responsibility and freedom will be detailed. Informed by both Fairclough and Foucault's conceptions of discourse, this paper concludes that as a policy technology management subjects head-teacher to 'a twin process of autonomization plus responsibilization' within which they become the linchpin of the delivery chain of policy and play a key role in the formation of 'performative professionalism'. | Draws primarily on policy texts rather than how head-teachers themselves respond in practice to those policy texts. |

Appendix 3: Numbers of Local Authority and Academy Schools.  Source: Ofsted Reports

| Ofsted Report | 2012/3 | % | 2013/4 | % | 2014/5 | % | 2015/6 | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Secondary Schools** | | | | | | | | |
| Local Authority | 1532 | 49% | 1383 | 44% | 1243 | 39% | 1149 | 36.5% |
| Academy - Convertor | 1263 | 40% | 1338 | 42% | 1385 | 44% | 1428 | 45% |
| Academy – Sponsor Led | 312 | 10% | 381 | 12% | 456 | 14% | 461 | 14.6% |
| Free Schools | 7 | <1% | 34 | 1% | 66 | 2% | 68 | <1% |
| City Technology Colleges | 3 | <1% | 3 | <1% | 3 | <1% | 3 | <1% |
| University Technical Colleges | 1 | <1% | 5 | <1% | 11 | <1% | 15 | <1% |
| Studio Schools | 1 | <1% | 6 | <1% | 18 | <1% | 19 | <1% |
| **Totals** | **3119** | | **3150** | | **3182** | | **3143** | |
| **Primary Schools** | **2012/13** | **%** | **2013/4** | **%** | **2014/15** | | **2015/16** | |
| Local Authority | 15,397 | 93.8% | 14,640 | 90% | 14,021 | 86% | 14454 | 83.9% |
| Academy - Convertor | 988 | 6% | 1416 | 8.7% | 1790 | 11% | 2180 | 13.5% |
| Academy – Sponsor Led | 7 | <1% | 175 | 1% | 410 | 2.5% | 427 | 2.6% |
| Free Schools | 17 | <1% | 35 | <1% | 69 | <1% | 69 | <1% |
| **Totals** | **16,409** | | **16,266** | | **16,290** | | **16,130** | |
| **Special Schools** | **2012/13** | **%** | **2013/14** | **%** | **2014/15** | | **2015/16** | |
| Local Authority – Maintained | | | 843 | 83% | 860 | 85% | 771 | 77% |
| Local Authority - Non-maintained | | | 69 | 7% | 69 | <1% | 65 | <1% |
| Academy - Convertor | | | 98 | 9.6% | 123 | 12% | 147 | 1.4% |
| Academy – Sponsor Led | | | 5 | <1% | 7 | <1% | 7 | <1% |
| Free Schools | | | 3 | <1% | 7 | <1% | 9 | <1% |
| **Totals** | | | **1018** | | **1015** | | **999** | |

Appendix 4: Clipping from policy document

**Department for Education Policy: Increasing the number of academies and Free schools to create a better and more diverse school system**

**From: Department for Education, the Rt. Hon Nicky Morgan MP and Lord Nash**

**First published: 22 April 2013**

**Last updated: 4 September 2014,**

**Issue**

There is an urgent need to reform our school system to prevent the standard of education in the UK from falling further behind that of other countries. Our education system is also frequently unequal, with poor performance concentrated in disadvantaged areas.

There is evidence that giving heads and teachers greater freedom over their curriculum, budget and staff can help improve the quality of the education they provide and reduce the attainment gap. We also believe giving parents, teachers and charities the ability to open schools in response to the needs of the local community will help to raise standards.

https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/increasing-the-number-of-academies-and-free-schools-to-create-a-better-and-more-diverse-school-system

Appendix 5: Interview schedule

1. Could you tell me briefly about your career history and what brought you to this point?
2. Could you name one highlight at your academy since you have been leader of the academy?
3. What do you think about the idea of academies?
4. Have you been able to use the freedoms of academy status?
    a. Have you used the freedom not to teach the national curriculum?
    b. Have you used the freedom to change pay and conditions for staff?
    c. Have you used the freedom to change the length of the school days and terms?
5. What do you think about reducing the role of the local authorities?
    a. What else happens in the middle ground now?
6. Could you tell me about the governance of your academy?
    a. How are governors at your academy elected?
    b. Are the governors at your academy on fixed terms?
    c. Do the governors need any particular qualifications?
7. Could you give me an example of where you have taken on board ideas from parents?
8. Could you give me an example of where you have taken on board ideas from teachers?
9. Could you tell me about how your academy works with other schools or academies now?
    a. Are they competitors or can you work together?
10. Could you tell me about a situation where you have done something significant with representatives from higher education?
11. Could you tell me about a situation where you have done something significant with representatives from further education?
12. Could you tell me about a situation where you have done something significant with representatives from local or national employers?
13. If you could talk about something to government what would it be?
14. Do you have any opportunities to influence governments?
    a. Do you have opportunities to discuss ideas with the National College for Teaching and Leadership?
    b. Do you have opportunities to discuss ideas with Ofsted inspectors?
    c. Do you have any opportunities to influence governments directly?
15. Who provides professional support for you now?
16. Any final thoughts or any things that you would like to follow up or on things that I haven't asked you.

Appendix 6: Informed Consent Form

Researcher: Julie C Smith

Faculty of Business, Education and Professional Studies, University of Gloucestershire, Francis Close Hall, Swindon Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL50 4AZ.

E-mail: juliecsmith6@hotmail.com

Do you understand that I have asked you to participate in a research study?

Yes / No

Have you received a copy of the attached information sheet?

Yes / No

Do you understand that you are free to contact me to take the opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?

Yes / No

Do you understand that you are free to refuse participation, or to withdraw from the study at any time, without consequence, and that your information will be withdrawn at your request?

Yes / No

Do you understand that I will keep your data confidential and anonymous?

Yes / No

Do you understand that you will have the option of rejecting the use of audio recording devices?

Yes / No


I wish to take part in this study:

Printed Name:  _____

Signature:  _____

Appendix 7: Information Sheet

This research sees the head-teacher or principal as being at the intersection of several fields of practice (see diagram below) and will investigate whether the head-teacher or principal can make educationally significant contributions to practice in those fields.
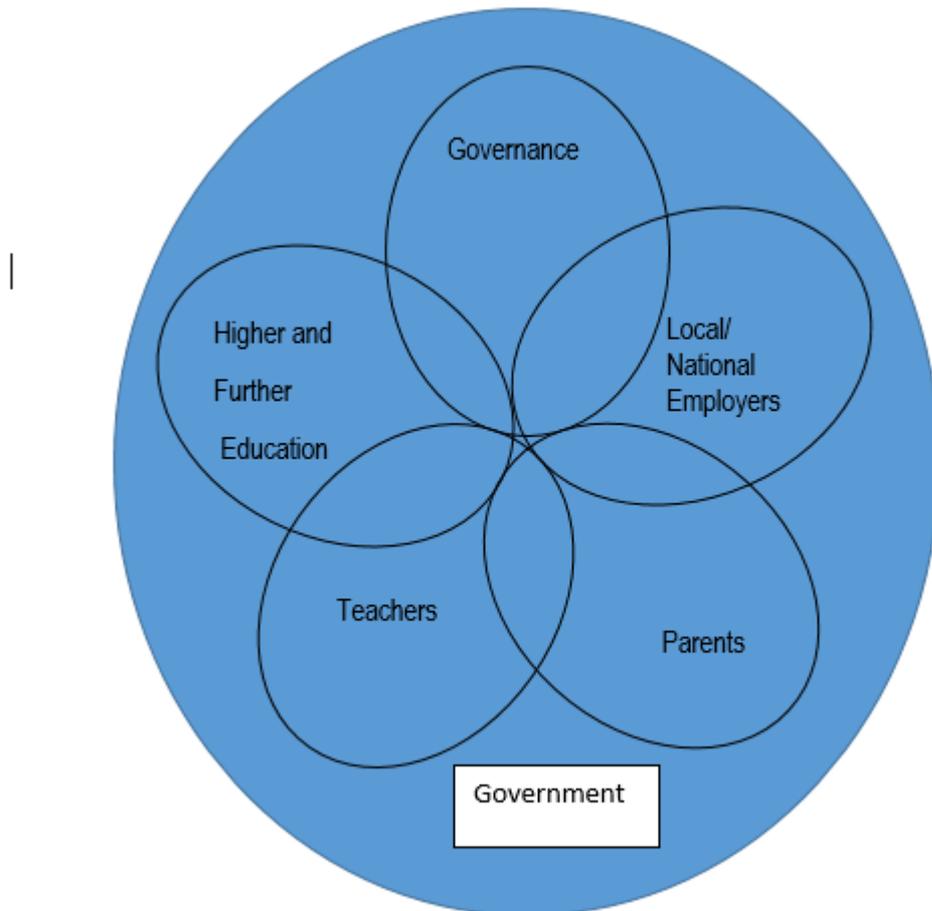
Appendix 8: Prime Ministers and Secretaries of State for Education since 1941

| Dates | Prime Ministers | Dates | Ministers of Education | Party |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| July 1941 | Winston Churchill | July 1941 – August 1944 | R. A. Butler | Conservative (War coalition) |
| July 1945 | Clement Atlee | July 1945 – February 1947 | Ellen Wilkinson | Labour |
| Feb 1950 | Clement Atlee | February 1947- November 1951 | George Tomlinson | Labour |
| October 1951 | Winston Churchill | November 1951- October 1954 | Florence Horsburgh | Conservative |
| May 1955 | Sir Anthony Eden | October 1954- January 1957 | Sir David Eccles | Conservative |
| January 1957 | Harold Macmillan | January 1957- September 1957 | Viscount Hailsham | Conservative |
| October 1959 | Harold Macmillan | September 1957-October 1959 | Geoffrey Lloyd | Conservative |
| October 1963 | Sir Alec Douglas-Home | October 1959- July 1962 | Sir David Eccles | Conservative |
| | | July 1962 – March 1964 | Sir Edward Boyle | Conservative |
| | | April 1964 – October 1964 | Quintin Hogg | Conservative |
| | | | **Secretaries of State for Education and Science** | |
| October 1964 | Harold Wilson | October 1964- January 1965 | Michael Stewart | Labour |
| March 1966 | Harold Wilson | January 1965 – August 1967 | Anthony Crosland | Labour |
| | | August 1967 – April 1968 | Patrick Gordon-Walker | Labour |
| | | April 1968- June 1970 | Edward Short | Labour |
| June 1970 | Edward Heath | June 1970- March 1974 | Margaret Thatcher | Conservative |
| February 1974 | Harold Wilson | March 1974- June 1975 | Reg Prentice | Labour |
| October 1974 | Harold Wilson | June 1975 – September 1976 | Fred Mulley | Labour |
| April 1976 | James Callaghan | September 1976 - May 1979 | Shirley Williams | Labour |

| Dates | Prime Ministers | Dates | Ministers of Education | Party |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| May 1979 | Margaret Thatcher | May 1979- September 1981 | Mark Carlisle | Conservative |
| June 1983 | Margaret Thatcher | September 1981- May 1986 | Sir Keith Joseph | Conservative |
| June 1987 | Margaret Thatcher | May 1986 – July 1989 | Kenneth Baker | Conservative |
| | | July 1989- November 1990 | John MacGregor | Conservative |
| November 1990 | John Major | November 1990 – April 1992 | Kenneth Clarke | Conservative |
| | | | **Secretaries of State for Education** | |
| April 1992 | John Major | April 1992 – July 1994 | John Patten | Conservative |
| | | July 1994 – July 1995 | Gillian Shepherd | Conservative |
| | | | **Secretaries of State for Education and Employment** | |
| | | July 1995 – May 1997 | Gillian Shepherd | Conservative |
| May 1997 | Tony Blair | May 1997 – June 2011 | David Blunkett | Labour |
| | | | **Secretaries of State for Education and Skills** | |
| | | June 2001 – October 2002 | Estelle Morris | Labour |
| | | October 2002 – December 2004 | Charles Clarke | Labour |
| | | December 2004 – May 2006 | Ruth Kelly | Labour |
| May 2005 | Tony Blair | May 2006 – June 2007 | Alan Johnson | Labour |
| | | | **Secretaries of State for Children, Schools and Families** | |
| June 2007 | Gordon Brown | June 2009 – May 2010 | Ed Balls | Labour |

| Dates | Prime Ministers | Dates | Ministers of Education | Party |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Secretary of State for Education | |
| May 2010 | David Cameron | May 2010 – July 2014 | Michael Gove | Conservative - Liberal Democrat Coalition |
| | | July 2014 – May 2015 | Nicky Morgan | Conservative – Liberal Democrat Coalition |
| June 2015 | David Cameron | June 2015 – July 2016 | Nicky Morgan | Conservative |
| July 2016 | Theresa May | July 2016 – June 2017 | Justine Greening | Conservative |
| June 2017- | Theresa May | June 2017 - | Justine Greening | Conservative |

Appendix 9: Letter to the Rt. Hon. Nicky Morgan MP, Secretary of State for Education, July 2014-July 2016.


The Rt. Hon. Nicky Morgan MP

House of Commons

London

SW1A 0AA                                                                                    7 July 2015


Dear Nicky

I am writing to you because I am currently doing research into leadership in the academies for a PhD in Education at the University of Gloucestershire and as part of this I am exploring whether Academy Leaders are able to influence government policies in the field of education.

In your capacity as Secretary of State for Education, I would be very grateful if you were able to write to me giving me an example of where the "wise words" or ideas of an academy leader have influenced you in policy development.

I am very appreciative for any assistance that you are able to provide in this matter.

Yours sincerely,



Julie Smith, BSc, MA, MSc.

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