

Leadership and Comparative Models of Governance in Public Services in England and Wales

Abstract

Effective governance and leadership of public services is a pressing issue, particularly during times of austerity. Managing on reduced resources whilst also ensuring an effective service for stakeholders is a challenge facing all governments. This paper investigates how via a range of policy innovations, models of governance are changing. Taking England and Wales as a case study, we examine how these challenges have affected a shift from a predominantly stakeholder models to appointed and also the elected models of governance in four service areas: education, health care, the fire service and policing. The paper finds that particularly in England, the stakeholder model is being undermined and in many cases replaced by appointed, elected or skills based boards. This shift away from stakeholder boards has important implications for accountability and scrutiny within public services.

Introduction

There is a great deal of research on the effect of the financial crisis on government approaches to public service (see, for example, McCann, 2013). Lodge and Hood (2012:85) argue that across OECD countries, there have been four principal policy responses to the crisis, each one colouring and conditioning the ways in which governments address public service reform and governance. The UK government falls into the category of “the hollow state whereby neoliberal or New Public Management policies of marketization and state rollback are accelerated”. This facet was reflected on by the UK Prime Minister David Cameron in his post election speech in which he announced his government’s intention to ‘break the state monopoly’ on public services by opening up the field to higher numbers of private and third sector providers (Watt, 2015).

There is a body of writers who imagine government responses to crisis as part of a politics of ‘hope’, an argument made forcefully by Klein (2007), whereby governments work to create a sense that reforms and change offer hope to the electorate and feature centrally during periods of crisis as part of governance as “cultural practice” (McCann, 2013: 6; Bevins and Rhodes, 2010). A emphasis on efficiency in public services, matched by an urgent need to ensure that they are responsive to stakeholders, forms part of government strategy to convince the

electorate of the need for rapid and often seemingly unjustifiable change (Perrucci and Perrucci, 2009).

There is little doubt that public services in the UK and internationally are facing unprecedented challenges, not only in terms of how they are governed and led, but equally in terms of how far they represent and respond to stakeholder needs. Government emphasis on innovation, transformational leadership and the introduction of new entrepreneurial approaches – many of which mirror private sector strategy, are creating unprecedented challenges for governing boards and their executives, a phenomenon which is mirrored in other successful economies (see, for example, Wu, Ma, and Yang, 2013). The increasing involvement of private and third sector organisations in the delivery of public services, is also creating substantial challenge from a governance perspective (De Vries et al 2015; Martin, 2011). These complexities, combined with the need for governance to be responsive and proactive, have led the UK government to place a great deal of emphasis on policies which look to both increase skill sets on boards whilst also making them ‘appear’ more responsive to stakeholders (Cameron, 2010).

In common with international patterns of governance (Rhodes, 2007), increasing levels of hybridity have in many cases led to greater levels of accountability and inspection and also place increasing emphasis on boards to be able to monitor and govern services, ‘at arm’s length from government’. There is also a far greater board emphasis on organisational strategy and the ability of boards not only to lead organisational performance, but to take a proactive approach to upscaling and expanding the number and range of providers within their remit (Farrell et al 2012; Wohlstetter, Smith, Farrell and McNeil, 2009). An example of this can be seen in the area of education, in which multi-academy trusts mirror US Charter Management organisations in terms of their ability to expand and diversify in response to government policy and stakeholder requirements (Wohlstetter, 2013).

Within the context of this background, this paper investigates four public services in England and Wales to examine to what extent boards in these areas are changing in response to government policy in this area. Fire, education and health are devolved UK services and governance frameworks for these in both England and Wales is separate whilst policing remains a UK wide service. The paper begins by examining different models of public service governance, moving on to explore the shape of boards in the four services. The final part of the paper investigates issues and concomitant changes to governance within the last five years examining the significance of these changes for the leadership of public services.

2. Stakeholder, Skills and Elected Models of Governance

Models of governance have emerged across both public and private sector in response to the needs of both shareholders (in the for profit sector) and stakeholders (Stone and Ostrower, 2007) and these are outlined in Figure 1 below. The stakeholder model of board identifies a multiplicity of competing and co-operating interests within organisations. The key aim of governance is to engage with, balance and integrate stakeholder interests ensuring that stakeholders are involved, supportive and are represented (see Farrell, 2005; Farrell and Jones, 2000).

The stewardship model also sees the need to engage with a range of interests but gives priority to the strong link between public bodies and civil society. The role of those who govern is to create a framework of shared values and then to engage with key stakeholders and a suitably skilled and autonomous workforce, all of whom 'benefit' from helping the organisation to achieve its goals (Freeman and Peck, 2007; Howard and Seth-Purdie, 2005).

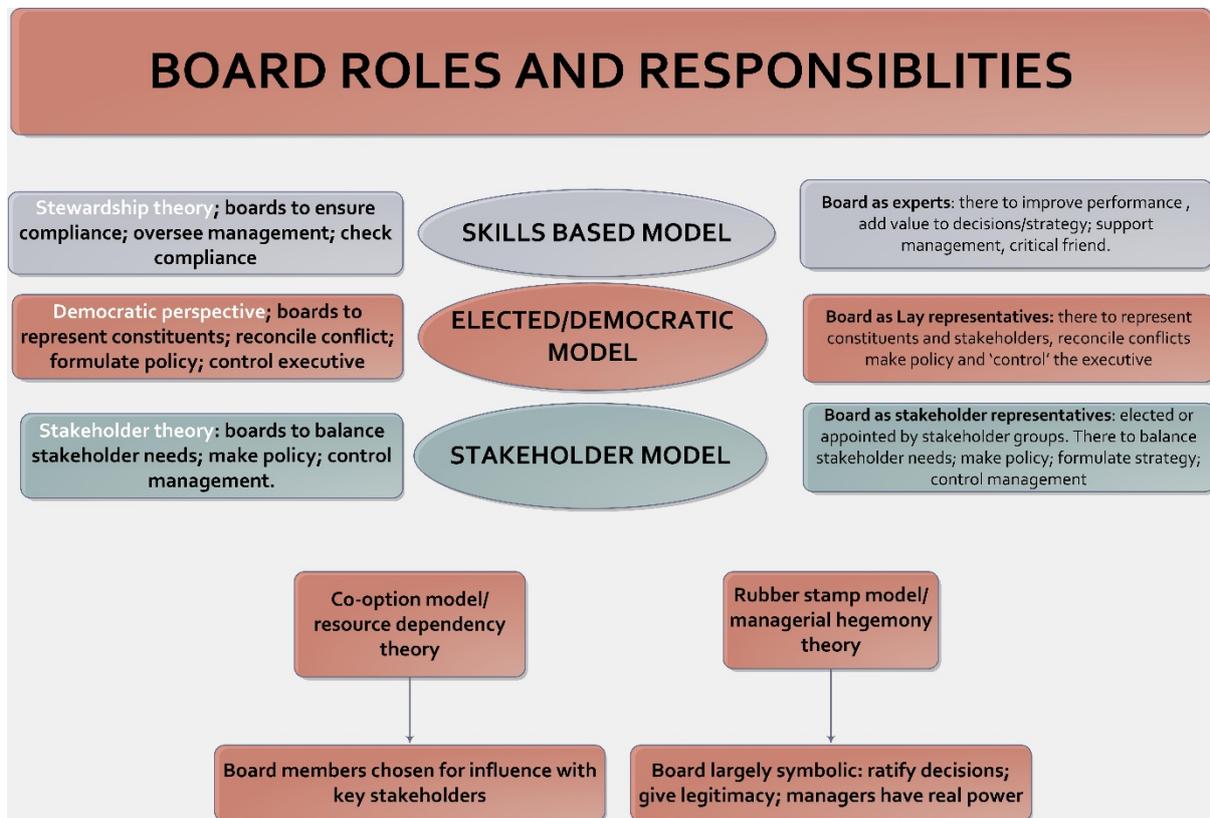
In the policy governance model, there is a distinction between the role of ‘owners’ (in the public service context, the local public) and ‘operators’ (those who deliver the service). In this model, boards act as ‘owner representatives’ who set objectives but fully delegate the running of the organisation to operators via the chief executive as the main point of contact. A framework of policies limits the freedom of the management, ensuring that the effectiveness of an activity is not prioritised over its being ethical or prudent (see Farrell, 2005; Hill and Hupe, 2002).

The elected democratic model of governance is premised on agency theory and has the ‘principal-agent’ relationship at its core. In this approach, the focus is on efforts by those who have been elected and in governance roles to ensure that others within the organisation act appropriately on their behalf – particularly the executive. The model emphasises monitoring and control systems including performance measures, incentives and sanctions, and relies heavily on defining what a ‘good’, ‘outstanding’ or ‘poor performance’ looks like (see, for example, Eisenhardt, 1989). It is premised on the idea of leadership as self-interested and opportunistic in the sense that they would seek to be re-elected. One of the key issues in applying agency theory to the public sector is that there is greater “ambiguity over who the principals or owners are” (Cornforth, 2001:2).

The two final models illustrated in Fig. 1 have been included here due to the particular marketised changes that characterise the government’s approach to the public services – particularly in England. The co-option model, premised on resource dependency theory, focuses on the ways in which organisations ensure their survival in the contexts within which they operate. In order to do this, they aim to mitigate financial risk and minimize

environmental dependencies by appointing board members who have influence in areas outside of the board’s operating context (see Hillman et al 2009). The final approach, labelled the ‘rubber stamp model’ is premised on managerial hegemony theory (Cornforth, 2001) and assumes that the management or executive function control of the organisation is more dominant than the board in leadership. The board’s role is merely act to ratify their decisions and to lend ‘legitimacy’ to the organisation (see also Spicer and Böhm, 2007).

Figure 1 – Board Roles and Responsibilities



ADAPTED FROM CORNFORTH (2004)

The reforms which began under the Conservative governments of the 1980s combined with the New Labour target driven ‘command and control’ approach to public services has created what John Seddon terms ‘The Whitehall Effect’: a focus on targets; factory systems and punitive inspection and accountability regimes (Seddon, 2014). The Coalition government of 2010-15 intensified these strategies in an attempt to shrink the public sector so that services respond ‘innovatively’ to cuts, streamlining their governance and leadership models and adopting an ‘entrepreneurial’ approach to service provision. These elements combined with an attempt to ensure ‘good governance’ according to the principles in Box 1, have impacted substantially on the composition and structure of boards.

Box 1: Good Governance Characteristics (Ref - OPM and CIPFA, 2004, the Good Governance Standard for Public Services.

Good governance means:

- 1. Focusing on the organisation’s purpose and on outcomes for citizens and users**
- 2. Performing effectively in clearly defined functions and roles**
- 3. Promoting values for the whole organisation and demonstrating the values of good governance through behaviour**
- 4. Taking informed, transparent decisions and managing risk**
- 5. Developing the capacity and capability of the governing body to be effective**
- 6. Engaging stakeholders and making accountability real**

Bearing in mind that boards are looking to attain these characteristics we move to examine the composition of boards in the four UK public service areas: health; policing, education and fire and rescue.

Health

Health governance has historically taken a stakeholder approach with representation from clinical and non-clinical employees, patients and non-executive members with a general interest in the area of health care. The Health and Social Care Act of 2003 marked the beginning of a schism in governing arrangements of England and Wales: Foundation Trusts were introduced in England in order to replace NHS Trusts established by the Conservatives. The new Foundation Trusts were promoted by New Labour as the means to achieve a heightened focus on local communities and other stakeholders. Local residents of each trust were given 'membership' status to elect representatives to serve on the board, made up of members on the basis of the stakeholder approach.

In 2012 The Health and Social Care Act introduced further changes in NHS organisation in England. These reforms, implemented in April 2013, included a move to clinically led commissioning groups, (CCGs), responsible for planning and purchasing health care services for local populations and now responsible for 60% of the NHS budget. 121 groups replace the 152 Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and operate under 'NHS England': an independent organisation which, in common with many networked governance structures, operates at 'arm's length' from the government (Burnham, 2001). NHS England's role is to provide national leadership in health, to oversee and allocate resources to the CCGs and to commission specialist services.

The CCGs are membership bodies made up of GP practices in the area they cover and may commission health services from a range of providers including from the voluntary and

private sectors. (<http://www.nhscc.org/ccgs/>). Each is required to have a governing body comprise six members including:

- The CCGs Accountable Officer
- The Chief Finance Officer
- A registered nurse
- A secondary care specialist
- Two lay members

In undertaking their work, CCGs should seek “expert advice from a broad range of health professionals” in their decision making (BMJ and NHS England, 2014), in addition the CCG governing board looks to be made up from individuals who, “bring different perspectives, drawn from their different professions, roles, background and experience. These differing insights into the range of challenges and opportunities facing the CCG will, together, ensure that the CCG takes a balanced view across the whole of its business” (CCG, 2012, p.31).

The 2012 Act also established independent consumer champion organisations locally: ‘Health Watch’ and a national body ‘Health Watch England’ possesses statutory powers to ensure that the voice of the patient is strengthened within the commissioning groups, delivery organisations and the health care regulator: ‘Monitor’ which regulates health services in England. In order to bring about greater integration in health and social care in England, health and wellbeing boards have also been introduced and these bodies, hosted by local authorities are made up of the following members:

- Local authority Director of Social Services
- Local authority Director of Children’s Services
- Director of Public Health
- Elected Member (at least one)
- Clinical Commissioning group
- Health watch

Their role is to promote integrated working through the development of a health and wellbeing strategy and a joint needs assessment in the planning of services (Humphries and

Galea, 2013). The membership of these boards is based on the stakeholder approach taking in interests from local authorities and their officers and elected members and also the new bodies operating in health in England.

In Wales, the stakeholder model of governance continues to operate under seven health boards which plan and deliver health services for their population. The boards comprise both officer and non-officer members: Non-officers represent stakeholder groups and include members from: a local authority, a voluntary organisation, a trade union and also an individual who holds a post in a university which is related to health. In addition, there may be an additional three 'associate' members appointed in Wales by Welsh Ministers they may be nominated by the board but must be officially approved by Ministers. In addition, Officer Members consisting of the chief officer, a medical officer, a finance officer, a nurse officer, an officer carry responsibility for provision of: primary care services, community health services and mental health services. There will also be officers responsible for: workforce and organisational development; public health; strategic and operational planning of the provision of health services and therapies and health science. The chair, vice-chair and non-officer members are appointed by the Welsh Ministers with the officer members appointed by the Board.

England undoubtedly favours a markedly 'expert' governance structure with some inputs from those receiving services, the city-regions moving towards an elected model of mayoral accountability. Governance of health in Wales continues to operate on the basis of the original stakeholder approach, put in place in the 1940s.

Police

There are 43 police forces of England and Wales: 39 English forces and 4 based in Wales. Responsibility is non-devolved and rests with the Home Office. 76% of total funding comes from The Home Office. As Rogers and Gravelle (2014, p.83) point out, “the landscape of policing is complex [in Wales] and often overlaps with devolved areas in which the Welsh Government has control”. The four Welsh police forces have strong links with the Welsh Government and are represented by two seconded officers who make up the police liaison team.

Governance structures within the police over the last 60 years began with a stakeholder model, introduced by The Police Act 1964. The model created a tripartite system of police governance which comprised the Home Office (under the Home Secretary), the Local Police Authority and the Chief Constable. This system remained in place until 2012 when Police Authorities were replaced by locally elected Police and Crime Commissioners. The system had been under scrutiny for some time - the Audit Commission was instrumental in pointing out ‘inefficiencies’ in the service and this added to rising government concerns about police governance along with a need to promote ‘efficiency and value for money’ (Campbell-Smith, 2008). The Police and Justice Act affected the composition of Police Authorities (PAs) in the following ways:

- Restricted the size of authorities to 17 people
- Mandated membership: nine councillors; three magistrates; five independent local members who have ‘significant local involvement.’
- Mandated PAs to produce an annual plan, including local and national targets/objectives

Based on the stakeholder model, the tripartite approach to governance contained a number of tensions including questions around the ‘democratic’ composition of the PAs and their legitimacy in representing local stakeholders. Government dissatisfaction with police authorities had been evident for some time under New Labour and accusations that authorities were opaque, their membership largely hidden from public view, that they were far too distant from the communities they purported to represent and this came to a head under the Coalition government 2010-15. The consultation paper ‘Policing in the 21st Century - Reconnecting Police and the People’ outlined a number of ‘significant changes relating to policing in England and Wales.’ (p6). One of these was the proposed abolition of Police Authorities, replacing them with elected police commissioners. According to Mori (2010), the public felt that the Police Authorities were ‘invisible’ and that this lack of visibility was not conducive to a purportedly democratic system. The research also revealed substantial public concern with regard to the proposal for elected commissioners. These concerns were chiefly centred on the risk of political bias and that the elected status of the role would attract politicians whose approach would be ‘more PR than pragmatic’.

The final element of the recent police governance reform has been described by a number of researchers as a compromise agreement between the Liberal Democrat and the Conservative parties in the coalition Government 2010-2015. Apparently, the Conservatives were keen for the proposed commissioner system to be implemented and the Liberal Democrats were unhappy with the proposal, arguing that there was too much power invested in one individual (Lister, 2014). The compromise resulted in the creation of a new body – Police and Crime Panels (PCPs) made up of a minimum of 10 and maximum of 20 members. Each member is nominated by local authorities within the police force area. Lister outlines the requirements – “police force areas consisting of ten or fewer local authorities must have ten members, as

well as two co-opted members. The maximum number of members of the panel is 20 reflecting a desire to ensure they do not become over-wieldy” (Lister, 2014:25).

Education

Education governance in England and Wales has existed in much the same form since the Education Act 1986. This act put in place a stakeholder model of governance (Figure 2) whereby school governing bodies are made up of individuals representing parents, local authorities, teaching and non-teaching staff, the senior leadership team and other ‘stakeholders’. Members may be either elected or co-opted and a formula indicates the proportion of each type of governor based on pupil enrolment.

This system began to change when radical reforms of the English system introduced new autonomies for schools under the academies project (Gunter, 2011). New federated school structures in the form of academy chains, cooperatives and multi academy trusts formed with a view to greater collaboration and pooling of resources (see Baxter and Wise, 2013). These changes have led to far greater responsibilities for schools both in terms of finance and multi-level governance structures. These changes have resulted in governing bodies, particularly those no longer within local authority control, looking beyond stakeholder models of governance that have been in place for the last fifty years and instead recruiting individuals for their skill sets rather than their democratic representative function (James et al, 2011).

The academy and free schools agenda does not exist in Wales and the 1986 model of governing bodies continues to exist. Research by Farrell in 2014 investigated the fitness for purpose of this stakeholder model of governance in Wales and recommended a shift from a

fully stakeholder model to a 'mixed model' approach, combining stakeholder presence with governors chosen for their particular skills. This was referred to as the 'Stakeholder plus' model of governance - based on an approach in which governing bodies think about the skill set of the existing governors and when a vacancy arises, to appoint an individual in areas where there are gaps.

In England, a number of high profile governance scandals – for example, the Trojan Horse Affair, have placed school governance firmly in the limelight for all of the 'wrong reasons' (Baxter, forthcoming). The media focus on school governing placing pressure on governors to perform and to 'professionalise' their practices. These media 'scandals' have also highlighted the need for some sort of system of local accountability to fill the gap left by local authorities. In England, eight Education Commissioners (Regional Schools Commissioners, RSCs) have been appointed to provide the level of local oversight that used to be provided by local authorities. It is not yet clear how these roles are intended to offer local support to governors nor how they will contribute to local education structures (for further information see DfE, 2015).

In England, education commissioners are currently responsible for academies and are in theory held to account by Head teacher Boards, made up from experienced academy head teachers who advise and challenge RSCs on the decisions they make (DfE, 2015). The membership of the head teacher boards is a mix of elected (4 head teachers), appointed (chosen by the RSC) and co-opted (2 members chosen for skill sets) members (Nye, 2015b). Elected members can only be from 'outstanding schools'. As this government has announced their plans to bring even more schools into the academy structure, the appointed Education

Commissioners as the governance approach should be given serious consideration as it may apply to all schools in the future. Recent accounts suggest that they may be given intervention powers in schools. This will place even more pressure on the system to hold these individuals to account. At this point, it is only possible to speculate about how this model of governance will work and how it will integrate (if at all) with individual and group school governing bodies.

The model of governance which continues to operate in schools in Wales is the stakeholder one. There are no academy schools in Wales. As a devolved Service, the Welsh Government has introduced many education reforms and the only one which relates to governance is compulsory training. Since September 2013, all school governors are required to undertake the introductory training session and also the data course. In his review of the delivery of education in Wales, Hill (2013) proposed increasing levels of formal collaboration between schools - federations in which schools group together and share a single governing body (Hill 2013). The Welsh government has not yet responded to this proposal.

Fire and Rescue Services

Fire and Rescue services continue to adopt a stakeholder approach: Councillors elected to the local authorities which make up the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) are may be 'appointed' to the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA). In England, most local authorities have their own Fire and Rescue Authority and where this is not the case, the Authority is drawn from a number of local council areas. Here, members are drawn on the 'parent' councils on the basis of their size. FRA are responsible for making provision for the purpose of promoting fire safety in

their areas, dealing with road traffic accidents and other emergencies. Wales has three fire and rescue services and the service is devolved to Welsh Government.

The fire and rescue authority is effectively the governing body or board for the service and must:

- “identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face, make provision for prevention and protection activities and respond to incidents appropriately;
- work in partnership with their communities and a wide range of partners locally and nationally to deliver their service;
- be accountable to communities for the service they provide.”

The authority’s role in the governance and leadership of the fire and rescue service is an under-researched area with the vast majority of academic work focusing on the modernisation of the service after the Bain Report of 2002 (for example, Matheson et al 2011). It is therefore unclear how effective the fire and rescue authorities are in leading this service. Neither has there been any research conducted in the UK on the effectiveness of the stakeholder model of governance in the FRAs.

In the most recent review of the FRS, again in England, Knight (2013, p64) focuses particularly on the issues of governance and scrutiny. The extent to which the authority is effective in this aspects is described as patchy. Authorities have not “fully embraced the 2012 National Framework requirements on governance and scrutiny and consequently the variety of structures that have been put in place do not seem to be effective”. In this report, scrutiny in some authorities is described as “robust and independent” and in others too “high level” to be meaningful. The report argues that:

“elected Police and Crime Commissioners were introduced because former Police Authorities [...] were not seen as providing enough scrutiny and accountability to the public. A similar model for fire could clarify accountability arrangements and ensure more direct visibility to the electorate”.

Since this report, Parliament continues to focus on promoting efficiencies within the FRS and encouraging services to work more closely together, particularly other emergency services.

Reviews of governance have not taken place in Wales though there has been a focus on the enhancement of efficiency (Howell, 2014). In Wales, the National Issues Committee is leading on reducing costs and identifying efficiency savings.

In terms of the key aspects of scrutiny and governance which are mentioned in the Knight (2013) review, the formal situation is one in which the fire and rescue authority must hold their Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive to account for the delivery of the fire and rescue service. The authority should have arrangements in place to ensure decisions are open to scrutiny: The public need to be able to access information in a way that enables them to compare the performance of their fire and rescue service with others.

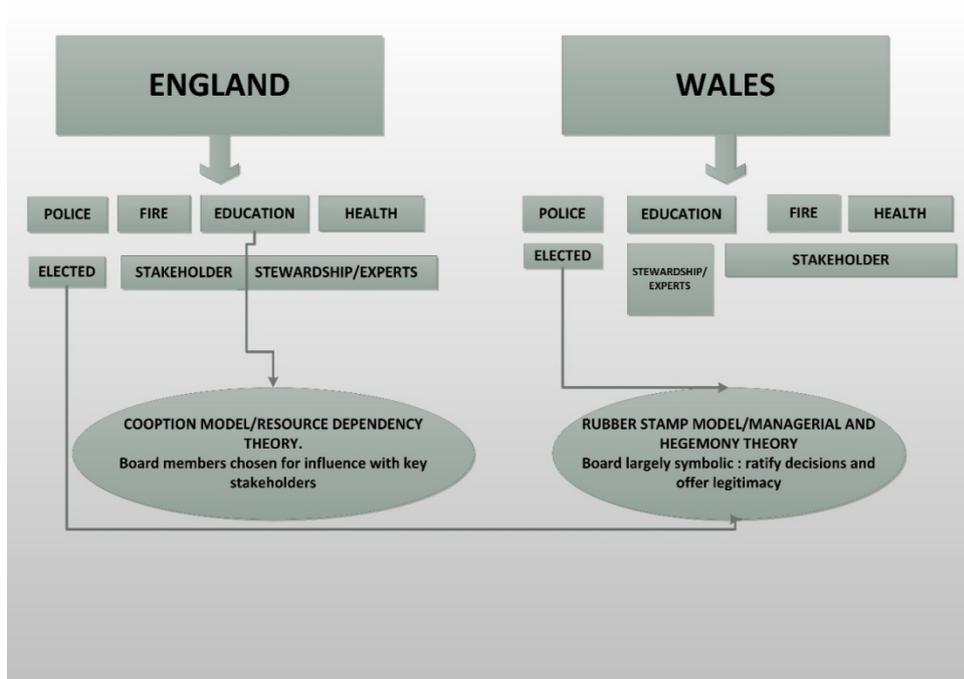
In England, a consultation on the governance of the fire and rescue service has been issued in September 2015 (Consultation, 2015). In this, a range of proposals are identified including an extension in the police commissioner model, the enhancement of greater joint working between the police, fire and rescue and also the ambulance service under the authority of an Emergency services commissioner and a range of other models. It seems from the document that there is a preference for an elected model of governance whereby “the sharp focus of directly accountable leadership can play a critical role in securing better commissioning and delivery of emergency services at a local level and that, where a local case is made, Police

and Crime Commissioners are uniquely placed to do exactly that (2015 p.10). The UK government will respond to this consultation in 2016.

Review and Analysis

Changes to the governance of the four public services are a direct result of government policy. In cases where governance is devolved, it is clear that although there are some changes in governance model – for example from stakeholder to the skills based models, the changes have been slower and far less radical than those which result from UK government policy. However these changes have presented substantial challenges in terms of the quality and genre of resulting models of governance. These range from issues around stakeholder representation (police and education) to flawed legislation which undermines accountability structures within the system (policing). In the final section of this paper we examine some of the challenges and their actual and potential impact upon standards of governance in the public sector.

FIGURE 2: COMPARATIVE GOVERNANCE OF PUBLIC SERVICES IN ENGLAND AND WALES



As figure two illustrates, recent changes to governance structures, particularly in England, have given rise to a diminution of the traditional stakeholder model. This has occurred in policing and in education where the elected approach and the skills focused models have been put in place. In the fire and rescue services, the UK government is reviewing the governance of the service by fire and rescue authorities and has recently published a consultation document on the continuation of the stakeholder model of governance in the service. The stakeholder model of governance continues to operate in the health service in England, though it has a revised membership. The model appears to be more professionally focused with members having key skills with GP practices at the centre. Patients continue to sit within the board, but there are fewer 'lay member' interests than on the original health boards. In

Wales, the original stakeholder health board continues to operate. But not without problems, as this recent article on three health boards revealed:

“serious questions have been raised over the finances of the Welsh NHS after three health boards plunged the service more than £50m into the red. Unaudited end-of-year accounts for all health boards and NHS Trusts revealed a £54.8m overspend for the 2014/15 financial year” (Smith, 2015).

In Wales, the stakeholder model has also been replaced in policing and where stakeholder models remain, there appears to be considerable doubt over whether this model is long term sustainable. Investigations into failures of health governance in Wales revealed that good governance arrangements were not in place (Healthcare Inspectorate Wales and the Wales Audit Office, 2013). Although such failures have not been identified in other boards, there is a continued focus on the need to improve leadership and governance across all boards (Academi Wales, 2014).

The move from the stakeholder model in the police in England and Wales was premised on a narrative around the need for the police to be more ‘responsive’ and aligned more closely to public needs. Whilst this may have been achieved to a degree, it is clear that there are key challenges around the extent to which the powers of the PCPs are legislatively and electorally strong enough to make any real attempt to hold the PCCs to account. The model has come under sustained criticism from both the LGA (Local Government Association) and the Home Affairs Select Committee (HASC, 2010, 2013), who produced, ‘a scathing criticism of the new police governance arrangements, established by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2012’ (Lister, 2014:22). The criticisms not only pertain to the amount of power wielded by the Police and Crime Commissioners but equally criticise the legislative debility of the PCPs to veto decisions taken by the PCC. Alongside this the composition of the boards is also a cause for widespread concern. Research by Lister in 2014 showed that the

chair of the PCP was an elected member in all but 2 out of panels. Of these, ‘nearly 40% of panels had no overall political majority among its membership, an equal proportion had a Conservative majority.’ (Lister, 2014:26). The most concerning figure within this research was that ‘of those panels that had a political majority, 68% shared the same political affiliation as the PCC’. In addition, a number of high profile scandals have dogged the new system since its inception, particularly in relation to the appointment and removal of the Chief Constable (Raine and Keasey, 2012).

Education in England, in common with health, has moved to a more ‘professionalised, skills based’ model of governance, instigated by the drive to satisfy the consumer and to ensure that boards come with ‘readymade’ skills to mitigate risk of organisational failure. The appointment of regional commissioners and elected head teacher boards is a big step towards fully professionalising governance, particularly when viewed alongside the considerable emphasis to recruit professional governors with a business background. Although early days, there is considerable concern that the new system is the beginning of the end of democratic stakeholder representation, particularly as it undermines the democratic role of local authorities. The powers of RSCs are devolved from the Secretary of State and include: authorising new academy conversions; issuing warning notices for failing academies; making strategic decisions on size and capacity of schools.

The Queens Speech 2015 suggested that RSCs will be given intervention powers in all schools – particularly those defined by Ofsted as ‘coasting’. Unfortunately, their ability to act independently of government is undermined as their role is to promote academy status as well as holding schools to account (Nye, 2015a). Recent figures indicate that “58% of secondary

schools are now academies and only 12% of primaries, local accountability for state maintained schools is still very much in question, particularly in areas where the local departments have suffered from severe economic cuts. Support for governors in these areas has also been severely cut' (Baxter, 2015:300).

In England, there have been a number of reviews of the 46 fire and rescue services and a series of reports published under the banner 'Fire Futures' since 2010. These reports include an examination of delivery models (Milsted, 2010), decentralisation and citizen empowerment (Robinson, 2010), localism and accountability (DeSavage, 2010), an efficiency, effectiveness and productivity review (Hood, 2010) and an options review for the service. DeSavage (2010, p. 5), proposes an alternative model of governance : "to develop nationally/adopt locally an alternative structure with a smaller number of authority members overall together with the inclusion of independents, to give a clearer voice to local priorities in line with other public service models". It suggests that FRAs could identify mechanisms to enhance "local community and independent involvement in scrutiny and governance structures". One of the suggestions includes: "better representation for all tiers of local government and the private, third sector and even service management of the representative bodies." This would enhance local accountability as well as adding specific expertise to the governance arrangements".

Alternative approaches include looking at directly elected bodies or commissioners, with a similar structure to the police commissioners. A shared 'Public Protection' Officer is also mooted and a model bringing together emergency services: police, ambulance and fire (www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-29048661). The appointment of board members by government in

a new FRA is also an option. This is the approach now in place in the newly formed Scottish Fire and Rescue Service with board members appointed by the Scottish Government. Finally, citizen panels are proposed, in order to bring in greater citizen perspective into the governance of the service.

Little research has been carried out into the governance of the fire and rescue services. Their governance is modelled on that which operated in police services prior to adoption of the elected approach. Neither have there been any academic studies of the effectiveness of leadership and operation of the fire service authorities. Within the wider professional literature, there is a call for a different approach to the governance of the service which may bring in a wider group of stakeholders than local elected members.

5. Conclusion

There can be little doubt that the drive to ensure more efficient and streamlined public services during the period of austerity which began in 2009 and shows no sign of ending before 2018 is impacting substantially on how public services are governed and led. But as McCann pointed out, 'the dominant frame is that service reform and cutbacks to provision are inevitable and unavoidable is contrasted with a counter frame that the Great Financial Crisis (GFC) is being used as 'cover' for ideologically driven reforms that policy makers would have wanted to introduce, even if the crash had not occurred.'(McCann, 2013:5). The UK government's response to the crisis has in effect gone a good way to consolidating the 'shrinking of the state', first effected during the Thatcher and Major administrations of the 1980s and 1990s. This has created the need for much 'tighter' systems of governance - smaller more highly skilled boards - and as many of the reforms attempt to graft a business

framework onto public service organisations, so too principals of corporate governance are being applied to many areas of the public services.

It can be argued that the shift from traditional stakeholder models of governance, skills based approaches have become more prevalent as organisations look to mitigate risk – particularly financial risk (see, for example, Dixon and Alvarez-Rosete, 2008). Over the last twenty years, a number of researchers in the field of public governance have criticised this move which they argue is leading to a decline in democratic accountability; ‘a magistracy control’; a lack of transparency over appointment of these individuals and a ‘muddying of the waters’ between operational responsibilities (traditionally carried out by the executive) and those acting as governors (but engaged due to their particular professional skill set) (Joyce, 2011; Mori, 2010; Pollock, 2004). This move has also interpellated governors into the role of leaders, to be held accountable for organizational failure or feted in cases of organisational success.

The impact of changes in the governance of public services is undoubtedly most felt in England, and in services which are not devolved, and reflect the UK government’s ideological drive to impose reforms based on neo liberal beliefs in market supremacy (Ozga and Segerholm, 2014; Peck, 2010). This is articulated in two principal areas: the imposition of skills based models of governance and the move to greater local accountability and service responsiveness via directly elected and appointed individuals to oversee specific areas. This paper has raised emerging issues in the case of directly elected PCCs and directly appointed RSCs. In its haste to apply models of corporate governance onto public service areas, there appears to be a marked lack of recognition of the not inconsiderable issues around

representation and lack of diversity on such boards. This is well exemplified by former issues on poor female representation on FTSE 100 company boards and the considerable innovations put in place by Thomson et al (2008) to address this. There is already evidence indicating substantial underrepresentation in terms of ethnicity and disability in public and voluntary sector boards, with recent figures showing only 8% of board members in the voluntary sector as declaring non-white. In 2011/12 voluntary sector organisations received £13.7 billion of funding in the form of contracts and grants from statutory bodies - making them substantial players in the roll out of UK public services, commanding a considerable slice of the public purse (Finamore, 2014). If this lack of representation is mirrored across the public services (as in the case of PCCs), then this is a serious cause for concern.

Although all four services appear to be striving for a model of governance which fulfils all of the stated characteristics, evidence suggests that paradoxically, attempts to resolve issues emerging from predominantly stakeholder models including financial failure, poor governance practices, lack of holding executive to account), for example, are resulting in new barriers to good governance. A focus on smaller skills based governing bodies' places greater responsibilities on individuals and concomitant greater need for effective accountability mechanisms to control them. There is already evidence to show that some PCCs are clearly struggling with the vast remit of their role and it is clear that a far greater focus is needed in terms of preparation for this role (Chambers, 2014). As The Home Affairs Committee recently reported: "many of the difficulties that commissioners have faced could have been avoided given greater opportunity to find their feet before starting the job" (HAC, 2014). This is also true in the case of school governors whose professional skills gained in the private sector may not translate so readily to the public sector (Baxter, 2015). Public leadership of any genre is not gained overnight as much research has highlighted (see for example Hartley,

2002). The shift away from stakeholder models of governance can presents a risk to diversity in the membership of boards as well as threats to good governance. Unless this is addressed as a matter of some urgency, the risks for the future of good public sector governance are considerable.

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