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The Scheme of delegation as a sensemaking framework in Multi Academy Trusts in England: Useful tool or constraint ?

Abstract

Changes to the structure of English education due to decentralization policy, particularly since 2010 have resulted in the creation of large groupings of schools -Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs), organisations with multi-level governance structures, set out in schemes of delegation (SDs). Although government has demanded ‘absolute clarity on role and remit of each part of the structure and the relationship and reporting between them,’ recent research suggests that there is little clarity or consistency in the role and function of board structures, with members often confused about their roles. This paper draws on data from a funded project to examine: What level of consistency is there in MAT SDs and what evidence is there that SDs align with sensemaking models (Vlaar et al, (2006, Weber and Glynn 2006). Finishing with a discussion on what the findings imply for use of SDs as useful tools for board member sensemaking in MATs ? The paper concludes that although these documents are part of sensemaking activities, their use in collaborative organizations can constrain innovation, and this may undermine the long-term sustainability of MATs.

Introduction and background

Over the last three decades an increasing rise of marketization, decentralisation and disintermediation of public services has occurred within education globally, in order to resolved complex and intractable societal problems. National innovations have emerged as part of a rise in the influence of transnational policies disseminated via influential trans-national players such as the OECD. (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development), who employ ‘soft governance mechanisms’ such as cross-country reports, in order to influence national policy climates (Baxter and Floyd, 2019).

As part of a move towards delegated governance and in an effort to raise standards in education, academy schools were introduced by the Labour Government of 1997 and were established in England, to improve the standards in poor-performing inner London schools (Woods & Brighouse, 2014). The policy borrowed from the longer established American Charter Schools Project (Ford & Ihrke, 2016a), aimed at resolving similar issues: to narrow the gap between socioeconomically deprived learners and their peers; and to provide a robust education for all. The academies project was premised on the belief that these schools were capable of providing a better education than traditional schools maintained by increasingly ‘inept’ Local Education Authorities (LEAs), whilst also aligning with new public management goals, and to increase parental choice and to reduce the size of the public sector.

But, as Greany notes, ‘centralisation and decentralisation have significant consequences for traditional middle tier structures, such as school districts and local education authorities (Greany, 2020): ‘The process of reshaping, as decentralisation combines with centralisation and marketisation to reduce, but not completely remove the local the need for local oversight and coordination, is termed ‘disintermediation’ (Lubienski, 2014,p: 45). It refers to ‘the withdrawal of power and influence from intermediate or meso level educational authorities that operate between local schools and national entities.’ (424). Multi-academy trusts, (MATs), or groups of schools, began to emerge in early 2000, beginning as a mechanism whereby high performing schools were tasked with supporting weaker ones. Since then, and particularly since legislation in 2010, The Academies Act, groups of schools- MATs have grown, both in size and number: In November 2019 there were 1, 170 Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) in England that manage at least two schools: 598 have five or fewer schools, 259 have

6-11 schools, 85 have between 12-25 schools and 29 have 26 or more schools (DfE, 2019b). In effect, they are *strategic alliances* that set out to raise standards, pool resources and achieve levels of academic success that may have been hitherto unattainable as a single entity (Kale, Dyer, & Singh, 2001). An academy trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee. It is an independent legal entity with whom the Secretary of State has decided to enter into a funding agreement on the basis of agreeing their articles of association with the department. (DfE, 2019a).

Highly complex organizations

MAT boards are multi-level and hierarchical in nature: Members at the top level of the organisation ensure that the purpose/charitable object of the trust is being met and that the trustees are discharging their duties effectively; a board of trustees, functioning at the apex of the organisation, manage the affairs and oversee the performance of the executive and all schools within the trust, and local boards functioning at the level of each school. Powers are set out in schemes of delegation (SDs) and the Governance Handbook, (DfE, 2019a Section 5.1.8), states that, MATs have flexibility in how to design them.

However, research from the USA in which similar structures operate, and from collaborations in the third sector, indicates that the role of local boards and the ways they interact with central ones, is not straightforward and that weak powers of local boards undermine democratic governance of education (Ford & Ihrke, 2016b). In addition, that poor or mal functioning local boards; misunderstanding over roles and decision-making powers, and existing board member schemata that constrain or prevent new understandings of collaborative arrangements, can undermine organisational effectiveness and accountability. Research into the management of interorganizational relationships has focused primarily on to problems of coordination, control and legitimacy, but, as Vlaar et al point out, issues of understanding and sense making are equally problematic: ‘such problems arise from differences between partners in terms of culture, experience, structures and from the uncertainty and ambiguity that these partners experience in early stages of collaboration (Vlaar et al 2006,p: 1618). In order to function effectively, SDs are used to outline the powers of different levels of governance within a MAT, and as such, function as a *formalizing tool*, as described by Vlaar et al (2006) and Weber and Glynn (2006):

Formalisation enables, or even forces collaborating parties to engage in sensemaking, helping them to create common ground and achieve mutual understanding (Vlaar et al, p:1622)

The full description of what a SD should include is located in Appendix 01.

Figure 1 Adapted from Baxter and Cornforth 2019

As figure 1 illustrates, there is a basic structure of delegation within MATs: Members sit at the top of the hierarchy, with trustees featuring next; at the lowest level are individual school boards. The individual school boards are referred to in several ways, either as: boards; committees, advisory bodies or parent representatives. This often depends on powers delegated by trustees. For the purposes of this paper, we shall refer to them as local boards. If the MAT is large and geographically dispersed over a wide area, trustees may decide to include another layer of governance, in the shape of *Cluster Committees*. These boards sit between the trustees and local boards and have oversight of schools within a certain geographical area.

According to the DfE, one of the key features of such a scheme of delegation, is that, ‘it should be drafted clearly so that everyone in the organisation can understand it, in order to be clear about their role and that of others [...] explain the circumstances in which the arrangements set out may vary, and [describe] any triggers that may lead the board to review or change levels of delegation.’ (DfE, 2019a, 5.1.71). It also describes the SD as a sensemaking tool; a tool for leaders to counter the high levels of ambiguity and uncertainty that emerge when organizations join forces to collaborate (DfE, 2019, Vaara, 2003). The use of formalisation documents such as the SD are key elements in the micro and macro organizing tools of sense making, yet, it is an under researched area of sensemaking, particularly in relation to power issues that arise whilst individuals make sense of their organisations (Brown et al, 2015). Vlaar et al argue that such documents trigger four key mechanisms in relation to sensemaking:

1. *The focus of attention-directing sense making focus*
2. *As stimulus for articulation; deliberation and reflection*
3. *As documents over which actors may interact in the process of sensemaking*
4. *As a place in which biases, judgement, errors, completeness and consistency in sense making, can be articulated and contribute to sensemaking processes* (2006, p:1620).

Their model is important in linking these mechanisms to the sensemaking processes within collaborations, in several ways: The partners within the collaboration; interorganisational relationships, and the contexts in which these relationships are embedded. They also argue that formalisation documents are used by organisational leaders to overcome or minimise differences in culture, size, background, and to overcome discontinuity and uncertainty in the early stages of collaboration.

Weber and Glynn (2006), drawing on Hedstrom and Swedberg’s work, (1998), argue that as sensemaking both constitutes and is constituted by organizations, that investigating the macro (organisational level) activities along with the micro sensemaking activities of actors, is key to understanding how one influences the other (ibid, p, 1640). Their model rests on institutional capacity to *prime*, *edit* and *trigger* sensemaking activities, in which, *priming* acts as a cognitive constraint on sensemaking; *editing* is the act of internalization of particular understandings and, *triggering*, is the act of embodying particular institutional ways of seeing the organisation (and, to a certain extent, the world as embodied by that organisation or in this case, MAT).

Key debates in sensemaking, emphasises not only ‘cognitive dimensions of sensemaking, but also the linguistic,’ (Brown et al, 2015, p:268). Narrative discourse with its capacity to ‘simultaneously make and unravel sense in organizational settings,’ provides powerful insights into sensemaking processes. This is echoed in education research which uses narrative, to create a ‘landscape of consciousness’, beyond the ‘landscape of action,’ (Bruner, 1996, p: 231): bringing certain elements into focus, whilst obscuring or negating others. This paper uses a narrative approach to sensemaking to test how SDs are being used by boards to make sense of school collaborations and to clarify roles within them, and whether, as such, they are a useful tool to effectively promote sense-making and understandings in interorganizational relationships in MATs. Combining two key models of formalisation in sensemaking, described earlier (Vlaar et al, 2006, Weber et al, 2006). In so doing it investigates: What level of consistency is there in MAT SDs? What evidence is there that SDs align with the model proposed by Vlaar et al, and promote priming, editing and triggering processes, outlined by Weber

and Glynn, and what do the findings imply for use of SDs as sense making tools in MATs ? In so doing it contributes an important element to the literature in understanding how school collaborations work in practice.

Terminology – a note.

Trustees - board members (TB) who sit at the top of the hierarchy of governance in MATs and academy or local board members (LBM), are those that are on boards at academy level.

Context

Boards in English Schools

In England (education is devolved the rest of the UK), the trend to link education strongly with economic competitiveness from 1970 onwards, placed increasing pressures on the education sector not only to perform but also to *demonstrate* performance: Through league tables; inspection criteria; and a raft of other measures, designed to monitor performance, ensure value for money and convince the parent – as a consumer of education – that in the market place of education, their school was performing. The trend to marketise and use statistics to measure educational quality has been illustrated to be highly problematic, for example, reducing democratic local control of education (Greany, 2018), placing power in the hands of a small number of trustees and executives (Baxter & Floyd, 2019), and failing to bridge the performance gap between different socio economic groups of learners (Francis et al, 2020).

Powers delegated to academy school level, vary greatly between MATs, presenting two challenges: The first; effectively integrating individual schools into the organisation; the second; ensuring that governing boards at all levels understand their role and powers. Successful integration of a new school into a MAT often depends upon why the school joined the trust in the first place: Failing schools may be mandated to join a trust by the DfE, or they may have elected to join a trust, either to gain the support and back office services that, due to cuts, are often no longer provided by LEAs; Some schools fear takeover by predatory trusts that may impose their own model on schools, regardless of local school context and climate (Greany & Higham, 2018); some schools join trusts due to opportunities offered by the organization: an ethos that matches their own or the opportunity to gain expertise in areas they lack (Baxter & Cornforth, 2019). Whatever their reasons, their roles and responsibilities and boards change considerably on joining, as we explain in the next section.

Duties of a school board

In England, school boards have been in existence for the last 600 years, and until 1977 remained relatively unchanged, their duties revolving around the fiduciary oversight and monitoring of schools. The 1970s heralded a more democratic approach to governance, with representatives from the community; local government and, for the first time, the parent body (Baxter, 2016). The 1988 Education reform Act allowed schools, for the first time, to break away from LEA control, and from the mid 1990's, lacking LEA support, those schools began to adopt a skills-based approach, more closely resembling corporate models, recruiting people for business skills, such as finance; HR and marketing (Thody & Punter, 2000). The powers and responsibilities of governing boards increased exponentially after that, as boards were interpellated as agents of government oversight (Baxter, 2016). Their responsibilities set out in various editions of The Governors' Handbook (DfE, 2019a).

Uncertainty and ambiguity in collaborative organisations

As Mandell and Keast (2007) report, the ways in which collaborations tackle collaboration issues are key to their success: But, Agranoff argues 'collaborative decisions or agreements are the products of a very particular type of mutual learning and adjustment' (2006,p:59). Research into such organisations, indicates that overcoming initial assumptions and organizational hegemonies, based on understandings of the organisation before the merger or collaboration, is one of the greatest challenges for them (Huxham & Vangen, 2013). In MATs, misunderstandings and lack of understanding of how

schools fit into the overall organisational picture, is well documented (Greany & Higham, 2018). Communication between levels of organisations is also key to overcoming risk, assisting parties in, defining and redefining ‘the terms of their independence.’ (Vlaar et al 2006,p: 66). According to The Governance Handbook, 2019, effective governance should provide, ‘confident and strong strategic leadership which leads to robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational and financial performance (DfE, 2019, 1.1.2). All governing boards no matter what type of school or how many schools they govern, have three core functions:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff; and
- Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and ensuring its money is well spent. (DfE, 2019, 1.1.2)

Elements for effective governance according to DfE guidelines are outlined in figure 2.

Figure 2 Effective governance of governing bodies

The challenge for MATs is how, given the multi-level nature of the organizations, they will achieve the 6 elements for effective governance outlined in figure 2, as well as ensuring the three core functions above.

SDs as formalisation tools in sensemaking

As our introduction outlined, there are a number of reasons why schools may join a MAT, but research into MATs, indicates that many boards are not fully aware of the implications of collaborating in this way: For example, they may not realise the degree of curricular standardization they will need to abide by; or that some/all of their decision making powers may be removed (Greany & Higham, 2018). During this sense making process, ‘individuals exchange gossip, stories, rumours, and accounts of past experiences, and take note of symbolic behaviours.’ (Balogun & Johnson, 2004,p:524). Gaining an understanding of the organisation and their place in it is even more demanding for governing boards than it may be for staff, as governing boards essentially sit on the periphery of the organization. Our previous research indicates that communication between levels of board is not always particularly effective, and that trustees often feel ‘cut off ‘from the schools within the trust, as well as being unclear about their particular roles (Baxter & Cornforth, 2019).

The DfE (Department for Education) advocate the use of SDs to, ‘generate a professional ethos across the entire governance structure and a culture of one organisation and away from any sense of ‘my school/your school.’ (DfE, 2019, 5.1.8.). But also indicate that SDs are flexible and may change as the MAT grows.

As a result of the discussion above, we argue, that, in the case of MATs, SDs can be considered to be formalisation tools: As to whether they actually engage the type of sensemaking activities that build

bridges between levels of governance in the organization, is a key research question for this study. In order to further elaborate our theoretical framework, we next turn to an explanation of the mechanisms of formalisation tools in sensemaking.

Mechanisms for sense making

Vlaar et al describe the first mechanism through which a particular document enables sensemaking, as *focusing attention*: In which, ‘participants in interorganizational relationships display a joint focus...on formal documents and processes, which renders formalisation a focusing device’ (p:1623). This is then followed by, *articulation, deliberation and reflection*, whereby parties are forced to articulate their individual and mutual goals, during the [document forming] process (p:1624). They also argue that this helps participants to, ‘lift equivocal knowledge out of the tacit, private, complex random and past, to make it explicit, simpler ordered and more relevant.’ This, in relation to schools that have been long established as independent entities, would be a crucial stage if this were indeed the case. The third mechanism is *instigating and maintaining interaction*: This stage is particularly evident on work on strategic change or re organization, such as that of Balogun & Johnson, (2004), who looked at sensemaking during an imposed shift from hierarchical to decentralized organisation and found that instigating and maintaining interaction was vital in order for the change to take place successfully. The fourth mechanism: *reducing biases, judgement errors, incompleteness and inconsistency*, denotes the extent to which formalisation reduces individual biases by confronting assumptions and revising them in light of new information and interests. It, according to a number of reports, also allows opportunity for relevant information to be considered in decision making circumstances: this arose during our previous work on communication in MATs, when boards suddenly become aware of new information emanating from particular schools, which subsequently altered their expansion ambitions (see Baxter & Cornforth, 2019).

Discourse and sensemaking

In this study we refer to Discourse as both mirroring and creating social reality, as well as both creating and reproducing norms: What Bourdieu calls habitus-socialised norms or tendencies that guide behaviour and thinking (Bourdieu, 1991). In discursive fields, in this case MATs, different forms of knowledge may compete with one another in a space of practice, helping to define and give meaning to its practices, relationships and to claim the authoritative status of truth, becoming accepted and authoritative in relation to institutional knowledge.

In order to fully explore the use of SDs as formalisation tools, we also incorporate Weber and Glynn’s *Priming, editing and triggering*, into our conceptual model (figure 3), in which, priming acts as a cognitive constraint on sensemaking; editing is the act of internalization of particular understandings and, triggering, is the act of embodying particular institutional ways of seeing the organisation (and, to a certain extent, the world as embodied by that organization).

Figure 3 Theoretical Framework

We then test this adapted model using the method that follows.

Method

In order to first build up a picture of the degree to which SDs are homogenous in relation to the powers of both trustee boards and local school boards, we analysed 20 SDs, this provided us with a background to the evaluate the degree to which sensemaking would be necessary when schools join a trust, and to offer a context for the research (figure 5).

In order to gain access from MATs, permission was sought from gatekeepers (normally chair of the trust or CEO) to take part. As the study focuses on SDs as formalisation tools, it does not differentiate responses according to geographical location or size of MAT. However, in order to provide a balanced overview of MATs in England, 6 MATs were based in the North of the Country and Six in the South. (Whatshalfway.com borders between North and South).

Interviews were drawn from an opportunity sample of 12 MATS which were selected using existing contacts. Data were gathered from 50 one hour semi structured qualitative interviews with Board Members over the period 2018-20. (see appendix 01 for sample). Participants included (a) Trustee Board Members (TBM) at the apex of the organization with overall responsibility for the governance of the MAT, and Academy Board Members (ABM) located in individual schools and who possess delegated powers from the Trustee Board and which vary in scope and range according to the MAT's scheme of delegation. Participants were self-selecting and invited to participate via CEO or Chair of Trustees.

Narrative

We employed a narrative methodology in order to investigate the qualitative data. We chose this method as narrative analysis has the capacity 'to see what is agreed upon by all organisational members, that which is shared only within certain groups, and that which is fragmented and ambiguous' (ibid, pg. 1149). For this reason, it has been employed successfully in sensemaking studies (Abolafia, 2010). We acknowledge that the narratives are, both productive and tension filled, as individuals and groups work through processes and power struggles to create strategic narratives that create organisational discourses; and are either rejected or become accepted into organisational cultures. Narratives can also convey information which would not be understood or accepted if conveyed directly in literal and explicit terms (Polkinghorne, 1988). In their capacity to link both events and understandings they provide an effective tool for analysis of sensemaking activities (Brown et al., 2008), and we have used this method effectively in previous studies of governing boards (Baxter & Floyd, 2019; Baxter & Cornforth, 2019). As this study is investigating particular types of sensemaking, we are interested in how individuals use SDs as sensemaking tools, and are looking for evidence of the four key areas outlined by Vlaar et al, whilst also exploring the narratives for evidence of: Priming; editing and triggering, as they appear in our theoretical framework (figure 4).

Findings and discussion

This section follows the conventions found in much narrative research, in that it combines the findings with a discussion in order to respond to the research questions (Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009)

Is there any level of standardization in relation to SDs?

The SDs from 20 MATs were first analysed in order to evaluate to what degree they are homogenous: This is key to indicating how much trustees and local board members may assume about their responsibilities and duties on joining a MAT: For example; if we found that SDs were largely homogenous, then we may be able to assume that board members at both trustee and school level may already know what their responsibilities were. Although this is not a given, as past research indicates

that school governors frequently underestimate the scale and nature of their responsibilities (James, Goodall, Howarth, & Knights, 2014).

The evaluation of 20 SDs, illustrated in Figure 5, revealed several factors, that may impact on sensemaking activities:

1. **Powers of trustees are laid down in law:** how they delegate those powers to local boards is not specified, although governor support agencies and the Department for Education offer guidance (see appendix 01 for DfE guidelines)

2. **SDs are far from homogenous**, with differing levels of delegated powers awarded to local boards. Although this in itself was unsurprising, as previous research revealed that many trustee boards taken an *earned autonomy* view of local boards (Baxter & Cornforth, 2019)-permitting greater levels of autonomy for high achieving schools. The schemes were more divergent than would be expected. The list of responsibilities numbered 45 separate powers/duties in total, although some SDs did not make mention of some elements: for example: Monitoring the value of being part of a MAT was only mentioned in one SD, when it was mentioned as a duty of local boards.

3. As the key indicates, **different levels of discretion are awarded to local boards:** For example, in relation to agreeing a school improvement plan, the key indicates that in MATs 1 and 2, the response is a clear ‘yes’, but in MAT 3, this is only in collaboration with trustees, in MAT 8 responses indicate that this should only take place in collaboration with a Regional Director, whilst in MAT 10 there was no mention at all of this duty: Added to this complexity, is the fact that many boards, as mentioned in point 2, change their SDs as new schools come into the trust, and in response to performance issues. Creating a climate in which there is much ambiguity- compounded by the fact that our previous research indicated considerable inconsistencies in communication strategies between levels of board within trusts (See Baxter and Cornforth, 2019b, Baxter and Floyd, 2019).

4. Many elements mentioned by some MATs, are not mentioned by others: For example, several SDs make no mention of the performance management of the academy head; several SDs make no mention of holding the trust board to account.

Our findings from this research indicate that there is a great deal of ambiguity within the governance of MATs, both for trustees- in relation to which powers are delegated to local boards; and in relation to local boards, in relation to which powers are awarded to them. Some SDs award so few powers /duties to local boards, that their work could hardly be called governance at all. Across the board, nearly all SDs allocate substantially less power and autonomy to local boards, than they would have had as single stand-alone schools. This effectively means, that local boards coming into a MAT are going to need to make sense of their new context and powers, whilst comparing these to their duties and powers in the past: In this case, powerful norms will compete with new understandings to create ambiguity and in some cases, resistance to the new context.

From this and in relation to the need and background for sense making:

a) Norms around powers allocated to governing bodies may still be dominant in standalone academies that join a MAT: This will, in terms of sensemaking, create a situation in which old norms compete with new understandings; creating ambiguity and in some cases, resistance.

b) Lack of homogeneity in MATs will create challenges for both local boards and trustees, in relation to sensemaking.

c) Differences in duties of local boards and trustees are difficult to convey to volunteers on recruitment, due to complexity and changes as new schools join the trust: It is therefore imperative to have some mechanism by which boards (local and trustee boards), remain able to make sense of their (changing roles).

MAT NUMBERS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Strategy																				
Input into TRUST strategic plan	AO	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	NM	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	
Create academy strategic plan	N	YT	N	N	N	N	N	N	NM	N	N	YT	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	
Approve new schools joining trust	N	N	N	NM	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	
Implement trust vision	Y	Y	YT	Y	NM	NM	Y	NM	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	NM	Y	Y	YT	
General																				
Consider how individual school decisions affect the trust schools	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	Y	N	YT	NM	Y	NM	NM	NM	NM	Y	NM	
Implement safeguarding	Y	Y	YT	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	YT	
Handle appeals on admissions	N	AO	YT	YT	Y	YT	N	N	N	YT	N	N	N	N	NM	Y	N	N	YT	
Agree academy year and day	Y	N	YT	N	N	N	YT	N	Y	NM	Y	YT	YT	N	N	NM	Y	N	YT	
Agree strategy to promote parent and stakeholder voice	Y	N	YT	AO	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	NM	NM	Y	N	NM	N	N	Y	YT	
Implement trust strategy for parent and pupil voice	N	Y	YT	AO	Y	N	NM	N	N	NM	NM	NM	Y	N	NM	N	N	N	YT	
Investigate complaints	NM	YT	YT	YT	N	N	N	N	NM	NM	NM	YT	N	N	N	NM	N	N	YT	
Appeals against exclusions (permanent)	N	Y	YT	YT	YT	YT	YT	N	YT	NM	N	YT	YT	N	N	N	YT	N	YT	
Policies																				
Propose policies	N	N	YT	N	N	N	Y	N	YT	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	YT
Freedom to set own admission policy	Y	N	N	N	N	N	NM	Y	N	N	N	NC	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	
Agree sex education policy	Y	N	N	AO	N	N	N	YT	Y	YT	Y	YT	Y	YT	NM	N	YT	NM	N	
Agree special needs policy for academy	Y	N	N	AO	Y	Y	YT	YT	Y	YT	Y	YT	Y	YT	NM	Y	YT	NM	N	
Decide local level health and safety procedure in line with trust policy	N	N	YT	AO	Y	Y	NM	NM	N	YT	N	N	Y	Y	NM	NM	NM	Y	YT	
Implement trust ICT strategy to prioritise pupil well-being and efficiency	AO	N	N		Y	Y	YT	NM	NM	N	Y	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	N	YT	
Agree annual schedule of business for board	Y	N	N	NM	NM	NM	NM	YT	N	N	Y	NM	YT	NM	N	YT	N	YT	N	
Performance																				
Agree school improvement plan	Y	Y	YT	N	Y	Y	YT	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	YT	
Performance manage academy head	Y	Y	YT	Y	Y	N	NM	NM	Y	Y	YT	YT	N	NM	N	Y	NM	N	YT	
Ensure reports are available for trust board and committee meetings	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	YT	Y	NM	Y	N	Y	NM	YT	NM	Y	YT	NM	
Monitor trust performance against targets	YT	YT	YT	N	Y	Y	YT	YT	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	YT	Y	YT	Y	YT	
Monitor academy performance against trust targets	Y	Y	YT	Y	Y	Y	NM	NM	N	Y	N	Y	Y	NM	Y	N	NM	Y	YT	
Monitor academy performance against academy targets	Y	Y	YT	Y	YT	YT	NM	NM	Y	NM	Y	YT	Y	NM	NM	Y	NM	Y	YT	
Carry out annual self-review	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	NM	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	YT	
Set CEO performance targets and monitor	MO	M	M	M	M	M	M	N	M	N	N	N	N	N	N	M	N	NM	M	
Hold the trust board to account	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	NM	N	N	NM	
Compile register of interests	Y	Y	NM	NM	YT	NM	YT	YT	NM	NM	N	NM	Y	Y	YT	NM	NM	YT	NM	
Monitor value of being part of MAT	NM	NM	NM	NM	Y	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	
Finance																				
Propose capital expenditure plan	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	NM	N	N	NC	NM	N	N	Y	N	N	
set own budget	YT	YT	YT	N	N	N	YT	NM	RO	N	N	N	N	N	NM	N	RO	NM	N	YT
Decide use of pupil premium	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	NM	NM	YT	N	N	NC	N	NM	N	NM	N	N	
Approve the sale of land	N	YN	YT	Y	Y	N	N	Y	NM	N	N	N	N	N	NM	Y	N	N	YT	
Agree extent of local financial delegation for academy	MO	Y	YT	N	Y	Y	YT	Y	N	NM	N	N	N	N	Y	NM	N	Y	YT	
Monitor own budget	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	YT	Y	Y	YT	YT	N	Y	Y	N	Y	
Agree top slice rate for academies	Y	Y	YT	Y	Y	N	YT	N	N	NM	N	N	YT	N	N	N	N	N	YT	
Monitor local financial procedures	N	N	N	S	N	AC	N	NM	Y	NM	Y	N	YT	YT	NM	Y	Y	NM	N	
Control of significant planned expenditure on capital maintenance	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	YT	NM	N	N	NC	NM	N	NM	YT	N	N	
Appointments and removals / staffing																				
Agree academy staffing structure	YT	YT	N	N	Y	YT	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	NC	Y	N	NM	N	N	Y	N
Apoin academy senior staff including head	N	N	N	AO	N	N	N	N	N	YT	N	YT	N	N	N	N	N	N	YT	N
Remove academy head	Y	Y	N	AO	Y	Y	N	N	YT	N	N	N	NC	N	N	N	YT	N	YT	N
Implement and monitor vision for individual academies	Y	Y	N	N	Y	YT	N	N	YT	N	Y	NM	NM	NM	N	NM	YT	N	NM	N
Appoint / remove exec leadership	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Community engagement																				
Engage with academy stakeholders	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	NM	Y	NM	NM	NM	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	
Regional Director Y N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	NM	NM	Y	N	Y	NM	Y	NM	N	
Implementation of communication mechanisms for info	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	NM	NM	Y	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	N

Figure 5 Analysis of SDs

Key	
*	Not principal
^	Academy level only
\$	Without trustee input
YT	In collaboration with trustee board
Y	Yes
N	No
MO	Members only
NM	Not mentioned in the scheme of delegation
N''	Receive only
YRD	In Collaboration with regional director
R	Recommends only
ST	Set targets
C	Consulted only

Table 1 : Key

What evidence is there that SDs align with the model proposed by Vlaar et al, and promote priming, editing and triggering processes, outlined by Weber and Glynn ?

The narratives were analysed for themes relating to the six areas outlined in figure 4 and repeated below. Exemplar citations for each, appear in figures 6-10 in appendix 02. These are each discussed in the section which follows.

Focusing Attention and Priming

Sixty percent of respondents indicated that boards focused on their SD as a way to understand the organisation and its dependencies. This supports Vlaar et al's assertion that they use the SD to clarify, 'whether decisions need to be made and what that decision might consist of (Weik, 2001 in Vlaar et al, 2016, p:1623). A considerable number of respondents at trustee level made reference to the SDs as a means of clarifying the future strategy of the organisation as well as controlling standards. Interestingly a number of participants used the SDs as a metonym for the organization, for example: 'At the moment, seems to be, the provision of anything...[is done by] clusters, they call them improvement clusters. That's okay, providing you have the skills and the abilities within that cluster. (TBM-Chair)'. In this case, the Chair of Trustees is referring to cluster boards, which often sit between trustee boards and local boards, in MATs which are geographically widely dispersed (see Figure 1. There were considerably more TBMs that referred to the ability to revise SDs than did LBMs: this is perhaps unsurprising, as many LBMs felt that they were not able to engage in such discussions, as this power was wholly left to trustees. (this is discussed in more detail in the section on Editing and Triggering). Trustees used the SD to reduce the apparent complexity of the organisation and seemed to take great pleasure in showing the researcher a pictorial illustration of the organisation as a whole. This supports Ring et al, and Putnam et al (2004), in creating a discourse of coherence around the organization, what Putnam et al term, 'the recursive property of texts, ' to constitute an organization. In this way the texts represent not only the 'here and now', but also the 'there and then' (p, 324). The SDs are used by trustees to indicate the present state of the organization, as well as looking at the ways that the SD- a metonym for the organization, may change in the future. In so doing there is evidence that they also act as a cognitive constraint on sensemaking. This is discussed in relation to priming in the section which follows.

Priming

As Weik argues, schema or perceptual filters lead actors to extract cues that activate identities and role expectations for particular organizations. In relation to boards, this means that SDs would have the power to, 'set in motion, sensemaking processes that cumulate in overall situational framing and

identity, which, in turn carry implications for action and further attention.’ (Weber & Glynn, 2006,p:1648). They would need to offer cues as to the particular behaviour required of occupational groups within the organization. As Weber et al point out, the link between noticing cues and the action or internalized behaviours is not easy to analyse, due to the complex relationship between them and the identity of the actor. This is exemplified in this quote s this LBM points out: ‘We don’t sit down and say, let’s look at the scheme of delegation and sort out what we do, it kind of gets passed on (LBM).’ This statement is a good example of the ways in which roles indicated by the SD become internalized by individuals and part of the culture, as this TBM Chair points out: ‘The SD gives freedom, but not in terms of culture and ethos: The first two schools that joined were x and y. They were independent trusts, so standalone academies. So, there was very little connection between them. The only thing that they were driven by was a sense that we need to get the standards up and we need to sort of try and embed some of our culture around the place and the SD was key to this (TBM-Chair).’ Weber et al argue that priming differs from internalized cognitive constraint because the situational context that supplies the cues plays a greater role in action formation’ (p:1648). But as Weik points out, the cues ‘build the language’ within which, actors make sense of their roles (or the converse) (Weik, 2001, 1995). Some participants indicated that the SD constrained their agency in not permitting them to be part of or make certain decisions as this LBM points out: ‘And I think as a board, I think to a degree we’re excluded from it, primarily because that conversation seems to go on with executive... Well it goes on at the operational between executive heads and CEOs. You know, they know what to do now, you know? They will say that they’ve had an approach, and the decision is then always made by the board. It’s the board’s decision. (LBM).’ Certainly the SDs primed a particular power relationship between TBMs and LBMs, with the locus of power firmly in the hands of the trustees, as this TBM reports: I think there is work to do around making sure that local governing boards are working to the same strategic priorities and reporting all their local priorities, you know, the context of their work locally to the trust board. Because I’m not sure that happens in a huge number of cases, but the scheme of delegation should make that clear, if they (local boards) ever read it (TBM). The priming actions of the SDs that appeared in the narratives of TBMs contained a number of referenced to the subordinate role of LBMS, to carry out the work set by TBs. There was no evidence within the data, of any feeling that LBs should be holding TBs to account for the performance of the trust, even though LBs are viewed predominantly through the narratives, as parent advisory bodies. This is interesting in terms of the ways in which the SDs prime actors, to change their cognitive schema from a traditional understanding of the role of local boards (or individual school boards as they once were, to that of a LB within a MAT. For some actors at LB level, this change was not welcome: ‘We don’t have any of those responsibilities, so we just discuss what’s going on in the school- we don’t really communicate with parents much – the trust do that I think (LBM)’ Although, where this was the case, there was little evidence of resistance amongst participants, but rather a disappointed acceptance of the status quo. This is discussed further in the section in which we deal with Triggering, or embodiment of institutional ways of seeing the organization. There was also little evidence of the SD acting as a catalyst for articulation, deliberation and reflection. As we discuss in the following section.

Articulation, deliberation and reflection.

Weik argues that bringing together ideas and organizational goals on paper prompts actors to think more deeply and deliberate beyond what he terms to be ‘general understandings’ (Weik, 2001), Goffman (Goffman, 1974,p:345), argues that such documents have the capacity to ‘break an actor’s frame of understanding,’ but that this can only be achieved under certain circumstances, depending on how involved the individual feels, with the particular focus of the document. SDs would seem to be an ideal site for the deliberation and reflection on organizational structures, strategy and decision making. But previous research on strategy making in organizational collaborations, indicates that organizations that collaborate often become, bound up in their own issues, with little concern for the whole (Huxam & Vangen, 2013). There is evidence that TBMs use the schemes to articulate how they

want the MAT to function, but little clarity provided in relation to actual roles, as this TBM Chair points out: ‘Everyone takes on these models, but I think it needs development. It’s almost like saying the board delegates its responsibilities, but it doesn’t give them any clarity about what my role is then. (TBM-Chair).’ This study echoes our previous findings, that SDs are linked to deliberation about the future of the trust and its strategy, however, this is purely confined to TBM; being all but absent at LBM level (See Baxter and Cornforth, 2019).

In summary only 35% of respondents indicated that SDs were used in formalisation in relation to deliberation or reflection, and of those, all were members of Trustee Boards, rather than LBMs. Furthermore, a number of TBMs indicated that the hierarchy outlined and reinforced by the documents, actively discourages LBMs from involvement in such discussions.

Editing: Internalization of particular understandings, and Triggering- Embodiment of institutional ways of seeing the organization.

In many ways internalization of particular understandings and triggering or embodiment of institutional ways of seeing the organization, have in their roots, similar gestation, both intrinsically linked to power (Baxter, 2016). As the previous sections in this paper point out, it is not necessary to actually read and discuss the SD in order to be influenced by it and its common language of understandings, assuming symbolic power and creating discourses which align with this symbolism (Bourdieu, 1991). It was not clear from this investigation, how many local boards actually read their SDs, what did emerge clearly, is that a number of respondents at local level and trustee level have internalized particular understandings, as a result of discourses emerging from narratives around delegated powers. For example, one LBM states: ‘I saw a document, I think it more or less sets out trustee work, I know my role is similar to the last one [as BM in a single school] (LBM).’

Several respondents at local level implied that although they were obviously aware of the organisation as a whole, they still primarily saw their function in terms of their particular school, resisting other interpretations: This was particularly true when discussing values and ethos statement:

They [the SDs] tell us to promote the values of the trust, but we have those values, I mean, we have them already we’ve always had them. (LBM)

It is clear from the narratives that these elements of sensemaking are linked strongly to identity formation in relation to governance roles: Participants frequently referred to their duties in relation to SDs, and their perceived amount of power, or lack of it; as this respondent illustrates: ‘We aren’t governors anymore, we are advisers, we also help to spread the trust ethos to the school (LBM).’ They also display what Abolafia terms ‘selective retention’ - collective negotiation of policy choice which fits the emerging organizational narrative (Abolafia, 2010,p:349) This is particularly evident in relation to TBMs who draw from central policy documents produced by government to justify their own roles in relation to SDs. In some cases, this results in a quasi-paternalistic view of LBMs, as this statement illustrates:

Capacity issues are about, for me, it’s about returning to the knowledge and skills bit and giving them[local boards] as much as we can, helping them as much as we can- guiding them (TBM)

On the whole, examples of instances of editing and triggering appeared in 72% and 60% of participant narratives. This would appear to support the SD as a tool for both. However, as the discussion above has revealed, a more nuanced understanding of this, based on schema and also incorporating an identity perspective, may offer a more insightful view of these elements.

Reducing bias, judgement and inconsistencies

The final category in this study relates to the capacity of SDs to reduce individual biases by confronting assumptions and revising them in light of new information. Although we treat this as a separate category, it is evident from the discussions above, that this element permeates all other categories, it is also useful to examine it separately: As we have already mentioned, existing schema may be very powerful for those that have been working in single school contexts, and the need to be

able to adapt and craft understandings for the new context is vital in order to achieve organizational coherence (Vaara, 2003). In relation to the participants in this study, 82% of the narratives reflected that they do use SDs to resolve inconsistencies, and, by offering a visual pictorial image of the MAT and actors' roles within it, SDs to some extent prompt revisions to some existing schema. In relation to TBMs they create the 'logics of appropriateness' that Ostrom refers to in her book on organizational politics (Ostrom, 1991): that is, they act to create organizational narratives that enhance legitimacy and that storify and thereby enhance, organizational legitimacy. However, as mentioned earlier, SDs are adaptive and change according to circumstances of the MAT: This means that actors at all levels must adapt and change their understandings as the SDs evolve. This may well account for the considerable amount of ambiguity and uncertainty within the narratives, particularly at LBM level.

SDs as formalisation tools in collaborative organizations: practical contributions.

Figure 11 Types of sensemaking activity: evidence from narratives (percentage expressed as a percentage of the 50 narratives analysed within the study).

The article provides two contributions. First, it elucidates that inter MAT relationships not only entail issues of coordination, control and legitimacy, but also problems of understanding, originating from the differences between cooperating parties, and from the ambiguity and uncertainty that tend to prevail in early stages of interorganizational cooperation. This description of cooperative endeavours conforms to Karl Weick's accounts of complex, ambiguous events, and it complements more conventional perspectives on interorganizational governance prevailing in the literature (Madhok 2002), by challenging the assumption that participants in these relationships have clear images of their partners, the relationships in which they are engaged and the contexts in which these are embedded (Jap 2001). Secondly, it capitalizes on Weick's contributions in this area to develop a richer and more comprehensive notion of the relationship between formalisation, sensemaking, and problems of understanding than has hitherto been available in the literature on multi-school collaborations. In particular, we argue that whilst formalisation tools are used in various ways in the sense making process in collaborations, the ways in which they are used, differ according to who in the organisation is employing their use. This research has shown that whilst they are valuable in reducing bias and resolving inconsistency and editing previous understandings, this is often done to impose top down understandings on local partners, undermining their power and decision-making responsibilities. It has also highlighted a concerning lack of deliberation and reflection around SDs, leading to the conclusion that by and large, they are *imposed* upon collaborative partners, in a top down manner that leaves some partners feeling frustrated and disenfranchised. In terms of their power to aid organizational sensemaking, we conclude that again, although they go some way to resolving inconsistencies within organizational understandings, they are more useful as tools for central teams who wish to impose particular understandings and power hierarchies on organizations within the collaboration. This finding implies that whilst formalisation documents are very useful, collaborations need to be aware that they close down as well as open up discussion and may cause resentment and

concomitant lack of trust amongst partners within the MAT, contributing negatively to their long-term sustainability.

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Appendix 01

An effective scheme of delegation

Key:

LGB =Local Governing Body

MAT=Multi-Academy Trust

71. An effective scheme of delegation, particularly in MATs, will:

- include details of all the committees, including LGBs in a MAT (whether decision making or advisory), in place beneath the board and explain in headline terms the role and remit of each;
- provide full clarity on which governance functions are retained at board level and which are delegated making clear, particularly where the board governs a number of schools, where all key governance functions are exercised in respect of each school – including vision and budget setting and executive leader oversight and performance management;
- explain clearly how the role of governance structures relates to that of key executive leaders (such as the CEO, any executive principals or regional directors, and finance and HR directors), avoiding duplication for example in a MAT between the role of MAT executives and LGBs in holding individual academy leaders to account;
- explain the board's parental and community engagement arrangements and how these feed into and inform governance both at board level and at the level of individual schools as applicable;
- be drafted clearly so that everyone in the organisation can understand it, in order to be clear about their role and that of others; and
- explain the circumstances in which the arrangements set out may vary: including both the timeframes for the overall scheme being reviewed and updated, and any triggers that might lead the board to review or change levels of delegations.

Sample

Number	Interviews	Total interviews	Number of schools	Area spread	Profile
1	CEO,1, CT (Chair of Trustees)1 , T (Trustees) 2, LBM (school board member) 2, SBC (school board chair)1.	6	4	1 town only	Urban South
2	CEO,0, CT (Chair of Trustees)1 , T (Trustees) 4, LBM (school board member) 1 , SBC (school board chair)0.	6	5	1 town only	Urban South
3	CEO, CT (Chair of Trustees)1 , T (Trustees) 2, LBM (school board member) 2, SBC (school board chair)1.	5	7	1 town with 2 schools in rural areas	Mixed areas , rural and urban North
4	CEO, CT (Chair of Trustees)1 , T (Trustees) 2, LBM (school board member) 2, SBC (school board chair)1.	6	6	3 towns in one county	Special schools North
5	CEO, CT (Chair of Trustees)1 , T (Trustees) 2, LBM (school board member) 2, SBC (school board chair)1.	5	5	1 town	All primary schools North high SED
6	CEO, CT (Chair of Trustees)1 , T (Trustees) 2, LBM (school board member) 2, SBC (school board chair)1.	6	8	Town and rural areas	Mixed all through (primary, secondary some SED) (3) South
7	CEO, CT (Chair of Trustees)1 , T (Trustees) 2, LBM (school board member) 2, SBC (school board chair)1.	5	15	Town and rural areas	All through North
8	CEO, CT (Chair of Trustees)1 , T (Trustees) 2, LBM (school board member) 2, SBC (school board chair)1.	6	65	Town and rural	Primary and secondary North
9	CEO, CT (Chair of Trustees)1 , T (Trustees) 2, LBM (school board member) 2, SBC (school board chair)1.	4	25	Town and rural	All through , North
10	CEO, CT (Chair of Trustees)1 , T (Trustees) 2, LBM (school board member) 2, SBC (school board chair)1.	5	43	Town and rural	All through North
11	CEO, CT (Chair of Trustees)1 , T (Trustees) 2, LBM (school board member) 2, SBC (school board chair)1.	3	4	Town	Primary South
12	CEO, CT (Chair of Trustees)1 , T (Trustees) 2, LBM (school board member) 2, SBC (school board chair)1.	3	3	Rural	Secondary North
	Total	60			

Appendix 02

Exemplar citations	Focusing Attention	Priming: acting as cognitive constraint on sensemaking	Articulation deliberation And reflection	Editing- acting as internalization of particular understandings	Reducing bias; judgement inconsistency	Triggering: Embodiment of institutional ways of seeing organization	Mat size	Type of GB
[the scheme of delegation]The best way I would describe it is; the local governing board looks at what we think is really important, which is to hold the school to account for the quality of teaching, the progress the kids are making; and their safety and welfare. And beyond that, everything else is done, and the responsibility is taken by the board of directors.(TBM)		x		x	x	x	15	TBM
We're introducing a slightly different model [of SD] than the usual, where you would describe it as the earned autonomy model, because if we're going to have an outstanding school, or a good school coming in, actually we might learn something from them. (TBM-Chair)			x	x	x		5	TBM
We get everyone [all boards] together once a year to talk about how things are going – it is a discussion but top down probably [TBM]			x	x			65	
We [the board]just said that, you know: every board that we know, at the moment, couldn't exist if you didn't double your hat... sometimes triple it , by acting on boards at different levels (TBM)							5	TBM
And when you spoke to all of the other seven, three were very happy to go back to local governing board work because that's where they enjoyed governance- at the local level (TBM)				x			25	TBM
We could not continue to have; as we grow – according to our growth plan – have local board representation on the director level. (TBM)			x				43	TBM
It changes [scheme of delegation] changes – it has to change as we grow (LBM)			x				4	
Oh, yes schemes of delegation Yes, I think they're more for guidance. For me and – this is what we've been talking about – again at board level, what do we do with them. The thinking, at the moment, is that they're used as a discussion tool for an annual conversation between the chair of governors and each of his, or her, governing... governors at LGB level.(TBM-Chair)	x		x	x			4	TBM
Within the local governing body we have a scheme of delegation that provides guidance for them , and [do they discuss it at LB level] no they don't discuss it, there is nothing to discuss ! (TMB)		x		x	x	x	43	TBM
It's a bit like creating – I see if that if we can perfect the model at xxx primary school then the model can be transplanted to other primary schools in the way that it's structured, organised, because especially if it was local – again that was part of the attraction of saying let's create a local map that is for local people.(TBM)			x	x			25	TBM
I saw a document [scheme of delegation] when I started , but then, I didn't know how important it was – I think it more or less sets out trustee work (LBM)				x		x	65	LB
Naively a lot of governing bodies think that they're going to maintain sovereignty and they press the button and realise they've just given it up forever.(TBM)		x		x	x	x	65	TBM
You know, all the responsibility lies with the trustees, and the trustees can delegate whatever they fancy. Which often they don't do well. So schemes of delegation are almost always the issue.(LBM)	x	x		x	x	x	65	LB
I've seen a few fairly good schemes, but nobody actually sits and talks about them and actually goes through them with the local governing bodies, and explains to	x	x					8	LB

Figure 6

Exemplar citations	Focusing Attention	Priming: acting as cognitive constraint on sensemaking	Articulation deliberation And reflection	Editing- acting as internalization of particular understandings	Reducing bias; judgement inconsistency	Triggering: Embodiment of institutional ways of seeing organization.	Mat size	Type of GB
them, and talks to the school. You know, when they're joining, this is what's going to be different, this is why... (LBM)								
So you can get a feel for the organization presence at board level, going down that the line manage is managed, I suppose, by me, ... by the chair of governors who's always an employee of the sponsor. (CEO)	x	x		x	x	x	8	TBM
Within the local governing body we have a scheme of delegation that provide... We do no management of operational management of the school at board level. We... The local governing bodies are, in effect, just like they were when they were in local authority. And the only major thing that we control is if a head teacher resigns or we need a new post, then it's the board that make that decision. They make that appointment. (TBM-Chair)	x	x		x	x	x	5	TBM
So the board formally approved the appointment of head teachers. All other appointments are made by the local governing body. Even the head teacher is really, but there is that sort of that formal bit about seeking permission from the board. When we first opened we were ... There were two separate trusts [...] the structure didn't work from a point of view of the scheme of delegation. So it had to sort of be undone and we were put under one trust and restructured, which I think from being in from the start, I think that a lot of things have evolved and maybe been not so clear: Its greatest strength is its greatest weakness in some ways. (LHT)	x		x	x	x		15	LB
Capacity issues are about, for me, it's about returning to the knowledge and skills bit and giving them [local boards] as much as we can, helping them as much as we can guiding them [....] And I don't think we've got that bit right yet. I think there's a view at the academy level and a more level in some elements of it, that the model of scheme of delegation is not fit for purpose. (TBM)	x	x	x				15	TBM
I know what I do, I am the finance person on the board: that's been my role all along [in relation to this and other board roles]...so my job is just to adapt that to this situation..... [....] to understand other peoples' roles, I know my own ! (TBM)	x	x	x		x	x		
Everyone takes on these models, but I think it needs development. It's almost like saying the board delegates its responsibilities for these things but remains accountable you know that's okay in words but what leeway does that give an academy of governors or board, body. It doesn't give them any clarity about what my role is then. (TBM-Chair)							15	TBM
We need to be so much clearer about what we are delegating and asking to do. And it ties up with another issue that I'll raise about perspectives on governments and democratic perspectives on what governor's roles might be. There are views that you know governors traditionally part of the democratic checks and balances to ensure that this is a public service- but are they ? Our SD doesn't indicate this (TBM-Chair)	x						5	TBM
We want to commission them to seek out and get the views of the range of stakeholders around their academy; pupil staff, parents, communities. So, that it does actually inform what they're doing but also what the MAT is doing but I want... There's a bit of confusion in our MAT at the moment because if you take the							25	TBM

Figure 7

Exemplar citations	Focusing Attention	Priming: acting as cognitive constraint on sensemaking	Articulation deliberation And reflection	Editing- acting as internalization of particular understandings	Reducing bias; judgement inconsistency	Triggering: Embodiment of institutional ways of seeing organization.	Mat size	Type of GB
scheme of delegation, right? And you've got a whole list of you know... It's like a tick box if you look at it, you'll find it online (TBM)								
We aren't governors anymore, we are advisers, we also help to spread the trust ethos to the school (LBM)				x	x	x		
Right, for me there's a big confusion because what you've got is you've got a sense of the board of trustees who delegate responsibilities to a local governing body and of you go through that tick and look at the responsibilities of the local governing body. The local governing body is invariably accountable to the CEO. Now, this is wrong in my view. (TBM-Chair)	x	x		x	x	x	43	TBM
I think that everyone needs to be clear that the trustees are commissioning the local governing bodies to do their work at the local level in terms of the core activities of you know of, you know the governor's handbook would say. But also, about getting the views and ensuring influence around stakeholder views and perspectives. And I think we need to be much clearer that it is the board that is commissioning them and they are accountable to the board and they should be reporting to the board (TBM-Chair)	x	x	x	x	x	x	5	TBM
It's a hugely confusing time. And I think, certainly, I have really experienced that in the small MAT, where you've got, you've still got your three governing bodies, but whose role is changed, in a way. And they sort of say... and I sit on one of those governing bodies as a governor, as opposed to be on the trust board. And I see them struggle with it, grapple with it, and say, right, now, that decision's happening. Now, that's not a decision for us, is it? That's a decision for the trust board. (TBM)	x	x	x	x	x	x	6	TBM
I've always seen and believe that a key part of my role is corporate governance, so I tend to set the agenda for corporate governance with Chairs. So, what we do every year, we have an Annual Governing Body work plan. So, because we've got quite small Governing Bodies and because of the power that they have, we have three Governing Body meetings every term (CEO)	x	x		x	x	x	4	TBM
The scheme of delegation, no we don't really see that, its official, I think, more for trustees than us [local board members] (LBM)	x	x				x	65	
They just realised that what they'd intended as their MAT when they first set it up, which was very much along the lines of it'll be very representative, so each school will have a head teacher and a Chair of governors, and they'll make up the board of directors, and will do things in a very collaborative democratic way. Over time the government changed the rules, and brought in rules such as you've got to have a CEO or an executive head, and they realised that what they wanted to do was no longer possible. So they ended up merging their trust with a larger trust, and essentially giving up really, because they couldn't do it the way they wanted to. (TBM)	x	x	x				25	TBM
They [the schemes of delegation] tell us to promote the values of the trust, but we have those values, I mean, we have them already in the school- we've always had them. (LBM)		x		x	x	x	25	LBM

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scheme of delegation, right? And you've got a whole list of you know...It's like a tick box if you look at it, you'll find it online (TBM)								
We aren't governors anymore, we are advisers, we also help to spread the trust ethos to the school (LBM)				x	x	x		
Right, for me there's a big confusion because what you've got is you've got a sense of the board of trustees who delegate responsibilities to a local governing body and of you go through that tick and look at the responsibilities of the local governing body. The local governing body is invariably accountable to the CEO. Now, this is wrong in my view.(TBM-Chair)	x	x		x	x	x	43	TBM
I think that everyone needs to be clear that the trustees are commissioning the local governing bodies to do their work at the local level in terms of the core activities of you know of, you know the governor's handbook would say. But also, about getting the views and ensuring influence around stakeholder views and perspectives. And I think we need to be much clearer that it is the board that is commissioning <u>them</u> and they are accountable to the board and they should be reporting to the board (TBM-Chair)	x	x	x	x	x	x	5	TBM
It's a hugely confusing time. And I think, certainly, I have really experienced that in the small MAT, where you've got, you've still got your three governing bodies, but whose role is changed, in a way. And they sort of say... and I sit on one of those governing bodies as a governor, as opposed to be on the trust board. And I see them struggle with it, grapple with it, and say, right, now, that decision's happening. Now, that's not a decision for us, is it? That's a decision for the trust board. (TBM)	x	x	x	x	x	x	6	TBM
I've always seen and believe that a key part of my role is corporate governance, so I tend to set the agenda for corporate governance with Chairs. So, what we do every year, we have an Annual Governing Body work plan. So, because we've got quite small Governing Bodies and because of the power that they have, we have three Governing Body meetings every term (CEO)	x	x		x	x	x	4	TBM
The scheme of delegation, no we don't really see that, its official, I think, more for trustees than us [local board members] (LBM)	x	x				x	65	
They just realised that what they'd intended as their MAT when they first set it up, which was very much along the lines of it'll be very representative, so each school will have a head teacher and a Chair of governors, and they'll make up the board of directors, and will do things in a very collaborative democratic way. Over time the government changed the <u>rules</u> , and brought in rules such as you've got to have a CEO or an executive head, and they realised that what they wanted to do was no longer possible. So they ended up merging their trust with a larger trust, and essentially giving up really, because they couldn't do it the way they wanted to. (TBM)	x	x	x				25	TBM
They [the schemes of delegation] tell us to promote the values of the trust, but we have those values, I mean, we have them already in the school- we've always had them. (LBM)		x		x	x	x	25	LBM

Figure 8

Exemplar citations	Focusing Attention	Priming: acting as cognitive constraint on sensemaking	Articulation deliberation And reflection	Editing- acting as internalization of particular understandings	Reducing bias; judgement inconsistency	Triggering: Embodiment of institutional ways of seeing organization.	Mat size	Type of GB
Yeah I think there's an issue where local governing boards can feel like the person who is held accountable by the trust board is the one who's influencing and representing the local governing board at trust level. And I think there's that whole issue of local governing boards still don't <u>always</u> , and aren't supported to understand their new roles and responsibilities as members of local governing boards and an academy trust. (TBM-Chair)					x	x	7	TBM
Schemes of delegations still aren't incredibly clear. They vary greatly from trust to trust; there's no consistency. And I understand that, I understand why that is. I understand that as a model. But actually if you've got trusts, if you've got governors who on the forums that I host talk to each other about what their local governing board has responsibility for or another local governing board has responsibility for, it just creates confusion. And then they'll go to their scheme of delegations and say well it doesn't mention that in ours. They're very, schemes of delegation can be very much based on things like the articles and they can be very stale. And what we don't do is account for some of the nuances that local governors may have.(TBM)			x			x	7	TBM
We don't have any of those responsibilities, so we just discuss what's going on in the school- we don't really communicate with parents much - the trust do that I think (LBM)		x				x	6	LBM
[any communication is]Top-down definitely. And I think there is, it's a sweeping statement, I appreciate that but I think there is work to do around making sure that local governing boards are working to the same strategic priorities and reporting all their local priorities, you know, the context of their work locally to the trust board. Because I'm not sure that happens in a huge number of cases, but the scheme of delegation should make that clear, if they (local boards) ever read it (TBM)		x		x		x	65	TBM
At the moment, seems to be, the provision of anything...[is done by] clusters, they call them improvement clusters. That's okay, providing you have the skills and the abilities within that cluster. (TBM-Chair)						x	25	TBM
Because, one of the things that you find is, if you don't handle that well, governing boards feel emasculated; governing boards... a lot of people step off governing boards, they think: well, what is there for me to do. And we try sell it as governance, but it isn't, not in the scheme of delegation (TBM)		x				x	15	TBM
Recruitment's a problem cos we aren't governors any more [...] I don't know what we are ... (LBM)		x					6	LBM
And I think as a board, I think to a degree we're excluded from it, primarily because that conversation seems to go on with executive... Well it goes on at the operational between executive heads and CEOs. You know, they know what to do now, you know? They will say that they've had an approach, and the decision is then always made by the board. It's the board's decision. (LBM)		x				x	7	LBM
In the people who were doing that [sitting on local boards and trustee boards] said: this is just too much. There's too much work to do; too many meetings to come to; and also, in what capacity are we sitting on this board? Are we sitting as a director			x				15	TBM

Figure 9

Exemplar citations	Focusing Attention	Priming: acting as cognitive constraint on sensemaking	Articulation deliberation And reflection	Editing- acting as internalization of particular understandings	Reducing bias; judgement inconsistency	Triggering: Embodiment of institutional ways of seeing organization.	Mat size	Type of GB
with our director hats on, and in accordance with company law, and trustee law... legislation? Or are we a volunteer looking after our own LGB. (TBM- Chair)								
The problem with the models is that in theory that is a perfect example – you go yes, keep your money as normal but actually they're all not being top sliced now so there's let's say 200,000 each... they've got more money, but the thing is that we also have to plan now because we're a MAT, we don't have the back up and resource of the local authority anymore. So we need to ensure that we have a good robust financial strategy for moving that forward, because there's no more cap in hand (TBM- Chair)							3	TBM
We don't sit down and say, lets look at the scheme of delegation and sort out what we do : it kind of gets passed on (LBM)				x		x	15	LBM
Previously each of the schools was an individual trust. So they were standalone... Well, of course standalone academies. But when I joined [...], you know, there needed to be a much clearer line of accountability, because basically we had individual trusts with a senior member, exec member from our organisation leading them. (TBM-CEO).							25	TBM
Suddenly they said, well have you not looked at the scheme of delegation ? You don't have those powers <u>any more</u> (LBM)	x	x			x		15	LBM
The SD gives freedom, but not in terms of culture and ethos: The first two schools that joined were x and y . They were independent trusts, so standalone academies. So there was very little connection between them. The only thing that they were driven by was a sense that we need to get the standards up and we need to sort of try and embed some of our culture around the place and the SD was key to this (TBM- Chair)	x	x		x			8	TBM
Totals in exemplar quotes	16	21	13	21	15	21		

Figure 10