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*A field analysis of a 14-19 educational partnership*

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# **A Field Analysis of a 14-19 Educational Partnership**

Stephen Holmes

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of  
Sheffield Hallam University  
for the degree of Doctor of Education

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## **Candidate's Statement**

I declare that this submission is my own work and has not been submitted for any other academic award. The use of all materials from sources other than my own work has been properly and fully acknowledged.

# Abstract

Over the 2002 to 2010 period of New Labour administration, a key strand of educational policy was the notion of 14-19 education. A key component of which was a belief that for this to be delivered most effectively, organisations needed to work in partnership.

This research aimed to understand and explain the operation of a 14-19 partnership, of which I was a member, and to suggest possible ways in which its operation could be improved. It was carried out as the Conservative Liberal Democrat Coalition was introducing significantly different accountability measures for the 14-16 age group.

A critical realist methodology was used as the ontological and epistemological basis (Bhaskar 1998; Bhaskar 2008). Since such a methodology does not have a preferred underpinning theoretical framework, results were predominantly analysed through the lens of Bourdieu's triad of sociological principles of habitus, field, and capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Where appropriate, results were also framed by performativity (Lyotard 1984) and partnership perspectives from education (Hodgson and Spours 2006) and organisational studies (Contractor and Lorange 2004).

Two key data collection methods, both from the perspective of an insider researcher, were used. Participant observation was used to obtain in situ evidence of partnership operation. In addition, eleven senior managers from partnership organisations were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. An analysis of field positions and a reflexive self-analysis were also carried out.

This study identified that, for this partnership, the introduction of 'Progress Eight' led to the partnership's demise. Using empirical evidence, the study provides theorised explanations of factors that affected partner engagement within this particular 'weakly-collaborative' 14-19 partnership, thus providing a number of original contributions to knowledge. It extended conceptions of educational partnership based upon theories of social capital by linking partnership engagement to capital exchange, capital cost-benefit analysis and the influence of government statist capital. The study also provided an early indication of the likely influence of 'Progress Eight' on partnership behaviour and, more generally, on the 14-16 curriculum within schools. Finally, the research methodology is an operationalised example of how a Bourdieun theoretical framework could be combined with a critical realist ontology to research the educational organisation context.

# List of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>List of Appendices.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>List of Tables.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>List of Figures.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Abbreviations.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Chapter 1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>12</b>
1.1 Introduction.....	12
1.2 Background.....	12
1.3 Research Questions.....	15
1.4 The Partnership.....	18
1.5 Overview of Dissertation Structure.....	20
<b>Chapter 2. Literature Review.....</b>	<b>21</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	21
2.2 Bourdieu's Sociology.....	23
2.3 Social Capital.....	39
2.4 Bourdieun Concepts of Domination.....	48
2.5 Performativity.....	51
2.6 Partnerships.....	55
2.7 Theoretical Framework Synthesis.....	60
<b>Chapter 3. Methodology and Methods.....</b>	<b>64</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	64
3.2 Methodology.....	65
3.3 Methods.....	79
3.4 Conclusions.....	98
<b>Chapter 4. Mapping the Field.....</b>	<b>100</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	100
4.2 Reflexive Account.....	100

4.3	The Changing Policy Context .....	105
4.4	Field Positions Based on Different Types of Capital .....	110
<b>Chapter 5.</b>	<b>Findings: Overview of Themes Identified from Observations and Interviews .....</b>	<b>123</b>
5.1	Introduction .....	123
5.2	Identification of Key Themes.....	123
5.3	Analysis of Key Themes within Level 3 Codes .....	130
5.4	Conclusions on Analysis of Themes .....	135
<b>Chapter 6.</b>	<b>Findings: Analysis of Themes Relating to Capital Accumulation and Exchange .....</b>	<b>136</b>
6.1	Introduction .....	136
6.2	Capitals Accumulated by Partnership Membership .....	136
6.3	Social Capital.....	144
6.4	Habitus.....	151
6.5	Conclusions .....	151
<b>Chapter 7.</b>	<b>Findings: Capital Values and How these are Determined ..</b>	<b>153</b>
7.1	Introduction .....	153
7.2	Perceived Value of Vocational Qualifications.....	153
7.3	Impact of Performance Table Equivalences .....	157
7.4	Conclusions on Capital Values .....	162
<b>Chapter 8.</b>	<b>Discussion .....</b>	<b>164</b>
8.1	Introduction .....	164
8.2	Research Question 1 .....	165
8.3	Research Question 2 .....	174
8.4	Summary Mechanism .....	181
<b>Chapter 9.</b>	<b>Conclusions .....</b>	<b>184</b>
9.1	Introduction .....	184
9.2	Evaluation of Research.....	184

9.3	Contributions to Knowledge .....	194
9.4	Key Outcomes .....	197
9.5	Implications for Future Professional Practice .....	198
9.6	Concluding Comments.....	198
<b>References.....</b>		<b>200</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>		<b>212</b>

# List of Appendices

<b>Appendix A- Organisations Referred to in this Study .....</b>	<b>212</b>
<b>Appendix B- Interview Question Grid .....</b>	<b>213</b>
<b>Appendix C- Research Consent Form and Information Given to Participants .....</b>	<b>215</b>
<b>Appendix D- Extra Interview Questions for Pilot .....</b>	<b>218</b>
<b>Appendix E-Example of Initial Coding of Transcript .....</b>	<b>219</b>
<b>Appendix F-Level 2 Codes .....</b>	<b>221</b>
<b>Appendix G- Level 3 Codes.....</b>	<b>225</b>
<b>Appendix H- Themes Identified in Level 3 Codes .....</b>	<b>226</b>
<b>Appendix I- Key Recommendations from Wolf Reforms.....</b>	<b>234</b>
<b>Appendix J- Extra Information from Field Analysis .....</b>	<b>237</b>

# List of Tables

<b>Table 3.1-</b> Those interviewed and their roles within their organisation .....	92
<b>Table 3.2-</b> How interview themes relate to my research objectives .....	95
<b>Table 4.1-</b> Key to column headings in tables and axis labels in graphs in chapter 4 .....	111
<b>Table 4.2-</b> The correlation between the various scores in chapter 4 .....	114
<b>Table 5.1-</b> Observation statements for each Level 3 code by organisation .	127
<b>Table 5.2-</b> Interview statements for each Level 3 code by organisation .....	129
<b>Table J1-</b> Data that was used in the field analysis.....	237
<b>Table J2-</b> Ranking of schools in the learning community based on 5A*-C measure .....	238
<b>Table J3-</b> Ranking of schools in the learning community based on Learning Community engagement.....	239
<b>Table J4-</b> Ranking of schools in the learning community based upon reliance on vocational qualifications .....	240
<b>Table J5-</b> Ranking of schools in the learning community based on number of Y11 students .....	242
<b>Table J6-</b> Ranking of schools in the learning community based on percentage Y11 students achieving the EBacc measure.....	244
<b>Table J7-</b> Ranking of schools in the learning community based on percentage Y11 students progressing into positive post-16 destinations .....	246



# List of Figures

<b>Figure 2.1-</b> Interrelationship between different social capital concepts .....	47
<b>Figure 2.2-</b> Key theoretical concepts synthesised from my literature review .	61
<b>Figure 4.1-</b> Ranking based on 5A*-C measure .....	112
<b>Figure 4.2-</b> Ranking based on LC engagement measure.....	115
<b>Figure 4.3-</b> Ranking based on reliance on vocational qualifications.....	117
<b>Figure 5.1-</b> Distribution of responses across Level 3 categories .....	125
<b>Figure 8.1-</b> My explanatory mechanism .....	182
<b>Figure H1-</b> Distribution of different themes from responses coded as positive towards or benefits of partnership.....	226
<b>Figure H2-</b> Chart showing distribution of different themes from responses coded as limiting factors .....	227
<b>Figure H3-</b> Chart showing distribution of different themes from responses coded as relating to curriculum reform.....	228
<b>Figure H4-</b> Chart showing distribution of different themes from responses coded as relating to financial factors.....	229
<b>Figure H5-</b> Chart showing distribution of different themes from responses coded as relating to BTEC equivalences .....	230
<b>Figure H6-</b> Chart showing distribution of different themes from responses related to different groups of student .....	231
<b>Figure H7-</b> Chart showing distribution of different themes from responses relating to performance table influences .....	232
<b>Figure H8-</b> Chart showing distribution of different themes from responses coded as relating to different stakeholders .....	233
<b>Figure J1-</b> Ranking of schools in the learning community based on number of Y11 students.....	241
<b>Figure J2-</b> Ranking of schools in the learning community based on EBacc score ... ..	243
<b>Figure J3-</b> Ranking of schools in the learning community based on percentage Y11 students progressing into positive post-16 destinations score.....	245



# **Abbreviations**

EBacc- English Baccalaureate

IAG- Information Advice and Guidance

IF- Increased Flexibility

LA- Local Authority

LC- Learning Community

NEET- Not in Education Employment or Training

NPD- National Pupil Database

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## **1.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this research was to understand and explain the operation of a 14-19 partnership, of which I was a member, and to suggest possible improvements in the partnership's operation. A theoretical framework, based predominantly upon Bourdieun social theories, linked to a critical realist methodology was used to amplify this understanding and explanation. Although this research focussed on the partnership that I belonged to, it also aimed to provide explanations that would be generally applicable to the operation of educational partnerships.

This chapter provides a contextual background to this research that explains: why I undertook this research; why I considered using a particular theoretical framework and methodological approach; what I was hoping to achieve with this research; key features of the partnership that I would be researching; the overall format of this thesis. Each of these themes are addressed over the following sections.

## **1.2 Background**

Over the eight years prior to the start of this research in Spring 2010, the New Labour government had continually emphasised the need for schools, colleges and other organisations or agencies to form collaborative partnerships in order to deliver their educational priorities. Such partnerships included: multi-agency safeguarding alliances (Department for Education and Skills 2004a); partnerships for improving school performance and alleviating disadvantage (Department for Education and Employment 1997a); collaborations for delivering extended wrap-around children's services (Department for Education and Skills 2002a); alliances for the delivery of 14-19 education (Department for Education and Skills 2002b). One of the major initiatives that had been implemented by New Labour was the idea of a variety of organisations working in partnership to deliver a broader, generally vocational, 14-19 curriculum (Department for Education and Skills 2002b). When I started this research the Conservative-Liberal Coalition, who had significantly different views on both partnership work and the role of vocational qualifications within the 14-19

curriculum, had just been elected. It was clear that researching partnership operation in a time of major policy change would be of relevance to those working within the 14-19 field.

The New Labour government had identified a number of key benefits for such partnership development. It had suggested that only partnerships can provide, at a suitable cost, the breadth of curriculum needed to meet its 14-19 agenda (Department for Education and Skills 2005; Department for Children Schools and Families 2009). An initial pilot for this study (Holmes 2010) suggested that most of this discussion focused on the process of successful partnership working with much of its analysis axiomatically presenting collaborative working as unproblematic and uncritically beneficial to all partners. This pilot also indicated that, although there was a growing body of knowledge relating to educational partnership working, with much of this knowledge having been accumulated from relatively large-scale empirical studies across a variety of educational partnership contexts, findings were mainly presented in an atheoretical fashion. Government sponsored research, such as Office for Standards in Education (2009) or Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (2007), produced mainly descriptive accounts that: identify partners; the scale and scope of provision; the key criteria for successful partnership implementation. By using my research to explain partnership operation theoretically, I aimed to introduce an element of originality into my research that appeared to be missing from much previous educational partnership research.

For eight years prior to the start of my research I had been involved in 14-19 partnership work, initially as coordinator of an Increased Flexibility (IF) partnership and latterly as a pre-16 manager within a further education college. During this phase I had to adapt to the rigours of working within a multi-organisational partnership and had been increasingly aware of the difficulties and challenges this presented. Additionally, my day-to-day work in this area gave me unique, long-term and opportunistic access to a number of key managers and processes involved in the operation of local 14-19 learning partnerships. From this personal and professional context, it was clear that my findings would be useful to me and to partners in our day-to-day partnership work.

Within another pilot study (Holmes 2009) I had investigated, via a realist interview (Pawson and Tilley, 1997), the types of capital (Bourdieu 1986) possessed by members of a 14-19 partnership. As an outcome of this pilot I was able to make a number of key conclusions in relation to the theoretical framework and methodological position that I wished to adopt for this dissertation. My own experiences had led me to favour critical realism (Bhaskar 1978, Bhaskar 1998) as a methodology that supported explanations not reliant on the polarised positions of positivism or interpretivism (Bhaskar and Hartwig 2010, pp236-237). Additionally, although critical realism had been operationalised by researchers, in terms of general social scientific method by Sayer (2000), in relation to evaluation research by Pawson and Tilley (1997) and in organisational studies by Fleetwood and Ackroyd (2004), it had the distinct advantage of not being tied to any particular theoretical framework (Fleetwood and Ackroyd 2004, p3), working as the 'underlabourer' to other theories (Mutch 2005, p781).

From the pilot, I was aware that capital was only one component of Pierre Bourdieu's sociological project and on its own, and as suggested by certain authors (Reay 2004; Emibayer and Johnson 2008), capital alone would not provide the breadth of explanation that I needed. I was clear that my theoretical framework needed to have the three interrelated heuristic concepts of field, habitus and capital proposed by Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Bourdieu's sociology, although well theorised, did not appear to have a particularly clear or useful ontological base. However, in common with the critical realist ontology, Bourdieu also sought to produce a sociology that overcame the contradictions of positivism and interpretivism (Bourdieu 1988, p780). Additionally, various writers, (Wainwright 2000; Sayer 2000; Mutch 2002; Ozibilgin and Tatley 2005), had discussed the compatibility between Bourdieu's sociology and critical realism. I therefore felt that by combining the theoretical framework offered by Bourdieu with the ontology of critical realism I would be best able to provide the 'mechanistic' explanation of partnership operation that I sought.

I was therefore able to identify key points that would describe what my research would look like:



- the research would involve an investigation into the partnership that both my own organisation and I belonged to;
- the subject of my research would be managers of partnership organisations;
- the key outcome of this research would be a 'mechanistic' explanation of factors that affect organisations' engagement with the partnership;
- the research would predominantly adopt Bourdieun sociological theories as my underpinning theoretical framework;
- this Bourdieun framework would be used alongside a critical realist ontology in order to make theorised links between my observations and provide potential explanations of partnership behaviour that would be of benefit specifically to educational partnerships and more generally all types of inter-organisational partnership.

The perceived benefits and novelty of this research could be summarised as follows:

- This research will be an in-depth, rigorously theorised study of 14-19 partnership that, by using a predominantly Bourdieun theoretical framework combined with a critical realist methodology, will illuminate potential 'mechanisms' that explain how and why organisations work in partnership.
- My final dissertation will make a contribution to the ongoing national debate about the effectiveness of educational partnership working by providing key explanatory links between organisational behaviour, government policy and established social theories.
- My theoretical framework, although predominantly based upon Bourdieun social theory, will be a novel synthesis of a variety of complementary theories that will position my findings within the social theory, educational studies and organisational studies fields.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

Reviewing the points in the previous section, I was able to identify two general aims for this research:

- i. To understand and explain, using a variety of theoretical perspectives, the operation of the 14-19 partnership that I was a member of.
- ii. To suggest possible ways in which the operation of the partnership could be improved.

Following an initial review of literature and the political context at the time, I was able to suggest a number of themes that would feature in research objectives, which would frame what I was trying to find out and clarify the types of theoretical lenses that I would use. My review of government policy indicated that, given the change from the New Labour to Coalition government, this research would be carried out against a background of significant change in 14-19 educational policy, which was likely to favour the notion of competition above the notion of partnership (Gove 2010). It also appeared important to make explicit the link between government policy at the top level and effects on organisational partnership engagement at a lower level. My first three objectives were therefore:

- i. To explore partnership dynamics specifically in relation to the tension between collaboration and competition.
- ii. To understand how a partnership operates within a volatile environment
- iii. To explain how the government influences partnership behaviour.

My initial review of Bourdieun sociology indicated that actions at the individual level depend upon the interaction between dispositions of individuals and the individuals' positions within a field (Bourdieu 1992, p66). These field positions ultimately depend upon the amount and configuration of capital possessed by an individual (Bourdieu 1986). Although my theoretical review indicated that these concepts are not necessarily transferable to organisations, this combination of field, disposition and capital led to the following three objectives.

- iv. To identify those factors which might enable a map of the 14-19 field of education to be formulated and to use this map to help explain the dynamics of 14-19 partnership operation.
- v. To determine the different forms of capital possessed by organisations within a particular 14-19 partnership.

- vi. To investigate how dispositions of organisational members affect an organisation's engagement with a 14-19 partnership.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p81) have suggested one of the key purposes in operationalising research is converting these broad, often abstract, objectives into tighter and more precise research questions. Similarly, Silverman (2011, p33) is clear that a key purpose of formulating research questions is to: 'narrow down your topic' and 'give focus to your research'. He also believes the research questions need to be sensitively tied to some form of theoretical perspective. From an organisational studies and qualitative research viewpoint, King (2004, p14) suggested research questions need framing in terms of how respondents interpret the problem being considered. Sayer (2000, p21), working in the critical realist paradigm, suggests that the method of abstraction dictates the sorts of research questions to be adopted. In Sayer's terms I had been planning research that was intensive, research that is '...concerned with what makes things happen in specific cases (Sayer 2000, p20)'. He indicates that questions within intensive modes of research need to focus on the particularity of the case that is being researched and the specific 'mechanisms' that explain what has been researched.

Review of my objectives indicated a number of key themes: 14-19 partnership; Bourdieun theoretical concepts; a volatile environment. The constraints of the particular intensive type approach that I planned to adopt clearly limited my key research questions to the partnership that I was planning to study. My planned methodological position, alongside my opportunistic access to a variety of managers within this 14-19 partnership, also made it clear that the key source of data for this research would be partnership managers. These considerations, alongside the previous paragraph's concepts, led me to the following two research questions:

- How do Bourdieun, and other related, theoretical concepts explain organisations' engagement with the partnership, when analysed from the perspective of managers involved in a particular 14-19 partnership?



- Which external political factors influence organisations' engagement with the partnership, when analysed from the perspective of managers involved in a particular 14-19 partnership?

At this point, although the first of these questions was clearly linked to theory, such theoretical framing was not well-developed. A key purpose of the literature review was to further develop this theoretical background in order to produce a synthesised theoretical framework and thus explicitly identify the range of theoretical concepts I included in this question. These research questions were operationalised into a method which involved a field analysis of the partnership, a reflexive account identifying my position both within the field that I was researching and in relation to the ontology that I used, a period of observation and interviews with managers of organisations that comprised the partnership.

## **1.4 The Partnership**

The partnership that I investigated was a 14-19 partnership based within one Local Authority (LA) administrative county in the north midlands of England. It referred to itself as a Learning Community (LC). It had evolved from a partnership that had been convened in 2002 to develop the Increased Flexibility (IF) 14-16 initiative (Department for Education and Skills 2002a). At the start of this research the LC comprised all fifteen schools from across three different district or borough council areas, the area's only college, four local training providers and representatives from the LA and the local Connexions<sup>1</sup> service. The college and several schools were based in the area's main town. All of the other schools were based in satellite villages or towns. The area had slightly higher than average levels of deprivation, with certain school catchment areas characterised by high levels of deprivation: the average Index of Multiple Deprivation for the area was 22.41 compared to the national average of 21.67; eleven (6%) areas within the LC were in the 10% most deprived nationally with a further 25 (14%) being in the 20% most deprived nationally (Department for

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<sup>1</sup> At the start of this research Connexions main role was to provide careers advice, guidance and support for students across the 14-25 age range. Its key strategic target related to a reduction of the number of post-16 students Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET).

Communities and Local Government 2011). In 2010 (Department for Education 2010a) the average score for percentage of students gaining 5A\*-C at GCSE including English and maths was 54% compared to 55% nationally and 55% for the LA. Most students progressed post-16 into either schools with sixth-forms or the college, although some progressed into training providers or moved out of county to organisations in neighbouring authorities. The average figure for Y11 progression into positive destinations for partnership schools for 2010 was 93.4% compared to the LA average of 95.5%. Although precise national comparators were not available, the county figures for students Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) appeared to be somewhat higher than national figures (Department for Education 2011a). The partnership was managed by a dedicated Partnership Manager, who had been seconded from the LA and who, for legal reasons, remained an employee of the LA. The anonymised composition of schools is detailed in Appendix 1.

When this research started the partnership's main activity was the provision of vocational qualifications for 14-16 year old students, which were delivered by the college, training providers or schools with particular specialisms. In September 2010 a total of 879 (15%) Y10 and Y11 students from LC schools attended this provision, which covered a variety of vocational specialisms at both Level 1 and Level 2. All of the courses enabled students to obtain qualifications that carried performance table equivalences. In addition to the curriculum delivery focus, the LC also had a remit to improve Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) processes across the district, particularly in relation to post-16 progression. It had also been involved in the development of specialist partnership provision that aimed to reduce numbers of permanently excluded Key Stage 4 students. At the start of this research, one post-16 partnership activity, involving the college and schools with sixth-forms delivering collaborative provision in poorly-recruited A-level subject areas was being terminated. At the same time a new partnership between the college and 11-16 schools with a planned rebuild under the Building Schools for the Future initiative (Department for Education and Skills 2003) had been convened to plan joint delivery of post-16 provision.

During this research I was employed as the college's pre-16 manager. At the college-level this role included day-to-day responsibility for the operational delivery and business management of the college's 14-16 provision and pastoral care of students on this provision. In order to carry out this role, I regularly, on a weekly or more frequent basis, communicated with senior members of staff within schools who were responsible for students on college-based provision. It was predominantly these staff who were the focus of this research. In addition, I also represented the college at the LC's curriculum, IAG and inclusion group meetings. Prior to and throughout this research I frequently represented the college principal at LC strategy meetings.

## **1.5 Overview of Dissertation Structure**

This chapter identified why I decided to undertake this research, gave a brief indication of its broader relevance and novelty and discussed how my initial ideas were operationalised into research questions. The next chapter will discuss, via a literature review, how I have synthesised a broad theoretical framework with the potential to provide explanatory answers to my research questions. Chapter 3 has two main sections. The first section identifies the ontological and epistemological assumptions that I have made. The second section explains how my research questions have been operationalised into a variety of research methods. Chapter 4 provides an overall contextual map of the field that I have studied. This contains not only my own reflexive account and a Bourdieun mapping of the field, but also a brief overview of the policy context both at the start of the research and over its duration. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 record and evaluate my key findings from the observation and interview phases. Chapter 8 presents mechanistic answers to my research questions. In the final chapter I evaluated the research that I undertook, commented on how this research and underpinning theories could be developed and reviewed how well I have met my initial aims and purposes of this research.

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to: synthesise a theoretical framework that will underpin my research, and detect key gaps in this research and theorising, by providing a theoretical framework that will enable answers to my research questions:

- How do Bourdieun, and other related, theoretical concepts explain organisations' engagement with the partnership, when analysed from the perspective of managers involved in a particular 14-19 partnership?
- Which external political factors influence organisations' engagement with the partnership, when analysed from the perspective of managers involved in a particular 14-19 partnership?

As discussed in the introduction, this review also seeks to clarify which 'other related theoretical concepts' will form part of the first question.

This review followed the critical review method described by Grant and Booth (2009) and Booth, Papaioannou and Sutton (2012, p25). This appeared to be a suitable method since it requires a synthesis of ideas from the literature into a new conceptual framework, model or hypothesis. Rumrill and Fitzgerald (2001, p166) describe such reviews as narrative or synthetic, with their key purpose being:

...to develop or advance theoretical models to explain the behaviour and experiences of people...

Linked to this, my review thus seeks to identify theories that may explain organisations' engagement with this specific 14-19 partnership. The key methodological purpose of my research will be to identify which of these theories most appropriately explain organisations' engagement with the 14-19 partnership.

Grant and Booth (2009, p94) have described in outline the procedure adopted in such reviews. Regarding search strategies, they have suggested that rather than systematically identifying all relevant items, such a review attempts to find only the 'most significant items' based upon their 'conceptual contribution'. These items are then appraised for their contribution to 'new' or 'existing'

theory, in a 'conceptual' or 'chronological' order. Grant and Booth (2009, p93) see the key weakness of such an approach as its lack of 'systematicity' but do concede that the subjective and interpretivist outcomes are the starting point for further evaluation, in my case by suggesting critical realist explanations that link the identified behaviour of the partnership with my empirical findings.

My research questions suggest various themes that can be used to frame this review or, in terms of the review strategy, indicate 'the research area (Rumrill and Fitzgerald 2001, p166)'. Rather than produce the specific inclusion criteria that Rumrill and Fitzgerald suggested, I used the research questions alongside exploratory reading and my proposed methodological position to identify the ranges of theories that I would include in my review.

As suggested by Pawson (2006, pp87-89), arguing from a critical realist perspective, I selected theories on their basis of 'clarifying the particular explanatory challenge' my research questions raised. The only theories explicitly mentioned within these questions are those of Bourdieu. Within the first question there is the notion of 'other related theoretical concepts'. As key themes were emerging from exploratory reading or from nascent research, it was possible to explicitly clarify which other theories would provide possible theoretical frames for my research questions. First, Bourdieu's theorisation of social capital was not the only such theorisation, with a number of these other theories having been used to explain partnership or networks. Thus it appeared pertinent to expand Bourdieu's conceptions to include other formulations of social capital within this review. Second, and as explicitly mentioned in the second research question, much partnership engagement appeared to depend upon external political factors. Given the purpose of this literature review, it was important to identify a theoretical basis for such political influence. Whilst certain notions of Bourdieun capital appeared to be relevant to an analysis of governmental power, implicit within much of the trajectory of this period's public sector policy discourse was the notion of performativity, related to measurement of performance. To fully appreciate how policy influenced this partnership's functioning it appeared important to integrate a review of the literature relating to such performativity.



The notion of partnership engagement appears in both research questions, thus this review also needed to include theories that could specifically explain why and how organisations work in partnership. I made two decisions in terms of which types of theory to add to my framework. First, I decided to limit my review to theories that could be applied alongside Bourdieun social theory to explain the very specific financial and resource decisions that I had observed taking place at LC meetings. Second, since a key feature of critical realism is the notion of context, I decided to incorporate partnership theory that clarified this partnership's context.

I started by locating and evaluating key original articles about each of the relevant theories. I then traced and evaluated articles by others who had either used or critiqued these theories specifically within the partnership, educational and organisational studies areas. Each section concludes with an indication of how each theoretical concept will be used in my analysis of research findings.

## **2.2 Bourdieu's Sociology**

### **2.2.1 General Features of Bourdieu's Sociology**

Bourdieu describes the key purpose of his sociological project as overcoming the bipolar '*opposition between objectivism and subjectivism* (Bourdieu 1988, p780)' by:

'...integrating into a single model the analysis of the experience of social agents and the analysis of the objective structures that make this experience possible (Bourdieu 1988, p782)'.

This integration of subjectivity and objectivity is mediated by two concepts that Bourdieu labels habitus and field (Bourdieu 1992, p66; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p128; Bourdieu 1993, p73; Bourdieu 1998, vii; Bourdieu 2000, p151). The final 'fundamental concept' that Bourdieu (1998, vii) considers essential within his 'philosophy' is that of capital. It is the accumulation and movement of capital that Bourdieu believes structures the 'social world' (Bourdieu 1986).

Despite many misgivings relating to Bourdieu's language use and the many inconsistencies across Bourdieu's vast body of work, Jenkins (2002, p10) agrees that one of Bourdieu's major contributions to contemporary sociology is

his attempt to reconcile the interplay between structure and action, significantly in relation to the critical realist methodology I adopted, by interlacing empirical research with abstract theorising. Likewise, working in the educational field, Gale and Lingard (2015, p10) suggest that within the rapidly changing social world, the intimate link between theory and research in Bourdieu's work means that not only can researchers use theory but reconstruct this theory from an empirical base in order to explain newly discovered educational phenomena or theorise concepts that Bourdieu himself had not yet investigated or hypothesised. It is the link between the empirically evidenced experiences of managers and objective structures that will be fundamental to the critical realist approach that I intend taking. By looking at the interface between Bourdieu's theories of habitus, field and capital I should be able to provide that key connection between individuals' accounts and potential critical realist explanations of organisations' engagement with the partnership.

Other authors have described the use of Bourdieu within educational research; however, Gale and Lingard (2015, p1) suggested most have considered the efficacy of just one part of his framework. Whilst supporting the use of Bourdieu, and specifically the use of habitus in educational research, Reay (2004) argued that his concepts have often been used merely to add 'gravitas' to academic pieces by applying them in a post hoc descriptive manner rather than using them as an analytical lens to interrogate data. Grenfell and James (1998, p16) also felt that much educational use of Bourdieu lacked theoretical rigour and was at times misinterpreted. Likewise, within the field of organisational studies Emirbayer and Johnson (2008, p1) suggested that although certain Bourdieun concepts, particularly capital and field, have been widely used in organisational studies, authors' lack of attention to either habitus or relational modes of interpretation means that a full appreciation of Bourdieu's usefulness has not been realised.

In summary, to synthesise elements of Bourdieu's sociology into my broad theoretical framework I need to make two key considerations. First I need to adopt a methodological position that will enable me to reconcile the opposing 'antimonies' (Bourdieu 1988, p777) of objectivity and subjectivity. Next, within any Bourdieun part of my final framework, I must use his concepts in a coherent

fashion that takes full account of their various facets, and thus avoid using Bourdieu 'for bestowing gravitas without doing any theoretical work (Reay 2004, p232)'. However, given Bourdieu's often changing, contradictory and complicated framework, rather than slavishly following the minutiae of his sociology, I need to use Bourdieu, as suggested by Jenkins (2002, p11), as a thinking tool that is applied and adapted to my particular context. Furthermore, to gain a full perspective on my findings I will have to combine Bourdieun ideas with those of others.

## **2.2.2 Habitus**

### **2.2.2.1 Bourdieu's Conceptions of Habitus**

Since the overarching methodological aim of this research will be to link the discourse of partnership managers to existing theoretical structures, I will start this evaluation of Bourdieu's framework with the notion of habitus, which Bourdieu (1988) identifies as the concept that is key to comprehending the polemical relationship between the objective and subjective. Bourdieu's idea of habitus is best defined in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* as:

The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of class condition) produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor. (Bourdieu, 1977, p72).

This definition introduces a number of key themes. First Bourdieu is clear that habitus is fashioned by the structures to which a subject is exposed. He explicitly identifies this structuring element as a field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p127). Elsewhere Bourdieu (2004a, p42) suggests the habitus can be structured by:

...principles such as educational or even social trajectories... according to variables such as sex or social origin...



Bourdieu (1990a, p54) also stipulates that habitus is a '...product of history... in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action...' By 'product of history' Bourdieu (1990a, p54) is referring to the 'past experiences' of agents that are 'deposited in each organism'. Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p124) uses this notion of history to suggest action is not only a reflex response to a stimulus but also depends upon an agent's past experiences and perceptions. Bourdieu (2000, p148) claims historical experiences are the 'instruments of construction' of the habitus by virtue of history incorporated in both agents and structures (Bourdieu 2000, p150).

The second theme identifies the main characteristics of the habitus: 'systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures'. Bourdieu (1977, p214) indicates a disposition has certain conceptual features:

It expresses first the result of an organizing action, with a meaning close to that of words such as structure; it also designates a way of being, a habitual state (especially of the body) and, in particular, a predisposition, tendency, propensity, or inclination.

Clarifying these features is somewhat problematic since Bourdieu often appears to treat dispositions as the habitus itself rather than being constituents of it. In the following account I have used a combination of Bourdieu's conceptualisations of both habitus and disposition to characterise these features. In relation to 'organizing action' Bourdieu again discusses the notion of 'history': individual history (Bourdieu 1993, p86) in terms of 'practical knowledge of the world (Bourdieu 2000, p148)'; the continual exposure to changing experiences (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 133); the 'active presence of past experiences (Bourdieu 1990a, p54)'. In outline, the past experiences of an agent, via the habitus, contribute to particular physical and mental actions being taken by an agent in a specific context. Bourdieu (2000, p144) explains that these experiences are intellectual perceptual experiences and the physical bodily 'practical knowledge' of how to move or change posture in a particular situation. The ideas of 'practical' and 'experiences' are particularly key to this: this accumulation of history is not passive, but involves an agent being actively and physically engaged in amassing this knowledge of how to act and think when similar circumstances arise in the future.

Bourdieu (1977, pp93-94) is clear about the embodiment of these dispositions, using the word 'hexis' to describe embodiment as: 'a durable manner of standing, speaking and thereby of *feeling* and *thinking*'. The idea of 'inclination' is central to the effect of the habitus on an individual's actions. For Bourdieu (1977, p78) it is the habitus that inclines individuals to act in a particular way. This leads to 'distinct' and 'distinctive practices' across a range of everyday activities and indeed beliefs (Bourdieu 1998, p8). This reaction to habitus may involve 'conscious' and 'strategic calculation' (Bourdieu 1990a, p53), with the 'unconscious' merely being the forgetting of those factors which have structured the habitus. Bourdieu has suggested that habitus inculcates a 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p129) that enables individuals to "'read" the future that fits them (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p130)'. The historical 'conditioning' of the habitus occurs over a number of generations and means that strategies adopted by participants are dictated by the accumulated history of the results of previous games, leading Bourdieu (2000, pp214-215) to suggest that success in the 'game' is not based on chance but upon historical precedents.

Durability seems a conceptually inaccurate term. Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p133) suggested these dispositions are 'durable but not eternal!' When new situations are experienced, all new stimuli are focussed through previous categorical lenses of experience rather than becoming themselves new categories (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p133). This leads to a 'non radical' change of habitus that is based on the '...premises established in the previous case (Bourdieu 2000, p161)': it is the chronological and iterative accumulation of past experiences, structured by a pre-existing habitus, which leads to the 'durable but not eternal', or perhaps more accurately transformable character of dispositions. Within this research these notions of history will be central in determining how managers' prior experiences have impacted upon their partnership decisions. A full and clear analysis of habitus will require not only a description of participants' histories but also an analysis of how such histories have been iteratively transformed.

The notion of what Bourdieu means by structure is much more difficult to ascertain. He has suggested that '...habitus is important in that it allows us to

escape structural mechanism (Wacquant 1989, p9)'; however, within his key definitions Bourdieu identifies the notion of structures and structuring as being key to the concept of both habitus and dispositions. This apparent confusion in the structural basis of dispositions or habitus is perhaps best resolved by the idea that although the habitus is a structure it only behaves in a structural or deterministic fashion in relation to the particular situations to which it is exposed (Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p135). Such a contextual activation of habitus, suggests that within this research I will need to pay particular attention to how the specific environments of organisations link with the habituses of managers to explain partnership behaviour.

In relation to 'transposability', Bourdieu (1990a, p104) has indicated that dispositions enable actors to deal with situations that are 'uncertain and ambiguous' or allow 'actors to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations (Bourdieu 1977, p72)'. However, at a later stage Bourdieu (2000, pp160-161) discusses the contrasting situation whereby the habitus only partially adapts to a new field, particularly in situations of crisis or when the field rapidly changes, and thus attempts to '...perpetuate structures corresponding to the conditions of production'. This situation he labels '*hysteresis*'. For those in this position:

...dispositions become dysfunctional and the efforts they make to perpetuate them help to plunge them deeper into failure.

Given the rapid change in the nature of educational fields it will be interesting to note whether managers display aspects of such hysteresis.

#### **2.2.2.2 Commentaries on Habitus**

Certain writers have been critical of Bourdieu's explanations of how the habitus works, particularly its inherent determinism. Jenkins (2002, p82) suggests that the habitus is just another form of determinism: the structures that produce habitus lead to the habitus determining behaviours and actions. Robbins (1998, p35) attempts to refute such objections by suggesting that part of an agent's habitus is that agent's ability to reflect upon their own and others' situations and thus behave in a not wholly deterministic fashion. Grenfell and James (1998, p14) indicate that 'structure is at the heart of this concept' but that its dynamism

(Grenfell 2004, p27) and state of flux make it different to the standard sociological structure. It is this dynamism of habitus that is of use in the current research: it will be interesting to identify how habituses change as a consequence of the volatility of the educational field.

Defending Bourdieu against others, Reay (1995, p357) is clear that a strength of habitus is its ambiguity, in terms of Bourdieu's own changing conceptions and in the looseness of its definition by Bourdieu. Such ambiguity means that it can be adapted to fit a variety of empirical settings. However, Reay (1995, p358) warns against '...habitus becoming whatever the data reveals'. To best use the inherent contradictions within various readings of habitus Reay suggests that habitus is conceptualised as a method: 'a way of seeing the world', and is particularly adept at uniting the macro and micro-levels of society.

Similarly, from organisational studies Emirbayer and Johnson (2008, p4), in a theorisation of Bourdieu's concepts for use in organisational sociology, believe that using habitus is a good way to investigate the links between micro and macro-level organisational processes. In a manner that takes account of managers' full spectrum of experiences, Emirbayer and Johnson (2008, p29) further link habitus to position takings of individuals, suggesting that such habituses are structured both by exposure to the current organisation and past professional and personal experiences. It is the interaction of these individual habituses with an organisation's field that determines macro-level organisational action. Emirbayer and Johnson (2008, p19) suggest that overall organisational behaviour is the consequence of a mixture of individual habituses and that organisational executives will make decisions not only on self-interest, directed by their own habitus, but on the needs of the organisation within the marketplace. Since a key task of my research will be to translate empirical perceptions of individual managers into actual behaviours of organisations, habitus would thus seem to be of key importance in determining links between these two elements. Once again such an analysis will depend upon gaining clear conception of those factors that have structured managers' habituses.

Linked to some of these ideas and Bourdieu's concept of hysteresis, Tomlinson, O'Reilly and Wallace (2013) make some relevant comments on alignment of

public sector leaders' habituses with the changing fields in which they operate. Tomlinson, O'Reilly and Wallace (2013, p86) believe that by operating in such a field leaders will develop dispositions, 'including deeply engrained beliefs and values about appropriate modes of action', that enable them to work within a culture of 'accountability and flexibility'. Leaders' habituses will have been developed by exposure to the management field and will have been conditioned in such a way that they accept the centrality of the notion of 'accountability' in public sector management. Tomlinson, O'Reilly and Wallace (2013, p86) further contend that these dispositions will cause leaders to behave in ways that further the 'accountability' aims and that the precise fit between these leaders' habituses and the fields that they operate in will lead to them being seen as natural leaders within the field.

Similarly, McDonough and Polzer (2012) and Collyer (2015), while researching the change to New Public Sector ways of working in higher education, found that such hysteresis of habitus led to major personal, including health, difficulties for some of those affected. Participants in Collyer's (2015, p320) study linked their:

...dissonance' [to ]'...the way marketization violates, or threatens to violate, highly valued academic norms and practices.

Collyer also found that those who were most comfortable with the new reforms had developed their habituses, in prior jobs and experiences, within managerialist fields. Once again the flux in educational policy would suggest that it would be fruitful to look both for the hysteresis effect and for examples of dissonance within the experiences of partnership managers. In addition, it will also be interesting to identify if elements of managers' past experiences make them less or more prone to these effects.

### **2.2.2.3 Conclusions on Habitus**

Habitus appears to be key to identifying a link between managers' explanations, values, their behaviours within the partnership and their past experiences: in effect the key link between the macro and the micro. Given the apparently novel, in terms of partnership, context in which I am using habitus, habitus's ambiguous and flexible nature would appear to be useful. However, I do need



to be careful not to use it in a lax and superficial manner: for instance, by simply conflating it with attitude and not considering the immanent factors that have contributed to the habitus. Other aspects of habitus will also be important within the final theoretical synthesis. Since partnership involves organisations interacting with each other through the mediation of individual members of those organisations it will be important to identify whether the habituses of various members of the partnership have been conditioned by exposure to similar past experiences, both personally and professionally, and whether this conditioning has an impact on their partnership decisions.

### **2.2.3 Field**

#### **2.2.3.1 Bourdieu's Conceptions of Field**

As indicated previously, the objective and subjective aspects of Bourdieu's social theory are mediated by the reciprocal relationship between habitus and field. Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, pp98-100) describes the field as being analogous to a game. Within this game field members compete for the stakes, or the various forms of capital discussed below. Bourdieu (Wacquant 1989b, pp37-41) describes a number of the key elements of a field. First the field is a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions with these positions depending upon the relative distribution of species of capital that are important within the field. For Bourdieu (1993, p73) the field's structure is a consequence of the power relations between those within the field. Elsewhere Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p114) is very clear these relations depend on this distribution of capital and not merely on the linkages between different members of the field. Bourdieu (1996c, p205) also suggests it is not only the relative distribution of capital that identifies these relations but the relative struggles for this capital that define and transform the field. Society is made of a number of mainly autonomous fields (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p97) each with their own specific 'logic' and with different values granted to the various forms of capital depending upon their worth within that field. Other fields influence a specific field not by directly acting upon its members but by 'mediation of the specific forms and forces of the field' in particular the worth of the different forms of capital.

Although fields are mainly autonomous, Bourdieu (Wacquant 1989b, p41) is clear they all contain a number of 'homologies', or characteristics that share a 'resemblance' across different fields but are structured in a specific way in each field. Thus, all fields contain notions such as 'dominant', 'dominated' and struggles for capital; however, the precise nature and operation of these concepts depends upon the field in question. Elsewhere, Bourdieu (1998, p83) suggested that each field has its own set of 'laws' that are independent from laws of other fields. Bourdieu (1993, p72) explains this apparent contradiction by suggesting that although all fields have different 'specific properties', in terms of the configurations of capitals at stake, they also have 'secondary variables' which are universal across all fields.

Bourdieu (1990a, p66) is also clear that if habitus is the subjective part of his sociological project the field is the objective element. Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p127) suggests that 'field structures habitus' and 'Habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world'. The dispositions inherent within habitus are conditioned by an individual's encounter with the field. The habitus endows the field with meaning to the actor and since the habitus has been structured by exposure to the field it feels 'at home' in this field, or: 'implies knowledge and recognition of the immanent laws of the field (Bourdieu 1993, p72)'. Using the metaphor of a game (Bourdieu 2000 p151) proposes:

It is in the relationship between habitus and the field,  
between the feel for the game and the game itself, that the  
stakes of the game are generated...

Here the field dictates, by influencing the habitus, the strategies to be adopted by those playing the game. In turn, the habitus will influence the value accorded to capitals.

My partnership appears to constitute a field, with partnership members having objective relationships to each other depending upon the different capitals that they possess. One of the key aims of this research will be to identify which capitals are important within this field and thus map the relative positions of organisations. By relating the field positions to the habituses of those involved in the partnership I should then be able to provide the links between my

empirical findings and the behaviours of organisations. In the following paragraphs I have indicated key items from the literature that will support my use of field in this study.

#### **2.2.3.2 Commentaries on Field**

Emirbayer and Johnson (2008, p2) have identified the advantages of using the Bourdieun field concept within organisational studies. They indicate that the Bourdieun field concept can be used to analyse distribution of resources, and hence sources of power, within an organisation. They are also critical about its application, suggesting that researchers have often failed to evaluate the 'social configurations' of the field and have frequently isolated the idea of the field from the other key Bourdieun concepts, thus rendering the analytical power of the field descriptive rather than explanatory. A field analysis will enable me to identify both which sources of capital are most powerful in this partnership and how their relative values structure the power relationships within the partnership. In order to harness the explanatory potential of the field concept, these field configurations will be used in conjunction with the concept of habitus to explain organisational behaviour. By examining how the process of capital accumulation, and hence field position, links to the 'social configuration' of partnership it should be possible to propose explanations for partnership engagement.

#### **2.2.3.3 Conclusions on Field**

From this critical analysis of Bourdieu's idea of field, a number of conclusions can be made about the relevance of field to my research questions and the formulation of my overall research framework. With my first research question, identifying positions within the 14-19 field will support explanations of partnership engagement. In order to clarify such explanations, as with other areas of Bourdieu's sociology, it is important to co-locate the idea of field with his other concepts. Obviously positions within the field will closely match levels and sorts of capital possessed and contested by field members; reciprocally, the relative values of these capitals within the field will depend upon the nature of the field. The concept of field will also be relevant to my second research question, supporting explanations of the linkage between macro-level fields, in particular the fields of policy and power, and micro-level fields, the 'local' and



the intra-organisational. Although not specifically tied to field, study of this field oriented literature also suggested that Bourdieun concepts, alongside other concepts such as performativity, need to be at the heart of any explanation of how educational policy affects partnership engagement.

## **2.2.4 Capital**

### **2.2.4.1 Bourdieu's Conception of Capital**

The final component of Bourdieu's triad of 'fundamental concepts' is that of capital. Capital both structures and is competed for within the field. Again, it is very difficult to pin Bourdieu down to a clear and consistent general definition of capital, although Bourdieu (2010, p108) does suggest it can be understood as 'usable resources and power'. The general nature of capital is perhaps best captured by identifying its effects within the field. Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p98) has suggested that capital's very existence depends upon the presence of a field within which it has a value. Furthermore, the total amounts of capital and the relative amounts of the different types of capital possessed by 'players' in the field dictates the structure of the field and the relative positions of those within the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p99). Such distribution of capital: determines 'the chances for success of practices (Bourdieu 1986, p46)' and, presumably, by its influence on habitus, the strategic adoption of these practices. In order for a specific type of capital to have significance there must be a certain field that endows it with a value (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p98), thus the values of different species of capital depend upon the field within which it is being used. A final key property of capital is that it can be converted from one form into another (Bourdieu 1986, p47). Specifically, Bourdieu (1986, p54) suggests that all forms of capital are ultimately 'reducible' to economic capital. As discussed above, it is this distribution of capital that will be used to map the different field positions within the partnership. Additionally, part of my research will examine the differential values of various capitals within this field and explore potential ways in which this capital will be converted from one form to another.

Bourdieu has identified three principal forms of capital: economic, cultural and social (Bourdieu 1986; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p119). Social capital will be discussed in the next section. Unlike many of his other concepts, Bourdieu

(1986) has explicitly clarified in one document what he means by key forms of capital. Unfortunately, there is very little discussion of economic capital within this document, simply referring to it as 'money' or 'property rights'. Likewise Bourdieu's other works have significantly less discussion of economic capital than the other forms, indeed stating: 'I shall not dwell on the notion of economic capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p119) and: 'As regards economic capital, I leave that to others; it's not my area' (Bourdieu 1993, p32). Bourdieu (1998; 2010) also discusses the idea that positions within a variety of social fields are heavily influenced by the balance between economic and cultural capital, without ever clearly defining economic capital. However, Bourdieu (2004b, p75) does explicitly define financial capital as:

direct or indirect mastery ... of financial resources, which are the main condition ... for the accumulation and conservation of all other kinds of capital.

Given his lack of discussion, combined with this somewhat circular definition, it can be inferred that his conception of economic capital is no more complex than our common-sense understanding of what constitutes capital.

In contrast, Bourdieu frequently discusses the idea of cultural capital, defining its three forms as:

...the *embodied* state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the *objectified* state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.; and in the *institutionalized* state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee (Bourdieu 1986, p86).

These conceptions were theoretically derived to take account of differing achievements of children in relation to their social class on the basis of cultural capital possessed by members of these different social classes (Bourdieu 1986).

Bourdieu (1986 ) suggests embodied cultural capital, being embodied, needs to be directly accumulated, often unconsciously, by an individual and cannot be

passed on directly or instantaneously to another. This accumulation can either be by inheritance or schooling. Economic investment in its acquisition is by expenditure of time and its conversion into economic capital is mediated by conversion into objectified cultural capital. Within this work Bourdieu is not clear about what sorts of dispositions make up embodied cultural capital; however, Grenfell and James (1998, p21) suggest that it is '...connected to individuals in their general educated character...'. Therefore, depending on which field it is active in, embodied cultural capital could refer to abilities as diverse as linguistic ability, practical competences, tastes, knowledge and understanding.

Bourdieu (1986) suggests that objectified cultural capital that is inherent within physical artefacts requires possession of embodied cultural capital to enable the objects to be either appreciated or used. Just owning such objects without the required embodied cultural capital merely renders them as economic capital. Given that key aptitudes related to the use of vocational tools or machinery can be classified as cultural capital, it is reasonable to extend the concept of objectified cultural capital to include such objects.

The final form of cultural capital is institutionalised cultural capital. This is embodied cultural capital that is objectified in its holder as an academic qualification (Bourdieu 1986). Institutionalised cultural capital is the medium, through which conversion, via the labour market, of embodied cultural capital to economic capital is mediated. The value of capital exchange rates are symbolically set and are also a function of the relative scarcity of the capital in question (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, pp181-182). Further expansion of the function of qualifications characterised them as a medium that would enable 'technical selection' for various occupations (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, pp164-167).

Each of these forms of capital appears to have a role within this particular partnership: institutionalised in the form of qualifications that students gain from partnership provision; embodied in terms of both experiences and knowledge that students gain from this provision or skills and knowledge that partners possess; objectified as the specialist objects and resources that partners possess the skills to use. To suggest reasons for partnership engagement, this

research will not only need to identify which capitals partners possess but also which conversions are taking place and how capital values influence an organisation's field position.

Although these forms of capital are those most commonly attributed to Bourdieu, to explain the behaviour of organisations, within what he terms the economic field, Bourdieu (2004b, p75) introduced a broader range of capitals, two of which are relevant to my study. First there is the idea of technological capital: those scientific and technical capabilities or resources that enable production or development of a product. Although the resources and capabilities that organisations in my study possess are not used to produce a product, this concept relates very closely to those professional competences, such as expertise in a practical vocational area, and resources, such as specialist vocational workshops, that certain organisations possess. The second relevant form of capital discussed is organisational capital. Bourdieu does not define this beyond the idea of information about the field, but it also presumably includes skills in running the organisation. For my study, this would relate to information and skills in administering, rather than merely delivering, specialist vocational qualifications. These capitals operate within the economic field in the way that other capitals operate. Use of these concepts will enable exploration of partnership engagement in terms that go beyond Bourdieu's core capital concepts.

#### ***2.2.4.2 Commentaries on Capital***

Capital has been widely used both within educational and organisational research. Much of its uses are particularly relevant to this current research. Nash (1990, p431), in common with previously identified commentaries on other concepts, feels that it has been discussed in isolation, without the full consideration of the entire Bourdieun framework, a similar point made by Emirbayer and Johnson (2008, p3) in relation to organisational studies. Nash (1990) also suggested that a key property of capital is the fact that it can be converted from one form to another and that agents employ various strategies to facilitate and maximise this exchange. Likewise Gunter (2002, p11) suggested, whilst discussing the field of education leadership, that for full comprehension of field and capital it is necessary to investigate strategies that

agents pursue to accumulate capital. Emirbayer and Johnson (2008, p11) introduced the idea that field strategies adopted by the dominant relate to conserving values of key resources; for the dominated strategies of 'subversion', which attempt to change the values of these key resources, are adopted. In this research it will be the combination of the ideas of capital with those of habitus and field that will underpin much of my explanatory discussion. It will not be sufficient to merely identify configurations of capital and their influence on field position if these explanations are to be proposed, it will also be necessary to explore how strategies of capital accrual or conversion influenced partnership engagement and identify whether those in dominant or dominated field positions adopt strategies to either conserve or devalue capital.

Lareau and Weininger (2003) reviewed the use of cultural capital in educational studies, which is particularly useful in clarifying this concept. They argued that most work discussing cultural capital has seen it as merely '...knowledge of or competence with "highbrow" cultural activities... (Lareau and Weininger 2003, p597)', that Bourdieu's conception does not take account of abilities or skills in other areas and that this limited reading is not fully consistent with Bourdieu's own theory. They propose an understanding of cultural capital that includes broader ranges of skills and competences, particularly academic ability or skills that would support social and vocational success. Lareau and Weininger (2003, p582) are very clear that, in common with Bourdieu's core conceptions, the values of these skills and competences are socially determined in relation to their efficacy within a particular field. This wider conceptualisation of capital is relevant here since it will enable an analysis of capital that acknowledges other skills and competences, such as increased confidence, improved self-esteem, new technical skills, that partners and students may seek to accumulate through partnership engagement.

From the organisational studies field, Emirbayer and Johnson (2008, p11) interchange the term capital with resources. They are clear that by using the concept of capital, analysis of organisational fields should investigate a broader range than the material resources that most organisational research concentrates on. Conceptualisation of capital as resources should enable



combination of notions of capital with organisational theories that emphasise accumulation of resources.

#### **2.2.4.3 Conclusions on Capital**

Although most of the reference to capital within education relates to the reproduction of capitals at the individual student level, there has been sufficient commentary on capital within the organisational, policy and leadership fields to usefully locate this concept in my own area of study and to support explanations of partnership engagement. In synthesising my theoretical framework, a number of key elements in relation to capital need to be considered. As with other Bourdieun areas, concepts of capital will not be investigated in isolation: capitals possessed by agents within the partnership will not only determine positions of organisations within the field but will also influence their habitus and hence strategies they adopt to maximise contested capitals. Such capitals will include: embodied cultural capital, the skills, knowledge and understanding possessed by various stakeholders; institutionalised cultural capital, the qualifications delivered by and possessed by different partnership members; objectified cultural capital, the equipment possessed by partners alongside the ability to use this equipment. Although the key forms of Bourdieun capital will be the main focus, in line with the suggestion of Emirbayer and Johnson (2008), it will be useful to extend this idea of capital to include all other organisational resources, such as equipment, privileged information about specialist curriculum or specific institutional competences. Crucial to this study will be an explanation of the conversion of capitals from one form to another and how amounts of total capital and distribution of such capital will affect behaviours, particularly in relation to field positions. It may also be possible to identify both conservation and subversion strategies that are used by partners.

### **2.3 Social Capital**

#### **2.3.1 Introduction**

In contrast to the other Bourdieun concepts, Bourdieu's theory of social capital is not the only social capital conceptualisation encountered within contemporary social theory. Within this section I have concentrated on theories that expand the usefulness of Bourdieu's ideas, particularly those that provide a more

nuanced taxonomic description of capital, rather than those that claim to provide a completely different reading of social capital. Thus, although I have briefly compared Bourdieu's and Coleman's (1988) theory at the end of this section, I have not included Coleman's theory in my final theoretical framework, since, although it has some differences to Bourdieu's theory, it does not provide a significantly different account of social capital that would improve the explanatory power of my theoretical framework.

### **2.3.2 Bourdieu's Conceptualisation of Social Capital**

Social capital is defined by Bourdieu (1986, p246) as:

...the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition- or in other words to membership of a group....

In the same article Bourdieu (1986, pp246-248) further clarifies this statement. These groups can both be constituted by either 'symbolic exchanges' between members or by the institutionalised naming of the group or institutionalised formulation of membership characteristics. This social capital is intangible and can only be identified by its onward conversion into other forms of capital and in terms of other capitals and relationships within a network. An individual's stock of social capital is related to the size of the network and the amount of other forms of capital possessed by both the individual and the group.

Bourdieu has helped illuminate this concept in a variety of articles. Within an economic field the entire capital of all forms accumulated by a network can be mobilized to gain competitive advantage for network organisations (Bourdieu 2004b, p76). To accrue social capital members must invest time and effort into developing such links, including an explicit conversion of economic into social capital (Bourdieu 1993, p33). This links to Bourdieu's (1986) notion of credit. In order to accumulate credit, agents must adopt investment strategies that confer obligations upon other network members. The amount of capital that can be exchanged in such creditor transactions is a function of both an individual creditor's capital and the total amount of capital possessed by the network.

This notion will be central within my research for explaining those partner actions that lead to an accumulation of social capital.

Consistent with other forms of capital, social capital can be converted into other types of capital (Bourdieu 1986). Linked to this, Bourdieu's conceptualisation has key methodological advantages over other social capital theories. First, since his theory involves several types of capital, the influence of social capital is not examined in isolation but relative to other capitals and in terms of its conversion into other capitals. For my research, where organisations will be involved in accumulating various forms of capital, such comparisons of the efficacious properties and conversions of the different forms of capital possessed by partners will support explanations of partnership engagement. Second, as part of Bourdieu's broader theoretical framework, social capital can be evaluated both in its role formulating individual behaviours and positioning agents within social space. These links will be used within my research to explain the role of social capital in determining partnership behaviour in maintenance and improvement of field positions.

In common with much of Bourdieu's work, James Coleman (1988) developed his conception of social capital within the context of differential educational achievement. Coleman's conceptualisation is similar in many respects to Bourdieu's. Like Bourdieu, Coleman (1988, S98) believes that social capital resides within relationships between 'actors' and can be used as a resource to enable actors to undertake certain actions. He also suggests, in common with Bourdieu, that it is convertible into other types of capital. Similar to Bourdieu's notion that values of capital are dependent upon the field within which the capital is being used, Coleman believes that social capital, and its subsequent conversion into other capitals, may only be useful to agents in certain situations. As with Bourdieu, this social capital is intangible: it is not 'lodged' in actors and only becomes substantiated when it is changed into other forms of capital. For Coleman (1988, S100), the key sociological importance of social capital is that it can be converted into human capital, in a very similar way to Bourdieu's conversion of social into cultural capital, but with human capital being rather nebulously defined and requiring other theories to explain its onwards conversions to effect actions. Finally, for both Bourdieu and Coleman, the mere

existence of a network of links is not a sufficient condition for the development of social capital. For social capital to be developed both suggest that actors who are part of a network must do something for others within the network. This then places a reciprocal obligation on others within the network to do something for others within the network in the future. Unlike Bourdieu, Coleman (Coleman 1988, S106) explores the architecture of networks that enable assimilation of social capital, suggesting that for social capital development the network must be closed: all members within a network are linked to more than one other person in the network.

By identifying similarities and differences between the two major conceptions of social capital, it is clear that Bourdieu's theory has significant advantages over Coleman's within this research. First, since Bourdieu's theory involves several types of capital, the influence of social capital is not examined in isolation but in its relative effects compared to other capitals and in terms of how it is converted into other capitals. For my research, where organisations will be involved in accumulating various forms of capital, such comparisons of the efficacious properties and conversions of the different forms of capital possessed by partners will support explanations of partnership engagement. Second, since it is part of a broader theoretical framework, Bourdieun social capital can be evaluated both in its role within formulating individual behaviours and locating agents within social space. These links will be key within my research for explaining how the aforementioned capital effects and exchanges, particularly that of the social capital of partnership, explain partnership behaviour both in terms of existing field positions and in improving field positions. Although, Coleman does introduce the notion of structure, this idea appears to be better developed by others discussed below such as Adler and Kwon (2002) and Koka and Prescott (2002).

### **2.3.3 Other Conceptualisations of Social Capital**

#### **2.3.3.1 Introduction**

Various writers from within the organisational studies field have expanded the analytical power of the social capital concept by providing various typological categorisations of social capital that give a more fine-grained description of social capital than that provided by Bourdieu. These sub-categorisations will



enable me to not only provide a more detailed description of the sorts of social capital accrued by partners in my study, but will also allow me to provide explanatory links between these differential accumulations and partnership behaviour. I have sub-categorised this discussion into theories that explain: the purposes and benefits of social capital; how social capital is structured.

### ***2.3.3.2 Purposes and Benefits of Social Capital***

Social capital has been categorised by a number of writers in relation to either its broad purposes or its specific benefits. Putnam (2000, pp22-23) introduced a set of categorisations that relate to the particular purposes of social capital: bonding and bridging social capital. Although his work is discussed in the broad context of integration of groups within American society, the overall outcomes of possessing each of these types of capital appear relevant to a Bourdieun conception, particularly since for Putnam social capital is an amalgam of social capital theories that include Bourdieun ideas. This concept was further refined by Woolcock and Narayan (2000) and Woolcock (2001) in ways more relevant to my research. Dhillon (2009) used a number of these ideas when researching a post-16 partnership. Bonding social capital is that capital which is developed within a group, community or network and has the purpose of bringing a community together. Dhillon (2009, p700) identified this capital as originating from 'shared goals and values' and demonstrated by the commitment of partners. Within my partnership this would be capital that matures by the day-to-day interactions of partners. Bridging social capital is capital developed between communities, which share 'broadly similar demographic characteristics' (Woolcock 2001, p10), and gives access to new resources or forms of capital. Dhillon (2009, p698) identified such capital in the links activated by a university manager who was able to network with a broader range of organisations than other partnership members. Within my partnership this bridging capital would be capital that provides links into new networks to access novel resources, as exemplified by expansion of the partnership to include establishments other than schools. Woolcock (2001, p11) believes it is the differential distribution of these two forms of social capital that explains social capital's ultimate effect: with bridging social capital ensuring a subsistence level of survival within a community and bonding social capital enabling its holders to make improved social progression.



Whereas bridging and bonding social capital can be considered as being horizontal, linking social capital (Woolcock 2001, pp10-11) is considered as vertical, and comprises linkages to powerful people or organisations outside the immediate network. Within the LC this would be capital that enables linkages to be made to powerful governmental bodies. Just as possession of more bridging than bonding capital enables improved social positioning, linking social capital allows its holders even greater social mobility. Overall this categorisation will be helpful in identifying the outcomes of accruing social capital in terms of which particular intra-partnership or extra-partnership links are developed and how such links will benefit either the partnership or individual organisations in the partnership.

Adler and Kwon (2002) suggested that benefits of social capital can be information, power, solidarity or trust. In this context the notion of power is tied to an *individual* member of a network being able 'to get things done and achieve their goals (Adler and Kwon 2002, p29)'. Similarly, in an educational partnership study, Muijs, West and Ainscow (2010) concluded that educational networks based on social capital are characterised by strong levels of self-interest. Koka and Prescott (2002, p795) suggest that relationships or ties between organisations can be regarded as social capital. These ties are advantageous to organisations because they are channels for flows of information and also, similar to Bourdieu's notion of credit, confer on organisations synergistic obligations. For my research, these ideas will allow a focus on explanations for partnership engagement that are directed towards information flows and power or self-interest benefits in addition to capital exchanges.

#### **2.3.3.3 Structure of Social Capital**

For this discussion I have focused on theories that explain how types of relations and positional relations between members of a network affect the development of social capital. Adler and Kwon (2002, pp18-19) identified three types of relations that underpin the social capital exchanges: market relations, based on exchanges of goods for money, with relationships that are symmetrical and terms that are both explicit and specific; hierarchical relations, based on exchanges of obedience for security-i.e. job contract relationships-

with asymmetrical relationships and diffuse but explicit exchange terms; social relations, based on exchange of favours or gifts, with symmetrical relationships and diffuse and tacit terms of exchange. Within my research, this concept will enable the partnership relationships to be positioned into one of these dimensions, with the key features of each dimension being used to help explain organisations' behaviour towards each other and the partnership.

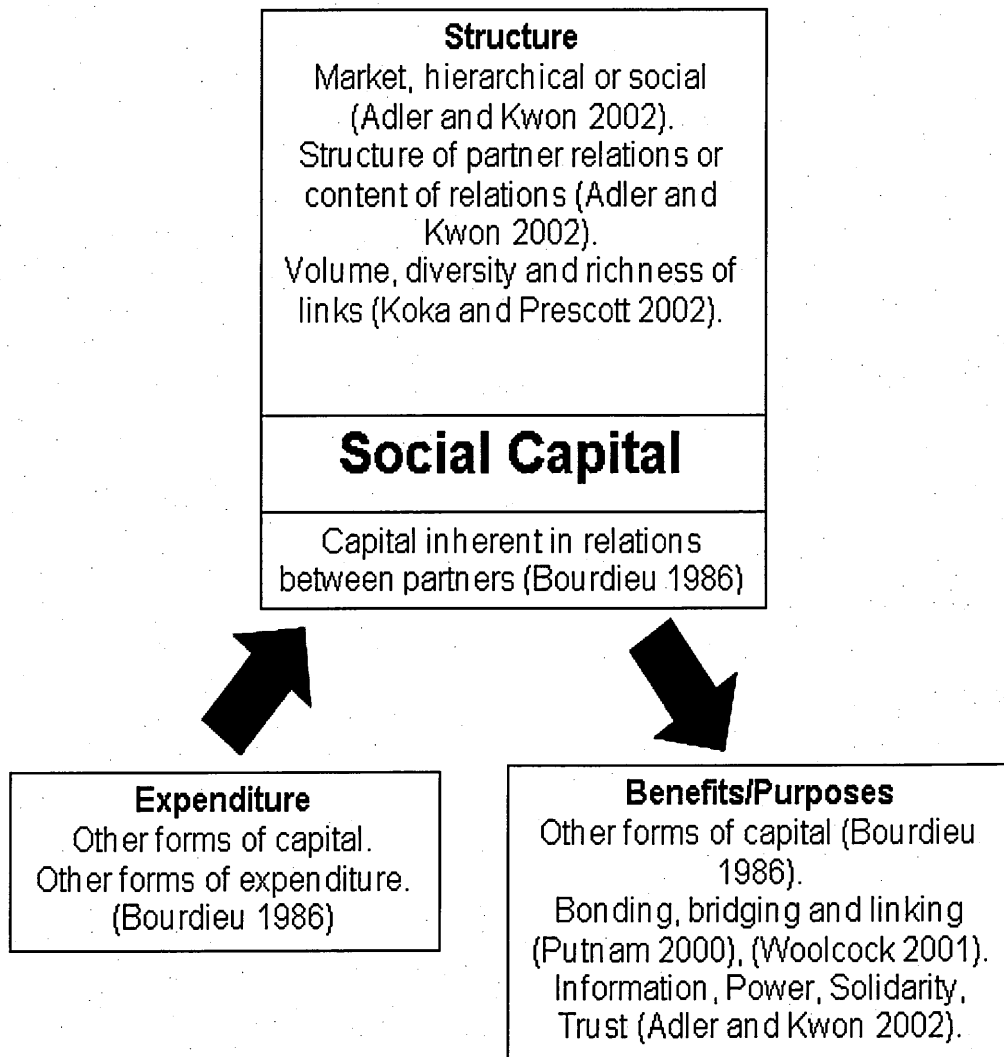
Koka and Prescott (2002, p799) developed, via a mixture of network theory and mathematical representations, three particular dimensions of social capital: its volume, diversity and richness. This work provides a link between structure and benefits of social capital. Volume relates primarily to an organisation's number of partners and the number of ties it has with each partner. Multiple links between partners also lead to a closed network. High volumes of social capital enable speedy transfer of information between network partners. However, Koka and Prescott argue that this dense network often leads to all partners possessing similar types of information, presumably due to the rapid reciprocal exchange of information, and also limits organisations' search horizon's to those which it has links with. Diversity relates to the variety and amount of resources that an organisation can access. It is represented by a combination of the sparseness of the network and by the amount of what could be described as 'bridging' links into other markets or strategic arenas. An open network with small numbers of interrelations between partners leads to links with a variety of organisations who possess different sorts of information. High levels of diversity would lead to organisations accessing a differing range of resources. Finally, richness relates to the quality and nature of resources that can be accessed. This richness depends upon how competent an organisation is at developing and managing relationships. Organisations that have considerable experience of working in alliance are best equipped to exploit this richness, particularly if they have longstanding relationships with one another. This experience of working together improves collaborative mechanisms, enhances inter-organisational trust and leads to organisations not only sharing information but undertaking joint operations. Two difficulties with such close ties are cited: the cost of developing such links and the reluctance of organisations to move away from pre-existing partnerships. These ideas provide a useful development of social capital theory for my research. This particular framework will enable me

to identify key aspects of partner behaviour and partnership structure in terms of differential positions in relation to these dimensions. It should then be possible to link such positions to the flow of information through the partnership and explain at a mechanistic level how such information flows contribute to partnership engagement.

#### **2.3.4 Conclusions on Social Capital**

Before summarising the benefits of notions of social capital to my research, it is important to identify how these varying conceptions of social capital can be combined into a coherent theory. This is presented in figure 2.1. In the top box, social capital will be conceptualised as that capital which is inherent in the relations between partners. As represented in the box to the left, capital or other investment is required to develop social capital (Bourdieu 1986). The nature of social capital can be explained in greater detail by identifying both its purposes and the structure of the relationships. Structural or relational features, presented in the top of the social capital box, would be: the notion of market, hierarchical and structural relationships (Adler and Kwon 2002); whether this capital arises from the structure of partner relations or from the content of these relations (Adler and Kwon 2002); description based upon the volume, diversity and richness of an organisation's relationships or ties (Koka and Prescott 2002). Each of the particular structures of relationships links to particular partnership purposes or behaviour. Purposes or benefits would be: conversion into other forms of capital or resources (Bourdieu 1986); enabling organisations to bond, bridge or link to other organisations (Putnam 2000; Woolcock 2001); facilitating the flow of information between organisations; power, solidarity or trust (Adler and Kwon 2002).

To conclude, a well-developed theory of social capital will theoretically illuminate respondents' explanations of partnership engagement. Purposes of working in partnership will be identified via my empirical instruments. These will then be linked, either via theorisation or using empirical evidence, to the different structural features of social capital networks. When such links have been established I should be able to explain how these structural features link to partnership behaviour.



**Figure 2.1-** Interrelationship between different social capital concepts.

## 2.4 Bourdieun Concepts of Domination

### 2.4.1 Symbolic Capital

The final Bourdieun concept that is required to underpin this current research relates to how arbitrary values are assigned to all forms of capital and thus how agents are dominated both by others within a particular field and by other fields. Central to these ideas is the notion of symbolic capital. This concept has been developed through a variety of iterations. Bourdieu (1998, p85) suggests that it is:

...any kind of capital when it is perceived to the categories of perception...capital with a cognitive base, which rests on cognition and recognition.

Although this does not fully explain this concept, it does introduce the idea that the value of symbolic capital is based upon the perception and recognition of its value by both those possessing the capital and those against which it is used. He also suggests that the notion of symbolic capital depends upon a 'misrecognition' of its 'arbitrariness' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p119) or any form of capital when it is 'misrecognised' as legitimate power (Bourdieu 2000, p242). It is this misrecognition which appears to be central to the idea of symbolic capital. At its simplest Bourdieu (1998, p95; 2000, p192) describes misrecognition as 'self-deception'. Bourdieu suggests (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p168) that this misrecognition is due to agents axiomatically accepting the legitimacy of social order due to having been continually exposed to objective structures that make this social order self-evident (Bourdieu 1989, p21). Symbolic capital is thus any of the forms of capital whose value is misrecognised by members of a field based upon their conception of its value. Actors are programmed to be deceived by, or misrecognise, the process by which symbolic capital values are set, with the underlying power relations of this process being part of undisputed and normalised social and mental structures.

The notion of symbolic capital is closely related to the concept of symbolic violence, one of Bourdieu's key ideas relating to power and domination. He clearly explains (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, pp167-168) that symbolic violence is: '*...the violence that is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity*'. Bourdieu himself uses the word misrecognition to explain such



complicity, with the agent believing that the person wielding the power has the right to do this because that it is the way that things are and that the agent does not recognise this wielding of power for what it is. Symbolic capital, since it has a perceived and arbitrary value, is key to such symbolic violence.

For my research, both of these concepts would appear to have particular relevance. Central to this study will be an analysis of field positions based in part upon performance table positions. Since use of these measures in the tables and values of qualifications within such tables have been arbitrarily decided upon by the government, they can be regarded as sharing some of the characteristics of symbolic capital. However, certainly at the school level, it will be interesting to note whether this arbitrariness or the government's power to set such values is misrecognised. Without this misrecognition, it will not be possible to regard the effects of league tables as symbolic violence.

#### **2.4.2 Statist Capital**

Also relevant to this study are the ideas that the state is one of the prime users of symbolic capital, using symbolic capital as the main basis of its power and that the effect of the state on this type of capital leads to its objectification (Bourdieu 1998, pp47-52). Bourdieu (2000, p176) also indicates that much of the subservience to the state power is due to the individual's exposure to histories that impose 'cognitive structures' that accept the legitimacy of state power, with this recognition itself being a form of symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1998, p44). For Bourdieu (1998, p47) the state is the 'site par excellence of the concentration and exercise of symbolic power.

Elsewhere, Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p114) introduces the concept of statist capital, which he regards as forms of capital that enable the state to exert control over other forms of capital and their relative exchange values and 'defines the specific power of the state'. The specific forms are (Bourdieu 2005, p12): 'capital of physical force'; 'economic capital'; 'cultural or informational capital'; 'symbolic capital'. For my research, governmental influence on the partnership is perhaps best regarded as statist capital rather than symbolic capital.

### 2.4.3 Commentaries on Government Domination

Thomson (2005) has employed the notion of symbolic capital in conjunction with field to provide an explanatory commentary on policy changes and their effects on the education system from Thatcher through to New Labour. Thomson contended that hierarchical field positions of schools depended upon whichever species of capital the state and those within the field regarded as being most important. Under Thatcher, the government privileged particular types of codified capital, such as test results, performance tables, graded and published inspection reports. Thomson (2005, pp744-745) argues that: pre-existing hierarchical field positions were at the least maintained or in many cases differences between positions broadened; a particular type of discourse about field positions was introduced, which reified this new codified capital by the use of 'positivist law like language'; the field became more standardised, which led to uniformity of behaviour by schools in an attempt to maximise their field positions. Thomson felt that under New Labour, this hierarchical positioning based upon codified capital was maintained.

Thomson (2005, pp752-753) also suggested that the state uses data as a form of symbolic violence to further its interests by: proving its policies are working; identifying and dealing with those it perceives as subversive; using it as a symbolic proxy for national competence within the global market. As an overall conclusion, she suggested that the Thatcher and New Labour changes had led to major changes in the nature of the fields which had caused a major reduction in the autonomy of these fields. Although she does discuss the misrecognition of such performance measures, it would appear that since schools generally accept the government's power to wield its influence in this way, what she regards as symbolic power would be best considered as statist power.

Certain ideas from this particular discussion are relevant to my study. First, the link between field position and codified statist capitals, which dictate this position, will be important in explaining how partnership behaviour helps organisations optimise their field positions. Second, it will be interesting to identify whether this codification has led to a commonality in school partnership behaviour as schools attempt to maximise field position.

#### **2.4.4 Conclusions on Domination**

Review of this area identified various thematic applications of symbolic capital and symbolic violence that will need to be integrated into my final theoretical framework. Symbolic capital theory, and particularly ideas about statist capital, will have the potential to explain how external political factors influence organisations' engagement with the partnership. This research will seek to explain how the state, and state-endorsed bureaucracies, use statist capital to influence and ultimately enforce policy imperatives at both the macro-level of policy development and at the micro-level of organisational operation.

### **2.5 Performativity**

#### **2.5.1 Lyotard's Conception**

As discussed in the introduction, one of the key elements that has framed educational policy for the last thirty years is the notion of accountability. Ball (2003, p215) suggested that performativity is one concept that has frequently been used to explain accountability. Symbolic or statist capital will support explanations of the links between policy and partnership, but the concept of performativity will strengthen this analysis by providing a connection between partnership engagement and policy and also with broader social changes framed by the move from modernity to post-modernity.

Performativity is most famously associated with Jean-Francois Lyotard's 1979 account *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, although, to gain a clear view of this concept several of his works need to be consulted.

Unfortunately, much of his argument is not based on empirical evidence, although others, such as Stephen Ball in work discussed below, have made the crucial supporting links between his theory and its practical effects. In his introduction to *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard (1984, xxiii) explains that the *postmodern condition* is: '...the condition of knowledge in the most highly developed societies'. Much of this work discusses the postmodern in terms of the breakdown of the grand or metanarrative, and it is this metanarrative that provided a philosophical framework that legitimated scientific, political, legal or social practice and belief. Elsewhere Lyotard 1992 (pp29-30) simplifies the legitimising principle of the metanarrative in terms of 'the Idea to be realised'.

This 'Idea' is variously couched in terms of 'freedom', 'enlightenment', 'reason', 'freedom', and particularly 'emancipation (Lyotard 1988, p302)'. Lyotard (1984, xxiv) also suggests that the metanarrative has been replaced by dispersed 'narrative clouds', which each have their own 'pragmatic valencies'. Although Lyotard does not explicitly define what is meant by a 'valency', it appears that they are the legitimising principle of a particular cloud or 'language game'. Lyotard (1984, xxiv) states that: 'Each of us lives at the inter-section of many of these clouds', which are only subject to 'local determinism'.

Set against the fragmented local clouds of determinism is the need for 'decision makers' to control these atomised clouds: this is where the notion of performativity makes its appearance as a mechanism that enables these decision makers to wield power (Lyotard 1984, xxiv). This control is via 'commensurable'<sup>2</sup> 'input/output matrices', which those in power believe are 'determinable', and the 'legitimation of that power is based on its optimizing the system's performance- efficiency' Lyotard (1984, xxiv). Performativity is thus how those in power control these 'narrative clouds' by finding the '...best possible input/output equation (Lyotard 1984, p46)' or the '...optimization of the expense/return relation (Lyotard 1986, p215)' at the expense of the pursuit of 'truth' (Lyotard 1984, xxiv). Lyotard (1984, p63) suggests that it is the action's contribution to efficiency that legitimates it rather than its benefit to the 'underprivileged'.

For my research, the LC could be seen as a 'narrative cloud', with its underlying principle being the delivery of vocational qualifications. It is not possible for the government to directly control this atomised cloud, thus the commensurable input-output equation of performance tables is used to measure system efficiency and enable remote government control of the partnership. These tables are legitimised by schools accepting the authority of the government to make such policy statements, this authority being legitimised by schools willingly conforming to them and developing strategies to be successful in these performance table games. One of the aims of research will be to determine if

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<sup>2</sup> The idea of commensuration has been fully reviewed and defined by Espeland and Stevens (1998). They define commensuration (p313) as: 'the comparison of different entities according to a common metric...'



organisations do indeed play such games and which strategies they adopt as members of the partnership to improve their performance in these games.

### **2.5.2 Educational Applications of Performativity**

Perhaps because Lyotard used education as an example to help explain performativity, the concept frequently appears within educational literature. Lyotard (1984, p48) suggested that the objective of education is to support optimal performativity of the system by creating skills that ensure this optimal performance. First, he states that education should efficiently provide nation states with predominantly technological skills that will enable them to compete within the global market. Second, he suggests that a goal of education is to provide sufficient trained actors to meet the needs of society, which in the postmodern world are dictated by the 'pragmatic' requirements of organisations rather than the emancipatory needs of society.

Additionally, Lyotard (1984, p51) suggests performativity leads to the aims of education becoming subservient to the performativity needs of society, resulting in the creation of 'a vast market for competence in operational skills'. The key questions that education will now ask, rather than 'Is it true?', will become 'Is it saleable?' or 'Is it efficient?' (Lyotard 1984, p51). Using the above input/output model to describe this instrumental notion of education, the goal of the input of education is the output of a number of trained individuals, performatively measured, that will enable society to function and nations to be competitive globally. In essence, this is the marketisation and commodification of education. The key differentiator between performativity and Bourdieun symbolic or statist power for this research will be the notion that performative measures are not just implemented to enable the power to be wielded but that these measures are used to ensure optimal performance of the system in terms of measures rather than real benefits for learners.

One of the main writers to use performativity to critique the contemporary trajectory of educational culture has been Stephen Ball, particularly reviewing the intra-organisational and intra-personal conflicts that it creates. Ball (2000, p1) defines performativity as:



a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation, or a system of 'terror' in Lyotard's words, that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of control, attrition and change.

Although this does not have Lyotard's emphasis on commensurable input/output equations, it contains most of the arguments I have previously put forward. He also places a particular stress on the importance of identifying 'who controls the field of judgement' i.e. who decides which performative measures will predominate. From a theoretical and empirical perspective he has identified a number of concerns with the public sector adoption of performativity as a key part of its policy and operational discourse, most of these mirroring Lyotard's tension between the metanarrative of emancipation and performance of the system.

He has suggested that it requires schools and teachers to change their perspective and value base (Ball 1997a, p191), turning teachers from 'substantive professionals' into technical professionals, trained and assessed via unintellectual competences. This he believes can lead to a schizophrenia, whereby teachers have to make judgements between what is good for students and what is good for performance (Ball 2000, p6), between pursuing the school's core educational values and the micro-management required to implement the quality culture (Ball 1997b, p324) and between development of students' moral and ethical wellbeing and between those aspects of education that are performatively measurable (Ball 2012, p20). He suggests that the key winners within such a scenario are the 'new managers' who implement such performative measures (Ball 2003p219). By adopting the performative ethos Ball (1997a, p193) also suggests that intra-organisational ways of working will move from a cooperative to a competitive culture, leading to dissonant feelings of 'guilt, uncertainty and instability' within teachers (Ball 2000, p4).

In common with Bourdieu's (2000, pp160-161) idea of hysteresis, it will be interesting to note whether the managers who I interview show such dissonance, with these notions having the capacity to provide a link between the macro-behaviour of organisations and decision making by managers at the micro-level. Although Ball (2000) has suggested that aspects of performativity

have provided a tension between competition and collaboration these ideas have not been applied within the specific context of partnership.

### **2.5.3 Conclusions on Performativity**

To conclude, the concept of performativity appears to be pertinent to a number of parts of my research framework. In relation to my first research question, it has the potential to complement Bourdieun theory to theorise respondents' explanations for engaging with the partnership; for the second research question, the fact that much of Lyotard's formulation attempts to explain changing government priorities in the move from the modern to the postmodern, performativity can clearly be used as a theoretical basis for explaining policy influences.

At the broadest level, it will be interesting to see if respondents' explanations for partnership engagement relate to modernity's notion of emancipatory metanarratives (in this specific case benefits for students) or to the postmodern conception of maximising system performance. At a more precise level this research should enable explanation of what practitioners see as the specific input/output equation that dictates their practice. Here, there is a potential link to Bourdieun ideas of capital conversion, with such conversions being a possible framework for the input/output equation. At this point it will also be important to consider what the awareness of being performatively measured will have on partnership behaviour. In order to clarify the conditioning of the habituses of partnership members, the various schizophrenias suggested by Ball will be one useful explanatory lens, as will the various tensions between performative and other measures of professionalism. Returning to Lyotard's original and broad conception of performativity being the tool that structures education systems to enable nations to be successful in the global market, performativity will be helpful in analysing specific policy changes.

## **2.6 Partnerships**

### **2.6.1 Introduction**

In order to incorporate partnership theories into my theoretical framework I made a number of considerations. First, the methodological position that I

adopted required my findings to be located at a particular contextual position. Although Bourdieun field concepts and certain social capital ideas provided some notions of context, I was keen to identify a theory that contextualised this partnership. Second, for the partnership that I was studying, much of the day-to-day operational rhetoric revolved around topics related to business transactions. Although the economic field discussions of Bourdieu (2004b) incorporate some of these business transaction ideas, I was clear that I wanted to incorporate into my framework an organisational studies theory that explained partnership engagement in terms relevant to practitioners but that also linked closely to Bourdieun notions of capital.

### **2.6.2 Contextual Theory**

I decided that in order to contextually locate the partnership, the most appropriate theory was that of Hodgson and Spours (2006) on weakly-collaborative versus strongly-collaborative 14-19 partnerships. They also presented revised findings in Pring et al (2009, Ch.11). Beyond its suitability for inclusion in my theoretical framework, this work also had two key strengths in relation to my research. First, their work applied very specifically to the sort of 14-19 partnership that I was researching. Second, since their theory was developed as part of the wide ranging *Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education and Training*, their research encompassed evidence from a variety of 14-19 practitioners and researchers, but, unlike many other relevant projects at this time, was not commissioned by the government.

As a start point, Hodgson and Spours (2006) take the conclusions of the Nuffield Review (2006) annual report that indicated that 14-19 partnership arrangements within England were only 'weakly collaborative'. Hodgson and Spours (2006, p330) suggest that a variety of 'policy steering mechanisms', including performance tables, inspection and qualifications, led to this weakly collaborative position by causing schools to focus on their own narrow interests in relation to these mechanisms rather than either the needs of a partnership or the needs of students who will not influence a school's competitive position. In contrast they suggest that the only mechanisms that favoured collaboration were area-wide inspections, certain aspects of targeted funding and certain policy-initiatives. Over the period of my research several of these 'positive'

factors were removed by the coalition. By locating my research within the broader context of what was taking place nationally, this aspect of Hodgson and Spours' work will provide a useful comparator to determine whether my findings are local and specific or fit a more general pattern. Additionally, my findings may also provide more detailed explanations of weak and strong collaboration.

Hodgson and Spours (2006, pp329-338) continue their discussion by distinguishing between weakly and strongly-collaborative partnerships on the basis of six different dimensions: vision; qualifications and assessment; planning and organisation; pedagogy and leadership; learning environments and communications; accountability frameworks. Hodgson and Spours confirm that those dimensions that had been most poorly developed across partnerships had been the assessment and accountability ones. This, they argue, is not surprising since both are substantially outside local control and that, since both have an impact on 'competitive relationships between organisations (Pring et al 2009, p182)', these have the most powerful influence on partnerships. For Hodgson and Spours (2006, p325), the ultimate consequence of having strong collaborative arrangements is that of improved 'learner choice and progression'. These dimensions, particularly the revised ones presented in Pring et al (2009, p183), which give much more concrete characteristics than the slightly vague 'approaches' used in the matrix in Hodgson and Spours (2006, p336), will be useful in contextually identifying whether my partnership is strong or weak and support explanations of whether any engagement patterns that I observe are related to these dimensions. In addition, Hodgson and Spours' perspective also confirms the central role of performance measures within collaborative working. An underpinning aim of my research will be to identify whether performance tables have a central role in this partnership and hence develop explanations for the effect of performance tables.

### **2.6.3 Business Theory**

As indicated earlier, much of the ongoing operational partnership discussions that I observed prior to undertaking this research, and indeed much of my own day-to-day work with the partnership, related to financial and business planning, and involved language and concepts that were business rather than education

focussed. It therefore appeared pertinent to incorporate theories that took account of such perspectives. From a theoretical point-of-view, although Bourdieu (2004b) had broadened his theory to encompass relations within the economic field, his discussions did not link directly to theories within the business field. From a methodological point of view, such theories needed to link the experiences of those involved in the partnership to the theory-based explanations I was aiming to formulate.

I decided to incorporate one theory from the organisation studies area that met my theoretical requirements, and did not require the introduction of a new, broad and incompatible element into my synthesis: the Overall Benefit/Cost Framework for Analyzing Cooperative Relationships (Contractor and Lorange, 2004). This perspective had the potential of linking with a Bourdieun theory of capital to provide a theoretical explanation of partnership engagement and also had the capacity to capture aspects of the partnership business planning process.

The Overall Benefit/Cost Framework for Analyzing Cooperative Relationships (Contractor and Lorange 2004, pp36-43) is an economic theory explaining why firms collaborate rather than either purchasing resources or producing these resources. This theory was developed using relatively straightforward algebra, but fits best with my other theories if explained discursively. It starts from the position that a cooperative venture will have both incremental costs and benefits. In order for partnership to be the preferred option, the incremental benefits of partnership must be greater than the incremental costs, and greater than the profit made by the other partner(s). Benefits can be both increased revenues and reduced costs, similarly costs can be decreased revenues or increased costs, highlighting that a capital balance sheet is not as straightforward as a simple cost-benefit analysis. Contractor and Lorange (2004) conclude their discussion by identifying partnership as being a way of reducing risk, particularly when ventures are transient, new or exploratory.

Such cost-benefit ideas were discussed in specific relation to social capital by Adler and Kwon (2002). They identified a set of risks that are mainly tensions in relation to the benefits. For instance, the information benefits may not be as



great as the expenditure required to establish social capital or increased solidarity between partners may lead to difficulties in bringing in new partners and information into a network. In addition, Adler and Kwon (2002) suggest that benefits for individual members of a network need to be balanced against risks for the entire network. Such an equilibrium would appear particularly critical in terms of balancing the power benefits of individual members against benefits for the entire partnership. Part of the process of gaining social capital, and establishing and maintaining a partnership, is balancing these risks.

For my research it is perhaps best to simplify the Overall Benefit/Cost Framework for Analyzing Cooperative Relationships to one that states a minimum outcome of partnership is that the incremental benefits of partnership will be greater than the incremental costs. When this theory is combined with Bourdieu's theory of capital, it has the potential to explain why the organisations choose to engage or not with the partnership. It also ensures that capital costs are expressed both in terms of capital expenditure and reduced capital gains and likewise that capital benefits are considered in terms of reduced expenditure and increased capital gains.

In addition to a potential for incorporation with a Bourdieun conception of capital, the Overall Benefit/Cost Framework for Analyzing Cooperative Relationships also provides strong complements for two other theoretical perspectives within my theoretical framework. First, the lists of business-related costs and benefits described by Contractor and Lorange (2004) provide a useful adjunct to the educational factors that are included in the descriptions of strong or weak collaborations by Hodgson and Spours (2006). Second, the Overall Benefit/Cost Framework for Analyzing Cooperative Relationships can be usefully integrated with the social capital cost-benefit analysis presented by Adler and Kwon (2002), which suggests not only considering this balancing at the organisational level, but also at the partnership level as a balance between organisational and partnership cost-benefits. The Contractor and Lorange (2004) framework therefore adds business elements to the argument and provides the notions that profits are increased revenues and decreased costs, with converse being true for costs.

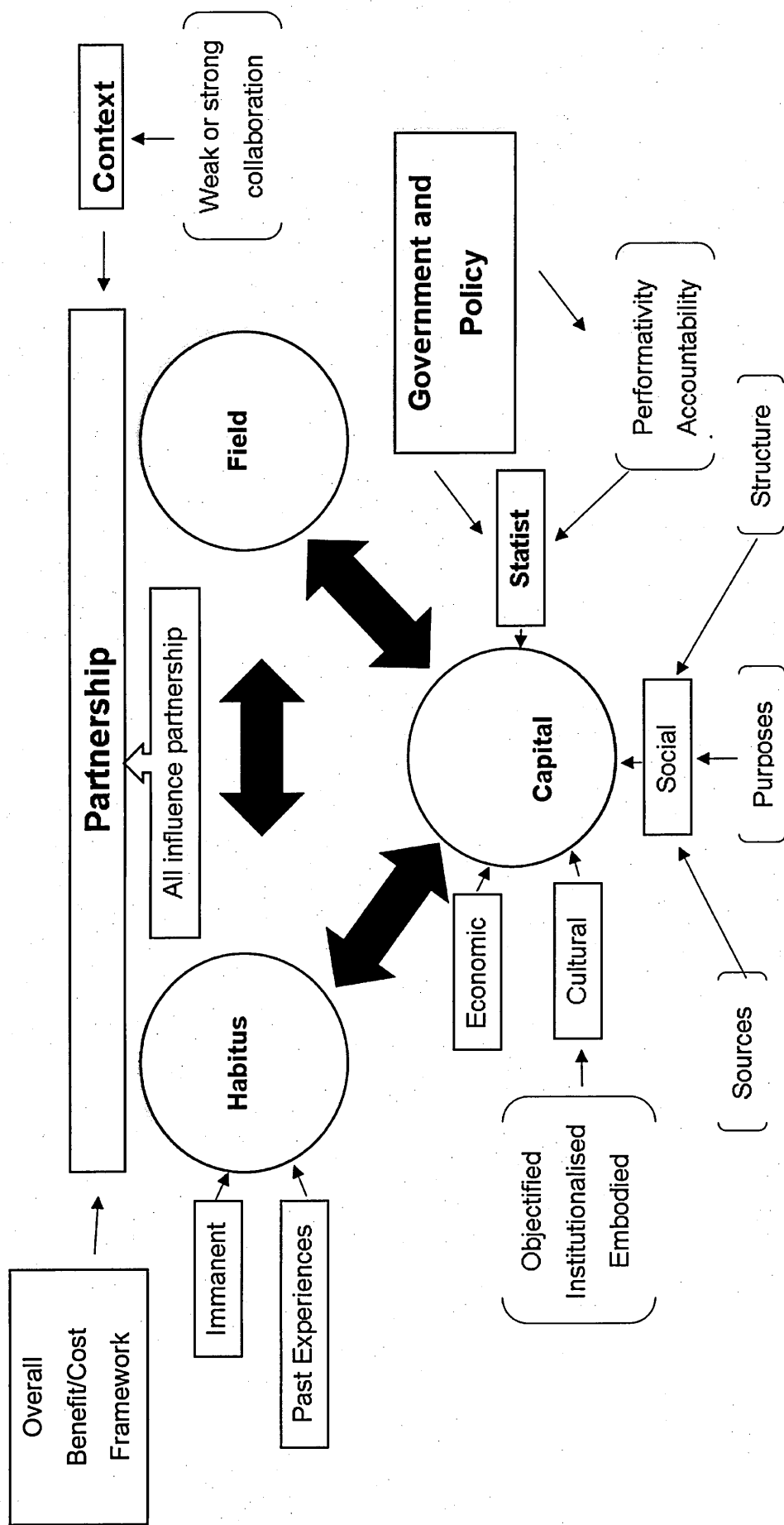
#### **2.6.4 Conclusions on Partnership Theories**

Both of the partnership theories provide a theoretical backdrop for explaining different organisations' partnership engagement. Hodgson and Spours (2006) perspective, as presented in Pring et al (2009), will enable me to contextually position the partnership as either weakly or strongly-collaborative. Additionally, the Overall Benefit/Cost Framework for Analyzing Cooperative Relationships, when used in conjunction with Bourdieu's theory of capital, will enable me to incorporate a capital cost/benefit balance sheet to explain partnership engagement.

### **2.7 Theoretical Framework Synthesis**

This section pulls together key ideas from the literature review. The theoretical framework is best described using a diagram (figure 2.2), which links potential theories that might support answers to my research questions and explain partnership engagement.

At the top of the diagram I have placed the partnership that I will be studying. Beneath the partnership I have identified how Bourdieun and other related, theoretical concepts could explain organisations' partnership engagement. The theoretical framework is centred on the interaction between the various components of Bourdieu's sociology. The habitus of individual partnership managers will have been influenced by their past histories and their interactions with the general field of education and the partnership field. This research will need to determine how these habituses are structured. The field will be characterised by the power relations of members of the partnership. These power relations will be determined by which particular species and configurations of capital prevail within this field. The capitals that predominate will be defined both by partnership members and by the government. By working in partnership, organisations will attempt to accumulate various forms of capital. One of the key purposes of this research will be to determine not only which capitals are collected but which capitals have greatest value for the organisations. Organisational positions will also need to be mapped in relation to each other. It is the interaction, or ontological correspondence (Bourdieu and



Wacquant 1992, p127)', between habitus, field and capital which will ultimately provide underpinning explanations for partnership engagement.

To the right of the diagram I have inserted government and policy and have recognised directly its influence on setting the value of capital and providing the input-output equations for performative measurement of organisational effectiveness. I have also indicated that government influence has the ability to structure the parameters of the partnership field. I have deliberately shaded statist capital bold and drawn a block arrow from it to capital. These emphases acknowledge the core capacity of statist capital to influence the values of all capitals in such a field. The constraints of this diagrammatic representation meant it was not technically possible to extend an arrow from this block to acknowledge the effect that government and policy have on structuring habitus, although a Bourdieun argument might be that these influences will actually operate via the interaction of field with capital. Another key aspect of this research will be to explain how government influences partnership engagement by the mediation of these concepts.

To the left of partnership I have placed Contractor and Lorange's (2004) Overall Benefit/Cost Framework for Analyzing Cooperative Relationships. This concept, in conjunction with Adler and Kwon's (2002) similar social capital arguments, will be used to explain how, once values of capital have been assigned, organisations make decisions in relation to the costs and benefits of partnership. To the right of partnerships I have inserted Hodgson and Spours (2006) theory. This will be used to contextually identify this partnership as either strongly or weakly-collaborative and thus link my explanations of partnership engagement to this context.

Construction of this theoretical framework has allowed me to confirm my research questions as:

- How do Bourdieun, and other related theoretical concepts, including broad conceptualisations of social capital, performativity, the notion of weak and strong collaboration and cost-benefit analysis of partnership, explain

organisations' engagement with the partnership, when analysed from the perspective of managers involved in a particular 14-19 partnership?

- Which external political factors influence organisations' engagement with the partnership, when analysed from the perspective of managers involved in a particular 14-19 partnership?

In conclusion, with this literature review I have identified a theoretical framework to underpin my research and to inform the analysis of my results. This framework will serve as a start point for my related ontological, epistemological and methods in the next chapter.

A number of gaps were found in relation to previous work in this and related areas. Much use of Bourdieu in both education and organisational studies was particularly fragmented, with only selective parts of his theory being used and often as a post hoc gloss rather than an integral part of a theoretical approach. Although social capital has been used to investigate partnerships, little use of Bourdieu's concept of social capital has been employed and consequently broad theories of how it operates have not been explained. Although Bourdieu's notion of dominance has been well documented, my analysis suggests that for it to be fully utilised here this concept needs to focus on statist rather than symbolic capital and incorporate ideas of performativity. This synthesis of performativity and statist capital should help theoretically explain how government wields its influence within the partnership context.



### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes how I chose the methods I utilised in this research and explains how they were carried out. The synthetic framework developed in the previous chapter and my research aims guide the decision making process. The chapter discusses the underpinning ontological and epistemological premises, including an overarching conclusion on my methodological position, and the methods used.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p117) suggested a stepwise approach to planning research, starting with identifying 'preparatory issues' such as 'constraints', 'purposes' and 'the research question', and finishing with timing and sequencing. Others have identified similar planning systems (Buchanan and Bryman 2011, xxvi; Burgess, Sieminski and Arthur 2006, p11). Grix (2002, p180) is very clear that it is the research question that both dictates the research ontology/epistemology and the approach to be taken. Combining all of the above, I am clear that the start point for research design is what I shall label context: the research questions; the general purpose of the research; the environment of the research; underpinning theory. The combination of these contextual factors dictated the precise research approach I adopted and were referred to throughout planning and implementation.

Reviewing my research questions, certain key factors are apparent. First, both questions identify the subjects as 'managers involved in a particular 14-19 partnership'. Second, each question aims to identify what influenced organisational decisions in relation to the partnership. Third, it is the managers' perceptions that is being investigated. Finally, from the theoretical perspective, derived from the literature review, it is 'Bourdieuun, and other related theoretical concepts, including broad conceptualisations of social capital, performativity, the notion of weak and strong collaboration and cost-benefit analysis of partnership' alongside 'political factors' that underpin this research. Confirming the argument of Grix (2002), this review of research questions confirms most of my key contextual factors. Thus, I must be able to:

- identify perceptions of individual agents;

- relate these perceptions to organisational decision making;
- incorporate a theoretical framework that includes Bourdieun theory and theories of political influence.

The approach should also match the research's purpose: the dual focus of completing a piece of doctoral research and explaining an environment that I work within. Additionally, it needs to take into account my 'opportunistic' (Adler and Adler 1987, p69) role as an insider.

Although the Bourdieun theoretical framework comes with its own methodological principles, Bourdieu's general methodology is insufficiently complete to fully inform my methodological approach. Thus, I decided to adopt a critical realist perspective. Critical realism is a philosophically based methodology developed by Roy Bhaskar (Bhaskar 1998; 2008). Various researchers have championed its use within organisational studies research, particularly as a counter to what they see as prevalent positivist (Egbo 2005), or interpretivist paradigms (Fleetwood 2005; Reed 2005), or as an antidote to both (Fleetwood and Ackroyd 2004; Mir and Watson 2001; Reed 2011; Scott 2005). Critical realism also sees the respondents' knowledge as being central to empirical studies and does not require adoption of any particular theoretical framework and is therefore compatible with my synthetic framework (Fleetwood and Ackroyd 2004, p3). More specifically, many researchers (Wainwright 2000; Mutch 2002; Wight 2003; Egbo 2005; Ozibilgin and Tatley 2005; Elder-Vass 2007) have commented on the correspondence between critical realism and Bourdieun sociology.

## **3.2 Methodology**

### **3.2.1 Ontology**

Grix (2002, p175) suggests that ontology describes 'what is out there to know about' and that it seeks to identify the nature of social reality. He is clear that, despite the research questions framing all methodological decisions, there is a clear sequence of steps:

...between what a researcher thinks can be researched (their ontological position), linking it to what we can know about it (their epistemological position) and how to go

For this research, my ontological position will also frame the sorts of conclusions that I will be able to make.

My decision to adopt a critical realist perspective was largely influenced by the perceived lack of an underpinning ontological base with Bourdieu's sociology, exemplified by Evens' (1999, p4) suggestion that a key weakness of Bourdieu's project is the failure to engage in the ontological, preferring to concentrate on perceptions of scientific understanding rather than analysing the underpinning social reality. Bourdieu (2004a, p69) indicates that he believes that within the social world an 'objective reality' exists that has '...meaning, an order, a logic...' that is different to the 'anything goes' ontology of the interpretivists. This dismissive notion of 'anything goes' is ontologically situated by Bourdieu's (2004a, p69) explanation that it is a rhetorical device used to clearly specify the real, structured and bounded nature of his ontology. He also suggests that both his position and that of the interpretivists is contested within the social world. Elsewhere, Bourdieu (1996, p29) clarifies that while 'social agents construct [their own] social reality', in the way he feels is suggested by interpretivists, the agents do not formulate the categories contained in such constructs. Broadly, Bourdieu is adopting a similar ontological position to that of critical realism, discussed in the following paragraphs. Although agents behave in ways that are not constrained by the structures that are imposed on them, they behave in ways that enable such behaviours to be described, categorised and ordered. Additionally, Bourdieu (1977, p3), albeit arguing from an epistemological perspective, is clear that he is attempting to develop a sociology that incorporates both 'objective structures' and subjective 'structured dispositions'. He identifies this relationship as being '...between the scientifically constructed objective probabilities...and agents' subjective aspirations... (Bourdieu 1990a, p54)'. In explaining this 'ontological correspondence' between habitus and field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p127) he responds with an answer that does not seem to go much further than stating that 'the field structures the habitus', and that the habitus 'contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful structure'. With this ontology, explanations of how various factors influence behaviour within a partnership would be reduced to no more than teleological



responses that state that the dispositions of individuals give meaning to the objectively structured field and that habitus has been influenced and created by such an objectively structured field.

The expression 'critical realism' is described by Archer et al (1998, ix) as an 'elision of the phrases "transcendental realism" and "critical naturalism"', which are Bhaskar's (1998; 2008) philosophies of natural science and social science. Bhaskar was mainly interested in providing a philosophical account of reality. Others, working closely alongside Bhaskar, have operationalised critical realism for use within a variety of social fields. In the following section I have described critical realism from both Bhaskar's and other's perspectives to synthesise the operational and philosophical.

Critical realism's first key ontological feature is the distinction between the objects that cause nature or society to operate in the way that it does and our knowledge and conceptualisation of these structures. Bhaskar (2008, p21) described these aspects as the 'two sides of knowledge' and labelled them the *intransitive* and *transitive* objects of knowledge. Intransitive objects are the unchanging structures, processes or phenomena, which exist independently of our labelling of them. Transitive objects are our theories and discourses about intransitive objects.

Within the social world, intransitive objects are not clearly defined (Bhaskar 1998, pp51-53), with transitive objects, or theories, having the capacity to interact with intransitive objects, those that they affect and those who study them and that these intransitive objects need to be empirically verified Bhaskar (1998, p27). Bhaskar (1998, p49) also states that intransitive objects are theoretical, they can *only* be identified by their effects and do not exist separately from these effects. These effects take place whether or not we observe them or have hypothesised the intransitive object's existence. These distinctions seem to be somewhat confusing and contradictory. Whilst acknowledging that intransitive objects exist within the social world it would appear ultimately that these objects are only identifiable by our social construction of them within the transitive domain.

In relation to this research, Bourdieu's field would be an intransitive object. We can only identify its existence by its effects on the organisations within the partnership, for instance schools changing their curriculum to optimise field position. We need not have identified the notion of field for these effects to take place. If we conceive the field had been governmentally created, but not necessarily by conscious design (Ackroyd and Fleetwood 2001, p10-14), such curriculum changes might not suit governmental priorities, causing the government to change the nature of the field and thus modify the intransitive object. We might have several explanatory theories why a field caused schools to behave in this way; because the field is an intransitive object, no matter which theory we propose the field will remain the same. It is one of the key purposes of critical realist research to identify which theory is most suitable by generalising theoretically rather than empirically (Bhaskar 2014, vii). However, somewhat confusingly, contrary to this, Bhaskar (1998, p13) agrees that such theoretical explanations must be 'empirically tested'. For my own empirically based research, empirical observations must be compatible with the explanatory theories that are generated and such theories must be able explain empirical observations.

Second, Bhaskar (1998, p13) has suggested that intransitive objects, their effects and observations of these effects exist in different ontological domains. Intransitive objects exist in the *real* domain; when these objects are activated, their effect is in the *actual* domain, and we can observe these effects in the *empirical* domain. Bhaskar (2008, p56) also suggested that mechanisms exist in the real domain, events within the actual domain and experiences within the empirical domain, and in the open systems of the social world these three domains are out of phase. Ackroyd and Fleetwood (2001, p13) have defined each of these domains: the real referring to 'whatever exists' (structures in the social world, school performance tables, organisational structures, partnership structures); the actual referring to what happens when these structures 'are activated' (the decisions made by schools based upon performance table, partnership or economic structures); and the empirical corresponds to how the world is experienced (the changes that are observed and the perceptions of individuals on why these changes occur). Another key facet of critical realist research is to identify links between these different domains.



Since social phenomena only occur in open systems, theorisation about society 'cannot be predictive and so must be exclusively explanatory' (Bhaskar 1998, p230) and any explanations must also take account of the context in which they operate (Bhaskar 2014, viii). These ideas lead to the critical realist researcher attempting to couch their explanations in terms of context, structure, mechanism and outcome (Bhaskar 2014, viii). For instance, within this current research, organisations may be positioned in the field, or structural aspect, based upon different configurations of capital. If capital values are changed by the government this is likely to have different impacts, or outcomes, on different organisations depending upon their different contexts, such as sizes of schools or positions within the field. Theorisation thus needs to identify the most appropriate mechanisms to explain the different contextualised outcomes.

Whilst critical realist explanations must be contextually based, this can restrict those wishing to identify transferable knowledge relevant to other situations. For Pawson and Tilley (1997, p119) the key theoretical ideas are transferable to other situations and are refined and improved by their iterative application to new empirical cases. For my research, it will be the key theoretical explanations that are transferable, not in the sense of predicting how other partnerships will develop but as a critical lens through which to analyse other partnerships. Additionally, a substantive ethical objection to critical realist explanation has been proposed by Willmott (2005, p753), who suggests that this explanatory preoccupation of critical realism does not allow for descriptions of how to change the world in an emancipatory sense. However, Bhaskar (2002, p190) suggested that critical realism '...is oriented towards the pursuit of truth and understanding'. From my research position, the explanation of factors that affect partnership engagement is a key and necessary antecedent to making suggestions as to how practice may be changed.

From a methodological point of view, one key purpose of this research is to provide mechanistic explanations that answer my questions. Within critical realism this notion of a mechanism has a specific meaning. At their most fundamental, Bhaskar (2008, p3) describes mechanisms as 'the ways of acting of things' and that phenomena are generated by real mechanisms interacting with intransitive structures (Bhaskar 2008, p15). Pawson and Tilley (1997, p66)

have operationalised the concept of mechanism for use in social research, giving a three point definition of mechanisms: mechanisms are hidden within the stratified layers of social reality; they provide a link between micro and macro-level processes; they identify how outcomes depend upon the interaction between individuals and social structures. For my research, using a combination of these ideas, mechanisms will be transitive statements that explain how intransitive structures within the real domain lead to outcomes within the actual domain. These statements will provide an explanatory link between behaviours at the individual level, outcomes in the actual domain and social structures within the real domain.

Given Bourdieu's lack of discussion on ontology or mechanism, it is not possible to unambiguously link critical realism to his sociology. However, certain points are worthy of comparison. For Bourdieu the purpose of sociology appears to be very similar to that of critical realism:

'The goal of sociology is to uncover the most deeply buried structures of the different social worlds that make up the social universe, as well as the mechanisms' that tend to ensure their reproduction or transformation (Bourdieu 1996, p1).

By suggesting that structures, and the categorisations that lead to such structures, are imposed upon agents, Bourdieu (1996, p29) appears to be placing such theoretical constructs within the transitive domain. By his insistence that habitus behaves in a particular way depending upon the particular field that it is exposed to (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p135) Bourdieu clearly implies the notion of context. Wainwright (2000, p9) believes that since the value of specific capitals depends upon which contextual field the capital is being used in, Bourdieu was linking causal effects to a specific context. Also, although Bourdieu has not discussed social reality, the notion of different layers of reality is not incompatible with Bourdieu's project. As will be explored fully in the next section, Bourdieu's frequent discussions on the notion of reflexivity, the status of the researcher and role of empirical evidence clearly link to the critical realist 'empirical' layer. Despite not being part of Bourdieu's conceptions, the 'real' and the 'actual' could easily be posited as field and practice: the field corresponding to 'the realm of objects, their structures and powers (Sayer 2000, p11)' and practice to the 'activation' of 'those powers'

when habitus coincides with field. Whilst discussing applications of critical realism to network theory, Mutch (2002, p486) suggests that Bourdieu's notion of habitus implies it is multi-layered. Similarly, Ozibilgin and Tatley (2005, p856) indicate that Bourdieu's work sits firmly within the realist canon due to its insistence on social reality being much more complex than the classical dualisms of subjectivity and objectivity.

For this research, I have therefore adopted a position on the 'social domain' mainly based upon critical realist theory. At one level, this domain is influenced by the real, such as Bourdieu's field, distribution of various forms of capital, performativity, government ideology, organisational structures and theories. At the actual level, these structures will cause individuals and organisations to behave in particular ways. At the empirical level this behaviour will lead to certain observations. My purpose will be to identify which theories from my literature review explain my findings by linking the domains of the real, the actual and the empirical.

### **3.2.2 Epistemology**

Grix (2002, p177) considers, in broad terms, that epistemology 'is concerned with the theory of knowledge' and that it seeks to investigate 'the possible ways of gaining knowledge of social reality', particularly the 'knowledge gathering process'. For my research, this 'knowledge gathering process' needs to be compatible with: the critical realist ontology; my research question focus on participants' perceptions; my insider access to various participants within the partnership. Due to critical realism's distinct ontological focus, much less appears to have been written about its epistemology. However, there is sufficient within critical realism's key writings for me to discuss how knowledge of social reality can be discovered, how such knowledge is structured and how such knowledge can be transmitted to others. Bourdieu's work contains many comments on its epistemological basis, particularly on the interrelationship between empirical and researcher knowledge. Given the breadth of Bourdieu's epistemological discussions, I will limit my discussions of Bourdieu to the two areas that are key to my insider position within this particular research: reflexivity and the notion of the scholastic fallacy.

Within critical realism epistemology is seen as being separate from ontology (Archer et al 1998, p5). Bhaskar (1998, p182) goes further and labels the conflation of 'statements about being' with 'statements about knowledge' as the 'epistemic fallacy', or as Fleetwood (2005, p15) suggests we should not claim 'that things are so because we perceive them to be so'. Such distinctions are key features of critical realism. For Bhaskar (1978), our knowledge of the world is transitive, our theories and discourses about the world are not completely dependent upon the real nature of the world and can vary. Ackroyd and Fleetwood (2001, p11) suggest that knowledge is bound to the concepts that those who investigate the concepts initially possess: the 'double hermeneutic', or the double understanding of 'social reality itself and one of a scientific understanding of it (Bhaskar 1998, p126)'. Likewise, Sayer (2000, p47) believes that a critical realist epistemology allows that 'the world can only be known in terms of available descriptions or discourses' or that it is bound to 'epistemic relativity'. This notion is more comprehensively described by Bhaskar (1998, p237) who suggests:

...all beliefs are socially produced, so that all knowledge is transient, and neither truth-values nor criteria rationally exist outside historical time.

However, critical realism's epistemology is fundamentally different to interpretivist ontology in that it rejects what is described as 'judgemental relativism' (Bhaskar 1998, p236) or the notion that it is impossible, (due to the concept-laden, observer-bound nature of knowledge, to differentiate or judge between the merits of competing theories or knowledge. This critical realist knowledge (Reed 2005, p1630) differs from interpretive knowledge by virtue of the fact that, although a human construct, it can be 'systematically assessed and evaluated'. Contrary to this, Walters and Young (2001, p497) claim that there is little within the critical realist literature that suggests how such assessment and evaluation should be carried out.

### ***3.2.2.1 Participants' Epistemological Position***

Some of the above notions can be used, alongside other concepts, to identify the stance that I will take in relation to partnership members' conceptions of the social world. A good opening for this discussion is a statement about a key difference between critical realism and hermeneutics:



...actors' accounts are both corrigible and limited by the existence of unintended consequences, tacit skills and unconscious motivations ...actors' accounts form the indispensable starting points of social enquiry (Archer et al 1998, xvi).

Bhaskar (2011, p3) has suggested that due to these 'unintended consequences, tacit skills and 'unconscious motivations', actors are not able to conceptualise the social structures that underpin their actions and discourses. Combining this notion with Giddens (1984, ch.1) discussion on the social agent, Pawson and Tilley (1997, p163) developed the idea of the 'knowledgeable actor'. This is an agent who is aware of the influence of aspects of their culture and potential reasons for outcomes but in an incomplete and atheoretical fashion. Given the relative seniority of my participants, I do need to be aware that in some cases knowledge may not be incomplete or atheoretical but will be based, due to personal and organisational needs, or indeed field positions, on a different set of values to my own.

Bhaskar (2010, p110) identified differences between 'scientific and lay' explanations based upon the concepts that appear in these explanations. For the social sciences it is the corrigibility and opacity of subjects' accounts that is the key differentiator (Bhaskar 1998, p171) between lay and scientific explanations. For the researcher, the overall process of translating the agent's perceptions requires not only an ability to interpret, based upon antecedent presuppositions of the researcher, but communication, which involves shared presuppositions and discrepancies between researcher and agent, and finally the theory-laden researcher interpretation of other societies or theories (Bhaskar 1998, pp168-169). These arguments do not take account of either the notion of insider-research or investigation of those in senior positions. I would argue that the positions of researcher and researched are much closer in such a context, implying both improved communication but also the difficulty of identifying what are likely to be very subtle positional differences. Investigation of participant habituses and organisational field positions would appear to be key in elucidating such differences.

My research questions indicate the accounts of partners, in interviews and observations, will be the starting point. I will assume that my subjects are



'knowledgeable actors', who have insights into potential reasons for their partnership decisions, with a clear comprehension of organisational and policy contexts. However, this knowledge will be incomplete due to: reflexive omissions, such as unacknowledged personal motivations or tacit skills; a lack of comprehension of broader cultural contexts, such as partnership behaviour elsewhere in the country and in different fields; unfamiliarity with structural objects, such as fields or capital. Although discourse of partners will be my primary empirical evidence, I accept that the language used does not necessarily describe the reality that I am attempting to uncover and that this discourse is limited by subjects' lack of comprehension of conceptual semantics.

### ***3.2.2.2 My Epistemological Position***

As part of the process of Bourdieun reflexivity, discussed below, I need to be aware that I have different types of knowledge to my subjects and this knowledge will also be partial. This will be a consequence not only of being a researcher, but also my varied positions as an insider and the fact that my precise role within the partnership gives me a different set of presuppositions, values and ultimate goals.

The key advantages of being an insider have been widely discussed. Labaree (2002), whilst analysing his own experiences as an insider-participant-observer researching university senate legislature, has identified some of the perceived advantages of being an insider: shared perceptions with those being researched; privileged access early in a research project; improved access to certain types of information; better interpretation of cultural issues; an insider's greater clarity of purpose and understanding. Brannick and Coghlan (2007, pp68-69) are particularly clear that pre-understanding, in terms of knowledge of organisational culture, procedures and relationships, is an advantage in comprehending the cultural significance of what is observed. Parry and Boyle (2011) suggest that an insider approach in researching organisations can enable the researcher to uncover tacit mechanisms, linking actions to organisational outcomes, and can more easily elucidate the influence of the external macro-environment on internal micro-environment changes. Similarly, Coghlan (2003) feels that insider access can enable a clear comprehension of

how actors see change and their roles within change. These benefits will support both my communication with subjects and my interpretive role. My pre-understanding of context will facilitate shared presuppositions and my existing relationships should ensure a free and frank discussion at interview.

Despite these perceived advantages, the insider position also creates interpretation difficulties. Labaree (2002) suggests a number of epistemological issues with the position of being an insider. First he suggests that the insider should explicitly narrate their own position within the field of study. Alvesson (2003) makes a similar point, indicating that the researcher needs to examine results from a variety of viewpoints. Second, he discusses difficulties maintaining both objectivity and accuracy as an insider. He also identifies potential difficulties in establishing truthfulness about the ontological significance of the findings, as do Brannick and Coghlan (2007, pp68-69) in relation to making assumptions about what is observed and not challenging these assumptions. Mercer (2007, p6) states that the insider is:

...more likely to take things for granted, develop myopia,  
and assume their own perspective is far more widespread  
than it actually is.

Such a position is not dissimilar to the notion of the scholastic fallacy but is derived from an insider, rather than an outsider, imposing their own interpretations. Finally, Kawulich (2005) has suggested that one of the key dichotomies within participant observation is the tension between observer objectivity and subjectivity: balancing the advantages of improved access against the dangers of interpretive subjectivity.

From a Bourdieun perspective, and as suggested by Griffith (1998), many of these difficulties were addressed by undertaking the participant objectivation discussed below and also by considering all findings through the resultant reflexive lens (section 4.2.5). Ultimately, this process of research requires the assimilation of my knowledge, particularly of broader contexts and theoretical discourses, and my subjects' knowledge in order to interpret participants' discourses so as to provide the links between the empirical, the actual and the real.

### **3.2.2.3 Bourdieun Epistemology**

Having identified the epistemological positions of participants and, particularly my interpretive role, it is important to use Bourdieu's notions of participant objectivation and the scholastic fallacy as lenses through which to focus my interpretations of results and overcome some of the methodological issues. Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p68) describes participant objectivation as the process that is used:

'...to make the mundane exotic and the exotic mundane, in order to render explicit what in both cases is taken for granted, and to offer a practical vindication of the possibility of a full sociological objectivation and of the subject's relation to the object- what I call participant objectivation'.

This quotation identifies two key epistemological points about the purpose of participant objectivation. First, it seeks to transcend the divide between 'taken for granted' and theoretical knowledge. Second, it attempts to acknowledge the effect that the researcher has upon the quality of knowledge created by the dialectical relationship between the researcher and the object by 'the objectivation ...of the researcher herself (Bourdieu 2003a, p282)'.

Throughout his work Bourdieu has discussed how the researcher must objectivise their relationship to their research and consequently the sociological knowledge generated from such an encounter. To make the relationship between the researcher and subject explicit, the researcher needs to make what Bourdieu (1990a, p27) suggests is a 'second break' that enables the researcher to not only objectify their viewpoint in respect to those being researched but also their relation to their research topic, particularly the status of the knowledge produced by this relationship. With this second break, the observer needs to critically analyse the validity of their conception of the world and whether their theorisation really explains, in terms of the reality experienced by the research subject, the practice that they have observed (Bourdieu 1977, p2). This second break compels the researcher to critically analyse their relationship to the field under study. Bourdieu (2004a, p89) describes the general approach to adopt when making this second break as the process whereby the researcher '...uses its own weapons to understand and check

itself...' and that this process must be carried on from the outset of research, rather than after information has been collected.

From the general epistemological perspective, participant objectivation, or reflexivity, requires the researcher to critically analyse the quality of knowledge generated in respect of the relations between the researcher and the object of research. In a positional sense, this is achieved by the researcher taking a step above and outside the research and analysing both their findings and their role in making such findings. However, Bourdieu is not clear as to how such participant objectivation can be used to perform this critical analysis. Within my research, I will complete a reflexive account that identifies my position within the field in relation to what is being researched, using the concepts of habitus and capital to identify this position. This will also be used as a lens through which to critically analyse both my findings and conclusions.

The second key epistemological issue that frequently appears in Bourdieu's work, and is regarded by Bourdieu (1990b, p384) as '...the most serious epistemological mistake in the social sciences', is the notion of 'scholastic fallacy' or 'scholastic point of view'. This is an error practised by sociologists who privilege their technical knowledge above that of the agent by imposing a structure onto the agent's behaviours that does not account for the cognitive and affective capacities of the agent (Bourdieu 1990c, p28). The entire genesis of the ideas behind this epistemological difficulty is fully explored in Bourdieu's (1990b) lecture *The Scholastic Point of View*. First, Bourdieu suggests that it is the point of view taken by the academic when studying any field and that this point of view is the entrance fee to any particular academic field. This point of view is generally remote and abstracted from the reality of agents' practice. Second, he believes that it is a failing of academics that they do not acknowledge the fact that they are viewing the world in this particular way.

In common with their ontological similarities, there is some correspondence between Bourdieu's epistemological concerns and the epistemological position adopted by critical realism. The critical realist notion of the 'epistemic fallacy' is similar to Bourdieu's 'scholastic fallacy'. From both Bourdieu and critical realism there is a clear warning about the dangers of conflating the researcher's

view of the world or agent with the way that the world or agent actually operates. Critical realism is much more philosophically precise about these dangers, identifying them with the confusion between what is in the epistemological domain and what is in the ontological domain, with both the agent and the researcher being susceptible to such issues. However, Bourdieu is clearer about the way in which the researcher influences such a process, by assuming their theoretical discourses correspond with how an agent experiences the world. Sayer (2000, p53) is clear that these different 'subjective influences' on the researcher are not to be denied but need to be accounted for by reflexive practice. Therefore, another purpose of my reflexive lens will be to critically analyse my explanations to ensure that I am committing neither of these fallacies.

### **3.2.3 Methodological Conclusions**

At the ontological level this research's purpose is to identify objects within the real domain that mechanistically explain the actual events that have occurred within the partnership and correspond to my empirical evidence. My epistemological position argues that I will only be able to gain knowledge of structures and theories by observation of and discourse with those involved in the partnership. However, subjects' discourses will be necessarily flawed by a lack of reflexivity and conceptual knowledge, requiring me to translate these discourses into potential theories. My theories about how the partnership operates will be socially constructed. Careful analysis of the empirical, actual and real should enable determination of the most appropriate theory. Certain key advantages derived from my insider position will support this interpretive and evaluative process.

In relation to my research questions, my ontological, epistemological and insider positions are also compatible with my wish to identify the perceptions of participants to explain how the partnership operates. These positions will also enable me to account for organisational behaviour by researching the conceptions of individuals working within the partnership, with the critical realist position implying that the only way I can gain information on organisational behaviour in the actual domain is by observation and discourse with organisational members who are part of the empirical domain. This infers using



methods that involve either observation of or discussion with members of the partnership. Bourdieu's considerations, alongside some key difficulties of the insider position, also indicate that to fully objectify my position: I will need to produce a reflexive account of my own social and academic position in relation to this study; while interpreting my results and identifying my conclusions, I will need to ensure that I have committed neither the scholastic nor the epistemic fallacy.

### **3.3 Methods**

#### **3.3.1 Overall Approach to Research Methods**

As suggested by Buchanan and Bryman (2011, xxvii), the decision about which particular methods to adopt depends upon a number of factors including: 'research objectives', 'epistemological choices' and 'opportunities and constraints' of the research's organisational context; to these I would also add ontology and theoretical framework. For Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p125) many of my arguments so far would be strategic decisions, the choice of research methods being a tactical decision. Before exploring these in detail, it is important to outline how my strategic context has led to an overall approach. At the ontological, epistemological and Bourdieun theoretical level, my methods need to reflexively examine the interaction between social structures and participants' conceptions of the social world. In relation to my research questions, the perception of participants is key, but linked to various political factors and Bourdieun and other theory. Finally, my own position within this partnership appeared to give me privileged and unique, but 'opportunistic' (Adler and Adler 1987, p69), access to participants and to various activities of this partnership.

My key research focus was the partnership I was part of. My epistemological position and research question links to subjects' perceptions suggested a qualitative interview would be my main form of data collection. However, my own position in the partnership, and a wish to observe behaviour within a naturalistic setting, both to better comprehend participants' viewpoints and to attempt to gain a clearer overview of their habituses, meant it was pertinent to include a participant observation element. To identify a structural element that

would impact upon participants' conceptions, and given the primacy of distribution of capital within Bourdieu's structural field and the postulated key influence of performance table positions on school behaviour, I decided to carry out a field analysis based upon these tables. Finally, to provide myself with a lens through which to critically evaluate my conceptions and to provide the reader with an overview of potential sources of bias within my conclusions, I undertook a reflexive account of my position within the field. The remainder of this section discusses the decisions taken in developing and operationalising these methods.

### **3.3.2 Ethical Considerations**

Kitchener and Kitchener (2009, p6) indicate that social science researchers need to consider two ethical perspectives: ethically responsible collection, processing and reporting of data and the ethics of researcher behaviour towards research subjects. From my insider perspective, and consistent with issues discussed by Costley and Gibbs (2006), Brannick and Coghlan (2007) and Labaree (2002), I propose an addendum to the second of these perspectives: ethical responsibilities towards myself as a researcher. For the first of these perspectives much of the processes were steered by key ethical codes. For this research I used the *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (BERA 2011) and the *Data Protection Act 1998* to ensure practical adherence to key practices. The procedural aspects that I adopted are discussed within the participant observation and interview sections.

Since the cohort was relatively small and I was a 'well-known' member of the community I was investigating, many of the issues of ensuring anonymity discussed by Walford (2005) were encountered. Although when reporting outcomes, details of respondents and names of schools were anonymised, and every effort was made to ensure that contextual features did not identify individuals or schools, it would be relatively straightforward to identify both the college and LC I belonged to and extrapolate the identities of other members of the LC. My consent documents had assurances of anonymity and confidentiality. As part of my general research introduction with the various LC groups, and in the introduction to each interview, I clearly indicated the processes that I would use to ensure this anonymity and confidentiality. I also

indicated that despite this it may be possible to identify respondents within my report. No issues were raised by partners at either point. Additionally, as suggested by Taylor (2011) each respondent was emailed a completed transcript of their interview and given the opportunity to alter and comment on the text. No suggestions were received from respondents.

For ethical issues related to my behavioural responsibilities towards my research subjects and myself, I have focussed on those pertinent to insider research: despite this narrow focus, the majority of such issues are specific cases of more general difficulties with the qualitative techniques that I have used. Labaree (2002) discusses the methodological and ethical dilemmas inherent in being an insider, particularly in relation to shared relationships. As an insider, the previous professional or personal relationships become a novel 'research' relationship based on the research needs of the investigator. Labaree is clear the researcher needs to fully understand the potential that development of the novel relationship has for damaging initial relationships. Second, he suggests the researcher needs to be very clear about their research agenda, taking precautions to ensure their intentions are not misunderstood, both in terms of development of new friendships or gaining personal and organisational advantages. He also suggests care needs to be taken to appropriately disengage at the conclusion of the research, again to protect researcher-respondent relationships and ensure knowledge is appropriately disseminated and deployed. Similar points have been raised by Brannick and Coghlan (2007, p70), who suggest being an insider leads to role and relationship conflict.

In this research, I have been able to take account of the epistemological issues related to my prior and post hoc relationships with respondents by identifying these relationships in my reflexive account. In terms of the different positions discussed by Brannick and Coghlan (2007, p70), throughout the research, and particularly within meetings and during day-to-day discussions, I was very clear that certain questions I asked and comments I made were linked to my research. I also asked participants to confirm that I could use such information in my research and, as suggested by Taylor (2011), asked respondents to validate my analysis of their comments.

I planned two strategies in terms of knowledge dissemination. First, I frequently discussed at meetings and in one-to-one sessions my generalised and emerging findings, at all times being careful not to present individualised perspectives that risked confidentiality or anonymity. This sensitive open discussion of findings also meant, as suggested by Taylor (2011), I was able to maintain professional and friendship relationships with participants, since over the period of the research my position evolved from that of just being a practitioner into being a practitioner-researcher, with many participants asking me about the progress of my research and offering unprompted insights into what I was researching. Second, I originally planned to present my key summative findings to the strategy and curriculum groups near the conclusion of this research. However, as discussed in my findings, as my research progressed it became very clear that forces external to the partnership were changing the nature of what the partnership did at strategic, operational and membership levels. In relation to the ethical issues surrounding the dissemination of knowledge, not only was there no opportunity to provide a summary presentation of my results, but by the end of the research my findings had very little potential to advantage either my organisation or others.

### **3.3.3 Participant Observation**

Alvesson and Ashcraft (2011, p70) proposed several advantages of using participant observation within organisational study; particularly, they state it:

...allows researchers to see organizing in action... [and]  
...to witness first hand phenomena discussed in or omitted  
by interviewees.

In terms of my own research, it would enable me to identify how partnership managers made sense of their organisations' engagement with the partnership in a naturalistic in situ context. I felt this method would enable me to gain a clear insight into the habituses of these managers. Since I had attended partnership meetings for the previous eight years, I also believed access issues would be minimised and I would gain a unique perspective on the partnership's operation and management. Information collected from the participant observation phase served two purposes: to inform my overall research outcomes and to provide a framework for the later interviews. This section



describes the process that I adopted and identifies a number of the advantages and issues with such an approach.

The primary focus for participant observation was the partnership meetings I went to, in my work-role, over a twelve-month period from September 2010 to September 2011. Twice-termly I attended the Curriculum Group, whose main purpose was to plan partnership vocational provision, delivered by various partnership members. Each school within the partnership was represented by the senior-manager responsible for curriculum, although the group's chair was a school head. Training providers were represented by curriculum delivery managers. Also present at these meetings was the LC manager and representation from Connexions, at that point incorporating the county careers services. On a twice-termly basis, I also attended the IAG group, whose primary purpose was ensuring careers support was in place for progression from pre to post-16 education. Attendees were broadly similar to those of the curriculum group, but with schools being represented by the senior-manager responsible for IAG and with no training provider involvement. On an occasional basis, I also attended two other meetings that were relevant to my research: the strategy group, which was attended by head-teachers and senior representatives from the LA, and determined LC strategy; and post-16 collaborative provision meetings, attended by curriculum leaders of schools with sixth-form provision. Although this was the main period of observation, I continued to attend meetings until the completion of this research in 2015 and continued to make notes of key discussions. I also made notes of key one-to-one discussions I had outside meetings, always confirming that I could make anonymised use of the discussion within my research.

I attended these meetings as a participant, with the main purpose of representing my own organisation's interests. Any observation that I undertook needed to be secondary to this role of delegated responsibility. This was the role of participant-as-observer (Gold 1958, p218) or opportunistic complete-member-researcher (Adler and Adler 1987, p69). In essence, these roles require the observer to reveal to observees their identity as an observer whilst taking a fully active role within the activities of observees. To achieve this, I had initial discussions with the LC manager about undertaking this research and



possible benefits for the LC. When I had gained verbal agreement from the LC manager, my research proposal was added to the agendas of each of the groups that I intended to observe. Starting with the strategy group, I then presented my proposal to each group, discussing the overall scope of my research and my specific approach. I asked group members to raise any issues they could foresee. No issues were raised at any of the meetings and agreement to the research was recorded in each group's minutes. Given the meetings' fluid attendance, at the start of each meeting all members identified themselves to the group. Whenever I introduced myself in this way I briefly explained my position as researcher, offered to give individuals more information about my research and asked people to indicate if they did not want anything that was discussed to be used in my research.

Being an active participant within the partnership alongside my observer role presented particular difficulties. When I actually undertook the observations my standpoint became much more that of observer-as-participant (Gold 1958, p220), meaning that, due to the practical difficulties of both recording exchanges and taking an active role in discussions, I adopted a position that enabled me to collect data but with much reduced levels of participation in partnership discussions. This particular positioning had certain consequences. First it led to my decision to only undertake intensive observation over a twelve month period, since it became clear that I was unable to represent my organisation's needs at meetings whilst adopting such a role. Second, since I was unable to consistently take part in discussions, I decided that I would not record my own contributions and instead rely on reflectively evaluating my position on each observed situation when analysing my findings.

Taking such a pragmatic approach meant that I needed to be aware of a number of points. For some arguments, where I contributed to the discussion, data was incomplete. For discussions where I did not contribute, although data was complete, the actual arguments themselves did not include a college perspective. Consequentially, within my overall analysis of data from meetings, my own and the college's positions on key issues were not included. Although I did include my own and the college's perspectives in my interpretative reasoning, this led to the issues discussed in the next paragraph. Additionally,

by interviewing the college principal I was able to identify college perspectives on key topics. However, these topics did not always coincide with those discussed at meetings and, since these views were expressed outside the meetings, they did not influence the dynamics of meeting discussions.

Although my own perspective was implicitly included in my interpretative analyses, both to compensate for not recording my meeting contributions and as a natural consequence of my insider position, this led to certain difficulties. First, since at meetings I had not clearly defined my viewpoint in key arguments, and thus had these viewpoints validated or rejected by others, I needed to be careful not to make the assumptions I discussed in section 3.2.2.2 about others sharing my perceptions. Second, and particularly in relation to my own strong personal positive attitude towards partnership and my professional reliance on the partnership for my employment position, as suggested by Alvesson (2003, p183), I needed to ensure these interpretations were not unduly influenced by my personal and professional closeness to the partnership. In effect, I needed to balance the advantages of insiderness, which would enable more realistic theoretical explanations of observations, against the dangers of being unable:

‘... to liberate oneself from some taken for granted ideas or to view things in an open-minded way (Alvesson 2003, p183)’.

Insiderness would thus help me avoid Bourdieu’s scholastic fallacy, but could also lead to me making unsubstantiated, or even personally motivated, assumptions. As discussed in section 4.2, key elements of my reflexive approach would be to ensure such a balance was achieved. Finally, linked to both points in this paragraph, since I had not explicitly recorded my own role within discussions, throughout my analysis of these discussions I needed to be careful to identify implicit knowledge that I had used to reach my interpretations and conclusions.

I decided to record key exchanges as handwritten notes. This was based on the view of Alvesson (2003, p182) that ‘...tape-recording may disturb the situation, create irritation...’ If I thought a discussion was particularly illuminating, I wrote this discussion verbatim. From a practical perspective, as suggested by Alvesson (2003), at times it was difficult to make comprehensive notes whilst

attempting both to observe and to participate. Such difficulties are exemplified by the lack of quotations within my notes, particularly when heated and revealing exchanges were taking place. In order to ensure a systematic approach, and to take account of the above notetaking issues, I then followed the three additional processes described by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p466):

- handwritten notes were typed into Word as contemporaneously as possible;
- emergent issues and ideas were detailed in a journal;
- an initial evaluative account of findings was produced.

This initial evaluative account was also used to support the questions that I developed for the interview part of the research. Following the completion of interviews, I carried out a full analysis of my findings as described in section 3.3.7.5, reviewing the observational evidence alongside the interview findings.

### **3.3.4 Reflexive Account**

My reflexive account was formulated for a number of purposes: to enable me to adopt the degree of 'participant objectivation' previously discussed, particularly in relation to my insider position, and thus provide a critical lens through which I would analyse my findings and conclusions in order to avoid both the scholastic fallacy and to overcome some of the issues inherent in my insider position; to clearly identify to the reader my position in relation to my field of study and thus, especially in relation to the absence of my statements from my thematic analysis, highlight some of key biases that could have influenced my interpretations.

As discussed in section 3.2.2.3, participant objectivation is performed by the researcher analysing their position within the field of research in relation to those who are being researched. Thus, my reflexive account was broadly a comparison of the particular forms of capital that I possessed relative to those capitals possessed by others within the partnership. This reflexive account was concluded with a discussion of my own habitus in relation to both the partnership and my research. This account was composed at roughly the same

time as my initial account on the findings from participant observation, since I felt that at this point, due to my immersion within the observation process, I would be most suitably be able to identify my relationship within the partnership.

### **3.3.5 Field Analysis**

From my ontological position it is clear that this research would require some discussion of the objective, but socially constructed, structure with which my research subjects interacted. As discussed in detail elsewhere, for Bourdieu the structural element of his sociology was the field. For my particular purposes, I took this notion of field to be what Bourdieu (Wacquant 1989b, pp37-41) described as 'objective relations between positions' based upon the relative distribution of species of capital that are important within the field. Throughout my relationship with the LC it was apparent that the key capitals that relatively positioned schools within this field were the various symbolic capitals represented by Y11 performance tables, with these tables defining objectively the school's position within the field and the practices and stances adopted by schools, both aspects being constitutive of and inseparably part of Bourdieu's notion of position (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p105). I thus decided that the key focus of my field study would be an analysis of the schools' positions in relation to such measures, but in order to broaden these capitals, I also included reference to school per-capita incomes, number of students in Y11, progression into post-16 provision and relative engagement with LC provision. From an operational perspective, I used these field positions to contextualise evidence obtained from observation in order to identify those particular contexts in which certain critical realist mechanisms were activated. To obtain an idea of where the different schools within the partnership were located within this partnership field, the schools were placed in rank order based upon the amount of each particular type of capital each school possessed. These measures are listed in table 4.1.

In order to identify the types of characteristics that schools in similar positions possessed, schools were put into groups based on whether they were in the top third, middle third or bottom third for each capital factor that was ranked. In addition, in order to gain a comprehension of how each capital factor related to other capital factors, the correlation of that particular factor against other factors

was also determined. Since correlations were determined using an entire population no tests of statistical significance were performed. Data for these measures were extracted from the sources identified in table 4.1 in chapter 4. The percentage of students accessing LC provision was determined from LC data and was calculated by dividing total number of Y10 and Y11 students attending provision by total number of students in Y10 and Y11. All figures referred to students who completed their year 11 in 2011. This year was selected since it represented the last available figures at the start of the interview phase.

### **3.3.6 Review of Policy Context**

In a critical realist analysis, an identification of the context within which outcomes have been identified is of central importance. This research was carried out against the backdrop of a change from the New Labour to the Conservative-Liberal Democrat administration. In addition, the state has the key role, in the context of educational activity, in specifying and assigning a value to those capitals which define the field. Thus it was important to identify key changes in government policy towards 14-19 education.

Although, this analysis was not empirical, in the sense of an analysis of primary data, for a number of reasons this identification of key government policy was positioned within the thesis alongside my reflexive account and field analysis. First, in common with my field analysis it provided a contextual background to my other findings, in this case a discussion of the key changes in what the field of power saw as being important, and hence how those capitals discussed in the field analysis would change. Second, in common with my reflexive account, it provided another context through which to interrogate my findings. Finally, an analysis of government policy might appear more appropriate within the literature review section. However, since the purpose of the literature review was to provide a synthetic theoretical framework for my research, this policy discussion did not seem to fit comfortably in there. It was more suitable to place it in a section identifying key research contexts in terms of: field positions at the organisational level; my own position in relation to the research project; government changes that would impact on the value of capitals and ultimately the structure of the field.



### **3.3.7 Interviews**

#### **3.3.7.1 *The Purpose of the Interview***

The purpose of the interview was, as suggested by King (2004), to ‘...see the research topic from the perspective of the interviewee’. In line with my critical realist perspective it also aimed to record ‘the reasoning and resources of those involved’ with the partnership and to identify the ‘processes and outcomes’ of the operation of the partnership (Pawson and Tilley 1997, p154). In line with this and my research questions, the overriding aim of the interviews was to understand how managers of partnership organisations comprehended factors that influenced their engagement with the partnership. From the Bourdieun perspective, the interview sought to identify capitals that influenced organisations’ partnership engagement and gain some comprehension of participants’ habituses in relation to the partnership.

Various researchers have discussed the positioning of the insider in ways that influenced the interview strategy I adopted to complement participant observation. Labaree (2002, p101), indicates that as an insider there are degrees of insiderness dependent upon the researcher’s position in relation to various groupings. Alvesson (2003, p178) describes these issues in terms of the insider having access to ‘limited fields’. In my research it is apparent I had varying levels of access to different sections of the partnership. For the overall partnership I was not part of the bureaucratic administrative structure. In relation to the individual partnership organisations I was also an outsider. This aspect of ‘outsiderness’ included my own organisation, where I was not involved in making key strategic decisions. These considerations were key in deciding who to interview. Brannick and Coghlan (2007, p67) discuss such difficulties in terms of primary and secondary access, suggesting that primary access was often easier for the insider, but secondary access, to different parts or hierarchies, was often more difficult.

#### **3.3.7.2 *Selection of Participants***

Following the observations, it was clear that key decisions rarely involved training providers. Training providers merely reacted to propositions made by schools by delivering the requested provision without discussing in detail any philosophical views on their participation within the partnership. In addition,

training providers were only present at the strategy and curriculum group meetings and thus had a more limited partnership role than either the schools or the college. Thus I decided to exclude training providers from those who I planned to interview. Since my research questions linked to the perceptions of school managers, this did not prevent these questions being answered.

Initially I planned to interview the curriculum group representative from each partnership school. Although my selection of this partnership for research would be regarded as convenience or opportunity sampling, my selection of actual interviewees was purposive (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011, p155-157). I selected interviewees with the *purpose* of using their comprehension of the actual and empirical to enable me to propose key mechanisms for partnership engagement. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p155-157) the key deficit of opportunity and purposive sampling relates to the generalisability of findings. However, this lack of generalisability is outweighed by the capacity of my sample to provide in-depth, relevant and contextualised information.

These interviewees would be labelled by Pawson and Tilley (1997, p160) as practitioners and would thus be the respondents most able to provide empirical knowledge that would allow the formulation of a critical realist explanation. At the school level they were involved in the operational management of provision and were also part of each school's strategic decision making process. They would thus be able to provide information about day-to-day issues of partnership engagement, both from their own and other stakeholders' perspectives. They would also have an insight into their school's overall strategic direction, both in terms of partnership engagement and more general objectives. Additionally, since these managers also attended most of the partnership meetings that I attended, they would be able to provide a different perspective to mine on key events at such meetings. To gain a broader perspective, and to overcome my differential access to certain aspects of the partnership, I also decided to interview the partnership manager and my own organisation's principal. Long after the interviews and the concentrated phase of observation, but before the termination of my research, new personnel were

in place in both of these roles. Those interviewed and characteristics of their organisations are listed in table 3.1.

Although I planned to interview a representative from each partnership school, staff changes, changing engagement and lack of response when contacted, meant that ultimately I only interviewed representatives from nine of the fifteen schools. Interviewees did include the chair of the curriculum group and staff from a spread of schools from different field positions, who, apart from the head who chaired the curriculum group, were either curriculum deputy or assistant heads.

### ***3.3.7.3 Format of the Interviews***

Interviews used the semi-structured approach (Bogdan and Biklen 1992; Pawson and Tilley 1997, p154). This met the requirements of a critical realist interview (Smith and Elger 2014, p119) by providing an 'analytical framework,' which enabled interviewees' responses to be structured by my comprehension of potential theoretical frameworks, and allowing me to explore 'the subjective experiences and narrative accounts' of interviewees, required to translate interviewees' knowledge into mechanistic explanations. The process that I adopted in arriving at the interview guide is detailed below.

Despite the suitability of the semi-structured interview, I was aware of its limitations. Some related to the interview process: key discussion topics might inadvertently be omitted (Patton 1980, p206) or topics of 'peripheral' interest

<b>Code<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>Organisation Type</b>	<b>Role of Interviewee</b>
<b>1</b>	11-16 School	Assistant Head
<b>2</b>	11-19 School	Head
<b>3</b>	11-19 School	Assistant Head
<b>4</b>	11-19 School	Assistant Head
<b>6</b>	11-16 School	Assistant Head
<b>11</b>	11-16 Academy	Deputy Head
<b>13</b>	11-18 School	Deputy Head
<b>14</b>	11-16 School	Assistant Head
<b>15</b>	11-18 School	Deputy Head
<b>16</b>	College	Principal
<b>17</b>	LC	Manager

**Table 3.1-** Those interviewed and their roles within their organisation

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<sup>3</sup> Codes refer to the organisational codes that I have identified in Appendix 1.



might be emphasised (Brewerton and Millward 2001, p70). To overcome this, I ticked off topics that had been covered on the interview guide, both during and at the conclusion of the interview, to ensure full topic coverage; during interviews I made judgements as to whether interviewees had moved off topic and took steps to redress this, although occasionally I allowed some drift since discussions provided useful information. Brewerton and Millward (2001, p70) suggested the interviewee might take control of the agenda, a distinct likelihood given the 'powerful nature' of those I would be interviewing (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011, p173): I planned to use the interview guide (appendix B) to control this process, but this was not needed at any point. Other problems related to issues of reliability. Patton (1980, p206) believes the lack of consistent wording makes comparison of responses problematic: my thematic analysis of responses, discussed below, specifically avoided reference to questions and looked for key themes independent of the questions. King (2004, p11) believes the relationship-building in such an interview might contaminate findings: another purpose of my reflexive account was to avoid such contamination. Ultimately, issues relating to reliability in such interviews were subsumed by the key advantages, both of the semi-structured approach and my position as an insider.

The semi-structured interviews were based around a number of discussion themes and topics without specified wording; although I initially planned the order of topics, at interview I ordered topics to fit the flow of conversation; despite producing a detailed introduction, which clarified the consent document's content, this was not used as a precise script at the interviews since I wished to maintain a conversational approach. During the interview I used the interview guide to ensure coverage of all topics and themes. To finish, each respondent was asked if there was anything that they wished to add. Each interview was electronically recorded and lasted between 20 and 45 minutes. With the exception of one school manager and the LC Manager, interviews were carried out at the respondent's workplace and all took place between July 2012 and March 2013.

Initial interviewee contact was made about one month prior to the interview by email, phone or in person. Once I had verbal agreement, the consent form and



information document (appendix C) were sent to each respondent. Signed consent was obtained immediately prior to the interview.

#### **3.3.7.4 Construction of Interview Guide**

The interview guide (appendix B) was constructed following the process suggested by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, pp415-420). I reviewed my research objectives, in light of my synthetic theoretical framework, and identified a range of topic headings that covered these objectives. I then reviewed the topic headings against my preliminary findings from the observation phase and also against my insider comprehension of key issues that the partnership was facing. Following this review I added a topic about BTEC equivalences and modified the topic on government influence to make specific reference to factors affecting schools sending students onto provision. Table 3.2 identifies the links between my topic areas and research objectives. Using key topic areas I added a number of sub-headings to use as prompts, for clarification of the topic, and probes, for extending responses into areas not raised by the respondent (Morrison 1993, p66). In relation to the ordering of questions suggested by Patton (1980, p210-211), topics looking for descriptive responses were placed at the start of the schedule, with more explanatory topics being placed towards the end.

At an early stage I made a key decision in relation to the interview format and the detail within my schedule. In previous unpublished interview work (Holmes 2009) I had used what Pawson and Tilley (1997, p169) described as the 'pilot interview'. Within such an interview, the interviewer presents a set of theoretical explanations of the research topic to the respondent and asks them to discuss this explanation. When I trialled this process both respondents felt that theoretical discussion unnecessarily complicated the interview process and also led them to particular responses, confirming the potentially biased and didactic nature of such interviews (Smith and Elger 2014). I decided that, although I was keen to explore the mechanisms that were crucial to a critical realist ontology, I would do this by asking generalised questions that would enable respondents to provide their own perspective on my key areas of interest. I would add mechanistic links myself at the evaluation stage.

	To explore partnership dynamics	To understand how a partnership operates	Government influences on partnership	To identify those factors which might enable a map of to be formulated	To determine the different forms of capital possessed	To investigate how dispositions of organisations change
Attitude towards partnership	X	X				X
Benefits of partnership	X	X		X	X	X
Costs of partnership	X	X		X	X	X
Factors that affect the numbers of students that you send onto LC provision	X	X	X			X
View of the partnership position relating to the value of BTEC qualifications.			X	X	X	X
View of Government position on qualification equivalences	X	X	X	X	X	X
Key issues facing the partnership	X	X	X			X

**Table 3.2** How interview themes relate to my research objectives.

Before starting interviews with actual respondents, as suggested by Taylor, Sinha and Ghoshal (2006, p84), I piloted the interview. As detailed by Oppenheim (1992, p48), the aim of the pilot was to identify '*anything* that can go wrong' with the *entire* process and by Noor (2008, p1603) to identify difficulties with question wording. I undertook two interviews with colleagues from my own college, one who was an experienced researcher, but not particularly aware of the specific issues relating to 14-19 partnerships, and one who had no research experience but was aware of key issues with this particular 14-19 partnership. To achieve the pilot's aim, pilot interviewees were also asked the questions in appendix D.

Following the pilot, no substantive changes were made. However, based on respondent feedback and my own perceptions I did confirm two clear decisions on my final approach. Since both respondents felt that reading from my lengthy introductory script had detracted at an early point from the conversational nature of the interview, I decided to paraphrase the introduction. Second, as suggested by Holstein and Gubrium (1995, p79), I decided to make immediate post-interview notes of my thoughts and feelings of the 'circumstances' and 'contexts' of the interviews. Again feedback from the pilot suggested this would be more appropriate than attempting to take contemporaneous interview notes.

### **3.3.7.5 *Transcription and Analysis of Interviews and Observations***

Being mindful of the issues in transcribing interviews raised by Poland (1995, pp296-299) I adopted a particular approach. I transcribed interviews and observations as soon as possible after the event. By transcribing them myself, I aimed to reduce the interpretative layer inherent in all forms of transcription due to the 'transition from the oral to the written (Kvale and Brinkmann 2008, p103)' and remove 'deliberate alterations of data', the 'accidental alterations of data', such as 'paraphrasing', punctuation errors and mis-contextualisation of words (Poland 1995, p296). Transcription involved typing up the dialogue, with minimal indication, apart from my field notes, being made on interviewees' non-verbal communication. To improve quality, when interviews had been transcribed I edited them for typographical and transcription errors by re-listening to the audio files.

Subsequent analysis of interview and observation material used the method suggested by Hahn (2008). This process aimed to reduce the large number of interview statements into a manageable number of topic headings by an iterative process that reduced by stages the number of topic headings from a large number of Level 1 codes down to a significantly smaller number of Level 3 codes.

For Level 1 coding, I read through each of my edited Word documents and highlighted sections of dialogue that might have direct relevance to my topic and provide answers to my research questions (Hahn 2008, p95). Each of these sections was labelled with a phrase that was structured as a potential answer to a research question. Level 1 coding was a rapid process, which did not involve cross-checking previously allocated Level 1 coding, identifying pieces of dialogue that might be useful in an ultimate analysis, rather than constructing a coherent, interlinked theoretical solution to my research problem. In order to ensure that ideas falling outside my theoretical framework were not discarded, this coding (and the Level 2 and Level 3 coding) did not contain any reference to theoretical concepts. When completed, Level 1 codes, and associated transcript dialogue, were transferred into an Access database. I constructed a table containing information on participants and their organisations, which was cross-linked to the interview or observation table using Access's relationship facility. (See appendix E for an example of this process).

I assigned Level 2 codes within the Access database following Hahn's (2008, pp111-145) method. The purpose of generating Level 2 code was to loosely create categories by grouping together Level 1 codes (Hahn 2008, p121). Level 1 codes and associated dialogue were read through and those that appeared to be conceptually similar were grouped together and given a thematic label (the 'Level 2 code', appendix F) that provided a potential answer to a research question. In contrast to Level 1, Level 2 coding was a much slower and more detailed process, with frequent revising of labels, reviewing of dialogue and moving of interview or observation statements from one Level 2 code to a more appropriate one.

The Level 2 codes and their linked Level 1 codes were printed out in an Access report. Each Level 2 code was then cut out and manually 'shuffled' into common groups in the way described by Hahn (2008, pp164-166), in order to iteratively create a smaller number Level 3 codes that gave clear indications of potential answers to the research questions. My Level 3 codes were simple phrases that provided indicative but untheorized answers to my research questions. After creating the Level 3 codes, I reviewed each code against its associated dialogue, referring to original transcriptions and audio recordings, to ensure the statements reflected the allocated Level 3 code. These Level 3 codes are presented in appendix G and analysed in chapter 5. Finally, I re-examined the statements within each Level 3 code to identify any key themes from topic areas that each code could be sub-divided into. These allocations of topic areas are presented in appendix H.

### **3.4 Conclusions**

This chapter has described how my eventual choice of methods met the requirements of my research objectives and questions by providing a coherent link between my ontological, epistemological and theoretical positions. In outline, my chosen methods enabled me to use mainly Bourdieun theoretical structures, located within the real domain, to explain engagement within this partnership. My methods also took account of the critical realist requirement to translate the comprehension of interviewees, via interpretative, communicative processes, whilst also enabling me to incorporate my broader knowledge of other contexts and theoretical perspectives.

The key deficit with this plan was the opportunistic, and incomplete, sample of respondents. This limited the generalisability of my findings. Other weaknesses were an inherent consequence of my particular ontological and epistemological position. Thus, whilst acknowledging potential 'reliability' issues with semi-structured interviews, these were outweighed by the potential for finding rich and illuminating respondent accounts that enabled me to formulate putative critical realist mechanisms. The key strength of my approach was the combination of a critical realist ontology with my theoretical framework. This amalgamation enabled me to overcome the contrasting deficits of each of these



two perspectives. Thus my synthetic framework provided the specific theoretical structures that were missing from critical realism, whilst critical realism provided the ontology that is missing from my synthetic framework, and in particular Bourdieun sociology.

The final point of note is about my position as insider. This also brought contrasting methodological strengths and weaknesses. As a strength, this position enabled me to bring perspectives and contexts into the interpretive and theorisation processes that enabled me to avoid the scholastic fallacy.

However, I had to be aware, that my familiarity with both my subjects and objects could well lead, via the making of tacit assumptions, to an obverse fallacy whereby I confused my comprehension of the situation with that of my subjects. As with other areas of this research, my reflexive lens was of crucial importance in avoiding this fallacy.

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter details key contextual factors that specifically tie critical realist explanations to my outcomes. It:

- Analyses how this particular partnership field is structured;
- Identifies, via the reflexive account, where I am actually located within this field;
- Discusses some of the forces that are impacting on the field from the governmental field of power.

Although the final point appears to be out of context in a chapter presenting empirical findings, it has critical links to both of the other points. Given the central role of the state in determining which capitals are valuable within such a field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p114), the policy context discussion fits with the analysis of field since it records changes that affect organisations' attempts to optimise their field positions. Second, like my reflexive account, it provides another key contextual lens through which to interpret my findings. Finally, along with the other sections, which either locate me in relation to the field I am studying or locate organisations in relation to each other, this section positions this research in relation to the field of power.

### **4.2 Reflexive Account**

#### **4.2.1 Introduction**

In order to undertake a reflexive account, the researcher needs to identify their field position relative to the research object and subjects (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p68). Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p97) suggested that to identify a position within a field one has to analyse the amount of capital that is possessed by the occupant relative to the capital possessed by others within the field. As a participant observer I need to analyse my position within the field both as a member of the partnership and as a researcher. This is achieved by identifying the capitals that I possess in comparison to those capitals possessed by my subjects.

#### **4.2.2 Social Capital**

Within the current context, I am considering social capital to refer to links and relationships that I have developed with others within the group: a key part of the Bourdieu's (1986) definition, discussed in section 2.3.2. To comprehend these levels of social capital, and which of these will affect my position as an observer, it is important to outline the sources of such capital in relation to my career trajectory. I have been a teacher within this geographical area since January 1989. Although my relationships with individual partnership members do not stretch back to this date, other personnel within schools do remember me. From April 1991 I have worked within college settings and have had a key responsibility for work with local schools. From June 2002 until June 2007 I was the coordinator of the area's IF Partnership and developed links with schools, training providers, the LA and other agencies.

In line with Bourdieu's relational and field mapping approaches, I have identified my relations with several partnership members, in terms of the time that I have known them and in terms of how I have previously worked with them. I have known one person for over ten years, have worked with most of the group for between four and nine years and have known a few people for less than a year. With my recent acquaintances, contacts have been in relation to partnership business; with longer-standing colleagues, networking has also included the IF partnership work and specific projects. I was in professional contact with all partnership members, with contact varying from weekly to about once per-year. Usually, contact was about partnership business, but occasionally we would have exchanges about other subjects. Although contact was on a professional basis, I would class some partners as friends. Others in the group had similar relationships. Some group members had previously worked together in the same organisation.

Over this period, I devoted time and effort to develop this social capital (Bourdieu 1993, p33), with others making the reciprocal commitments to me and to each other that underpin social capital (Bourdieu 1986). The unique access I had to key managers was mainly developed by this mutual accrual of social capital: for this research I was hoping that my respondents' would repay some of their obligations to me by taking part in the research, in Bourdieu

terms, by allowing me to convert this social capital into the information capital of knowledge about the partnership.

#### **4.2.3 Cultural Capital**

Here, institutionalised cultural capital relates to the qualifications of partners (Bourdieu 1986) and embodied cultural capital would be agents' generally educated nature and general knowledge (Lareau and Weininger 2003; Grenfell and James 1998). It is useful first to identify my key cultural capital. I am a biochemistry graduate and possess a qualification enabling me to teach science and PE within schools. I also possess a masters degree within education and masters level qualifications within marketing and management. I taught for three years within schools, then worked twenty one years within the college sector. I had been in my current position nine years, with my remit predominantly involving work with partnerships and 14-19 year old students. Within college I was an academic middle-manager without a teaching commitment. I had two line-managers between myself and the college principal, and managed only administrative staff. I needed to discuss most partnership decisions either with my senior managers or with those who managed college curriculum areas. Although without a teaching commitment I did have frequent one-to-one and group contact with 14-16 year old and 16-19 year old students and undertook observations of teaching for both.

Schools' representatives within the LC appeared to possess similar levels of cultural capital to each other. All were teacher-managers within their own schools and all currently had a teaching commitment. Most were also senior-managers, and had only one line-manager between themselves and the head-teacher. All managed other teachers or managers, with a curriculum management or pastoral focus. Unlike myself, most only had 14-19 as part of a broader remit. With the exception of head-teachers, most had similar levels of decision-making autonomy to myself. In conclusion, by virtue of experience within the 14-19 field and exposure to the pedagogy relevant to 14-19 year olds, these managers possessed slightly different types and levels of embodied cultural capital to me. Although I had not systematically collected such data, by virtue of the qualifications needed in such positions, school representatives appeared to have similar levels of institutionalised cultural capital to myself.



This identification of levels of cultural capital is useful in a number ways. For myself it not only specifies the sorts of knowledge and abilities that I bring to this research but also indicates the biased lenses that I will need to guard against refracting my findings through. For my respondents, it also indicates the potential biases they might possess, but more broadly, the sorts of experiences and knowledge that would underpin their answers to my research questions. This is particularly important given my research questions specifically relate to these managers' conceptions.

#### **4.2.4 Habitus**

To fully comprehend my own position in relation to my object of study, it is important to identify those factors which impact on my own views and those which have influenced my methodological position. In Bourdieu's conceptualisations of habitus, discussed in section 2.2.2, my past experiences within the field would dispose me to act in a particularly habitual manner and, as with my capitals, would be a potential distorting lens when I come to analyse my findings. As explained above, during the period of research, and in contrast to those observed or interviewed, except the partnership manager, my job-role focussed predominantly on provision delivered by the partnership. Without partnership provision my job-role would have been severely compromised; indeed at this research's conclusion my position had been made redundant and I had been redeployed into a completely different position. It is clear my habitus includes a very positive attitude to working in partnership.

Additionally, my political and philosophical leanings, both professionally and extra-professionally, have made key contributions to my habitus. My educational trajectory defied much of Bourdieu's ideas (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990) about social and educational reproduction. I came from a financially poor working-class background; my parents rented LA accommodation and worked in low paid semi-skilled or unskilled jobs. By attending a local Grammar school and subsequently a Russell Group university, I progressed to a management position within an educational organisation, gained a masters level degree and an owner-occupied property within an affluent suburb of northern England. Despite, or possibly because of, such a trajectory, throughout I have maintained



the strong socialist principle that the state should wholly finance the effective operation of key public bodies, even if increased taxation is required. I also believe that the state should support the most vulnerable members of society. All my teaching has been within organisations serving disadvantaged communities and predominantly to either low achieving students or those looking to change their personal trajectories. When combined with my personal history, this has led me to believe social justice (Ayers, Quinn and Stovall, 2009, xiv) is education's key function. I fully endorse their key principles that education should provide equitable opportunities for all, enabling students to take a full and active role within society, and should be where injustices, such as racism, sexism, and homophobia, are actively challenged. Additionally, I also believe that students' needs should be prioritised over those of other educational stakeholders and that selection within the schools sector is abhorrent.

In order to understand my methodological position, awareness of my background as a biochemist and a science teacher is important. Throughout this training, I was immersed in the practice and dissemination of, what I now recognise as, the positivist or empiricist research method. As I developed as a teacher, in particular through my masters degree studies, teaching on programmes such as science technology and society, and by the exploration of ideas such as normal and revolutionary science (Kuhn 1996), I became aware that such a positivist approach to natural science research was not the only way of obtaining evidence to describe, understand and explain the natural world. Additionally, when teaching scientific concepts, like quantum theory, I became aware that many of our natural scientific theories or laws were social constructs describing real structures, which due to limitations in instrumentation or language, we struggled to describe adequately. Given this scepticism about positivism's ability to explain the relatively easily measurable and controllable natural world, I found it very difficult to see how application of positivism to the more complicated social world would enable us to understand all of its complexity. Equally, I also thought a 'real' social world existed and thus believed that we cannot gain a clear picture of this by examining language or people's conceptions in the way advocated by interpretivism in its many incarnations.

#### **4.2.5 Reflexive Conclusions**

To conclude this section I have attempted to make the epistemological break, suggested by Bourdieu (1977, p2), by identifying the key questions, suggested by this reflexive review, I have asked myself throughout while interpreting my data.

- Am I trying to adopt a theoretical position that is based more upon my understanding of the social world rather than on the way that actors interpret the world?
- Is the conclusion that I have arrived at due to my vested interest and positive attitude towards partnership?
- Have my dogmatic political and educational views influenced my analysis?

#### **4.3 The Changing Policy Context**

This research commenced as government was changing from the New Labour administration (1997 to 2010) to the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition (from May 2010). This came with a clear change in attitude towards 14-19 partnerships and the related pre-16 vocational education. Higham and Yeomans (2011, p217) in their overview of 30 years of 14-19 education and training, suggested that this change in government represented: '... a distinct break in policy in relation to 14-19 education and training...' In this section, each administration's position in relation to partnership working and vocational education has been compared and contrasted.

Three particular threads of New Labour policy led to the formation and development of the LC: the notion of a coherent 14-19 phase of education; strong support for vocational provision for pre and post-16 students; a belief that such provision was most effectively delivered by organisations working in partnership. Higham and Yeomans (2011, p220) stated on more than one occasion that it was with the New Labour administration that most progress was made in establishing a coherent phase of 14-19 education and that the development of this phase was consistently backed by '...policy and supported by a whole range of levers and drivers'. Hodgson and Spours (2006, p330) also postulated that various policy drivers at this time led to an unequal '...struggle

between competition and collaboration'. These policy drivers are discussed below.

New Labour introduced the idea of 14-19 education in its 2002 Discussion paper *14-19: Extending Opportunities, Raising Standards* (Department for Education and Skills 2002a). Over the following eight years it supported the development of 14-19 partnerships to deliver vocational opportunities to students using two main drivers: providing financial incentives in initiatives such as *Increased Flexibility* (Department for Education and Skills 2002a), *14-19 Pathfinders* (Department for Education and Skills 2002b); developing the novel *Diploma* qualifications (Department for Education and Skills 2005). In order to develop and deliver the *Diploma*, organisations had to work in partnership; funding was provided for their development but not for delivery. Importantly, all 'approved' vocational qualifications had GCSE equivalence values in the performance tables, although in many cases these values were over-inflated (e.g. a Pass in a BTEC Level 2 Diploma was equivalent to four grade C passes at GCSE, although the qualification was rarely delivered in more time than two GCSEs).

Although New Labour's attitude towards 14-19 vocational partnership provision was positive, certain of its actions were contrary to this, as the administration was still clearly wedded to the primacy of traditional academic qualifications. The introduction of the *Diploma* qualification resulted from the government's rejection (Department for Education and Skills 2005) of the *Tomlinson Report* (Department for Education and Skills 2004b) reforms, which advocated restructuring 14-19 academic and vocational qualifications into a comprehensive credit framework that removed the perceived inequalities between these two types of qualification. At about the time the *Tomlinson Report* was published, Tony Blair explicitly re-iterated his support for academic qualifications, indicating in a speech to the CBI that any introduction of vocational pathways would still be against the backdrop of A-levels, GCSEs and external examinations (Blair 2004). The *Tomlinson Report* supported partnerships, suggesting that performance table changes were needed to enable effective partnership working. Again, such proposals were not implemented, and performance tables were revised to include the percentage of

students achieving 5 grade A\*-C GCSE passes including English and Maths as the key performance measure, with schools who failed to meet floor targets in this performance measure (Department for Children Schools and Families 2007) being in danger of conversion to Academy status or closure (Sammons 2008).

From the outset, the Coalition adopted a very different position in relation to vocational education and partnership at 14-19 and rarely mentioned the notion of a coherent and unified 14-19 phase of education. Much of their policy involved the strengthening and refining of New Labour policies and drivers. These changes were also underpinned by the notion, as discussed by Lyotard (1984, p48), that the purpose of education is to improve the nation's competitiveness (Gove 2010). In outline, the changes that impacted upon partnership delivery of 14-19 vocational education were: more widespread academisation of schools, including the introduction of new types of schools that were directly funded by the government; a review of 14-19 vocational education; a complete overhaul of both pre and post-16 accountability measures.

Academisation, via the *Academies Act 2010*, had a number of impacts on partnership delivery of 14-19 vocational education. Increased levels of autonomy meant academies had less compulsion or need to work within local partnerships. Additionally, a number of commercial trans-regional academy chains were put in place. As suggested by Brundrett (2012) and Morrison (2013), this led to the development of partnerships predicated on the needs of that commercial enterprise rather than the needs of the local community and replacing 'social collectivism' with 'commercial collectivism' (Brundrett 2012). Additionally, groups of people, such as businesses, faith groups, parents, charities, were able to put forward proposals to sponsor the opening of '14-19 Studio Schools'. Although their 14-16 curriculum would primarily be academic, there would be an 'entrepreneurial and vocational focus (Department for Education 2010b, p60)'. This signalled the unwillingness of the Coalition to have 14-19 vocational partnerships built around loose networks of schools, colleges and others.

Early in its incumbency the Coalition commissioned a review of pre and post-16 vocational education (Gove 2010). The subsequent review, carried out by Professor Alison Wolf (Wolf 2011), which did not mention partnership working, had 27 key recommendations (see Appendix I). The key theme pertinent to this research was the planned reform of the way that vocational and other qualifications contributed to the Key Stage 4 performance tables (recommendations 1, 3, 4, 26). Throughout, Wolf was keen to indicate that 14-16 year olds were free to follow any Section 96 approved vocational qualification; however, only certain ones would be used within the Key Stage 4 performance tables.

When the Coalition published guidance on the key features of vocational qualifications that could be used in Key Stage 4 performance tables (Department for Education 2011b; 2011c), this indicated they would be characterised by 'good progression, appropriate size, challenge and external assessment, proven track record (Department for Education 2011b: pp3-4)'. A truncated list of 'Wolf compliant' vocational qualifications that would be credited in the 2014 Key Stage 4 performance tables was published (Department for Education 2012). These changes led to approved vocational qualifications becoming more like academic qualifications, with a large volume of classroom based theoretical delivery, examinations, rather than ongoing competence-based evaluation, as the key form of assessment, particularly in the compulsory theoretical units. For some qualifications delivery appeared possible without any hands-on experience. Additionally, qualifications in hair and beauty and motor vehicle studies that had been successfully delivered by the partnership were not included.

Alongside these reforms, the Coalition also reconstructed the apparatus of secondary school accountability. These changes were underpinned by a very particular view both of what qualifications students should be following and how they should be assessed. Within six months of the Coalition's election, Michael Gove (Gove, 2010) introduced the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), another standard against which schools would be measured at the end of Key Stage 4. It was retrospectively used in 2010 (Department for Education 2010a) to measure performance of students who had entered Key Stage 4 in 2008. The



EBacc indicated at the end of Key Stage 4 the percentage of students who had achieved at least 5 A\*-C GCSE grades in English, maths, science, a foreign language and humanities subject. Alongside this measure, the Coalition's first performance tables (Department for Education 2010a) included comparison of a school's 5 A\*-C (including English and maths) pass rate *with* vocational qualifications included against the same pass rate *without* vocational qualifications: effectively a measure of a school's reliance on vocational qualifications within the performance tables.

These changes pre-empted performance measure reforms that were potentially far more disruptive than the EBacc. The Coalition had recognised (Department for Education 2010b, p68) that the Key Stage 4 performance tables had an unfair emphasis on measuring the performance of more capable 14-16 year olds. In October 2013 the Coalition announced another reform of school accountability measures (Department for Education 2013a; 2013b) with the 'Progress Eight' accountability measure for the 2014-2016 Key Stage 4 cohort. The stated key purpose of these reforms was '...to hold schools to account for all their pupils' progress across a broader range of subjects (Department for Education 2013b, p5)'. This was achieved by changing the metric, from the narrow measurement of the proportion of students achieving 5A\*-C in GCSEs, to one that identified on average how much progress across eight subjects learners were making, from entrance at age 11 to leaving at 16, via a value added measure. Significantly, the progress of *all* students, and not just those likely to achieve 5A\*-C GCSEs, would now be measured and subjects favoured within the EBacc would form the core of this measure. Although vocational qualifications were included, only those previously specified as suitable by the Government would be allowed. The formulaic way that a curriculum would need to be constructed meant that unless a vocational qualification had performance table value it would be unlikely to form part of the curriculum.

To conclude, I have identified key Coalition changes that affected the partnership during this research. Coalition views on many of the elements of 14-19 vocational education partnerships were markedly different to those of New Labour and discussion of 14-19 partnership was markedly absent. Partnerships

were jeopardised by academisation and introduction of new types of 14-19 organisation. Performance tables continued to measure school success and at Key Stage 4 there was a radical change including broadening of the measure to include performance at all levels and a clear emphasis on the central role of traditional academic subjects. It was the position of vocational subjects within these tables that underwent the most significant changes. Under Coalition plans, only a narrow range of specified vocational qualifications, with significantly reduced values, were featured.

#### **4.4 Field Positions Based on Different Types of Capital**

The field analysis described in section 3.5, has been presented in graphical format. The vertical axis of each graph indicates scores on each particular measure presented in table 4.1. The horizontal axis identifies each school using the codes in appendix A. Schools are placed along this axis in rank order of the particular measure. I have also included the mean score for the top middle and bottom third of schools on that particular rank. The final column in each graph indicates the overall mean score for that measure. Although I ranked schools on all eight measures, I have only included those that I felt were key to this research. For completeness the other ranks and my original ranking tables are in appendix J.

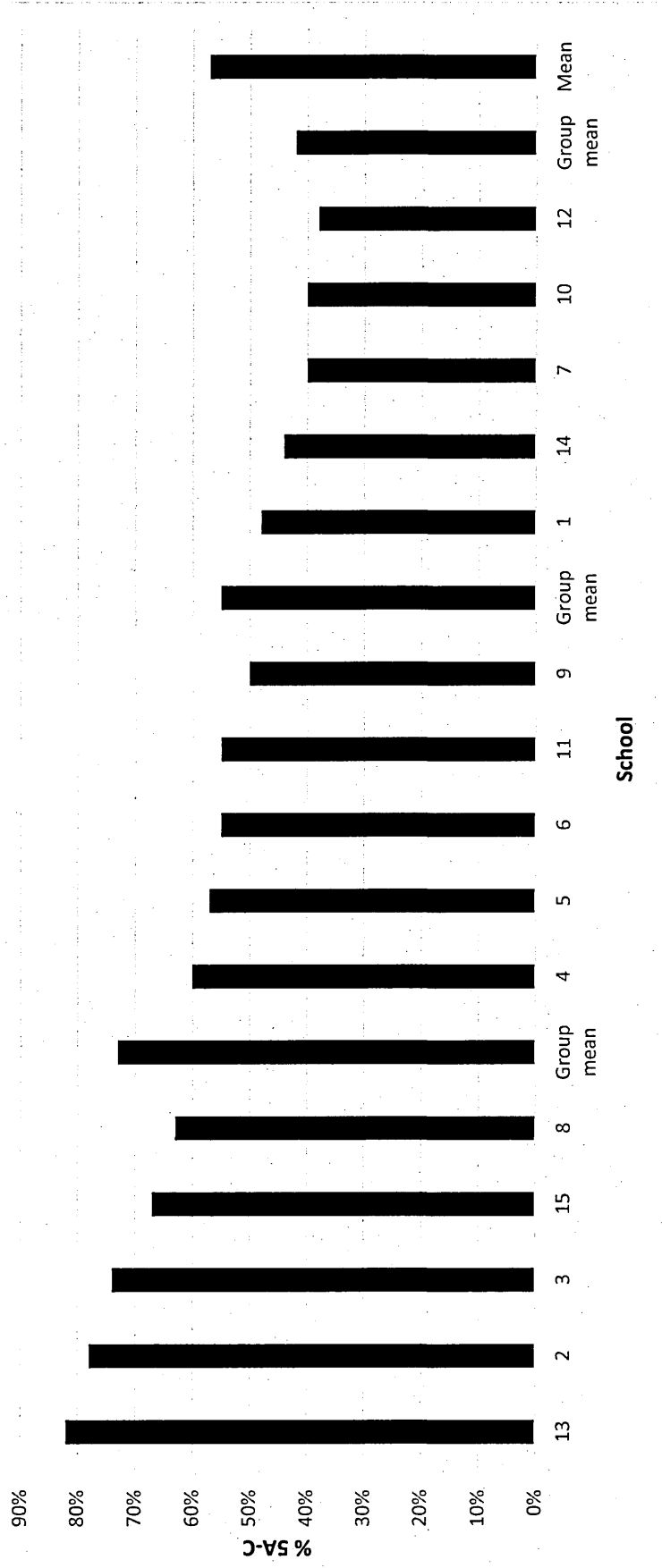
##### **4.4.1 Ranks Based on Percentage Y11 Students Gaining 5A\*-C at GCSE Including English and Maths**

The key performance measure for schools to identify their relative level of success was the percentage of students gaining 5A\*-C at GCSE including English and maths, the 5A\*-C measure in the rest of this section. School rankings based on this measure are presented in figure 4.1 and table J2 in appendix J. Although it could be argued that this is a measure of institutionalised cultural capital gained by students, frequent discussion at LC meetings of the significance of this figure alongside its importance to the government make it clear that this measure is most appropriately regarded as symbolic capital or more specifically statist capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p114). When schools are ranked on the 5A\*-C measure a number of comments can be made. For those schools in the top third the range (19%) is not much smaller than the range (22%) between schools in the bottom third.

Column Heading	Capital Measure	Data Included	Data Source
School		School code	Appendix 1
No	Proxy for gross economic capital	Number of students in Y11.	School Performance Tables 2011 (Department for Education 2011)
% 5 AC	Symbolic or statist capital of performance table points	Percentage of students gaining 5A*-C at GCSE including English and maths (including vocational qualifications.	As above
Diff	Symbolic or statist capital of performance table points gained from vocational qualifications	Difference between percentage of students gaining 5A*-C at GCSE (including English and maths) <i>including</i> vocational qualifications and percentage of students gaining 5A*-C at GCSE (including English and maths) <i>without</i> vocational qualifications.	As above
%LC	Capital investment in LC provision	Percentage of school's Y10 and Y11 students attending LC Provision.	As above and LC figures
OFSTED	Symbolic or statist capital of OFSTED inspection	Schools most recent OFSTED grade.	OFSTED reports
Income	Economic capital per student	Total income in £ per student, including both grant and self-generated income.	School Performance Tables 2011 (Department for Education 2011).
%EBACC	Symbolic or statist capital of performance table points in newly introduced measures	Percentage of Y11 students achieving the EBacc measure.	As above
Pos prog	Measure of combined institutionalised and embodied cultural capital gained by students	The percentage of Y11 students progressing into positive destinations.	Local Connexions Year 11 Progression Statistics for 2011 Leavers <sup>4</sup>

**Table 4.1-** Key to column headings in tables and axis labels in graphs in chapter 4.

<sup>4</sup> Precise reference has not been given so as to preserve anonymity.



**Figure 4.1- Ranking based on 5A\*-C measure (see table 4.1 for key to vertical axis label and section 4.4 for information on graphical presentation).**



Schools in the top third all have sixth-forms, only two schools with a sixth-form being ranked outside this top third. For schools within this top third, their reliance on vocational qualifications is lower than the average figure, but with large variance within this figure. This mirrors the small negative correlation between the 5A\*-C and vocational measures (see table 4.2). Similarly, the mean score for percentage of students gaining the EBacc within the top third is significantly higher than average, but with wider variances than in the middle and bottom thirds. Correlation (table 4.2) between the 5A\*-C at GCSE measure and the Baccalaureate measure is relatively strong and positive. Mean incomes per student for schools within the top two thirds of the 5A\*-C measure are very similar, but lower than the mean for those schools in the bottom third. However, there is a strong negative correlation between income per student and exam performance (table 4.2). There is a strong positive correlation between the 5A\*-C measure and the percentage of Y11 students progressing into positive post-16 destinations (table 4.2). The levels of LC engagement (measured by percentage accessing provision) shows very little variance in the three groupings based on the 5A\*-C measure, with a very weak negative correlation being shown between these two measures. There is little difference between median OFSTED grades between the three groupings based on the 5A\*-C measure.

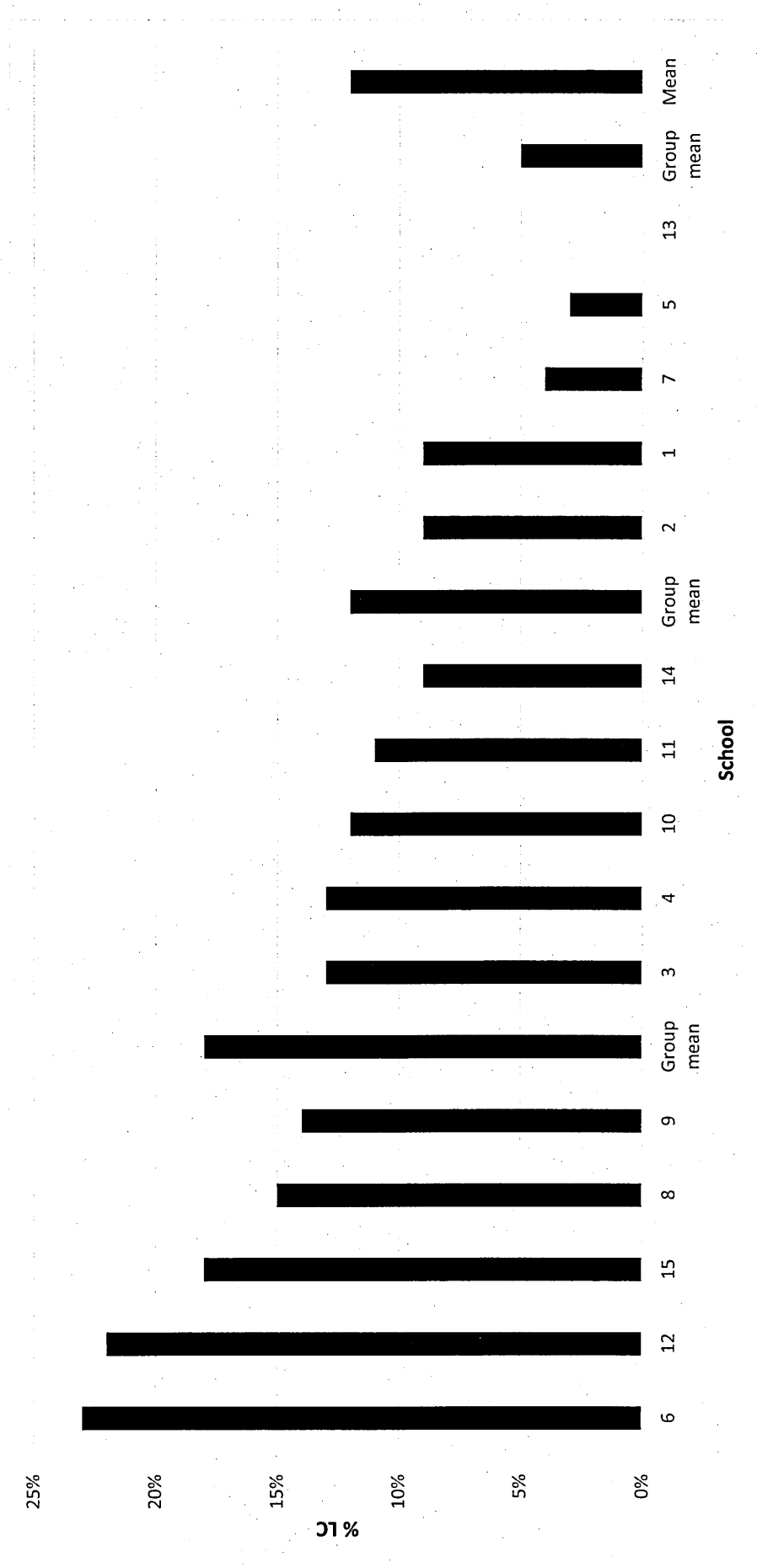
#### **4.4.2 Rank Based on Engagement with the LC**

This ranking was based upon the percentage of Y10 and Y11 students from a school who attended LC provision. These results are presented in figure 4.2 and table J3 in appendix J. Examination of this set of rankings gives a good indication of the sorts of capital possessed by schools who send large numbers of students onto LC provision. Those ranked in the bottom third on the LC engagement measure have significantly different scores in other measures to those schools in the top two thirds. Those schools in the bottom third of the LC engagement measure have significantly better average EBacc scores than the others, although this score is boosted by the two most successful schools in terms of EBacc appearing in this group. The correlation (table 4.2) between the LC engagement and EBacc measures shows a moderate negative correlation. Relationships between the LC engagement figure and the 'difference measure' are discussed in the next section.



	No	5AC	Diff	LC	Ofsted	Income	Ebacc	Prog
No		0.48	0.15	0.31	0.24	-0.62	0.09	0.34
5AC	0.48		-0.33	-0.21	-0.43	-0.65	0.80	0.85
Diff	0.15	-0.33		0.68	0.41	0.35	-0.59	-0.49
LC	0.31	-0.21	0.68		0.46	0.17	-0.51	-0.37
Ofsted	0.24	-0.43	0.41	0.46		0.04	-0.50	-0.55
Income	-0.62	-0.65	0.35	0.17	0.04		-0.45	-0.53
Ebacc	0.09	0.80	-0.59	-0.51	-0.50	-0.45		0.76
Prog	0.34	0.85	-0.49	-0.37	-0.55	-0.53	0.76	

**Table 4.2-** The correlation between the various scores in chapter 4(see table 4.1 for key to headings)

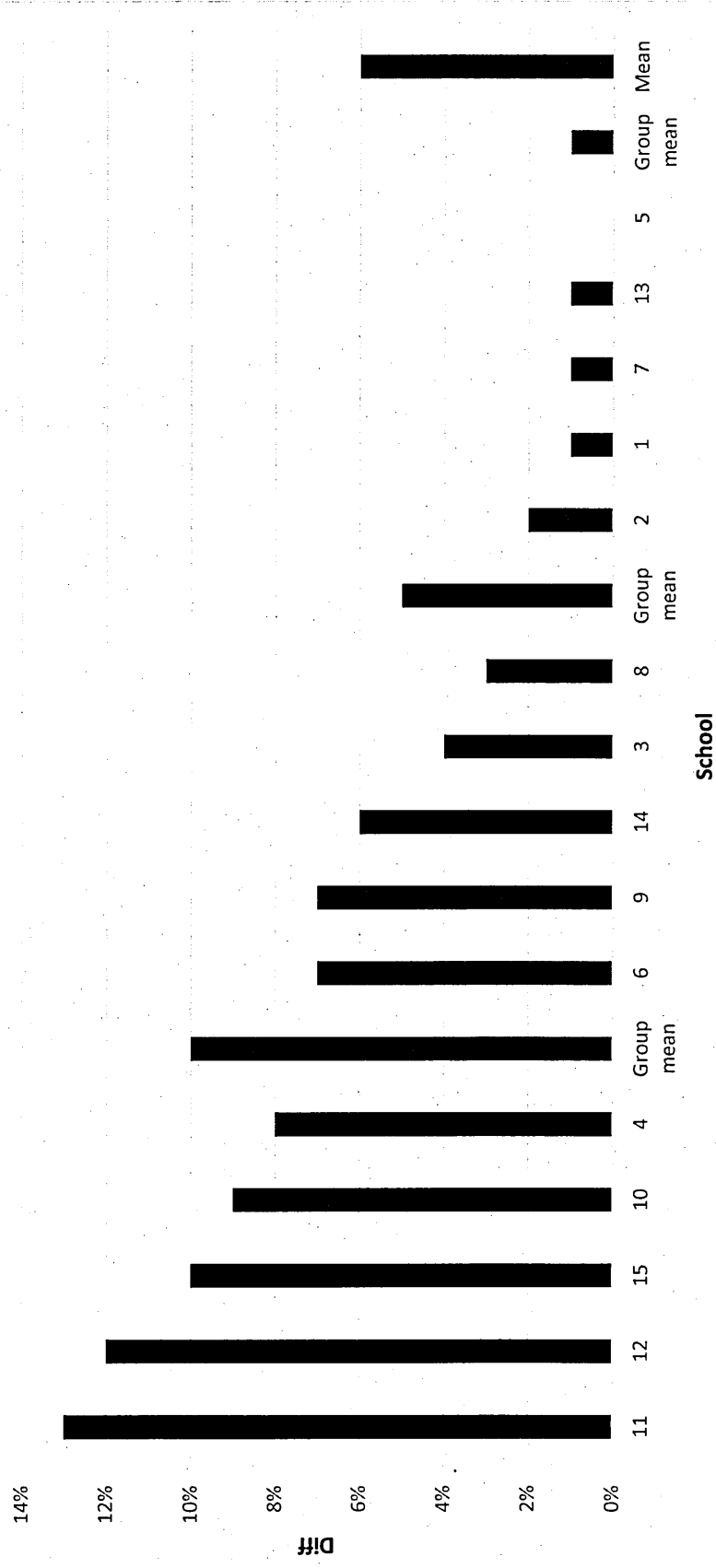


**Figure 4.2** Ranking based on LC engagement measure (see table 4.1 for key to vertical axis label and section 4.4 for information on graphical presentation).

The only other figure of note from the LC engagement rankings is lower median most recent OFSTED score for the third of schools that engaged most with the LC, with only one school in this group gaining better than a 3 in the most recent OFSTED inspection.

#### **4.4.3 Rank Based on Percentage Difference between Those gaining 5A\*-C at GCSE Including English and Maths With and Without Vocational Qualifications Included**

Ranking on this measure gives a good indication of a school's reliance upon points from vocational qualifications within the performance table. This value was calculated by subtracting the figure for percentage of those gaining 5A\*-C at GCSE including English and maths *with* vocational qualifications included from the percentage gaining 5A\*-C at GCSE including English and maths *without* vocational qualifications included. I have referred to this as the 'difference measure'. The higher the figure, the greater the school's reliance upon vocational qualifications in the performance tables. In terms of Bourdieu capital it identifies how much of the symbolic capital of performance table points is obtained from vocational qualifications. See figure 4.3 and table J4 in appendix J for presentation of this analysis. Although this measure shows moderate correlations with a variety of other measures (table 4.2), it is when schools are grouped into top, middle and bottom thirds based on this 'difference measure' that the clearest patterns are observed. There is a relatively small negative correlation between the 'difference measure' and the percentage of students gaining 5A\*-C including English and maths. Those schools in the bottom third in relation to the 'difference measure' have a higher than average mean score for percentage of students gaining 5A\*-C; however, as with the other two groupings based upon the 'difference measure', there is wide variation in this group. A similar picture is seen with the EBacc score: schools in the bottom third, based upon the 'difference measure' have a significantly higher mean EBacc than those schools in the top third; correlation between these two measures is moderately negative (table 4.2). It is when groupings based upon the 'difference measure' are compared to LC engagement that the clearest pattern emerges. Although there is only a relatively moderate correlation between the 'difference measure' and LC engagement, it is interesting to note that the mean score for those schools in the bottom third for



**Figure 4.3** Ranking based on reliance on vocational qualifications (see table 4.1 for key to vertical axis label and section 4.4 for information on graphical presentation )

the 'difference measure' is significantly lower than the average engagement score for the other two groups, and that the five schools with lowest levels of LC engagement appear in the bottom third based upon the 'difference measure': it appears that those who engage least with the LC rely least on vocational qualifications for performance table points.

#### **4.4.4 Discussion**

This discussion explains how some of the differences identified above relate to key features commented on elsewhere in this research. In Bourdieun terms, this discussion identifies how field position may affect school behaviour within the partnership. Although the relationships between different measures are interesting, I have not investigated any of the key links between these measures, so I will not imply any causal relationship between them.

For this research, the relationship between LC engagement and field position based on other measures is of most interest. In broad terms, schools engaging least with LC provision had better than average field positions based on the 5A\*-C GCSE measure, although this figure was skewed by the presence of the two highest performing schools in this group. When LC engagement field positions in relation to certain other measures were explored the most striking differences were observed. The five schools with lowest LC engagement score were the five schools with the lowest score in the 'difference measure', with these schools having a mean score for the 'difference measure' 7% lower than the mean for other schools. A similar pattern was seen in the EBacc measure. The mean score in this measure for the least-engaged schools was considerably higher than the mean score for other schools, but with much variance and the overall mean being influenced by the exceptionally high scores in this measure of the two best performing schools.

Two key conclusions can be made from these relative field positions. First, the 'difference measure' scores clearly indicate that schools least engaged with LC provision relied much less on vocational qualifications for their performance tables positions. Given that most of the LC provision is vocational, such a conclusion is not surprising. Additionally, the very low scores in the 'difference measure' also indicated that, not only did these schools not rely on LC provision



for the symbolic capital of performance table points, these schools did not rely on *any* vocational provision for such capital accumulation. The variance in EBacc score within this least-engaged group suggests that the GCSEs that students took varied by school. Conversely, those schools with moderate to good LC engagement had generally poorer scores in the 'difference measure' and the EBacc score.

The similar average scores for the 'difference measure' and the EBacc score amongst schools positioned in the top or middle third for LC engagement, indicate that although these schools relied on vocational provision for performance table position, their reliance on LC provision for this varied. Analysis of these figures does not indicate whether decisions relating to LC and vocational qualification engagement were strategic, both in the conscious sense of a management strategy decision and the conscious and unconscious sense of Bourdieun strategy based upon the interaction of field and habitus. At the very least it must be implied that the positions of schools within this field would lead to the *position takings*, the '*practices*' or actions of agents to maximise their field position, proposed by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p105).

The second key conclusion relates to suggestions about the future role of partnership based upon the proposed introduction of 'Progress Eight'. Although not directly compatible, the combination of the 'difference measure' and the EBacc measure gives a reasonable indication of where schools would be positioned in a field based on this new measure. Although post-Wolf reform tables would include a variety of newly accredited vocational qualifications, the providers of vocational qualifications within the LC were very clear that they would not offer these new qualifications as they did not meet the needs of students who had previously come onto LC provision. If schools were predominantly using LC provision as a means of improving or maintaining their performance table position it would be expected that those schools who engaged most with LC provision would significantly reduce this engagement when the new performance tables were implemented.

In Bourdieun terms, LC provision would no longer provide its previous symbolic capital returns. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p105) have suggested that

when a field is at equilibrium, or values of capital are stable, the positions within a field will direct the '*position takings*' of field members. When the relative value of vocational qualifications are changed, this equilibrium is disturbed and members will adopt different '*position takings*': this would equate to different partnership behaviour as the schools strive to maintain their positions within the field. Likewise, Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p99; Bourdieu 2000, p183) suggests that for capital to be efficacious it must be considered in relation to a particular field and that the field itself dictates the relative values of capital within this field. As a consequence, strategies and dispositions adopted by agents depend upon the relative values of the capital they possess. The proposed change in the symbolic performance table capital value of vocational qualifications has the capacity to change schools' behaviour within a partnership and their attitude towards partnership membership. As argued by Bourdieu (2000, p186), by imposing these symbolic values on to vocational qualifications from its position of 'legitimacy' and 'monopoly', the government is using statist capital to construct this part of the educational world in the government's preferred configuration.

The other area worthy of further discussion is the relationship between progression into 'positive' post-16 destinations and other measures. Correlations between this progression measure and all measures, other than school size or income, were at least moderate and in many cases large. The positive correlations are not surprising since the vast majority of these measures relate to qualifications possessed by students, or institutionalised cultural capital. As identified by Bourdieu (2010, p17), these qualifications can be regarded as the institutionalised representation of the embodied cultural capital gained by an individual from their educational experiences. Since these capitals give an individual an advantage in terms of progressing to the next level, this link between progression and qualifications is to be expected.

The strongest positive correlation is between the 'progression' and 5A\*C measures: those schools ranked in the top third on the progression measure having mean 5A\*C scores that were 20% higher than the mean for other schools. Although the correlation was less strong between the 'progression' score and the EBacc score, similar big differences were seen between the

mean for the EBacc score for those schools in the top third and the overall mean progression score. Smaller and negative, relationships were seen between the progression score and the 'difference measure'. If, as Bourdieu (2003b, p87) suggests, the capacity of qualifications to guarantee cultural capital is greatest when progression is into other educational establishments, this broad range of correlations between progression and different configurations of qualification is perhaps to be expected since by-and-large these qualifications are being used to enable progression into other educational organisations.

This is reflected in a similarly moderate negative correlation between LC engagement and the progression measure. Since this research has not identified causal relationships between any of these measures, it is not possible to propose a clear link between progression and LC engagement. However, particularly given the relatively large proportions of students in 'highly LC engaged' schools attending LC provision, if the LC provision enabled positive progression, at least a positive correlation of some sort ought to be seen. It is possible to say that LC provision does not seem to confer any progression advantage for students. Although pursuing such qualifications may give students different sorts of both institutionalised and embodied cultural capital, this capital does not seem to confer any post-16 progression advantages on students.

#### **4.4.5 Conclusions on Field Analysis**

To conclude, investigation of field positions of schools based on the data reviewed in this section suggested a number of factors that needed further exploration by observation and interview.

- Schools engage with the LC provision to improve their field position by exchanging the capital gained by students achieving vocational qualifications into positions within the performance tables.
- Proposed decreases in symbolic value of LC vocational qualifications would reduce LC engagement, particularly for schools relying heavily on vocational qualifications for field position.

- Vocational courses allow students to gain different qualifications and experiences, but do not give these students any advantages in terms of post-16 progression.



## **Chapter 5. Findings: Overview of Themes Identified from Observations and Interviews**

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### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter identifies key themes that emerged during the coding process. Chapters 6 and 7 then proceed by evaluating how these key themes link with my theoretical framework to answer my research questions. Findings are mainly focused through a Bourdieun theoretical lens with observations and interviews analysed alongside each other. When organisations are identified this is by a number in square brackets. This number refers to the organisation making the statement (see Appendix A). The prefix 'Ob' refers to observations, the prefix 'In' refers to interviews. To anonymise the gender of those responding, I have used the third person plural pronoun throughout.

Since the process of Level 3 coding was to identify potential answers to my research questions, at this point it is helpful to reiterate these:

- How do Bourdieun, and other related theoretical concepts, including broad conceptualisations of social capital, performativity, the notion of weak and strong collaboration and cost-benefit analysis of partnership, explain organisations' engagement with the partnership, when analysed from the perspective of managers involved in a particular 14-19 partnership?
- Which external political factors influence organisations' engagement with the partnership, when analysed from the perspective of managers involved in a particular 14-19 partnership?

### **5.2 Identification of Key Themes**

Analysis of interview responses and discussions from my observations resulted in the identification of nine Level 3 categories, which were condensed from 190 observation statements and 417 interview statements extracted from raw data. Initial analysis had yielded 348 Level 1 categories that potentially answered my research questions. At the second stage these were condensed into 153 Level 2 categories (presented in appendix F). Some statements were not categorised. The Level 3 categories were:

- Applicability of different sorts of partnership



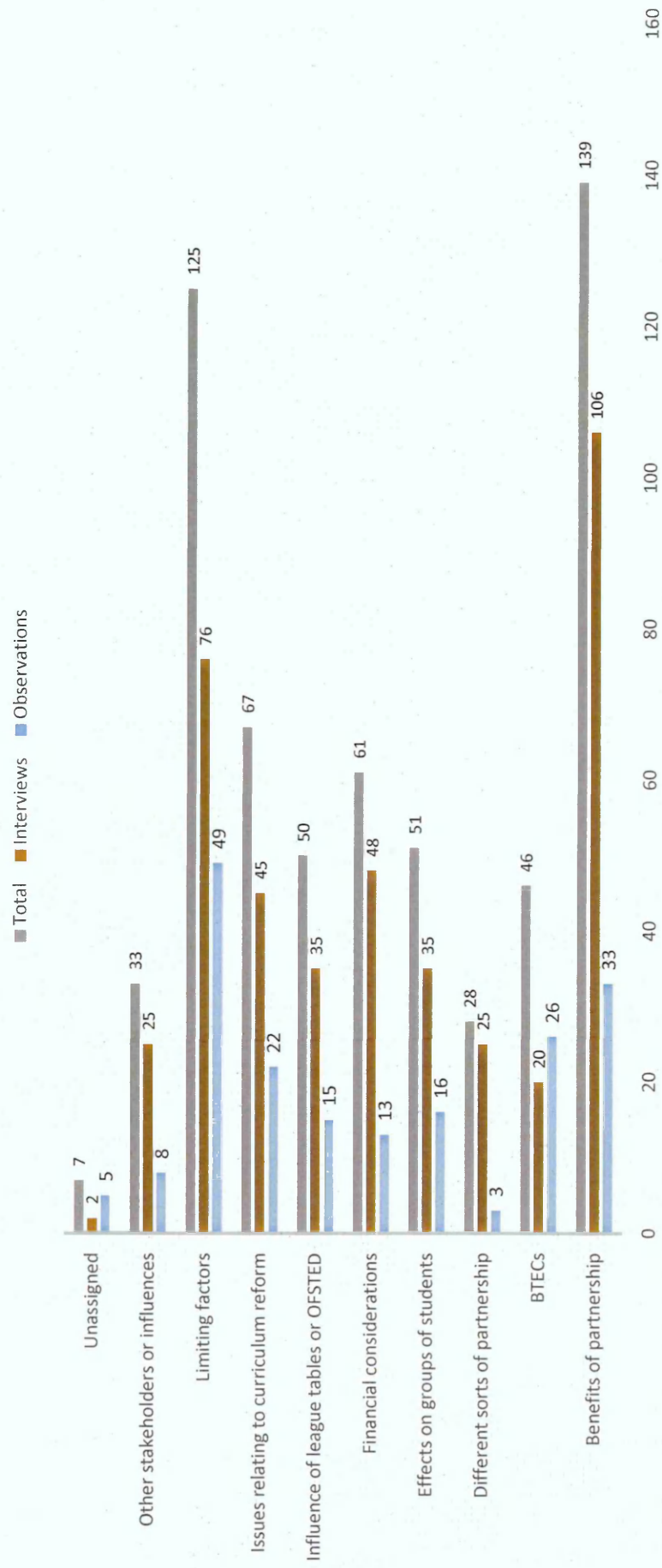
- Effects of partnership on groups of students
- Financial considerations
- Factors related to other stakeholders or influences
- Factors that limit working in partnership
- Factors that relate to the benefits of partnership or positive effects of partnership
- Influence of BTEC qualification equivalences
- Influence of league tables or OFSTED
- Issues relating to curriculum reform

The overall distribution of the Level 3 codes across the observations and interviews are presented in Figure 5.1. Each count within this graph refers to a piece of dialogue, either observed or transcribed from interviews, which had a key theme relating to the topic that was coded.

I am reflexively aware that, since I have put statements into particular categories and also influenced interview responses, by the questions that I asked and by the interview process, these distributions do not support a particular theory or reflect ontologically what is occurring in the real domain. However, this distribution is interesting in identifying the significant context at the time and clarifying what respondents saw as important. In interviews, the Level 3 code that occurred most frequently was 'benefits of partnership'. However, from the observations, 'limiting factors' were coded more frequently than 'positive effects'. Broader review of observation data suggested this was because the key purpose of many meetings was to resolve partnership issues, whereas in interviews I was able to ask questions that enabled respondents to discuss positive features of partnership. In the main, the other Level 3 categories showed similar distributions across both observations and interviews.

### **5.2.1 Statements at Observation**

Categorising 190 observation statements into topic areas, 47 (25%) statements were about the sixth-form partnership, 47 (25%) about progression issues and 44 (23%) about operational issues. The remaining statements were split between curriculum reforms (25 or 13%) and BTEC equivalences (23 or 12%)



**Figure 5.1 - Distribution of responses across Level 3 categories**

with four (2%) not fitting any of these categories. The distribution of each code in relation to organisations that attended the various meetings is indicated in table 5.1.

This categorisation is interesting. From a methodological point of view it identifies the perspective of those involved in the partnership rather than my viewpoint. My initial and subsequent reflections indicated that I thought BTEC equivalences and curriculum reform were most frequently discussed; however, this analysis clearly shows that they were not. Much of the discussion surrounding BTEC equivalences was rather emotive which may have led to this misconception.

These distributions also identify the important contexts for the partnership at this time. During the intensive observation phase much of the discussion at meetings was about how the sixth-form partnership, discussed in section 1.4, might work or why it had failed. Additionally, nascent discussions had also started about the new college-centred sixth-form provision.

In relation to discussions about progression and curriculum reform, it is important to note that observations took place early in the coalition government's incumbency. At this stage, the English Baccalaureate had been introduced, the Wolf Review proposed and the closure of Connexions announced. It is therefore not surprising that many discussions were about the future of this partnership within this context of policy reform and about how the partnership might minimise the impact of the closure of Connexions.

Since number of contributions will also relate to number of meeting attendances and meeting dynamics, no major conclusions can be proposed in relation to this organisational distribution of responses. However, the general patterns do reflexively contextualise this research. At meetings I categorised 55 responses as being made by 'unknown', meaning that I had been unable to identify the respondent. This reflects the combination of difficulties I had in ascertaining who made particular responses in heated discussions and the fact that for many aspects of meetings a general group consensus was agreed for key points.

Level 3 Code	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	8	11	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	UN	Tot
Benefits of partnership		1	1	1					2	2	1		1	3	5	2	3	11	33
BTECs		8	1	3		3	5		1						1			4	26
Different sorts of partnership						1												2	3
Effects on groups of students	1	1				1			1	1	2		1	1	2	1		4	16
Financial considerations		3	2			1	1		1						2	1		2	13
Influence of league tables or OFSTED		1			1	2					1		2		1	2		5	15
Issues relating to curriculum reform		4				1							4		2	2	3	6	22
Limiting factors		4	3	5				2	2			1	8	2	1		1	17	49
Other stakeholders or influences		1								1						5	1		8
Unassigned		1																4	5
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>190</b>

**Table 5.1-** Observation statements for each Level 3 code by organisation

Of the 135 observation responses *not* assigned to unknown, 67 (54%) were made by four organisations, including the LA [18], the LC [17] and two schools. The school [2] with most responses, was a high performing sixth-form school, represented by a head teacher who was also curriculum group chair. Despite sending very few students onto LC provision, they were always vocally supportive of the LC, at a curriculum and strategic group level, and frequently supported the LA and LC in developing partnership initiatives. The other school [15] made eight limiting factor observation statements about partnership and only one positive statement. This organisation was a large moderately successful school that engaged extensively with the pre-16 partnership, had a large sixth-form and was represented by a deputy-head teacher, who in interviews was positive about the pre-16 partnership, but, as in meetings, very negative about post-16 partnership.

### **5.2.2 Statements in Interviews**

A distribution of Level 3 codes in relation to each interviewee is presented in table 5.2. Each Level 3 code had statements made by multiple interviewees, with 'Benefits of partnership or positive statements about partnerships', 'effects on groups of students', 'financial considerations' and 'limiting factors' being mentioned by all respondents. All other codes were assigned to all but one or two of the interviewees. Four respondents made statements that fitted into all of the Level 3 categories. The remaining interviewees all made statements that fitted into at least seven of the nine Level 3 categories. The number of coded responses per interviewee ranged from 27 [2], by the high performing school with sixth-form discussed above, to 57 [13] responses, by another high performing sixth-form school that had minimal partnership engagement. There was a median of 35 coded responses per interviewee.

The interviewee with the least number of coded responses, and the shortest duration interview, was the one with most statements coded at meetings. This was the only head I interviewed. They made relatively few statements at interview, but these were often very measured, detailed responses articulating key points of importance to this study, not requiring any clarification. They did not dominate the interview or move off topic any more than others, but the briskness and clarity of responses were those of somebody who generally deals



Level 3 Code	1	2	3	4	6	11	13	14	15	16	17	Total
Benefits of partnership	4	14	18	6	14	7	6	9	10	7	11	106
BTECs	1		4	1	1	4	5		3		1	20
Different sorts of partnership	1	2	2	2		1	9	3	2	3		25
Effects on groups of students	6	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	4	1	5	35
Financial considerations	2	3	4	4	8	2	6	5	3	7	4	48
Influence of league tables or OFSTED	5	1	5	2	2	4	9		3	3	1	35
Issues relating to curriculum reform	1		6	8	3	3	7	3	4	4	6	45
Limiting factors	9	3	7	6	7	7	11	1	6	8	11	76
Other stakeholders or influences		1	6	1	4	2	2	5	2	2		25
Unassigned			1			1						2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>417</b>

**Table 5.2-** Interview statements for each Level 3 code by organisation

with matters quickly and does not veer from the key purpose of an interaction. The respondent [13] making the largest number of responses at interview was particularly quiet at meetings, where they had a low number of responses coded. Their interview responses were generally contrary to others' and often presented a cautionary position or a different perspective. In contrast, the other organisation [3] with over fifty responses coded in the interviews (a well-performing school with a sixth-form that had mid-level partnership engagement and mid-level reliance on vocational GCSEs for performance table position) generally made statements that matched the overall perspective others' of responses.

These distributions raise some important methodological points about the relative merits of interviews and observations. Within meetings, participants made contributions that reflected the important operational needs of organisations, such as BTEC equivalences, progression or the sixth-form partnership. As exemplified by the respondent from organisation [13] who made little contribution at meetings but had the largest number of coded statements at interview, it would have been easy to assume that non-participation at meetings implied agreement. By undertaking interviews with participants, it was possible to explore opinions of those who did not contribute to meetings and reveal perspectives that not been previously presented. In contrast, as exemplified by the BTEC debates, at meetings it was possible to identify and record strong and emotive opinions that were not displayed at interview.

### **5.3 Analysis of Key Themes within Level 3 Codes**

This section identifies key themes that I identified within my different Level 3 codes based upon the distribution of themes presented in appendix H. This analysis is presented in order of number of interview responses recorded under each Level 3 coding and only refers to general patterns or highlights themes that I have not discussed elsewhere.

### **5.3.1 Benefits of Partnership or Positive Comments about Partnership**

In general terms the distribution of responses within this code (figure H1 in appendix H) indicated that organisations see the key benefits of partnership as more important for their students than for their own organisations. As discussed in the next chapter, when content of statements was analysed the value of provision for students was contested. Additionally, my final conclusions, based upon the subsequent demise of the partnership, suggested that although student benefits are important, the key factor that dictates engagement with the partnership is the notion of gaining performance table credits from partnership qualifications.

Statements linked to partnership success, which I have generally not discussed elsewhere, also appeared to be a prevalent theme in interviews. The main success factor was good levels of advice and guidance for students moving on to partnership provision. I have not expanded on this notion of appropriate guidance since this is student centred and falls outside the manager focus of my research questions. Notions of commitment and positive partnership attitudes to working together also appeared as a theme for 8 of the 23 success factor statements from interviews. Specific ideas linked to this will be incorporated into the next chapter.

The idea of clear partnership leadership, both from the partnership manager but also from the head who led the curriculum group, was the only other success factor identified multiple times. In line with one of Hodgson and Spours' (Pring et al 2009, p183) characteristics of weak collaboration, this included comments about how this reliance on key leaders meant that should these leaders change, there was the perception that the partnership would cease to function. Despite their prevalence, leadership issues linked to theories outside my theoretical framework. Such limitations will be discussed in my final evaluation.

### **5.3.2 Factors That Limit Working in partnership**

It is interesting to note that in contrast to positive responses in the previous section, organisations also see the partnership having negative effects on

students. Responses relating to negative effects on students or organisations will be discussed in the following chapter.

A significant theme that I coded within this section (presented in figure H2 in appendix H) related to dissatisfaction with post-16 partnership activities, with more observation statements coded in this way than interview statements. In interviews the most common limiting theme related to operational difficulties, but with no clear pattern of responses or link to my theoretical framework. The difference between responses coded at interview and those at meetings again reflected the purpose of meetings and indicated that interviews and observations were needed to obtain a full comprehension of participants' views.

### **5.3.3 Issues relating to Curriculum Reform**

Categorisation of responses within this code are presented in figure H3 in appendix H. The two main themes at interview related to concerns about the devaluation of vocational qualifications and the potential impact of changes on the performance table value of such qualifications. At the meetings I observed a similar level of preoccupation with curriculum reforms, but with a general level of optimism about the future of the partnership. Despite many respondents giving interview statements that related to concerns about the reforms, there were still 12 responses that I classed as 'agreeing with Wolf'. This was in stark contrast to what I continued to observe at Curriculum Group meetings in the extended period of general observation where all discussion about the Wolf-led reforms was in very negative terms. These differences appeared to be due to respondents being given greater opportunity in interviews to reflect on the broader educational implications of these reforms and thus identify several positive aspects.

### **5.3.4 Financial Considerations**

Issues or views relating to finance were widely discussed within the interviews, both in terms of the number of occurrences and the breadth of interviewees. Thematic categories are presented in figure H4 in appendix H. Within this Level 3 classification, in interviews ideas that I have classed as relating to negative financial effects appeared most frequently. Key themes under this coding have been fully analysed in the next chapter.

### **5.3.5 The Effect of BTEC Qualification Equivalences**

At LC curriculum group meetings one of the most polarised arguments was about a decision that had been made by the strategy group that, for purposes of post-16 progression within the LC, a pass on a BTEC Diploma would be regarded as being equivalent to one GCSE pass rather than the four passes that they had been deemed as being equivalent to for performance table purposes. Responses coded in this Level 3 category mainly reflect perspectives on this decision. Heads in the strategy group were in broad agreement with this decision. This is not reflected in the coding since discussion was led by one particular head and agreement was merely via 'nodding' consensus.

The themes coded under this category are presented in figure H5 in appendix H. These themes are analysed in chapter 6 in combination with responses within the curriculum reform code.

This is the only Level 3 code which was coded more times at meetings than at interviews. This particular set of responses again demonstrates the different types of information that can be obtained from meetings and at interview. At meetings the polarised responses reflected the key importance of the decision about equivalences at one particular time. The lack of coded statements from interviews suggests a more nuanced subsequent position. It is also important to note that analysis of observation data just in terms of numbers of responses did not give a clear viewpoint. By use of extended field notes it was possible to identify the overall agreement of head teachers to these changes and the emotive attitude of certain partners to these changes.

### **5.3.6 Effects on Groups of Students**

The thematic distribution of this code is presented figure H6 in appendix H. When looking for themes within this code I concentrated on identifying the specific group of students discussed by the respondent. About half of the responses within this code discussed students who I labelled as 'lower ability'. By and large statements relating to this group of students indicated how useful LC provision had been for such groups of students. At meetings, a number of responses suggested that changes in equivalence values would limit the ability



of schools to send students, particularly C-D borderline students, onto LC provision.

### **5.3.7 Influence of League Tables or OFSTED**

Although this Level 3 code is very similar to the Level 3 code relating to curriculum reforms, this particular code is differentiated from the other code by statements merely mentioning the influence of these factors rather than changes in these factors. Themes identified under this code are presented in figure H7 in appendix H. In interviews the most prevalent theme related to the level of partnership engagement being linked to the available performance table credits. These points will be expanded upon in chapter 7.

The main difference in meetings was that nine statements were made that related to a major discussion on how the partnership should measure its own performance. In common with Hodgson and Spours' (Pring et al 2009, p183) characteristics of weak-collaboration, these discussions focussed on using performance measures and observations. Due to the timing of the intense phase of observation, the statements recorded in this section did not reflect the overwhelming consensus shown at meetings towards the end of this research that clearly indicated that the reduction in partnership engagement following the introduction of 'Progress Eight' was due to changes in the performance table value of partnership qualifications.

### **5.3.8 Different Sorts of partnership**

All but two of the eleven interviewees made statements about their view on development of partnerships that were different to the LC partnership. Nine of these 25 statements were made by a single organisation [13] that did not substantially engage with the LC partnership. Only three statements were coded in this category from the observation data. Unlike other codes, there was very little consensus on conceptual themes within this code.

### **5.3.9 Other stakeholders or influences**

The distribution of responses is presented in figure H8 appendix H. Seventeen of the 25 interview responses in this category related to views and influences that parents have on partnership provision. The preponderance of answers

relating to parents was not surprising since one of the pre-requisites for opting into partnership provision is the fact that a child's parent must agree to participation. The responses related to parents' views indicated a rough balance between parents who saw this provision as being positive and those who saw it in a negative vein. Since parents' views are outside this research's scope no further analysis of their comments has been undertaken. At meetings seven of the eight responses coded in this category referred to various organisations that were part of the bureaucratic funding or regulation apparatus, such as the LA, the Department for Education or funding bodies. Some of the responses about relationships with such bodies have been incorporated into the next chapter's discussions on linking social capital.

## **5.4 Conclusions on Analysis of Themes**

In outline, this particular analysis has enabled me to identify a number of key themes that will be explored in greater theoretical detail in the next two chapters. Given the nature of my interview questions, I had expected statements relating to positive effects of partnership and to limiting factors. This outline distribution pattern has enabled me to split advantages into those for the school and those for students. Although partnership members were generally very positive about the partnership this was not the case for the sixth-form partnership. Thus, analysis of this area of provision will be important for identifying factors that led to weak partnership engagement. Given the curriculum changes that were taking place at the time, it was not surprising that curriculum and performance table reforms featured within both interviews and at meetings. However, from my observations at meetings, I did not expect the support for the Wolf reforms that emerged at interview: this was clearly an area that required a broader theoretical analysis. Finally, from the methodological point of view, the varied responses at interview compared to what I had observed at meetings indicated that both instruments were important in collecting empirical data that would support mechanistic explanations.

# **Chapter 6. Findings: Analysis of Themes Relating to Capital Accumulation and Exchange**

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## **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter analyses key data themes relating to Bourdieun notions of capital accumulation and exchange, and acts as a prelude to the next chapter, which analyses the relative values given to these capitals by partnership organisations. Key forms of capital that partner members believe are gained from partnership membership are identified, and the evidence for social capital development within the partnership and the lack of data to support conceptualisation of habitus are discussed.

## **6.2 Capitals Accumulated by Partnership Membership**

Many statements were given within interviews and in meetings identifying the advantages gained from partnership membership for organisations and their students. Closer analysis enabled many of these statements to be linked to Bourdieun conceptions of capital.

### **6.2.1 Student Benefits**

Managers of the partnership organisations saw a key benefit of working in partnership as providing students with enhanced opportunities. This was perhaps to be expected given the partnership's evolution and the vocational theme of the previous government's 14-19 partnership focus. Since my research questions centred on managers' perceptions, I have focussed on how these management perceptions are explained by my theoretical framework rather than the perceived benefits to individual students.

Interview statements relating to student benefits included:

They enjoy the independence. They enjoy coming to an organisation where they don't have to wear uniform. It has enhanced their feelings of self-worth, in that they feel they are achieving, whereas if we'd made them take a course back at school that they weren't particularly interested in, you know? [In6].

Something different, getting new experiences, building up their own independence in travelling to these places and



then not having a teacher holding their hand when they did that [In4].

Yes, qualifications, but it's not just about the qualifications, it's about the actual learning experiences [In2].

They get an experience away from school, they get a different experience, they get to meet other people that they may not necessarily have met before and it also provides them with an outlet for thinking for themselves [In17].

...wider social participation, getting out from this closed community of [village name]. For some students, like the Foundation learning, you know, they don't really, haven't been down to [town] before, so you've got all those sort of things [In3].

Interview statements about student benefits mainly discussed curriculum rather than qualifications. For instance, a middle performing school, without a sixth-form, with good LC engagement and with average reliance on BTEC equivalences typified such responses with this statement:

I think that it's absolutely essential for a school like ours where we aren't able to offer all the vocational courses that we would like to offer and that we see as essential to the provision. Mmm I think that it enhances our own curriculum. It enables us to be competitive where parents are concerned, if you like, in that they see you offer all these courses that previously we haven't offered and it looks good [In6].

Although many statements coded from observations were not explicit in what the 'other' benefits were for students, at one meeting the head of a high performing sixth-form school [Ob8], with a slightly above average reliance on BTEC equivalences, that sent an above average proportion of students on LC provision, indicated that on a recent OFSTED visit, inspectors had stated: 'that students' esteem on alternative provision was good' and 'students all felt happy'.

Several comments mentioned advantages in students being exposed to novel and different experiences and meeting others. This notion of 'meeting others' is clearly linked to various definitions of social capital. In common with Bourdieu's key definition (Bourdieu 1986), by attending partnership provision students are increasing their 'network of ... relationships'. In a number of ways, these

different influences that students are exposed to can also be considered as embodied cultural capital, particularly if extended using the broader conceptualisation used by Lareau and Weininger (2003, p597). From a different perspective, the gaining of such capital closely relates to what has been termed the 'hidden curriculum', particularly when it:

... refer[s] to those non-academic but educationally significant consequences of schooling that occur systematically but are not made explicit at any level to the public rationales for education (Vallance 1974, p51).

From this perspective, the novel exposures learners have experienced from partnership provision would appear to lead to the concealed but 'educationally significant consequences of schooling'.

At meetings and to some extent in the interviews, the importance of partnership provision enabling student to progression onto post-16 study was mentioned on a number of occasions. Within interviews, progression statements did not mention qualifications, merely indicating that the experience of studying somewhere else was beneficial. For instance, the deputy-head of a large sixth-form school, which had performance figures in the top third, but much higher than average reliance on BTEC equivalences, and a much higher than average level of LC engagement, stated:

...a glimpse of a route that they may well be able to take post-16 so the progression and the contacts that they've developed have been started from the start of year 10 [In15].

As indicated in chapter 4, such statements were not supported by my field analysis. The notion of LC engagement supporting progression, like other perceived benefits discussed below, appears to be contested.

Although qualifications as a positive reason for students attending partnership provision was rarely mentioned either in interviews or observations, they were mentioned frequently in relation to the 'negative effects on students' theme. I have classified this as institutionalised cultural capital, with 16 of the 20 interview statements I coded as 'negative effects on students' being categorised in this way. Eleven of these responses related to the fact that a student who chose a LC option would have a restricted options choice in school and in some



cases would actually have to select fewer options at school, and so reduce the number of qualifications that they achieved at the end of Y11. One school identified this issue in detail stating:

... let's look at what they do have to give up. They have to give up one of their school options so it narrows their school options' choices. They, in school, stop doing an ICT qualification: now that's something that could be valuable for them in the future. They miss out on an element of PSHE and RE education, which we then have to deliver in a different form to them [In4].

In Bourdieun terms this suggests that although students will accrue different types of cultural capital, by choosing to attend a partnership course ultimately they will gain less overall capital. However, statements that seek to quantify amounts of capital do not take account of how valuable different sorts of institutionalised cultural capital may be for particular students and their progression opportunities. At no point in either the interviews or at meetings, beyond discussing equivalences, did respondents make statements that I interpreted as attempting to identify which sorts of capital they thought were more valuable: mainly, I interpreted responses as indicating that students opting for partnership provision accessed an altered total amount and configuration of capital.

Additionally, four 'negative effects on students' statements were made within interviews that I classified as embodied cultural capital. Some of these related to students not gaining any of the previously perceived 'hidden curriculum' benefits. One of these statements clearly specified that the hoped for changes in behaviour of weaker students did not actually occur. One school [In13], an academically high achieving religious school, believed their students' parents did not want them to move away from the particular ethos of that school. To conclude, statements in this area suggest that certain schools thought partnership opportunities did not enable their learners to pick up any greater levels of embodied or institutionalised cultural capital than that provided by the home school.

### 6.2.2 Organisational Benefits

In terms of benefits for schools rather than students the most widespread advantage of partnership related to either finance or resources, with such comments being identified in both the 'benefits of partnership' and 'financial considerations' level 3 codes. The key differentiator in placing a statement in these categories was whether the comment discussed finance or merely access to resources.

Issues or views relating to finance were widely discussed within the interviews, in terms of the number of occurrences (48) and the breadth of interviewees, with all eleven respondents making finance related comments. Overall this financial setting can be summed up by the college principal's response to a question on the effects of the Wolf reforms:

Finances are at the heart of all this, I mean every public sector, publicly funded organisation is still experiencing a tightening of the belt and the need to find efficiencies and new income streams [In16].

His qualification of this statement:

And there's always a danger that that won't be in the interests of the student [In16].

fitted a common theme that financial factors needed to be balanced against other factors or influences.

Finance was discussed both in positive and negative terms. The most popular financial response within interviews related to the sharing of resources and expertise, with eight of the thirteen positive 'financial considerations' statements being coded in this way. Additionally, the most prevalent statement within interviews in relation to organisational benefits suggested that partnership was key in providing resources the school itself did not possess, with six of the twelve 'organisational advantages' statements fitting this theme. Two interviewees identified the cost benefits of working together in partnership either in terms of being able to run vocational courses that otherwise would be too expensive:

Obviously we would have to employ specialist staff, which we wouldn't do, and all the resources that go with it, even the buildings that are required [In4].

and:

'...we couldn't provide that level of facility that you can provide, you know, for the beauty and the catering, construction, and all those things... we couldn't invest the amount of money that would be necessary to get people to that level of expertise... [In2]'

or in terms of schools grouping learners together to make courses financially viable, both pre and post-16:

But relatively, to buy people in, we would have to buy somebody in for three of four children whereas if they're all coming to a central point you've got somebody in front of twenty children [In6].

The first two of the above quotes identifies a clear case of the convertibility of capitals, particularly the idea that all forms of capital are ultimately 'reducible' to economic capital (Bourdieu 1986, p54). In this case, the institutionalised, objectified and embodied cultural capitals of 'specialist staff' or 'expertise' into the economic capital of 'resources' and 'buildings' or 'facility'. Likewise, respondents discussed the benefits of pooling students to make viable groups. Although difficult to link this to a Bourdieun theme, by working in partnership several organisations can pool students to meet the token requirements for entry into the game of accessing vocational qualifications.

At meetings there was a slightly different theme, with roughly half of the responses coded under 'financial considerations' mentioning working together to access funding that would not be available to individual organisations. This suggests that not only can the social capital of partnership be converted into other forms of capital, it is also a prerequisite for access to certain sources of economic capital. Within certain meetings, the head of an academy who was hoping to expand into sixth-form provision in order to offer courses:

...that suit our sponsors and students [and prevent] the drift of post-16 students out of county and out of [local village] [Ob11]

indicated that partnership would be preferable because partners could provide access to unique resources and sources of funding. This head explained that if the academy had wanted to offer autonomous sixth-form provision they would have had to apply to the government for sixth-form status, which could be expensive and would run the risk of being rejected. This fits Woolcock's (2001, pp10-11) idea that partnership provides social capital that can be used to link the network to more powerful external bodies to improve the situations of a network member. In this case, the academy appeared to be indicating that the linking capital benefits of this type of partnership, initially enabling access to funding but ultimately generating the symbolic capital of having a sixth-form, outweigh the costs of developing this capital alone. Additionally, by accessing this funding in a partnership the school is also reducing risk in this tentative enterprise, in the way discussed by Contractor and Lorange (2004).

In relation to finance, ideas that linked to 'negative financial effects' appeared most frequently. Several responses in interviews and meetings discussed the changing availability of capital, both in terms of the gross amounts of available capital and access to any capital, as being a key limit to partnership activity. For instance, at one meeting the partnership manager suggested that the main factor that decided whether a school engaged with partnership was the amount of funding they could invest in partnership provision. This was supported by an assistant-head of a school that had sent large numbers of students onto partnership provision who stated:

...practical activities funding will affect uptake of LC provision rather than the English Baccalaureate [Ob6].

Overall, such financial statements mentioned the three key changes over the period that the partnership had been in existence: a reduction of per capita student capital; a reduction in school cohort sizes; the removal of the 'ring fence' on the schools' 'practical activities' budget that financed such activity. Once again the notion of capital exchange is hinted at. In order to gain capital by partnership activity there is a requirement to invest economic capital into the partnership field. Not only do schools have less capital available for such investment, but the removal of the budgetary 'ring fence' means that they are no longer compelled to spend funds within the partnership field. This reliance on



external funds for development of the partnership represents one of Hodgson and Spours', as presented in Pring et al. (2009, p183), characteristics of weak-collaboration.

I also classified several interview responses under the theme of 'poor value for money'. Most of these responses came from one organisation [13], which rarely sent learners onto partnership provision, and were given as one reason for lack of partnership engagement. However, this organisation's comments did link financial cost with other costs such as qualifications with the respondent stating:

..they'd be out of school for a full day, yet they'd only get one qualification, so I talk about costs financially, but actually that's too big a cost for me on our headline figures...[In13].

Here the respondent is indicating that the return on economic and other investments is too low in terms of numbers of qualifications, a theme they discussed frequently. Additionally, several respondents discussed competing financial priorities. Two schools [1&6] weighed up, in the context of potential redundancies, the financial cost of sending students onto this provision with the salaries of school staff, one stating:

'It's simply money. Not the cost of the LC courses, it's more about our own teachers' jobs' [In6].

The other, responding to a question about whether the cost of partnership impacts on sending students on provision, stating:

At the moment it's got to... we made redundancies for the first time at Christmas ... we are overstaffed at the minute, and we're going to have to lose some more...I mean it depends on the cost...[In1].

The college principal discussed the idea of lost opportunity cost:

The cost beyond that is the opportunity cost of the workshop space, for example that they take up; if we're having to turn away groups of apprentices because we are all booked up with pre-16s at certain times then that could be a cost to us [In16].

Such statements exemplify the notion that, to be part of a field, a capital investment, in this case economic, needs to be made. Pressure placed on



organisations, such as impending redundancies or the loss of more profitable provision, may force them, whatever their view of partnership, to invest in other fields.

Several of these ideas fit into the 'Overall Benefit/Cost Framework for Analyzing Cooperative Relationships' proposed by Contractor and Lorange (2004, p36) and the notion of a social capital cost-benefit analysis suggested by Adler and Kwon (2002). Generally, the partners are weighing the benefits of working in partnership against the costs, with organisations expressing costs both in terms of expenditure but also in terms of potential lost revenues. In terms of social capital, they are balancing the costs of social capital development against the potential for capital gains. These considerations are also being made at an organisational rather than partnership level.

## **6.3 Social Capital**

### **6.3.1 Development of Social Capital**

Statements were made that related to Bourdieun social capital, particularly the social capital that organisations gained by working together. However, putting statements into this category was not straightforward: in many cases comments were only linked to social capital because, although the respondent was clear that working together was good, it was difficult to identify what positives were conferred other than just meeting and working with others in Bourdieu's (1986) 'networks'. For example the college principal suggested that:

We've always taken a collaborative view, an approach at the College [In16].

without really identifying what advantages this gave the organisation. The deputy-head of a geographically isolated school with a low level of partnership engagement stated:

...I think without it [partnership] you're very isolated and restricted in terms of what you can do [In11].

When discussing an earlier move that combined two smaller learning communities, one respondent said that increasing the size of the community, and hence number of linkages, was advantageous:

I think that it only started to be really successful when we came together as a whole learning community [In 6].

Here, as suggested by (Bourdieu 1986), the increase in partners leads to an enhanced amount of social capital.

On a number of occasions sharing is mentioned: 'sharing of resources', 'sharing of expertise', 'sharing staffing'. The notion of sharing confers a social dimension: the act of working together enables access to increased levels of capital. Sharing also fits in with the credit slip model discussed by Bourdieu (1986): at some points for such sharing to take place one organisation must have performed a service that placed an obligation on another organisation, but it is not possible from these statements to identify such obligations. Further examples of statements pertinent to identifying this development of social capital are discussed in section 6.3.3.

Capital's convertibility is key to these ideas, with sharing of 'resources' referring to exchanging social capital for economic capital; the sharing of 'expertise' and 'staffing' relating to the conversion of social capital into the embodied cultural capital of such 'expertise'. A head of a school with low LC engagement summed up the key benefit of partnership with the statement:

The principle of recognising that we are greater, you know, than the sum of our parts [In2].

Although this statement did not offer any insights into how such cooperative behaviour leads to enhanced benefits, it does link to the 'multiplier' effect of social capital, whereby the social capital of relationships increases the value of the capital possessed by an individual member of the network (Bourdieu 1986, p51).

Two interview statements discussed the hidden costs of working in partnership, with one respondent stating:

Costs on my time. Like tomorrow, I will be out all day at a meeting and if you work that out every period, and average cost in our school of a teaching period over a year is £2000 so you can do the mathematics [In3].

Such statements clearly link the development of the social capital of partnership to the investment that is required to cultivate this capital.

### **6.3.2 Difficulties in the Development of Social Capital**

Various statements about the demise of the sixth-form partnership, exemplify important elements in the maintenance or development of social capital. When analysed alongside Hodgson and Spour's (Pring et al 2009, p183) notions of strong and weak-partnership, they suggest why the sixth-form partnership was unsuccessful. Several respondents made interview comments about the effects, or necessity, of such sixth-form collaboration on their own or other organisations. For instance the school with the largest sixth-form stated:

We have a huge selection of A level subjects anyway, and for those students that were picking up something that was very specialised, it's quite likely that there would be something similar that is running here... [In15]

The same organisation made similar statements in meetings and was supported in this assertion by a number of other organisations. In general partnership terms this supports the statement made by Huxham and Vangen (2005, p37) that organisations should not get involved in collaborative ventures '...unless you can achieve something really worthwhile that you couldn't otherwise achieve...'

The post-16 partnership met certain of Hodgson and Spour's (Pring et al. 2009, p183) weakly-collaborative characteristics. Comments from a number of organisations in key meetings identified an unwillingness to develop a shared collaborative infrastructure, with organisations either being protective of: their own provision, with unattributed and non-transcribed statements being made about schools being unwilling to reduce their provision further to support this initiative; human resources:

We are very willing to run small groups, funded by larger groups elsewhere. We are concerned by the possibility of redundancies in certain areas if we don't run such provision [Ob8];

or physical resources:

we cannot offer our own buses because of capacity issues [Ob16]

Several comments, in interviews (6 statements) and in meetings (4 statements), further supported this weakly-collaborative position by suggesting that it is difficult to run such provision without a commitment to central timetabling or transport. The weak nature of this partnership was best summed up by one head-teacher at a meeting who stated that:

this collaboration will only work if there is a commitment from all heads to stop running A-level provision with low numbers [Ob2].

This statement was fully supported by others at the meeting. Most sixth-form schools clearly limited their partnership involvement to sending pre-16 students on vocational courses, because their sixth-form provision was strong enough to be run without needing collaboration. This failure to develop partnership beyond this narrow 14-16 focus also fits a characteristics of weak collaborative activity (Pring et al. 2009, p183). Various statements in meetings, alongside the context of this particular 14-19 partnership, support other aspects of weak-collaboration (Pring et al. 2009, p183): the vocational-academic divide, with schools only engaging in the partnership for the delivery of relatively low-level vocational provision or as suggested by a school with a large sixth-form at a meeting:

schools were willing to collaborate pre-16 because this didn't have a major impact on them financially or in curriculum delivery terms [Ob3];

and the notion of voluntarism, with schools only engaging in those aspects of partnership that they see as advantageous to themselves:

the format of the provision was dictated by the supply side rather than the demand side ie by what partners were willing to provide rather than by what students wanted [Ob17].

leading to unequal participation and opportunities, both in relation to schools and students; a concentration on 14-16 provision rather than the full 14-19 spectrum. Hodgson and Spours (2006, p332) concluded by suggesting that weak-collaboration leads to a lack of partnership-sustainability. At the time of this research, this lack of sustainability was apparent in terms of the failure of the post-16 initiative; the ultimate demise of the partnership was a consequence of an overall lack of sustainability.

The sixth-form partnership can also be analysed from various social capital perspectives. In all conceptions of social capital there is the principle that such capital can be converted into another form of useful resource. For Bourdieu (1986), a key antecedent for the development of social capital, and the ultimate exchange of it for other forms of capital or resource, is the idea that participants need to invest something in the network of relations. In this case, partners do not appear willing to make such contributions and thus any social capital in the post-16 partnership would appear to be of low value.

From another Bourdieun perspective, statements discussed here indicate that such a partnership would not give organisations any opportunities to accrue greater amounts, or different types, of capital and thus would not improve their field positions. Additionally, the LC manager also put forward the supplementary argument that the vocational expertise that was shared within the pre-16 partnerships was more specialised and only possessed by a small number of organisations. Post-16 expertise was more widely possessed by partners, making collaboration unnecessary for access to such expertise. Bourdieu has argued that values of capital depend upon the scarcity or availability of capital (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, pp181-182). Since conversion of social capital into other types of capital requires expenditure of economic capital such investment is only worthwhile if the capital yields are high, as would be the case with the particularly scarce availability of capitals associated with vocational delivery.

From the perspective of Woolcock (2001), the social capital developed in the post-16 partnership only appears to be bonding: it brings members together but doesn't enable access to novel forms of capital that bridging or linking forms of capital would. In Koka and Prescott's (2002, p799) terms, the linkages within this post-16 partnership are not diverse. Since all organisations deliver A-level provision themselves, this partnership gives access to a broader range of A-levels rather than an entirely different set of qualifications. Thus, social capital cannot be converted to completely novel resources, information or capitals.

To conclude, in line with the social capital model of partnership suggested by Muijs, West and Ainscow (2010), this post-16 partnership appears to be driven



by high levels of self-interest, one of the characteristics of Hodgson and Spours' (Pring et al 2009, p183) weakly collaborative model. Because the capital that the social capital can be converted into is low in value, and linkages are not diverse, organisations appear unwilling to make those reciprocal commitments needed to develop social capital. The consequence of all of the above is the failure of the post-16 partnership.

### **6.3.3 Social Capital and Information Exchange**

Specific statements were also given that identified precise information exchange advantages of social capital. Within meetings there was great emphasis on the way that working in partnership enabled enhanced sharing of information relating to student progression: for 11-16 schools and their students improved knowledge of post-16 provision; for schools with sixth-forms, or the college and training providers, potential access to better information about prospective students. As before, my field analysis did not confirm any of these progression advantages for schools. At one meeting there was also the general consensus that by working together in this way to ensure smoother progression, loss of students out of the community could also be prevented. Here it appears that the partnership is acting as a network to support information exchange.

Within interviews, several other statements discussed a broader notion of sharing of information and suggested the actual possession of social capital confers upon its holders advantages related to a network of relationships. One interviewee explicitly identified such advantages by stating:

I think the fact that I can pick up the phone to you, or I can email you straight away... I think, now, there's a greater cooperation at all levels, from the Heads right down because we're seen to cooperate, we're seen to be in partnership. We want to work with each other. It's, you know, I know now that if I had an issue, or a question about OFSTED, I could ring ...and say ... have you got a view on this' or 'can you give me a steal' or 'do you know' and I think it's that sort of working together, you know, for the benefit of the students because that's what we're all here for [In3].

These perceived benefits strongly confirmed one of the advantages of working in partnership is access to information.

Several statements within interviews discussed the idea of partners gaining better comprehension of each other or being more easily able to share information. The first of these points is exemplified by the head of a high performing sixth-form school with low LC engagement:

I think understanding of pedagogy in other situations, so I think it's improved our understanding of what goes on at the College. Maybe that's been a two-way thing as well, but I certainly think we've, you know, we have greater understanding of that now than we did previously, and I think the same applies to training providers as well, you know, I think that having that level of communication between [training provider], say, or the [other training provider], has certainly added to our knowledge of how they work, what they do, what they can provide [In2].

Similar ideas were also expressed at LC meetings, with a number of statements being made about the importance of the partnership for sharing information, even if organisations did not send students on provision. The extent of informal networking outside of meetings was hinted at by the head of a high performing sixth form school that sent virtually no students on partnership provision who stated that:

It was great during the snow that we [the head-teachers] kept in touch with each other to see what we were planning to do with school closures [Ob13].

These ideas can be analysed from a number of perspectives. As suggested by Koka and Prescott (2002, p795) it appears that a key benefit of social capital within a partnership is the 'flow of... knowledge and information'. In terms of Woolcock's (2001) definitions of social capital, these networks between organisations can be regarded both as bonding and bridging forms. Bonding in relation to the capital that actually brings these organisations together and strengthens the partnership, and bridging in relation to the links between the different sub-categories of organisations: sixth-form schools; 11-16 schools; the college; training providers. Using the conceptualisations of Adler and Kwon (2002) and Koka and Prescott (2002) the structure and purposes of this capital will be considered in the discussion chapter.

## 6.4 Habitus

Very little evidence was obtained from this study about the habituses of partners. Many statements were made in interviews and at meetings that conveyed a positive attitude towards partnership. This positive attitude could be considered a positive habitus in relation to partnership. However, none of these statements identified reasons for this positive attitude. Given this widely distributed positive attitude towards working in partnership it would certainly be interesting to identify those shared experiences or 'homogenous conditionings' (Bourdieu 1977, p80; Bourdieu 1993, p46; Bourdieu 2010, p95) that have contributed to such a shared habitus.

## 6.5 Conclusions

In terms of a Bourdieun conceptualisation of the benefits of partnership, organisations value working in partnership because it allows them, or their students, to have access to, and accumulate, types of capital that a single organisation does not possess. Working in partnership ultimately leads to the development of non-concrete social capital that can be converted into other forms of useful capital. However, the capital benefits that students gain from the partnership are not universally agreed, and in some cases students themselves end up losing other forms of capital by attending partnership provision.

Two key outcomes were identified from statements relating to finance. The social capital of working in partnership can be converted into other forms of capital, in this case embodied cultural capital of 'expertise', the institutionalised cultural capital of staff qualifications, the economic capital of resources. Additionally, this social capital led to improved flows of information. Finally, there is again a cost benefit analysis, which weighs up the costs of partnership against its benefits in the ways suggested by Contractor and Lorange (2004, p36) and Adler and Kwon (2002).

Specific examples from the sixth-form partnership suggest that this partnership is only weakly collaborative. Sixth-form partners only have access to low value capital that is similar to that which they already possess. The cost of working in partnership outweighs its capital benefits.

In order to fully integrate these ideas into a Bourdieun theoretical framework the values and configurations of capital that are considered most advantageous to partnership organisations must be identified. The key focus of the next chapter is an analysis of partners' perceptions of these values and configurations.



## **Chapter 7. Findings: Capital Values and How these are Determined**

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### **7.1 Introduction**

I have already discussed the capital exchanges occurring within this partnership. For a full Bourdieun conceptualisation of the partnership, it is important to identify the relative values of capital and how the distribution of this capital affects different members of the partnership (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p99). For a full evaluation, account must be taken of how the comparative values of capital are set using the notion of statist capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p114). This chapter analyses key themes explaining how values of capital are perceived by the partnership and how external influences affect the values of this capital.

### **7.2 Perceived Value of Vocational Qualifications**

Over the period of this research, partnership members expressed concern at meetings about the expected changes in the performance table value of vocational qualifications and the message coming from the coalition government about the qualifications' status and worth. Within this section, I have concentrated predominantly on discourse that relates to devaluation impacting on students rather than on performance table positions. However, at certain junctures, in order to clarify certain points, I have briefly mentioned performance tables.

This notion of devaluation was initially discussed at meetings in relation to the LC's change in equivalence value of BTEC qualifications. At the curriculum group meeting that discussed this devaluation decision, three [4,6&7] members of the group were unhappy with the decision. Two [4&6] represented schools that had above average reliance on BTEC equivalences. All three argued strongly and emotively about this devaluation of vocational qualifications, with one respondent stating:

I am very disappointed with this decision: it will give the wrong message about the value of vocational qualifications [Ob7].



Another [4] suggested that they were worried about the overall message that was being put out and the implied message about the value of BTECs. They also suggested that schools do BTECs for the 'numbers game' and made the emotive statement:

We are saying one thing about vocational qualifications and practising another [Ob4].

Several interview responses indicated disappointment in the perceived devaluing of vocational qualifications by the government reforms and were concerned at the impact on students and the LC curriculum. A statement, made by a deputy-head of a school that engaged well with the LC but relied heavily on non-GCSE qualifications for league table position, said:

Unfortunately, I think the change in the GCSE reforms and the misguided, in my view, narrowing the emphasis on academic subjects will have an impact on where schools guide their students to be... I'm worried about the likes of Business Studies, Art, Drama, the DT subjects, all successful positive subjects here in school that I can see are going to be squeezed in terms of staffing and numbers [In15].

Interestingly, of the fifteen statements about this devaluation of vocational qualifications made by schools seven were made by schools in the top third for reliance on vocational qualifications for their league table position; each respondent in this group making at least one statement about this devaluation.

Several respondents discussed the key benefits of a vocational curriculum in terms of benefits for students. For instance, the assistant head of a school in the above group suggested:

...certain students, will find it very difficult to do a large number of GCSE subjects and be successful on them and yet the BTEC qualifications that we used to offer, mmm they could do them and be successful and, you know, have that pride in it [In4].

The idea that vocational skills possess less capital value than academic skills is one that has been discussed on a number of occasions by Bourdieu and will be discussed further in chapter 8.

One respondent, from a high-performing school with minimal LC engagement, having discussed disappointment in the erosion of 'rigorous vocational' qualifications in such areas as engineering, made the following statement:

Just having more girls doing beauty I find depressing, and I don't think we've particularly addressed that, you know, in terms of the local economy, we still seem to be sending, I've got girls leaving here going to do beauty and I think why, really, in terms of, 'where's this going to lead you in the local community because its saturated already [In13].

This statement fits well with other arguments that have been made about the academic-vocational divide, particularly those made by Bernstein (2003, p55) about lower value vocational qualifications ensnaring and disadvantaging the working-class. Others, by making statements that champion the virtue of the vocational qualifications for those that can 'do them' and suggesting 'that they have a value in certain circumstances' appear to be linking the vocational qualifications to particular, lower ability, levels of student. However, for all but the respondent in the last statement this was not seen as a disadvantage. This argument will addressed in chapter 8.

Surprisingly, statements were made at interview giving some support for the proposed Wolf reforms, particularly the planned rationalisation of the equivalence values of vocational qualifications. For instance, one school suggested:

For a learner to go and do one day a week, to come out with ten equivalences or however many is bonkers, so you know, to limit that and you know, still allow for recognition of a diploma size qualification, but then to, sort of, restrict how that is used in League Tables and stuff, I think it's a fair thing to do [In14].

In contrast, other statements, mainly made by schools that had high-level LC engagement and high-level reliance on vocational provision for league table position, explicitly linked the reduction in value to a reduction in student numbers on LC provision and proposed the effect of equivalences on league table position as a reason for this reduction. This is summed up by one respondent who stated:

...but it's been driven by the government's change in the value of non-GCSE qualifications[In4].

The same respondent later clarified this by suggesting:

Mmm eh, if you think back to when we used to send sixty or seventy students if we still did that it would have a tremendously damaging effect on our position in the performance tables, and we are driven by our position in performance tables[ln4].

It is the entire notion of equivalences that is both problematic and interesting in this context. From a Bourdieun perspective such equivalences appear to be a form of symbolic capital. For schools this symbolic capital can be cashed in to ensure a certain score, and hence position, within the performance tables.

Some statements also discussed the belief that the previous equivalences had led to students making progression onto inappropriate post-16 courses. A typical response was made by an assistant-head, who had previously discussed the impact of these changes on the school's performance table position, when discussing the changes in equivalences:

But then you're setting students up to have a very difficult time post-16 by allowing them access to Level 3 courses, academic courses, that maybe they're not suited for. [ln4].

This was agreed by a respondent from a high performing school that didn't send students on LC Provision.

I thought the whole purpose, really, of the vocational courses was a post-16 progression, and some of them, I don't really think, had a post-16 progression, so I think in principle, on those two factors, it was right [ln13].

Similar statements were made in relation to the change in value of BTEC equivalences:

'...but for A level preparation, a BTEC in a particular subject was not going to be sufficient grounds for them to be able to pick up an A level...[ln15]

One respondent indicated that for post-16 vocational courses they may be a good preparation, stating:

'...If it's going on to another vocational course, maybe, but if it's going on to A-levels, it's not fair on the learner because it isn't equivalent [ln13].

For students the equivalences can be used to meet the formulaic access requirements of post-16 provision progression, or, as suggested by the college principal, progression into employment or higher education, but without suitably preparing them for much of this provision. The fact that for certain, less capable, students these conversions enabled access onto courses that they were not 'suited for', appears to break the key link between possession of a qualification and its guarantee of 'competence' and cultural capital (Bourdieu 2010, p17). In addition, one respondent suggested that by reducing the equivalence value, the 'credibility' of vocational qualifications would be improved. This inflationary valuation of qualifications by the system of equivalences seems to be paradoxically another way in which the real worth of vocational qualifications was reduced. Wolf (2011) made a number of comments that indicated that, rather than simply devaluing vocational qualifications, she was reforming them since these qualifications did not benefit lower level learners.

### **7.3 Impact of Performance Table Equivalences**

Additional statements were made at interview and in meetings that discussed the impact of changed equivalence values in terms of their impact on performance table positions. Across interviews and at observations, and within statements initially coded as relating to 'curriculum changes', 'BTEC equivalences' and 'performance table effects', a total of 38 statements explicitly mentioned the potential for changes in equivalence value to affect performance table positions. Twenty-one mentioned that changing equivalence values would affect uptake of LC provision. Fourteen discussed the notion of ignoring these effects when planning a curriculum. This balance was significantly skewed by one respondent, from a very successful school [13] that did not engage with LC provision, who made nine (64%) of these fourteen 'ignoring changes' statements.

Several statements linked the previously discussed devaluation of vocational qualifications to performance tables. For instance, one school, which has always sent large numbers of students onto LC provision, stated that:

I always feel quite saddened that they appear, or perceive to be, devalued, because for the students that do them and complete them, it's often a route that they can then pursue and be successful in, so to perceive them as being a second best, and to you know, classify them differently in league tables, or not to recognise that they have a value in certain circumstances is very sad... [In15].

It is interesting in terms of Bourdieun symbolic capital that this respondent has used terms such as 'perceived' and 'value'. On the surface use of such language appears to be suggesting that the Government's position has conferred less symbolic capital on these qualifications. The overall argument, supported by similar statements from other respondents, seems to be although the government feels that these qualifications are of lower value than 'academic' qualifications, this position doesn't take account of the useful capital, expressed by this respondent as 'value in certain circumstances' and by the idea that they enable students to pursue a successful career in the qualification area. Interestingly such views were expressed by organisations who have not previously sent large numbers of students onto LC provision and was communicated about both LC and school-based qualifications.

A key facet of symbolic capital is the notion that its value is arbitrarily perceived by members of a field (Bourdieu 1998, p85). In order for this to happen, members of the field must also accept the legitimacy of the value that has been set (Bourdieu 1998, p103). However, to be properly considered as symbolic capital this arbitrariness must be misrecognised by members of the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1998, p119). Statements made by respondents clearly identify the perceived, and government imposed, nature of the relative values of vocational and academic qualifications. In general there was complete acceptance of the government's authority to set these arbitrary values and explicit articulation of the effect of the government changing these values via statements, such as this, from an assistant-head whose school engaged well with the LC, but also had a high dependence on non-GCSE qualifications for league table position:

If it was just cost, I don't think you would have seen the cut that we've made because if you think about it we're driven by our position within performance tables and the changes made by the government as to the value of qualifications



and their role in those performance tables, that is essentially what has driven our reduction in student numbers, because if you think about it we pump vast sums of money into multiple entries for students so it's not driven by the finance, that's helpful for us because obviously we've all got reducing budgets to spend but it's been driven by the government's change in the value of non-GCSE qualifications. Absolutely. [In4].

Since the schools appear to be accepting, or recognising, the legitimacy of the government to set these values, the misrecognition element of symbolic capital is missing (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p119; Bourdieu 2000, p242). Rather than being an example of symbolic violence, this arbitrary setting of value appears to be a clear illustration of how government imposed statist capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p114) confers exchange rates and market prices on other forms of capital that are important to schools.

One respondent, from a school which had medium-level engagement with the LC and medium-level reliance on vocational provision for league table position, said:

...the Government are pushing parents to question more thoroughly 'should my son or daughter do more academic subjects as opposed to vocational? [In14].

Since parents and students were not the focus of this research, it is not possible to identify how this government influence is achieved. However, this statement is interesting since it clearly indicates the reforms not only affect schools' actions but also influence parental perceptions.

The 21 interview statements related to OFSTED or league table measures having a negative effect on adoption of LC provision mainly discussed the conflicting priorities of ensuring the curriculum met the needs of students and that the curriculum ensured the school performed well in league tables. The LC manager, from a slightly more detached position, summed this up with the statement:

...but I do know, hand on heart, that if there's a choice between a learner who is a C/D borderline and they need them to get their performance measures, that choice between going out of school or staying in school will

ultimately be made for them, they will stay in school...[In17].

Again from a more detached perspective, the College principal made the prescient statement:

...when there was this discussion in the LC meeting, to a person the heads were all saying that 'we will [keep sending students onto LC provision]. How we appear in schools league tables is secondary to the needs of the students'. You just wonder whether that is true when they are sitting in front of the governing body and they are being appraised for their performance and probably the first point of reference for the governing body is [league table performance] [In16].

Interestingly when 'Progress Eight' measures were announced, two of the schools [4&5] that made the most positive statements about putting needs of students first, and also sent the majority of students onto LC provision, agreed to drastic reductions in LC students. Over this period these two schools had OFSTED inspections, the results of which were described as 'disappointing' by the head teachers.

Since the announcement of the introduction of 'Progress Eight' (Department for Education 2013b) numbers of learners being sent on to LC provision reduced drastically, to such an extent that the nature of the partnership changed significantly from one that planned vocational provision for schools to one that merely discussed, as a broad staff development opportunity, how schools were engaging with various curriculum changes. Throughout this period I insistently asked schools to explain reasons for this change in engagement, both in order to corroborate evidence for this research and to confirm for managers at my own organisation why numbers were dropping so drastically. Schools consistently told me that disengagement was due to the influence of 'Progress Eight', indicating that vocational qualifications offered by the partnership, which most partners had agreed were suitable for their particular cohorts, would not enable schools to gain performance table credits for 'Progress Eight'. One school [4], which initially sent large numbers onto the provision, indicated that it would be putting its 'bottom band' learners on to Geography GCSE because even if they gained a grade G this would benefit the school more in performance table terms than these students gaining a vocational qualification.

My conclusions about the impact of 'Progress Eight' on the partnership were confirmed in conversations with the, by then both different, LC manager and college principal. Both had, in separate one-to-one conversations with head-teachers, identified concerns about 'Progress Eight' measures as the only reason why schools would not be sending students on vocational provision.

The number of students recruited onto partnership provision that started in either 2014 or 2015 was very close to the 1.2% of students that the government felt that 'Progress Eight' would *not* apply to (Department for Education 2013b, p10). The biggest proportional, and gross, reduction in students coming onto provision was from schools that had originally sent large numbers of students onto the provision. In addition, all of these schools at some point during, or throughout, this period of research had gained a grade 3 at an OFSTED inspection.

The general view is perhaps best summed by the statement from a school that relied heavily on BTEC equivalences for their league table position:

'...we're not heavily into the BTEC game. Our curriculum's approximately 80% traditional GCSEs and 20% BTEC but obviously there is a large cross over in the CD borderline band of kids that do access the, you know, the BTEC courses, to make sure that they get, with the equivalences ... the 5A-Cs [In11].

Such a statement is an interesting admission that, although the school did not believe, contrary to evidence from performance tables, it heavily invested in BTECs, these qualifications were used to ensure that certain students obtained qualifications that gave the school the symbolically valued capital of league table points. In common with other respondents, this interviewee had been very clear about the negative value of BTEC qualifications for progression, although with those responses this subject positioned themselves as a teacher. This illustrates an interesting dichotomy about capital values: on the one hand the respondent recognises that the embodied cultural capital worth of the BTEC is not high; on the other they suggest that for the school the capital value of equivalences is significant in terms of league table position. This fits very closely the schizophrenia described by Ball (2004 p146), whereby a teacher judges whether student needs or performance table concerns should

predominate when making a decision. Previously discussed statements also hint at this schizophrenia.

The most successful schools within the partnership, in terms of OFSTED grades and performance table measures, continued to send roughly the same small number of students onto the provision. In interviews, the two schools that were best positioned on the 5A\*-C performance measure gave some pertinent statements in relation to this. In common with other respondents, school [13] suggested that the needs of individual students were more important than adopting a government diktat. On a number of occasions this respondent indicated that they were in the lucky position of being very highly performing and consequently suggested that lower performing schools may need to more rigorously adopt government agendas such as the EBacc:

... we don't worry about the EBacc but I think for other schools, who are under more pressure to reach their footfall targets... I think they are under pressure to do that, and I think it's a huge shame for those learners, because they're basically trying to do something that A) they can't do, or B) they're not interested in...[In13].

This sentiment was echoed by the other high performing school:

For schools who are at the sharp end of the accountability agenda, and who need to really maximise the [5A\*-C GCSEs] figures, then that might be also be a factor [in their LC engagement]...[In2]'

In line with this argument, but in relation to another factor that would influence field position, other schools [3,6] that argued for making sure that provision met the needs of learners were two of the larger schools from within the LC. It would appear that the specific environment that influences these schools has given them a particular disposition in relation to the way that their behaviours are structured in respect of league table influences: an example of habitus being structured by environment and field position (Bourdieu 1977, p22).

## **7.4 Conclusions on Capital Values**

Despite concerns about performance tables or OFSTED not ranking highly in interview responses, given the clear and subsequent impact of 'Progress Eight' on the nature of the partnership, it is important to model in detail in chapter 8



the potential theoretical reasons for the impact of these factors. The evidence above suggests that one of the key reasons that schools see for partnership engagement is that this provision enables students to gain performance table credits for the school. This focus on performance table measures fulfils another of the differentiators between weak and strong collaboration discussed by Hodgson and Spours (Pring et al 2009, p183): the partnership is apparently driven by the 'narrow institutional' needs of improved performance rather than the needs of the entire community.

This influence of performance table points on organisational behaviour is amenable to analysis from a variety of theoretical perspectives. From a Bourdieun perspective, this behaviour would be regarded as an example of the influence of statist capital (Bourdieu 1998). When the influence of 'Progress Eight' on partnership engagement is reviewed from a performativity perspective, its effects add to a long line of similar arguments about the primacy of performativity within education (Lyotard 1984; Ball 2000; Ball 2012).

Within the next chapter, ideas from this chapter will be combined with key points from other findings chapters and incorporated with my theoretical framework to suggest mechanisms that explain the actual behaviour of the partnership by linking these empirical findings with real structures.



### 8.1 Introduction

This chapter identifies potential answers to my research questions, using this research's specific context together with my theoretical framework and methodology to frame these answers. Each section starts with an overview of likely answers to my research questions based on my empirical findings from chapters 4-7. It then proceeds with sub-sections that aim to identify key links between my *empirical* observations, the *actual* behaviours of organisations and *real* structures from my theoretical framework. Each section then concludes with putative explanatory mechanisms that attempt to answer each research question.

At a practical level, mechanisms were formulated using Bhaskar's (2014, viii) critical realist context, structure, mechanism, and outcome framework. I have linked *actual* outcomes to a particular part of my *real* structure, using my *empirical* observations to support this link in the context of my research. My mechanisms were explanations that linked partner behaviours, partnership outcomes and my theoretical framework structures. Additionally, during analysis, I continually passed my conclusions through my reflexive lens.

Before looking at my research answers in detail, I must again reiterate the research's broad contextual setting. As an insider I had access to much of the partnership and its members before and after my intensive research phase, and continued to make field notes of my observations during this period. At one level, I have had to ensure empirical evidence supports my assertions and to avoid the assumption that my viewpoint is shared by my subjects (Mercer 2007). On another level, this 'insiderness' has given me a thorough comprehension of the activities and behaviour of this partnership over an extended time-period, leading to the advantages proposed by Labaree (2002), Coghlan (2003) Brannick and Coghlan (2007) and Boyle (2011) and discussed in section 3.3.3.

I started this research when the LC regarded itself as being a very successful partnership for delivery of popular pre-16 vocational provision. At the end,

although the partnership still existed, it had become a forum for discussing of school-based curriculum issues, with negligible recruitment onto a much reduced pre-16 vocational curriculum and with two failed attempts to develop a broader post-16 partnership. For the 14-16 part of the partnership it was clearly the introduction of 'Progress Eight' that led to this partnership demise. In essence, it is this *actual* behaviour of the partnership that my conclusions must seek to explain.

## 8.2 Research Question 1

My results identify a number of potential answers to the first question:

How do Bourdieun, and other related theoretical concepts, including broad conceptualisations of social capital, performativity, the notion of weak and strong collaboration and cost-benefit analysis of partnership, explain organisations' engagement with the partnership, when analysed from the perspective of managers involved in a particular 14-19 partnership?

Organisations working in partnership develop bonding, bridging and linking social capital, which can be exchanged for a variety of other capitals not available outside the partnership. Other capitals include: the institutionalised cultural capital of qualifications for students, which schools can use to enhance their performance table positions; the embodied cultural capital of novel student experiences; the economic capital of funding opportunities. However, for some students, these capital exchanges would not be advantageous, or students could lose access to other forms of capital, such as qualifications or experiences within school. Social capital was developed by reciprocal 'information' exchange between partners and, as a consequence of the long-term relationships and transactions between partners, was also used to ensure such 'information' transfers took place.

By working in partnership organisations were able to access a broader range of resources, including expertise, specialist equipment, vocational qualifications, in a less risky manner than if working alone. Most of these resources can be described in terms of the wider forms of Bourdieun capital and it appears, that for some organisations, the incremental capital costs of partnership are greater than the potential incremental capital gains. For the post-16 partnership, this

led to partners disengaging from the partnership. The failure of the post-16 partnership could be also described as a failure to develop sufficient social capital of the correct type, by unequal commitments to the partnership and inadequate conversion of capitals into those capitals useful for either the schools or their students.

Because of its narrow focus on vocational 14-16 provision, weak governance and a focus on performance measures, this partnership would be regarded as being weakly-collaborative (Hodgson and Spours 2006).

Two of the factors identified in the success of this partnership were the ideas of strong leadership from the partnership manager and good involvement from head teachers, although concerns were raised about personnel changes within this leadership group.

## **8.2.1 Capital Considerations**

### ***8.2.1.1 Social Capital***

In partnership, the organisations develop social capital. Empirically, beyond unqualified statements about it being 'good to work together', it was difficult to identify specific statements about such capital. This is unsurprising since, social capital is generally intangible and is best identified by determining key elements of network dynamics and social capital's onward conversion into other forms of capital (see section 2.3.2). From Bourdieu's (1986, p51) definition of social capital, this partnership possesses the key elements of 'institutionalised relationships', 'mutual acquaintance' and 'recognition'. Members, by attending, and making contact outside of, meetings have, as identified by two partnership members, invested time, effort and economic capital into developing this capital (Bourdieu 1993, p33). Additionally, partnership members also discussed capitals lost by students when attending partnership provision. One organisation discussed the opportunity cost of partnership and others the possibility partnership leading to redundancies. From the perspective of Adler and Kwon (2002) such losses of capital can be regarded as investments needed to accrue social capital.



Various comments can be made about the purpose of this social capital. Using Woolcock's (2001) descriptions of social capital, the partnership can be characterised in different ways. Statements about the general virtue of working together can be linked to bonding social capital, i.e. strengthening relationships between organisations. Statements from schools discussing relationships with other sectors exemplify bridging social capital, i.e. links between different educational sub-fields such as sixth-form schools, 11-16 schools, the college and training providers. Statements and observations about links to sources of external funding provide evidence of an element of linking capital.

Information exchange, a suggested key aspect of social capital (Adler and Kwon 2002; Koka and Prescott 2002), was identified by various partners as one of the advantages, in terms of information about post-16 progression but also being able 'to pick up the phone' for more general information exchange. Although some organisations discussed gaining competitive advantages from this information exchange, or in Bourdieun terms improved field position, there was no explicit indication that this was the key purpose of partnership membership. However, it is very clear partners believe information exchange is used to benefit the organisation: smoother progression of students into post-16 provision for the college; 'a clearer idea...of career progression' for students in 11-16 schools; in relation to other sectors, '...knowledge of how they work, what they do, what they can provide' linked to offering students better advice and guidance. These positions seem to conform to the 'egocentric' focus of bridging social capital suggested by Adler and Kwon (2002, p19) or the self-interest element of Muijs, West and Ainscow's (2010) application of social capital to school networks. This is further supported by the observation that no organisation linked information exchange to strengthening the partnership.

A combination of empirical information and my long-term immersion within the partnership gives some indication as to social capital's structuring and sources. Outside the partnership structure, most organisations appear to have links to each other, with some confirming this in interviews or meetings, suggesting this partnership can be regarded as a closed structure. Adler and Kwon (2002, p24) have suggested that a closed structure increases trust between partners. Such trust benefits may help explain why, although the partnership was originally set

up to provide curriculum opportunities, information exchange benefits were so frequently identified. At an early stage, when the partnership was predicated upon the 'purchase' of qualifications, this capital could be regarded as 'market based' (Adler and Kwon 2002). By working together this way, with terms of the contractual relationship clearly and tightly specified, organisations made the reciprocal and explicit exchange of economic capital required for course delivery and the more implicit information exchange, which is necessary for the development of social capital (Bourdieu 1986). This led to the 'social-relations' aspect of social capital, which provides the underlying structure of social capital (Adler and Kwon 2002, pp18-19), with 'diffuse' terms of exchange and loose specification of information transfer requirements and inter-organisational learning. The terms of exchange were tacit with no compulsion for reciprocal exchange of information, it was just acknowledged that at some point reciprocal exchanges would occur. Finally, these exchanges were symmetrical, meaning all organisations were empowered to both ask for and give information.

This study was carried out over eight years after the partnership convened and it was apparent in interviews and meetings that all partners were experienced in partnership working. This experience also fits Koka and Prescott's (2002, p803) model, which suggests repeated and long-term linkages between partners builds trust, leading to exchange of high quality information. Structurally, linkages between organisations are dense, a relatively large number of organisations linked via a large network of linkages, but also diverse due to the previously identified bridging capital. Although Koka and Prescott (2002) suggest that linkages are either high in volume or high in diversity, this partnership has both types of linkage and key advantages from both: rapid or efficient transmission of information between partners and a wide range of information about different educational contexts.

In this partnership, there was evidence of the information but not the power benefits discussed by Adler and Kwon (2002, p29). In terms of the risks that Adler and Kwon (2002, p29) and Koka and Prescott (2002) discuss, the main one identified here is the previously discussed cost in developing such capital. These cost-benefits will be discussed later. Finally, as Koka and Prescott (2002, p801) suggested, due to the cost of setting up these links it is pertinent



for an organisation to ‘...leverage such relationship-specific assets across multiple projects’, or in this case to look for benefits, such as the specific and general information exchange discussed by partners, that go beyond those for which the partnership was originally convened.

By combining theoretical ideas with empirical statements and knowledge of the partnership, it is possible to link the post-16 partnership’s failure in the *actual* domain, to reciprocal exchanges needed to maintain social capital. Many organisations involved in the post-16 partnership, by failing to offer qualifications or resources to the partnership were unwilling to make these reciprocal exchanges. For Bourdieu (1986), a key antecedent for the development of social capital, and the ultimate exchange of it for other forms of capital, is the idea that participants need to invest something in the network of relations. Here partners were not willing to make such contributions and thus any social capital in the post-16 partnership would be of low value.

From Woolcock’s (2001) perspective, no bridging or linking social capital was developed in the post-16 partnership, or in Koka and Prescott’s (2002, p799) terms the linkages are not diverse. As exemplified by the school that stated that rather than accessing partnership provision ‘...it’s quite likely that there would be something similar that is running here...’, since the organisations involved deliver similar A-level provision there is no access to the completely novel resources, information, capitals or different qualifications provided by bridging, linking or diverse social capital. Consistent with Muijs, West and Ainscow’s (2010) social capital partnership model, this partnership is driven by high levels of self-interest. Finally, in Bourdieun terms, partners’ statements indicate that this partnership does not give organisations opportunities to accrue greater amounts or different types of capital to enhance their field positions.

#### **8.2.1.2 Capital Conversions**

For the concept of social capital to be incorporated into a mechanistic explanation of partnership engagement, Bourdieu’s (1986) notion that social capital is convertible into other forms of capital is needed. Empirical responses about advantages of partnership, such as access to ‘facility’ and ‘resource’ for organisations, ‘wider social participation’ or ‘vocational courses’ for students,

indicate that the abstract social capital of partnership is converted into other capitals. This conversion of capital requires expenditure, thus the benefits of such capital conversions must be clearly balanced against the costs.

Interview and observation statements identified several forms of capital resulting from the conversion of social capital. Students' qualifications can be considered as institutionalised cultural capital, with broader and novel experiences they gained from vocational experience being embodied cultural capital. My research focus was an explanation of organisational, rather than student, behaviour, so I will concentrate on the impact of such capital for a schools rather than a students. When the partnership was most successful, most partnership qualifications had performance table value, often greater than many school based qualifications. Thus, another form of capital gained is that of performance table points (see 8.3). Social capital is also converted into economic capital, particularly preferential access to sources of funding (see 8.2.1.3).

For certain schools, some of the partnership capital advantages for students were contested: the schools did not perceive that the institutionalised cultural capital of qualifications gave students key advantages nor that students actually gained any of the suggested forms of embodied capital. Additionally, the field analysis indicated that partnership engagement did not give schools any post-16 progression advantages. Others thought that access to this capital was at a cost for the students or the organisation.

These observations about capital's contested value are part of the empirical domain. To incorporate them into a mechanistic explanation of partnership engagement a *real* element must be introduced that links to the *actual* outcomes of partnership engagement and success. This is discussed in the next section.

#### **8.2.1.3 Cost-Benefit Analysis**

From a financial perspective partners suggested that working in partnership enabled cheaper access to various resources, such as specialist instructors or equipment. Interviewees also discussed the economic and other costs of

working collaboratively. As Contractor and Lorange (2004, p36) suggested, in order for partnership to be worthwhile, the incremental financial benefits of collaboration have to outweigh the incremental financial costs. In social capital terms, partners' cost-benefit calculations seem to be privileging the needs of the individual organisation above those of the partnership (Adler and Kwon 2002; Muijs, West and Ainscow 2010). For many respondents, these incremental costs, including staff redundancy, 'lost opportunity' to deliver provision to more 'lucrative' students, loss of other curriculum opportunities for students attending partnership provision, appear to outweigh any advantages of working in partnership. Partners indicated in their statements that they perceive these costs and benefits in much broader than financial terms. From a theoretical perspective, there would appear to be much scope in expanding Contractor and Lorange's framework, to include other types of capital and develop a more thorough explanatory model of the feasibility of collaborating. This model offers greater explanatory power than Adler and Kwon's (2002) social capital risk-benefit model since it suggests a way that costs and benefits can be quantified to determine whether partnership is feasible.

When Contractor and Lorange's model is combined with Bourdieu's idea that the amount of capital and its configuration determine an agent's position within a field and ultimately their behaviour (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p99) it is possible to identify a potential mechanism to explain partnership engagement. It appears that partnership engagement decisions depend upon a cost-benefit, or risk-benefit, analysis of potential capital expenditure, in terms of decreased revenues or increased costs, when compared to capital gain, as either increased revenues or decreased costs. Given that, for Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p99), field position is determined by the amount of capital possessed, such a decision may be based on a calculation of whether partnership benefits outweigh the costs in terms of field position.

The organisational studies perspective can also be used to explain why partnership is preferred to other forms of organisation. Contractor and Lorange (2004, p29) suggested that production is often shifted to the lower-cost partner within an alliance, with a consequent overall reduction in cost. This is analogous to the situation discussed within interviews, whereby reduction in

cost of delivering vocational provision was significantly reduced when the lower-cost partners were used to deliver the vocational courses. Contractor and Lorange (2004, pp29-33) also discussed the sharing of complementary technologies and what they term 'vertical quasi-integration'. Using a partner to deliver provision can be seen as a pooling of resources and expertise: the ability of vocational training organisations to deliver vocational qualifications being shared with the ability of schools to provide pre-16 students. Similarly, for Huxham and Vangen (2005, p5) one of the key reasons for public sector collaboration is the sharing of '... resource, expertise, knowledge and connections'.

#### **8.2.1.4 Conclusions on capital Considerations**

The ideas above can be incorporated to provide a critical realist mechanism that explains why an organisation engages in this particular partnership. At the actual level, organisations have variable levels of engagement with the partnership, quantified by the numbers of students sent onto partnership provision. At the empirical level, interviewees have varied explanations for their engagement with the partnership and have indicated working in partnership enables organisations to gain qualifications and experience for their students. For schools, these qualifications can be exchanged for performance table points. At the real level, organisations, by forming a network of relationships and expending various types of capital, develop social capital, which can be exchanged for other forms of capital. Levels of partnership engagement ultimately depend upon the balance between the capital expenditure required to develop social capital and the capital that can be accrued when the social capital is exchanged for other forms of capital. Partnership is only worthwhile if capital benefits, both in terms of gross amount and configuration, are greater than capital costs. The key component missing from the argument is a notion of which type of capital has the highest value. Ultimately, the only contextual difference identified in this section is that between pre and post-16 partnership.

#### **8.2.2 Educational Partnership Perspectives**

Various features of the partnership, identified from empirical evidence and my long-term comprehension of the partnership, link to four of Hodgson and



Spours' six characteristics of a weakly-collaborative partnership, as presented in Pring et al (2009, p183).

First, this partnership mainly provided 'alternative learning experiences (Pring et al 2009, p183)'. The failure of post-16 partnership, illustrated by comments from schools about not wishing to collaborate in an A-level partnership, supported this idea of the provision of 'alternative learning' for 14-16 year olds. Second, although the LC manager wished to broaden the partnership's remit, and discussed in interview the success of moving provision from the narrow confines of IF to a broader multi-level provision, partnership facts and partners' empirical statements indicated that this vocational 14-16 curriculum mainly benefitted weaker learners. Third, although there was clarity in the partnership's leadership and in links with the LA, discussion about funding changes, concerns about leadership change and the impact of 'Progress Eight' placed the partnership in the weakly-collaborative finance and governance part of Hodgson and Spours' matrix. Finally, the key influence of the performance table on partners' behaviour and measurement of partnership performance, as discussed above and observed in partners' engagement with the introduction of 'Progress Eight', clearly placed the partnership on the weakly-collaborative pole of the 'performance measures' characteristic. This focus on 'institutional self-interest (Pring et al 2009, p183)' was confirmed by the prevalence of partners' egocentric interview statements highlighting advantages for their own organisations.

For the remaining two of Hodgson and Spours' partnership characteristics there was either no or conflicting evidence as to the partnership's position. In relation to infrastructure, although historically there had been some use of pooled resources to develop new vocational facilities, these facilities mirrored provision already in place, and in contrast to that developed in a neighbouring LC, was based within one school. In terms of staff development, there was evidence of resource pooling for development predominantly in response to initiatives such as the *Diploma* rather than to increase capacity within the LC.



### **8.2.2.1 Conclusions**

The key purpose of using Hodgson and Spours' framework was to identify this partnership's context. At the actual level, the main outcome I need to explain is partnership's demise. There is clear evidence from research responses and past partnership actions to contextualise this partnership as weakly-collaborative, thus my final mechanistic explanations about this decline must take into account this context.

## **8.3 Research Question 2**

There is one very clear answer to the second research question:

Which external political factors influence organisations' engagement with the partnership, when analysed from the perspective of managers involved in a particular 14-19 partnership?

Schools' engagement was linked tightly to performance table credits. Significant reduction in these qualification values, initially via the Wolf reforms and ultimately via 'Progress Eight', led to a drastic decline in engagement, as measured by uptake of partnership qualifications. Schools recognised the way that government wields its influence via the statist capital of performance tables. In relation to performativity, performance tables can be regarded as one of those commensurable outcomes that measures system efficiency.

Beyond their effect on performance tables, changes in equivalences were contested, with some seeing this change as devaluing the qualifications and others as necessary to enable students to make suitable post-16 progressions.

### **8.3.1 Effect of Performance Tables**

The partnership's ultimate demise, in terms of lack of recruitment to vocational provision, was due to the performance table changes with the introduction of 'Progress Eight'. Both these events were part of the actual domain. Empirical evidence, particularly from my extended period of observation and conversations with the LC manager and college principal, confirmed the link between these two events.

Field analysis and interview responses showed that, for certain organisations, partnership engagement, as measured by numbers of students accessing provision, was linked to the organisation's reliance on non-GCSE qualifications for league table or, in real terms, field position. When the capital value of such qualifications changed it was these organisations that most drastically reduced their engagement with the partnership. Two of these organisations even went as far as stating at meetings that 'Progress Eight' would not influence their partnership engagement, but when it was introduced, drastically reduced their levels of engagement. Another school, which previously engaged well with the partnership, openly identified a strategy of putting students who would have previously been on LC provision, onto GCSEs that would enhance the school's position post 'Progress Eight'. Organisations not sending large numbers of students onto provision did not rely highly on equivalences for league table position and reduced their engagement to a much smaller degree. The two best performing schools in the partnership, although only showing low levels of partnership engagement, indicated that their own positions gave them more flexibility in dealing with the introduction of novel performance measures.

To conclude from this, a key reason for certain schools allowing students on to partnership provision was that it enabled students to gain performance table credits for the school, which could then be cashed in to obtain a performance tables position. From a contextual perspective, this behaviour was more prevalent for schools that relied heavily on vocational qualifications for their performance table position.

### **8.3.2 Symbolic and Statist Capital**

This influence of performance table points on organisational behaviour can be analysed from a variety of real theoretical perspectives. It is tempting to describe the effect of league tables at the organisational level as symbolic violence mediated by symbolic capital. As argued previously, while performance tables rely on the arbitrary imposition of symbolic values upon performance measures, schools, although unhappy about this process, fully recognise the power of government to do this and the arbitrariness of the process. Given that misrecognition, a key component of symbolic capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p119; Bourdieu 2000, p242) is absent,

performance table points are best regarded as statist capital or capital that '...defines the specific power of the state...(Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p114)' by imbuing other species of capital with value and controlling their reproduction. Comments from partners and their actions, support the idea that the capital of performance points has this primacy over the other forms of capital gained from partnership. This idea, combined with the notion that partnership activity is about wider access to the various forms of capital identified empirically in this research, shows that once these other forms of capital are devalued, working in partnership no longer remains useful.

A number of points can be made in relation to the mechanistic role of this statist capital. My suggestions are not novel in the broad context of the role of the state in education over the last thirty years; however, these suggestions highlight the effect of 'Performance Eight' on the behaviour of schools and the relative importance of different sorts of capital within partnership activity. From the government perspective, the Coalition had a particular view of preferred qualifications, favouring the 'academic' over the 'vocational' and examinations over other assessment types. By allotting arbitrary values to certain qualifications it objectifies and codifies these values by using them within a quantitatively formed performance table system. This is important since it implies that school performance is directly calculable from student performance within these symbolically privileged subject areas. The net consequence for partnership schools is that they are compelled to force students to take certain sorts of qualification and thus disengage from partnership activity.

Thomson (2005) made similar links between Bourdieu's notion of symbolic state capital and control of education. Thomson (2005, p744) is clear that codification, in such instruments as performance tables, is a key policy lever when change is required. In the case of this partnership, re-codification of performance measures has had the clear effect, as stated by one partner, of schools opting to enter students for qualifications other than the previous vocational ones. Schools' willingness to conform to these league table changes confirms Thomson's view that this symbolic capital can have a disciplining effect on schools (Thomson 2005, p752): in this case coercing schools, particularly

those less successful against these symbolic measures, to change their provision in order to avoid punitive government measures.

### **8.3.3 Aspects of Performativity**

When the influence of 'Performance Eight' on partnership engagement is reviewed from a performativity perspective, its effects add to numerous similar arguments about the prevalence of performativity within education. From the original notions of performativity, put forward by Lyotard (1984), a number of key concepts can be confirmed. In relation to Lyotard's (1984, xxiv) input/output logic, 'Progress Eight' measures are just another of those commensurable outcomes that measure system efficiency and demote the pursuit of 'truth', or development of student skills, qualities, knowledge etc., to a secondary position (Lyotard 1984, p51). In common with Lyotard's (1984, p48) discussions on the optimal performativity of education, this performativity was underpinned by the government's wish to maximise the country's global performance against perceived competitors (Gove 2010). Since the government cannot directly control the partnership, which could be considered as one of Lyotard's (1984, xxiv) local 'narrative clouds', the performative measures of performance table points are used by the government to ensure indirect compliance with its policy.

Much of what I found resonates strongly with the arguments put forward by Stephen Ball in the literature review. As argued above, it is the government 'who controls the field of judgement' (Ball 2000, p1) of what counts as performatively significant. Schools' statements and actions indicate that they are privileging that which is good for school performance above what is good for students (Ball 2000, p6), thus prioritising performatively measurable 'Progress Eight' qualifications above other non-commensurable aspects of student experience (Ball 2012, p20). One respondent hinted at the tension felt by managers who implement these performative measures contrary to their own beliefs of what benefits students (Ball 2000, p4).

These ideas of performativity do not particularly explain the key dynamics of partnership operation and choices, but they do explain how the government can control this field by reifying performance table capital. Findings in this area also suggest that it would be fruitful to investigate manager's feelings about the

changes they are making both from the performativity and Bourdieu's (2000, pp160-161) hysteresis perspectives.

### **8.3.4 Value of Vocational Qualifications**

Most of the preceding arguments focus on the value of partnership vocational qualifications for schools' positions within performance tables. Views were balanced on the influence of these changes on students with some indicating that devaluation would negatively affect opportunities for 'lower-ability' students; others suggested previous 'overvaluing' had led to students making unsuitable progression decisions. Various theoretical arguments support these contrasting positions. Although these theories fall outside my framework, it is important to use them to explain these somewhat surprising and contradictory findings.

Bourdieu made many references to the relative values of different sorts of education. When discussing mastery of verbal constructions in a specifically French context, he was clear (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, pp49-50) that the 'dominant cultural arbitrary' values 'symbolic mastery' above 'practical mastery'. This argument is further developed to identify an 'unbridgeable gulf' between those who understand how technical systems work and those who merely operate them. Comparing the French and Japanese educational systems, Bourdieu (1998, p28) again asserts the symbolic primacy of 'general education' over 'technical education', suggesting that self-serving reproduction of educational values favouring those in power is responsible for this divide. While discussing domination, Bourdieu (2010, p388) suggests a consequence of education is to privilege the learning of 'useless, disinterested knowledge' over the 'practical, tacit know how' of the technician.

Those in the partnership who made statements about their concerns over the perceived governmental and partnership devaluation of vocational qualifications appear to be concerned that these devaluations are re-asserting this primacy of academic qualifications. However, many of the organisations making such arguments had heavy reliance on vocational qualifications for performance table position, and after 'Progress Eight' made significant reductions in partnership engagement. In this argument, it again appears that the statist capital of



performance table points trumps any other values that they believe vocational qualifications to possess.

Elsewhere, Bourdieu (1977, p187) is clear that qualifications are analogous to the role of money in economic capital, by guaranteeing that their holders possess a certain amount and configuration of cultural capital. Unlike the situation with money, whereby value is objectively and numerically ascribed, Bourdieu (2010, p17) suggests that the value of a qualification is socially or symbolically imposed. My previous arguments suggest one of the ways that the symbolic value of qualifications is defined is by the statist imposition of performance table values.

Bernstein (2003, p55) argued that 'pedagogic practice' based upon the intrinsic value of knowledge, what he terms 'autonomous pedagogy', favoured academic learning whereas 'pedagogic practice' that was aligned instrumentally to the market, or 'market-oriented pedagogy', favoured vocational learning. Unlike Bourdieu, Bernstein argues that the relationship between these two forms of practice is not hierarchical but still leads to social stratification. He suggests that market-oriented pedagogy leads to a vocational curriculum that he feels traps the working-class learner, who is more likely to take such qualifications, in a very limited and, due to the changing nature of the contemporary workforce, contracting range of occupations. Consistent with this, one interview statement clearly located the beauty qualification in the 'local community' marketplace and that the beauty qualification only allowed entry into an already 'saturated' domain.

Although the previous respondent clearly resonated with Bernstein's worry about vocational provision trapping students in certain occupations, others also hinted at certain of these concerns. Partners who felt that that the over-inflated equivalence values of vocational qualifications were enabling students to progress to inappropriate post-16 courses, whilst not suggesting students were 'trapped' by these vocational qualifications, were clearly indicating that the qualifications had a negative impact on student opportunities. One respondent, by suggesting reductions in equivalence value would improve the 'credibility' of vocational qualifications, is indicating that an over-inflation of equivalences

reduces the value of the qualification for students. This is similar to the devaluing of qualifications, in terms of what they can be exchanged for within the 'careers' market, that Bourdieu (2010, p127) suggests occurs when a qualification becomes commonplace. Bourdieu (2010, p139) has suggested that those who lose most with such devaluation of qualifications are those who possess such qualifications. Linked to the previous discussion about market-oriented pedagogy, this inflationary valuation of qualifications by the system of equivalences seems to be paradoxically another way in which the real worth of vocational qualifications was reduced.

### **8.3.5 Conclusions to Question 2**

At the actual level, changes in government policy, specifically via the Wolf reforms and the subsequent introduction of 'Progress Eight', led to significantly reduced engagement with the partnership, predominantly due to devaluation of GCSE equivalences within the performance tables. At the real level, this behaviour can be explained in terms of these reforms reducing the capital value of these qualifications for schools. As previously argued, this altered engagement appears to confirm that for certain schools it is this performance table capital that is of highest value, trumping the value of all of the other capitals that I have discussed. Those schools whose context required them to rely heavily on vocational equivalences for performance table position were most affected by these changing capital values.

The impact of 'Progress Eight' is also linked to the performativity ideas. At the real level, performance table measures are one of those commensurable outcomes that the government uses to measure system efficiency and remotely-control the behaviour of public bodies (Lyotard 1984). Ultimately, the combination of statist capital and performative measures appears to force schools to prioritise the capital tied to performance points over any other forms of capital.

Finally, at the student level, and within the real domain, from one perspective the devaluation of vocational qualification equivalences fits the ongoing symbolic deflation of such qualifications' worth described by Bourdieu and Passeron (1990). From an alternative position, this devaluation is necessary to

avoid trapping 'lower ability' students within a narrow choice of careers (Bernstein 2003). At the empirical level both of these viewpoints were expressed.

## 8.4 Summary Mechanism

It is now possible to suggest summary mechanisms that explain levels of organisational engagement within this partnership and answer my two research questions. The overall links between key components are presented in figure 8.1.

It is important to note that I have not included the issues with the post-16 partnership in this discussion. However, the evidence from discussions about the post-16 partnership serves to support my findings with the notion of a cost-benefit calculation, since the failure of the post-16 partnership was mainly due to organisations being unable to accrue any useful capital despite the expense of working in partnership. The lack of access to novel capital also suggests that linking social capital strengthens partnership. Finally, the unwillingness of organisations to reciprocally invest in capital also highlights the importance of reciprocal obligations in developing social capital.

The key *actual* outcome that this mechanism needs to explain is the partnership's demise following introduction of 'Progress Eight', identified in the box at the top of figure 8.1. Contextually, the 14-16, vocational qualification and performance table focuses, alongside weak finance and governance arrangements, suggest that this partnership can be described as weakly-collaborative, the 'Context' box in the left of figure 8.1. In critical realist terms, this mechanism must explain how, in the context of a weakly-collaborative partnership, introduction of 'Progress Eight' led to the partnership's demise. The mechanisms are those statements in this section's final four paragraphs explaining partnership behaviour in terms of intransitive theories from my theoretical framework.

At the *empirical* level, as shown in the 'Empirical' box in figure 8.1, partners explained that engagement depended upon the equivalence points obtained from qualifications offered by the partnership. When the equivalence value of

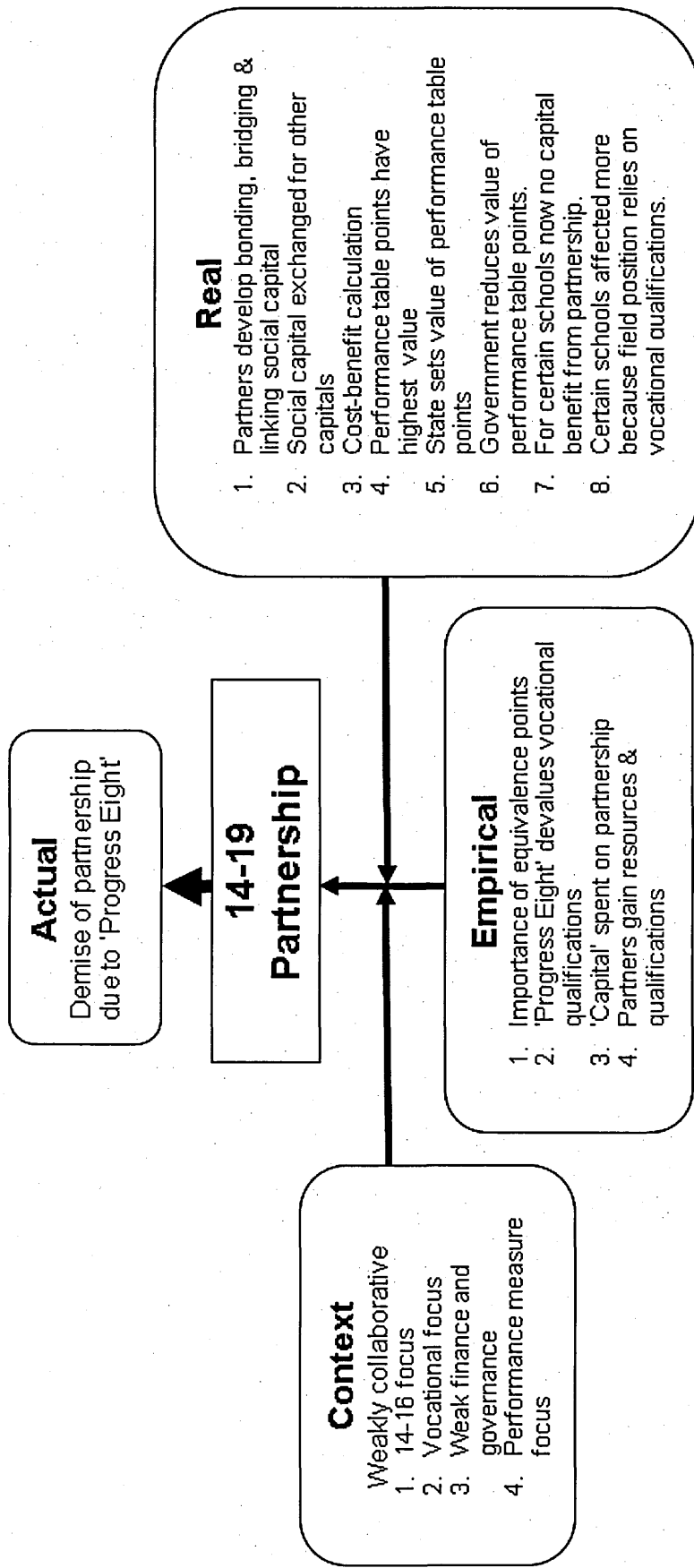


Figure 8.1- My explanatory mechanism



these partnership qualifications changed, schools no longer wanted to send students on these courses. Also at the empirical level, organisations explained they spent money and time in developing the partnership. They also explained the partnership enables them to gain either resources or qualifications that it would not be possible to accrue working alone.

At the *real* level, organisations develop increased levels of social capital by working in partnership (Bourdieu 1986). For the pre-16 partnership, this social capital is both bonding, in terms of building the partnership, and bridging, in terms of partnering different types of organisation (Putnam 2000). Elements of linking social capital are also used to connect to more powerful bodies (Putnam 2000). This is point 1 in the 'Real' box of figure 8.1.

This social capital can be exchanged for different types and configurations of capital (Bourdieu 1986). The ultimate decision about whether to work in partnership depends upon a balance between the capital expended by working in partnership and the capital that will be gained by working in partnership (Adler and Kwon 2002; Contractor and Lorange, 2004). These are points 2 and 3 in the 'Real' box of the diagram.

For many schools within this partnership, it is the capital value of performance table points that has the highest capital value in ensuring an improved field position, 'Real' point 4 in the diagram. The capital value of performance table equivalences is set by the state, and these values can be considered as both statist capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p114) and performative measures (Lyotard 1984), 'Real' point 5 in the diagram.

When the values of performance table points were decreased, 'Real' point 6 in the diagram, for many schools the capital gains of working in partnership no longer outweighed its capital cost (Adler and Kwon 2002; Contractor and Lorange, 2004), 'Real' point 7. Additionally, for certain schools this change in capital value was more significant since their field position depended heavily upon performance table capital accumulated via the partnership, 'Real' point 8.



## **Chapter 9. Conclusions**

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### **9.1 Introduction**

This final chapter evaluates, in a reflexive manner, my methods and methodology, particularly identifying areas within this research that I feel could have been improved. Ultimately, this discussion needs to analyse the evidence I have for explanations that I have made in the previous chapter, particularly the impact of the introduction of 'Progress Eight' on this partnership's demise. This chapter also aims to suggest key areas for future development, by proposing themes for further empirical research and by discussing potential ways in which this area could be further theorised. Finally, it discusses the study's key contributions to knowledge and closes with my concluding thoughts on how this research has met my initial aims.

### **9.2 Evaluation of Research**

To evaluate my research, I have taken what Jenkins (2002, p49) describes as '...a second step backwards, epistemologically speaking, [that] is necessary in order to reveal or unmask the techniques of the observer...' I have started this section by reviewing my research against my reflexive framework. I have then presented a sub-section relating to strengths and limitations.

#### **9.2.1 Reflexive Review**

My reflexive account enabled clarification of my position within the field and in relation to my research. The reflexive process created a lens through which I continually refracted my findings to ensure that my conclusions fully reflected my empirical findings. This reflexive process has also enabled me to identify the key strengths and limitations of my research presented in section 9.2.2.

When asking myself the three questions from derived from my reflexive account (section 4.2.5):

- Am I trying to adopt a theoretical position that is based more upon my understanding of the social world rather than on the way that actors interpret the world?

- Is the conclusion that I have arrived at due to my vested interest and positive attitude towards partnership?
- Have my dogmatic political and educational views influenced my analysis?

the following comments can be made.

First, despite my final discussion being couched in theoretical terms there is sufficient empirical evidence to support this theorisation being a translation of partners' ideas into theoretical terms rather than a complete re-interpretation of their view of partnership. Due to their relatively abstract natures, much of the social capital and performativity discussions were theoretically based. In both cases I believe I provided sufficient links to empirical evidence to avoid the scholastic fallacy (Bourdieu 1990b, p384). In order to ensure that I did not make the 'epistemic fallacy' (Bhaskar 1998, p182), and reduce my theoretical explanations merely to what I had observed empirically, such theorisation was justified. My position as an insider supported this theorisation in the ways suggested by Alvesson (2003, p183). Although I did not record my own dialogue from observations, and thus check out my assumptions in the naturalistic setting of the meeting, by combining interview evidence with observation evidence when making conclusions, I feel that I was able to balance insider advantages against the dangers of imposing my own assumptions on both the explanations of participants and my theories. Additionally, I had to continually guard against incorporating evidence into my theorising, such as knowledge of student and parental behaviour, that did not relate systematically to my research focus.

My discussion of certain aspects of social capital and weak-collaborative arrangements integrated evidence from my long-term experience of the partnership. This was factual evidence about long-term partnership operation rather than opinion deriving from my own vested interests. Key evidence about reasons for the demise of the partnership was derived from discussions and observations outside the main period of research. Given the centrality of these reasons to my overall conclusions, I was very careful to corroborate this evidence as discussed in section 7.3 and confirm clearly that the link between

'Progress Eight' and disengagement from the partnership was based wholly on partners' opinions. Given the impact that the dissolution of the partnership has had on me at a personal and professional level, whereby I was redeployed into a new position and provision that I had built up over a ten year period had been completely dismantled, I have been careful to check that my findings are based upon empirical evidence rather than my own personal position in relation to the partnership. Throughout, I have confirmed reflexively, and wherever possible by checking conclusions with partners, that my discussion has not been influenced by the keen disappointment I felt at this demise or its impact on me. I have adopted an objective tone in all my discussions that does not reflect, and may indeed have obscured, my own emotive position due to the partnership's failure.

Finally, I have not imposed my own dogmatic political and educational views onto my interpretations. Many of my conclusions, particularly those about the role of the performance table, fit my personal views, but there is sufficient empirical evidence to clearly link my findings to what partnership managers believe. Additionally, the finding that some partners agreed with certain aspects of the 'Wolf' reforms, alongside my theorisation of the value of vocational qualifications, significantly changed my views about the reasons and purposes of these reforms. Similarly, although I personally believe that partnership is essential for delivery of effective educational provision and initially thought that this partnership was an example of a strong-partnership, I have been able to objectively use empirical evidence to categorise this partnership as weak and link this weakness to its demise.

### **9.2.2 Strengths and Limitations**

Since certain research aspects gave me both key advantages and disadvantages, rather than identifying separately my approach's strengths and weaknesses I have integrated both into this evaluation, but separated these discussions into three sub-sections relating to my theoretical framework, methodology and methods.

### **9.2.2.1 Theoretical Framework**

Overall, although I may not have applied Bourdieu's concepts as precisely as he suggested, in agreement with Jenkins (2002, p11), I found Bourdieu 'good to think with', particularly when I broadened his original conceptions of capital (Bourdieu 1986) to include other forms (Bourdieu 2004b). My secondary theories provided a useful adjunct to Bourdieu, providing alternative or supplementary mechanistic explanations, and in some cases, these were usefully combined with Bourdieun theories to improve their explanatory power. Hodgson and Spours' framework for analysing the strength of partnerships, particularly as presented in Pring et al (2009, p183), was the only supplementary theory that added something distinct from the Bourdieun theories. However, to discuss the value of qualifications I had to incorporate additional theories.

As I did not sufficiently investigate partners' past histories, my approach did not enable me to identify significant details about their habituses, key to Bourdieun sociology. I was therefore unable to determine how experiences led to key dispositions, making the mistake highlighted by Nash (2003, p52) of attempting to identify dispositions by their effects rather than their inherent characteristics. This aspect could have been improved either by introducing more probing interview questions about participants' pasts or by adopting a longitudinal case-study approach, which would also have allowed me to produce a clearer picture of partners for my reflexive account. To avoid trivialising habitus, as discussed by Reay (2004), I have only included minimal reference to habitus in my discussions.

This lack of evidence relating to habitus has epistemically limited the range of explanations that I have made. As indicated in section 2.2.2 habitus was included in my theoretical framework not only to ensure a complete reading of Bourdieun theory but also to offer the potential for specific explanatory links between the micro and the macro. Thus without clear evidence relating to the habituses of those I researched it is not possible to identify which aspects of their past experiences, prior training and personal contexts, have led to managers making the decisions and statements that have been chronicled within this research. Similarly, evidence required to describe habituses would

have enabled a clearer comprehension of the managers' value bases, both in relation to partnership and to the schizophrenic performative positions described by Ball (2000). Such a comprehension would enable a more thorough explanation of the decision making processes involved within partnership engagement and could also have provided further critical realist contextual differentiators.

Allied to my concentration on explanations linked to improving organisations' field positions, the lack of empirical evidence that I identified in relation to key aspects of individuals' habituses limited my discussion of inter-partnership relationships such as norms, trust or power differentials. Additionally, although I made a clear decision to use the dimensions of weak and strong partnership, as featured in Pring et al (2009, p183), these were not included in formulation of my interview questions. Careful integration of key statements from these dimensions would have also enabled better conceptualisation of such inter-partnership relationships.

### **9.2.2.2 Methodology**

The main strength of my approach relates to my critical realist methodology. By adopting a critical realist ontology, I have been able to address the key explanatory purpose of my research questions and also to provide an ontological basis that I found was compatible with my Bourdieun focussed theoretical framework. This framework provided the theoretical structure that critical realism was never expected to offer (Fleetwood and Ackroyd 2004, p3); the critical realist ontology, acted as an 'underlabourer' (Mutch 2005, p781), contributing the ontological underpinnings missing from Bourdieun theory. Key elements of Bourdieun sociology, such as capital and field, also provided structures within the real domain that could be used to provide an explanatory mechanism. Finally, given the small number of organisations I used in this study, the critical realist approach allowed me to couch my mechanistic conclusions in terms that reflected my narrow focus.

Throughout my theorising, I found that the ontological compartmentalisation inherent in a critical realist approach provided me with a clear analytical and reflexive framework. I also continually clarified not only which particular domain



my conclusions fitted but also attempted to define which empirical evidence supported a particular actual outcome and which real structures explained links between these domains. Structuring arguments via this framework was generally straightforward; however, at times it was difficult to identify within which domain certain parts of my explanations fitted. For example, certain aspects of the partnership's demise appeared to belong in both the empirical and actual domains. Consistent with Ackroyd and Fleetwood's (2001, p13) definitions of the actual and the empirical, I was able to put the broader changes that I observed within the actual domain and designate individuals' perceptions as to why these changes occurred in the empirical domain.

My concentration on particular measures of engagement and field position within my mapping of field (see section 9.2.2.3), alongside a predominantly Bourdieun reading of capital, also more broadly limited my final considerations as to what comprised the real within my conclusions. As indicated in figure 8.1, my discussion of the real is mainly linked to notions of the performance table and Bourdieun aspects of capital. This means that other potential explanations linked to a broader range of real elements have not been considered.

Additional real elements that could have been integrated into my theoretical framework, and thus enhanced my explanations, include various partnership characteristics discussed by Huxham and Vangen (2005), such as trust, power, identity, purpose and membership structure, and a number of Coleman's (1988) social capital elements, particularly trust and norms. Whilst I am clear that my empirical evidence indicates that partnership engagement, particularly as framed in terms of sending students onto vocational provision, depends strongly upon performance table values of qualifications and capital conversions, inclusion of other real elements would have enabled a more fine-grained explanation of such engagement and why, above and beyond notions of performativity of statist capital, this aspect predominates over other potential explanations for partnership engagement.

The other key strength within this research related to my position as an insider. The closeness of my position was ideally suited to my epistemology. Some of

the perceived advantages of being an insider, such as the 'reframing' of 'tacit knowledge' into 'theoretical knowledge' (Brannick and Coghlan 2007), or the insider's greater comprehension of context (Mercer 2007), enabled me to clearly comprehend how to link real mechanisms to my empirical evidence without committing the 'scholastic fallacy'. The insider position also allowed me to integrate a broader and longer-term range of empirical evidence into this research, and also to fully comprehend the context in which my evidence was collected and in which my proposed mechanisms would have to operate. My extended observations of the partnership's demise were particularly helpful in framing my final mechanisms and checking that these were not just my scholastic constructs.

### **9.2.2.3 Methods**

The instruments I used enabled me to answer my research questions without having any distinct strengths. Observing as an insider, whilst yielding key benefits identified above, also provided technical challenges. As Alvesson (2003) indicates, by recording exchanges using notes, it was sometimes difficult to capture precise statements or who had actually spoken. A digital-recording process may have overcome these difficulties, and from my reflexive post-research position, I am not convinced that using such recordings would have had the negative impact postulated by Alvesson (2003, p182). Additionally, use of recordings would have enabled me to take a more active role in discussions and both include my contributions in my analysis and undertake a longer period of intensive observation. Although the observation enabled me see behaviours and attitudes in a naturalistic state, I was unable to make the observations required to identify past histories that contributed to such habitual dispositions. Finally, despite the observation process highlighting key areas for my interview questions, a more systematic analysis of these themes would have resulted in the question on BTEC equivalences being omitted.

The semi-structured interviews enabled me to gain answers to my research questions and to link such responses to potential mechanisms in all areas apart from the previously discussed habitus. Although the process gave me an indication of participants' views of their partnership world and let me draw mechanistic conclusions, since I was theorising without their input in this

theorisation process, I sometimes came close to committing the scholastic fallacy (Bourdieu 1990b, p384). Adopting Pawson and Tilley's (1997, p169) 'realistic' interview method of would have allowed me to check that my proposed mechanisms actually reflected the way that the participants' world operated.

I believe that my ethical procedures were suitable, but I perhaps should have included a statement within my consent form about the difficulties of anonymity. I was not surprised at the absence of interviewee feedback on my transcripts, because when I had previously sent them work-related documents requiring comments, I had rarely received any response: Taylor (2011) also reported that she frequently had no transcription feedback from participants. My open communication with partners about my research, discussed in 3.3.2, appeared to be well received, with partners often asking me about my findings and my general progress with my thesis. Occasionally, partners also asked me for advice on policy and partnership theory that they perceived my research position had given me specialist knowledge of. Dhillon (2009, p690), albeit from the position of a non-participant observer, reported similar experiences when she was researching a post-16 partnership.

Finally, I feel I under-utilised my field analysis within this investigation. Whilst the notion of field position contextualised and informed my mechanistic conclusions, I could have actively incorporated findings into my question delivery to confirm with respondents my speculations on the role of field position on partnership behaviour. Although my field analysis provided indicators as to the relative positions of schools within this partnership, these findings are limited by the range of measures I used within this analysis. As indicated in section 3.3.5, the key measures that I used were mainly linked to what both schools and the government identified as being the key determinants of a school's position in relation to other local schools and notional national averages. It was also clear from my experience of the partnership that such accountability measures were shaping schools' perspectives on partnership. Additionally, these figures ultimately defined a school's capacity, via the notion of 'floor targets', to continue functioning under its current governance arrangements. Similarly, when considering partnership engagement, I only

used the narrow measure of proportion of Y10 and Y11 students attending LC provision. My concentration on these particular measures have certain implications for my final outcomes. Although I am clear that empirical evidence from interviews and observations support my findings and that this is clearly a 'weakly-collaborative' partnership, the link between partnership engagement behaviour and field position could be considered as a potential example of the 'epistemic fallacy': this link is purely predicated on the evidence that I have examined rather than other potential real mechanisms. If other measures of partnership engagement, such as meeting attendance or answers to an attitude survey, and additional measures of field position, such as school deprivation or geographical location, had also been used, broader and more nuanced explanations of partnership behaviour would have been possible.

Additionally, the particular field measures that I used, alongside my use of Hodgson and Spours' model (Pring et al 2009, p183), limited the contextual variables that I included in my conclusions. Use of a broader range of field measures would have enabled additional contextual factors to be included. If I had used additional models of weak/strong educational partnership to categorise my partnership, for instance, Dhillon's (2013, p741) 'continuum of weak to strong forms of partnership', it would have been possible to evaluate the efficacy of these different models. By contextualising my partnership as either weak or strong against a different model, I would have been able to identify if there were such tight links between the partnership engagement that I observed and the partnership's position on additional weak/strong partnership scales. Additionally, the use of such supplementary weak/strong partnership models to categorise this partnership would provide an extra *real* element to my explanations. Finally, as I have contextually identified this partnership as weak, it suggests that the first stage for continued research ought to be undertaking similar work with a partnership that is characterised as strong.

The final key limitation relates to the particular focus of my study. As discussed in my findings, a number of statements were made within this research that linked to perceptions of parents or students. At the interview stage I did not particularly pursue such statements since they fell outside the focus of my research and these were simply noted as of interest. Given my epistemological



position in relation to my subjects' knowledge, these statements were likely to be influenced by the 'unintended consequences' and 'unconscious motivations' (Archer et al 1998, xvi) that I discussed in section 3.2.2.1. Since I had positioned myself as an insider in relation to the managers, and not to students or parents, I did not feel suitably placed to collect data from students and parents or verify and interpret their perceptions, which could be considered as second-hand anecdotal statements. Although I did have access within my job-role to parents and students, use of specific statements from such encounters would have been unethical. Unfortunately, lack of consideration of parental and student perceptions again limits the full extent of my explanatory framework. It would have been interesting to analyse this population's perception of both partnership working and the 'Progress Eight' changes, particularly in comparison to both government and school views on these factors and to gain a comprehension of how these initiatives had been presented to them.

### **9.2.3 Conclusions to Evaluation**

To conclude this section, reflexive evaluation of this research has not only identified strengths and limitations of this research but also confirmed, by evaluating my research process against the reflexive frame derived in section 4.2.5, that my explanations were derived from my empirical findings. The two key strengths of this research related to the combination of a critical realist methodology with a Bourdieun theoretical framework and the use of my insider position to facilitate this research. I also identified various limitations relating to: the constricted range of field measures I used in my field analysis; the range of real elements I incorporated into my explanations; my focus on managers and not parents or students; the lack of focus on inter-partnership relations; the limited evidence relating to habitus. It is important to note that, with the exception of my reading of habitus, these limitations were due to the necessary constraints that needed to be placed upon such a piece of research. Although they do highlight limits to the breadth of my conclusions, they do not negate my key findings, particularly the central role of 'Progress Eight' in the disintegration of this partnership. Additionally, these limitations should also be regarded as an introductory guide to future avenues of research.



### 9.3 Contributions to Knowledge

Ultimately, by using this particular methodology in a unique contextual setting, this research extends and clarifies pre-existing knowledge into partnership operation and government policy influence and thus makes three novel and distinct contributions to knowledge in this area.

First, as an intensive small-scale piece of research into a partnership that I identified as weak, it provides a deeply theorised and empirically supported explanation for a weak partnership's demise. This particular aspect of my research complements and supplements previous research into 14-19 partnerships by Hodgson and Spours (2007) and Dhillon (2009).

Much of the previous research into 14-19 partnership work has been what Sayer (1992, p243) would describe as 'extensive', in that it attempts to provide a description of characteristics of partnerships drawn from a broad-ranging sample of partnerships but without providing theorised explanations of individual partnership behaviour. This current research provides one potential explanatory frame for Hodgson and Spours' (2007) work on weak and strong collaborative provision. In common with Sayer's (1992, p243) description of extensive research, Hodgson and Spours work used evidence from a large number of partnerships (Nuffield Review 2006) to provide a set of descriptive characteristics of weak and strong partnerships, but does not provide theorised causal explanations on the likely effects at the individual partnership level of being either a weak or strong partnership. My research thus adds to Hodgson and Spours work in two ways. At a general level, by identifying the partnership as weak against Hodgson and Spours' dimensions and then tracking the partnership to its ultimate demise, I have been able to verify at an individual partnership level the efficacy and impact of Hodgson and Spours' characteristics of weak partnerships. At a more specific level, I have been able to provide a theorised explanation, in terms of capital conversion and the role of statist capital, of how such a weak partnership failed.

In contrast to the above, Dhillon (2009) undertook theorised intensive research into a single educational partnership. In common with my research, her work included key theoretical reference to social capital; however, she research: did

not refer to any Bourdieun notions of capital; was into a post-16 partnership, which she categorised as 'effective, sustainable and strong (Dhillon 2013, p736); used a grounded research approach, with Dhillon positioned initially as a non-participant observer. Overall, Dhillon's work provides a fine-grained description of the social capital that she identified as having a key role in the sustainability of the particular partnership. She highlights the importance of the various strata of networks, strong ties, shared norms and trust and bridging and linking capital in developing social capital that led to this sustainability. Dhillon (2009, p701) also suggests that social capital can be considered as a 'resource' which can help a partnerships make up for a lack of externally provided economic capital. However, Dhillon does not discuss how the social capital she has identified is converted into other capitals. Ultimately, my findings can be seen as supplementing Dhillon's work by providing explanations of how the social capital of partnership can be converted into other capitals and how the relative values of these capitals can be altered by the effect of statist capital. My research can be also be regarded as a contrast to Dhillon's work by providing a capital based study into a slightly different type of partnership that, crucially, I have categorised as being weak.

Second, this appears to be the first piece of empirical research that has identified a likely impact of the government's introduction of 'Progress Eight', both specifically on partnership behaviour and more generally on the Key Stage 4 curriculum. Recently three pieces of work have been published that have looked at certain facets of the coalition government's new Key Stage 4 performance measures. None of these publications discuss partnership work and all have significant differences in approach and overall subject matter.

Hobbs (2016) used critical discourse analysis in an intensive study to investigate the effect of the EBacc on the curriculum. In common with my findings, she concluded that this performance measure had an impact on the curriculum but, for reasons similar to those proposed by Bernstein (2003), found that lower ability students were excluded from EBacc subjects in order to improve school performance table outcomes. Hobbs (2016, p154) suggested that 'Progress Eight' was likely to have a potential impact on the curriculum but

that other research was needed to identify the specific impact. My research thus clearly provides an initial indication of what such an impact might be.

Similarly, Parameshwaran and Thomson (2015) published results from an extensive statistical study that used figures from the National Pupil Database (NPD) to identify changes in uptake of Key Stage 4 qualifications following the introduction of the EBacc. They concluded, in an essentially untheorized manner, that the implementation of the Ebacc had led to a move away from qualifications, especially vocational ones, that were no longer in the performance tables. In relation to 'Progress Eight' Parameshwaran and Thomson (2015, p171) postulated that its introduction would lead to:

...certain types of pupils (financially disadvantaged; less able; vocationally oriented; interested in creative subjects) more likely to have their access to subjects and qualifications restricted.

In relation to this, my research not only confirms this statement, for at least this particular partnership, but also suggests, in terms of capital conversion and the government use of statist capital, an explanation for this.

In contrast to the purposes of the above research, Perry (2016), again using data from the NPD but also reviewing previous research, published results from a robust statistical study that aimed to identify the effectiveness of value added measures for quantifying school performances. He concluded that differences in such value added measures were much more likely to be due to measurement errors and non-school factors than actual differences in school performance. Taken in tandem with my results, which explain the potential impact at school-level of the introduction of 'Progress Eight', these findings support the arbitrariness of the use of such measures in performance tables and thus vindicate my use of an explanatory model that has statist capital as a key real element.

Finally, the methodological approach that I adopted demonstrates how a critical realist methodology can underpin a Bourdieun theoretical framework and be operationalised for small-scale insider educational research. As I discussed in section 3.2.1, several articles (Wainwright 2000; Sayer 2000; Mutch 2002;

Ozibilgin and Tatley 2005) have identified key compatibilities between critical realism and Bourdieun theory and how critical realism could be used to support work that uses Bourdieun sociology. None of the above articles gave any suggestions as to how Bourdieu and critical realism could be integrated and operationalised into an empirical research study. Furthermore, I was unable to find any empirical research within the literature that had combined these two approaches within an educational context. Given such an apparent lack relevant literature, my research would appear to have broad relevance to those in education wishing to undertake empirical work that uses critical realism as the 'underlabourer' to Bourdieun theory.

## **9.4 Key Outcomes**

The key and novel outcome from this research is the synthesised mechanistic account that explains factors enabling organisations to engage with this particular partnership. Broadly, I have suggested that for this partnership to work, the social capital of working together must be exchanged for other capitals that optimise the organisations' field positions. By combining these ideas with the partnership modelling of Contractor and Lorange (2004, p86), I have provided a potential mechanism for the atheoretical statement of Huxham and Vangen (2005, p13) about partnership: 'don't do it unless you have to': to engage in partnership, capital expenditure, in terms of amount and configuration, to develop the necessary social capital of partnership, must be less than the potential capital gains of partnership. By introducing the notion of Bourdieun capital, particularly his broader definitions of capital (Bourdieu 2004b), I have not only expanded Contractor and Lorange's ideas beyond the narrow confines of economic capital, but have also introduced the idea that when analysing these capitals it is not sufficient to simply summatively add capitals but it is also necessary to explore capital configurations, particularly in relation to their ability to influence field position. As a supplementary outcome, I have also identified that for these schools the key capital conversion that improves field position is the conversion of the social capital of partnership into the capital tied to performance table points.

## **9.5 Implications for Future Professional Practice**

My relatively small and specific sample means that outcomes cannot be generalised, but my overall analytical approach and key theoretical ideas (Pawson and Tilley 1997, p119) are transferable to partnerships in a various contexts. When developing partnerships, members could compare the capital expenditure, needed to develop the social capital of partnership, with the potential capital gains of partnership. Within the public-sector, this would need to be linked to an analysis of which capitals the state deems to be of highest value. A careful determination of the various capital values in comparison to the ultimate value of economic capital would also be needed. Such analyses would enable partnerships to determine the feasibility of working in partnership or, alternatively, identify partnership features that would need changing to ensure partnership success.

## **9.6 Concluding Comments**

Taking a reflexive step away from my findings, it is clear that, by identifying potential mechanisms that explain engagement, and by highlighting the crucial and central role of government set performance table equivalences in a school's wish to work in partnership, I have provided answers to my two research questions. Although, from my initial aims of wanting to comprehend how the partnership operates and to suggest how it could be improved I have not been completely successful. I gained a better understanding of partnership mechanics and identified perspectives transferable to other professional partnership contexts, but due to the partnership's subsequent demise I was unable to put my findings to practical operational use. This research has also clearly highlighted the caustic effect of the introduction of 'Progress Eight' on this partnership's delivery of vocational provision: something that would be interesting to investigate, and guard against, in broader educational contexts.

Although I believed policy changes being implemented at the inception of this research would impact on the partnership, I did not expect them to have such a catastrophic effect. Initially the rhetoric from stakeholders suggested a very strong partnership. The biggest surprise from my research is that, if analysed from the perspective of Hodgson and Spours (2006), the partnership was not as



strong as we had all thought. However, when this finding is then combined with mechanistic ideas about capital accumulation and exchange, its deterioration is not unexpected. Ultimately, I was privileged to record this partnership dissolution and to suggest mechanistic ways to account for this. I sincerely hope that these findings will inspire others to guard against future policy changes having the detrimental impact on young people that I have observed.

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# Appendix A

## Organisations Referred to in this Study

Code	Organisation Type
1	11-16 School
2	11-19 School
3	11-19 School
4	11-19 School
5	11-16 School
6	11-16 School
7	11-16 School
8	11-19 School
9	11-19 School
10	11-16 School
11	11-16 Academy
12	11-16 School
13	11-18 School
14	11-16 School
15	11-18 School
16	FE College
17	Learning Community
18	Local Authority
19	Connexions
20	Training Provider

These codes refer to organisations that have been referenced in various chapters. The organisation type refers to the organisations at the start of this study in 2010. All of these organisations, alongside three other Training Providers that have not been referenced in this study, comprise the Learning Community.

# Appendix B

## Interview Question Grid

Subject:

Date:

Audio File Name:

### Introductory Comments

*Thank you for agreeing to help with my research. Before starting the interview I would like to let you know what I am going to be doing and to also make sure that you understand what are you are agreeing to do.*

*This interview will last about 45 minutes. It will take the form of a semi-structured interview: I will be asking you to discuss with me your views on a number of topics relating to working in partnership, which I will explain to you in a moment. While I am interviewing you I will be consulting a grid that identifies the topics that I wish to discuss. I will also be recording the interview. At the end of the interview I will give you an opportunity to give any other comments and I will also check on my grid that I have covered all the areas that I need to. When I have completed the interview I will transcribe the interview. I will also identify a number of themes from the interview. You will an opportunity to look at this transcript and to comment upon my findings. Although I will anonymise my findings, you need to be aware that it may still be possible to identify you within my final report. Are you okay with this?*

*I am now going to start the recorder.*

*In general terms within my research I am interested in exploring organisations' views on being part of a partnership. I am also interested in finding out how you think working in partnership may have changed what you do and how changes in government policy will affect your views of working in partnership. Some of my questions will be very general in nature; however, some of my questions will also specifically relate to comments that you have made at partnership meetings and to the particular nature of your school.*

Attitude towards partnership	a. Pre-16 partnership b. Post-16 partnership c. Partnership performance d. Organisation attitude e. Individual attitude
Benefits of partnership	a. Financial b. Benefits for students c. Other benefits for school d. Groups of students that benefit e. Parental views
Costs of partnership	a. Financial b. Costs for students c. Parental views
Factors that affect the numbers of students that you send onto learning community provision	a. Size b. League table performance c. Cost



	d. School ethos
View of the partnership position relating to the value of BTEC qualifications.	a. General view b. View as either a receiving or providing organisation c. View on how the group came to its decision
View of Government position on qualification equivalences	a. General view b. How it affects your view on sending students to the partnership c. How it will affect the partnership d. Which groups will it affect
Key issues facing the partnership	

# Appendix C

## Research Consent Form and Information Given to Participants

Dear Colleague

### 14-19 Partnerships Research Interviews

As outlined in a previous document circulated at a Learning Community meeting, I am currently undertaking study towards a Doctorate in Education at Sheffield Hallam University. The key focus for my studies on this course relates to 14-19 Partnership working. The interview that you have agreed to take part in will help me in answering a number of my research questions.

In order to ensure that you are fully aware of both the process that will be adopted and your own rights with respect to the data that will be generated, I feel that it is important that I outline a number of key points about this research.

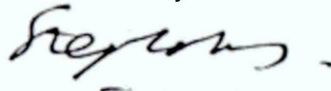
- The main aim of the interview is to investigate what attitudes and thoughts schools, and managers at schools, have in relation to being involved in 14-19 partnership activity. I am also interested in how what schools do may have changed whilst being part of a 14-19 partnership and what they do or their attitudes might relate to Government policy.
- The interview will last about one hour and will be semi-structured.
- The interview will be recorded in an audio format and then transcribed into a written format.
- After the transcription has been completed you will be given a copy of the transcript to comment upon.
- When your responses have been analysed I will contact you again to discuss my findings and to check that I have accurately represented your responses.
- Your responses and my analysis of these responses will form part of my final dissertation. This dissertation will be publicly available.
- All of your responses will be confidential and will be anonymised within the dissertation.
- At any point, up until my confirmation of your responses you will have the right to withdraw from either the interview process or to have your responses withdrawn.
- Collection and storage of this data will be subject to the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1988.

Once again thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. Prior to the interview I would be grateful if you could sign and return to me a copy of the attached consent form.

If you would like any further information please feel free to contact me on 01246 500657 or [holmess@chesterfield.ac.uk](mailto:holmess@chesterfield.ac.uk). My supervisor, Dr Paul Garland, can also be contacted on 0114 2254821 or [p.garland@shu.ac.uk](mailto:p.garland@shu.ac.uk)

Best wishes

Yours sincerely



Steve Holmes

## Consent for Taking Part in Research Interviews

I give my consent to be interviewed by Steve Holmes in order to support him in completing a Doctorate in Education at Sheffield Hallam University,

I am fully aware that:

- The main aim of the interview is to investigate what attitudes and thoughts schools, and managers at schools, have in relation to being involved in 14-19 partnership activity. I am also interested in how what schools do may have changed whilst being part of a 14-19 partnership and what they do or their attitudes might relate to Government policy.
- The interview will last about one hour and will be semi-structured.
- The interview will be recorded in an audio format and then transcribed into a written format.
- After the transcription has been completed you will be given a copy of the transcript to comment upon.
- When your responses have been analysed I will contact you again to discuss my findings and to check that I have accurately represented your responses.
- Your responses and my analysis of these responses will form part of my final dissertation. This dissertation will be publicly available.
- All of your responses will be confidential and will be anonymised within the dissertation.
- Collection and storage of this data will be subject to the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1988.

Name:

Signed:

Date:

# 14-19 Partnership Research Project

## Outline

I am currently undertaking study towards a Doctorate in Education at Sheffield Hallam University. The key focus for my studies on this programme relates to 14-19 Partnership working. Since I have good levels of access to, and awareness of the activities of, this particular learning community, I would like to use my experiences of this partnership and my relationships with members of the partnership as the basis for my research.

## What are my research objectives?

Within my research I am interested in:

- Determining whether I can use a particular theoretical model to help me understand how the partnership works
- Investigating how the Government policy affects 14-19 partnerships.
- Exploring how various factors that can be used to characterise schools affect the school's view of partnership and how the partnership operates.
- Understanding how organisations' dispositions have changed to enable them to adapt to the challenges of working in partnership with other organisations.

## What am I planning to do?

### Literature review

- a) Grey literature relating to 14-19 partnership public sector partnerships and educational partnerships.
- b) Academic literature relating to 14-19 partnerships, educational partnerships, public sector partnerships and business partnerships.

### Documentary analysis

- a) OFSTED reports.
- b) Government performance data.
- c) Government financial data.
- d) Local learning community data.
- e) School and learning community websites.
- f) Derbyshire Common prospectus.
- g) Connexions data on progression.
- h) Minutes from learning community meetings.

### Observation at key meetings

- a) Learning community curriculum group meetings.
- b) Learning community IAG group meetings.

### Interviews

- a) Piloting with College Managers
- b) Ten to fifteen interviews with schools' learning community representatives.
- c) Interview with Learning Community Manager.
- d) Interview with College Principal.

# **Appendix D**

## **Extra Interview Questions for Pilot**

1. What in general do you think about the overall format of the interview?
2. Is the length about right?
3. What are your views on my questioning style?
4. Did my introduction fully explain both the process and the context of my research?
5. Is there anything that I have said that you think is too leading?
6. Can you think of anything that I have missed or any other questions I could have asked?
7. Are there any questions that I have repeated?
8. Do you have any further comments?



# Appendix E

## Example of Initial Coding of Transcript

Line Reference <sup>5</sup>	Level 1 Code	Interview Statements
X1		<b>Interviewer:</b> I've started the tape. As I said in my preamble, I'm interested in 14 to 19 partnerships. I'm interested in how they work together. So I'm going to ask you a number of questions about your views on partnership. I may try to identify whether it's your view or the school position, because again that is another difficulty in interviewing individuals. To begin with a very open, a very open question. Could you tell me a little bit about your views, your school's views on working in a 14 to 19 partnership?
X2	Offering appropriate courses Widening curriculum offer	<b>Respondent:</b> Mm I think my view and the schools view is very similar in that it allows the school to offer appropriate courses to students that as a single organisation we wouldn't be able to offer and that was certainly the reason why we got so heavily involved in the early days. I know when I started here, which was 2005, a couple of months before we'd had an OFSTED inspection and they'd criticised our very traditional academic curriculum and so the only way that we thought that we could widen that was to get more closely involved with partnership, and that was the days of increased flexibility.

<sup>5</sup> Letter refers to interviewee (anonymised in this extract) and number to line in transcript.

X4		<b>Interviewer:</b> Yes. Okay. That was predominantly pre-16 partnership work. What's your view on working together in partnership post-16?
X5	Being driven by finance Working in small post-16 collaborations	<b>Respondent:</b> Mm, again mm. PAUSE Not so much an issue of widening the courses that we can offer, but actually it's now being driven by financial considerations. We're moving again towards working in a small collaboration with[ School X] and[ School Y].
X6		<b>Interviewer:</b> Right.
X7	Offering uneconomical courses	<b>Respondent:</b> And it's really looking at courses which are uneconomical for us to run.
X8		<b>Interviewer:</b> Yeah.

# Appendix F

## Level 2 Codes

Presented in alphabetical order.

Accountability measures
Agreeing with league table reforms
Ambivalent attitudes towards partnership
Availability of capital
Behaviourally challenged students benefitting
Benefits for excluded students
Benefits for organisation vs benefits for students
Benefits for schools
Benefits for students
Benefits of partnership
Benefits of post-16 collaboration for organisation
Benefits of students vs other imperatives
Benefitting more capable students
Borderline students being affected
BTEC equivalences
BTEC not benefitting students
BTEC not supporting progression
BTEC type curriculum
BTECs affecting league tables
BTECs favouring CD borderline
BTECs overvalued
Challenges facing partnership
Challenging students benefitting
Changes in personnel
Competition benefits to own organisation
Competition from schools
Considering other models of 14-19 delivery
Considering other types of partnership
Curriculum benefits for students
Curriculum benefits to own organisation
Curriculum reform
Curriculum stability
Demographic effects
Differences between pre-post 16 partnership
Different types of provision needed
Different views on BTEC
Difficulties for misbehaved students

Difficulties in setting up a partnership
Difficulties of novel provision
Difficulties with partnership
Difficulties with post-16 collaboration
Ebacc
Employers' views
Equal partnership
Equality of access
Equivalences
Factors in partnership success
Financial imperatives vs other imperatives
GCSE preferable to BTEC
Government effect on students
Heads effects on partnership
Hidden costs
Hidden curriculum
IAG
Importance of large partner
Improving offer for students and parents
In house delivery
Individual student needs
Influence of academies
Issues with reforms
Issues with Wolf
LA Changes
League table effects
League table imperatives vs other imperatives
League table position affecting view
Level 1 students benefitting
Liking new BTEC equivalences
Limited places
Limited student curriculum choice
Lower ability students benefitting
making partnership work
Meeting learner needs
Middle band of students affected by changes
Missed cpd opportunities
Missed partnership opportunities
Moral obligation to offer students appropriate courses
Need to support vocational qualifications
Negative attitude to post-16 collaboration
Negative attitudes of parents to partnership provision
Negative attitudes towards Partnership

Negative effects on staffing numbers
Negative time effects for students
Not being dictated by targets
Not limiting provision to specific groups
OFSTED
Organisations focussing on own needs.
Other benefits for schools
Other organisations' priorities
Parental perceptions
Parental views
Partnership benefits of scale
Partnership benefitting weaker students
Partnership can make courses viable
Partnership meeting own needs
Partnership offering novel opportunities
Partnership provision not needed
Partnership restricting curriculum in schools
Performance tables
Poor vfm
Poor vocational progression
Positive attitude of parents to provision
Positive attitude to partnership
Positive attitude towards post-16 partnership
Positive financial effects
Positive 'hidden curriculum' effects
Positive parent attitude
Positive personal view of partnership
Post 16 collaboration to engage NEET students
Progression benefits for students
Progression benefits to own organisation
Progression partnerships
Proportion of students benefitting
Providers and schools benefitting
Provision offered to all groups of students
Provision suiting certain groups of students
Reasons why students don't like provision
Reduction in numbers of students accessing provision
Reforms not affecting level 1 students
Resource benefits for partners
Role of exam boards
Role of local authority
School better option than partnership
School location affecting attitude to partnership



School not dependent on vocational qualifications
Schools being in charge
Schools keeping students because they have more control
Schools protecting own provision
Sharing of good practice
Sharing of resources
Sixth form, vocational offer.
Size benefits
Size of collaboration
Size of organisation affecting attitude to partnership
Size of school
Specific benefit groups
Staff development benefits
Strategic post-16 changes needed
Student decisions
Student focus
Students not changing behaviour
Timetable benefits
Timetable deficits for students
Timetable deficits for students
Timetable deficits for students
Timetabling difficulties for schools
Travel difficulties
Type of school
Value of vocational qualifications
Wolf affecting partnership
Wolf changes causing an academic curriculum
Wolf devaluing vocational curriculum
Wolf favouring level 1 qualifications
Wolf reducing vocational curriculum pre-16

# Appendix G

## Level 3 Codes

Presented in alphabetical order

Applicability of different sorts of partnership
Effects of partnership on groups of students
Factors related to other stakeholders or influences
Factors that limit working in partnership
Factors that relate to the benefits of partnership or positive effects of partnership
Financial considerations
Influence of BTEC qualification equivalences
Influence of league tables or OFSTED
Issues relating to curriculum reform

## Appendix H

### Themes Identified in Level 3 Codes

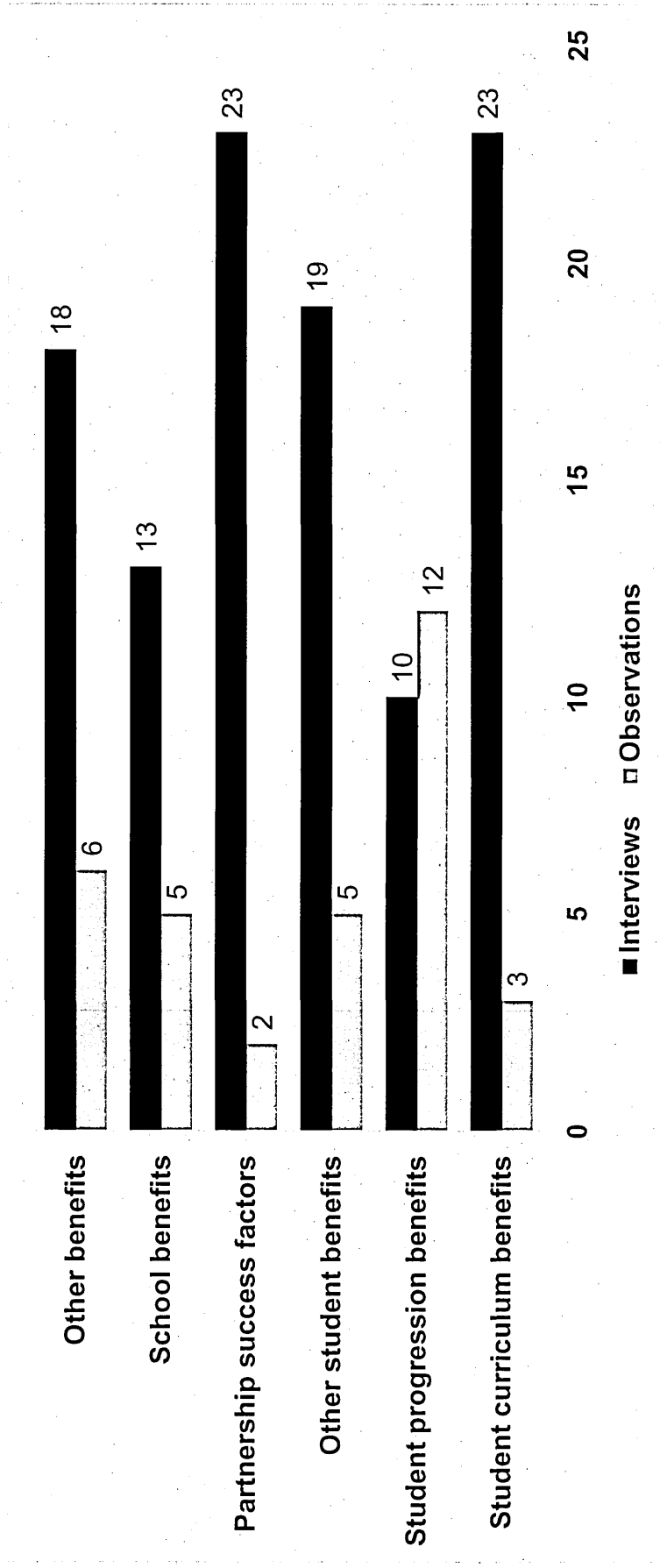
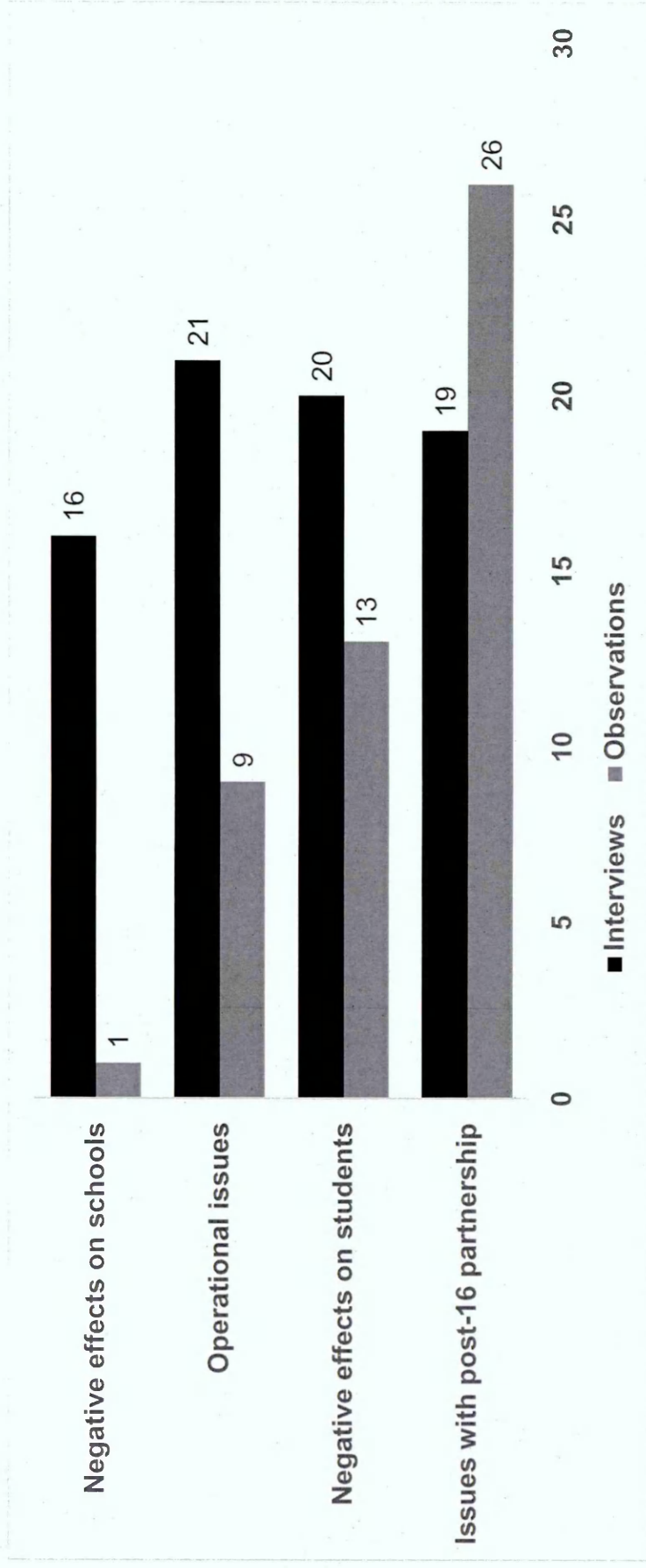
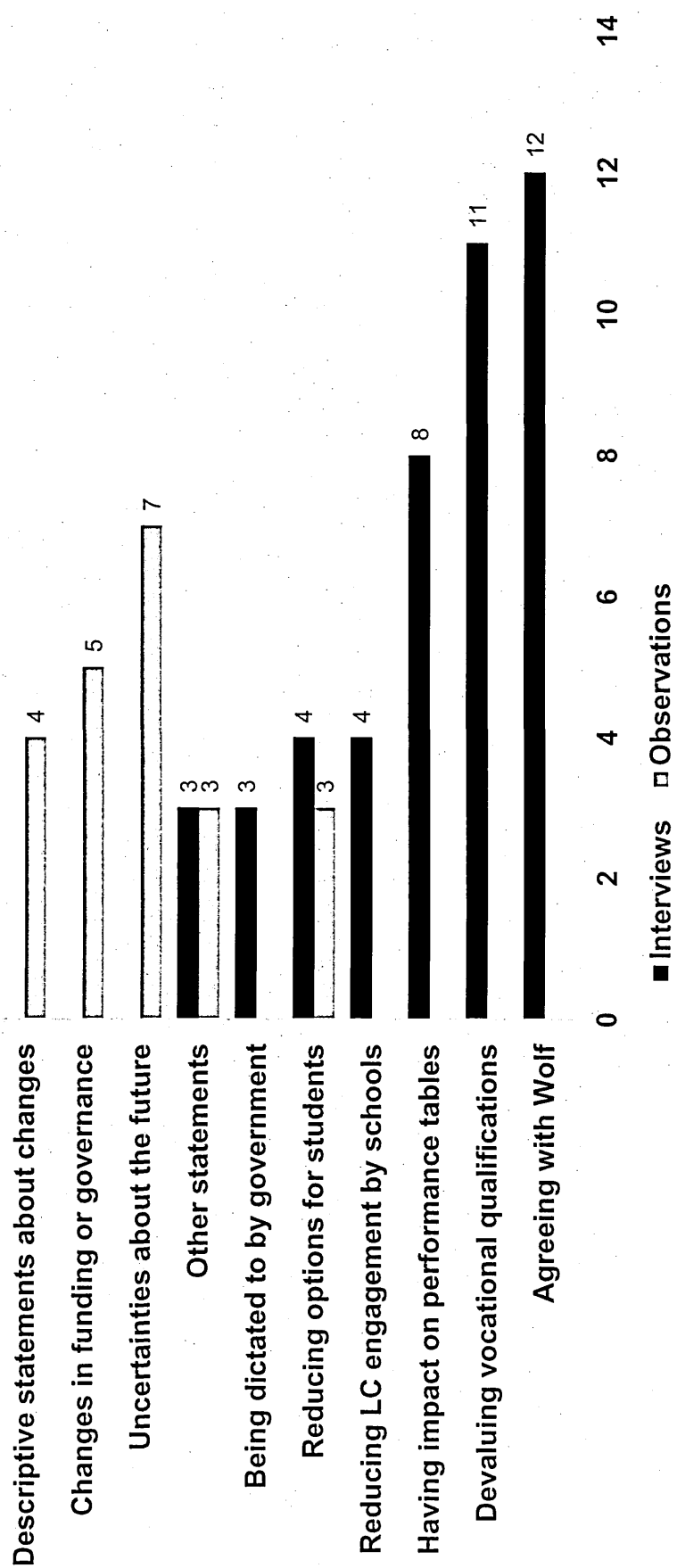


Figure H1- Distribution of different themes from responses coded as positive towards or benefits of partnership.

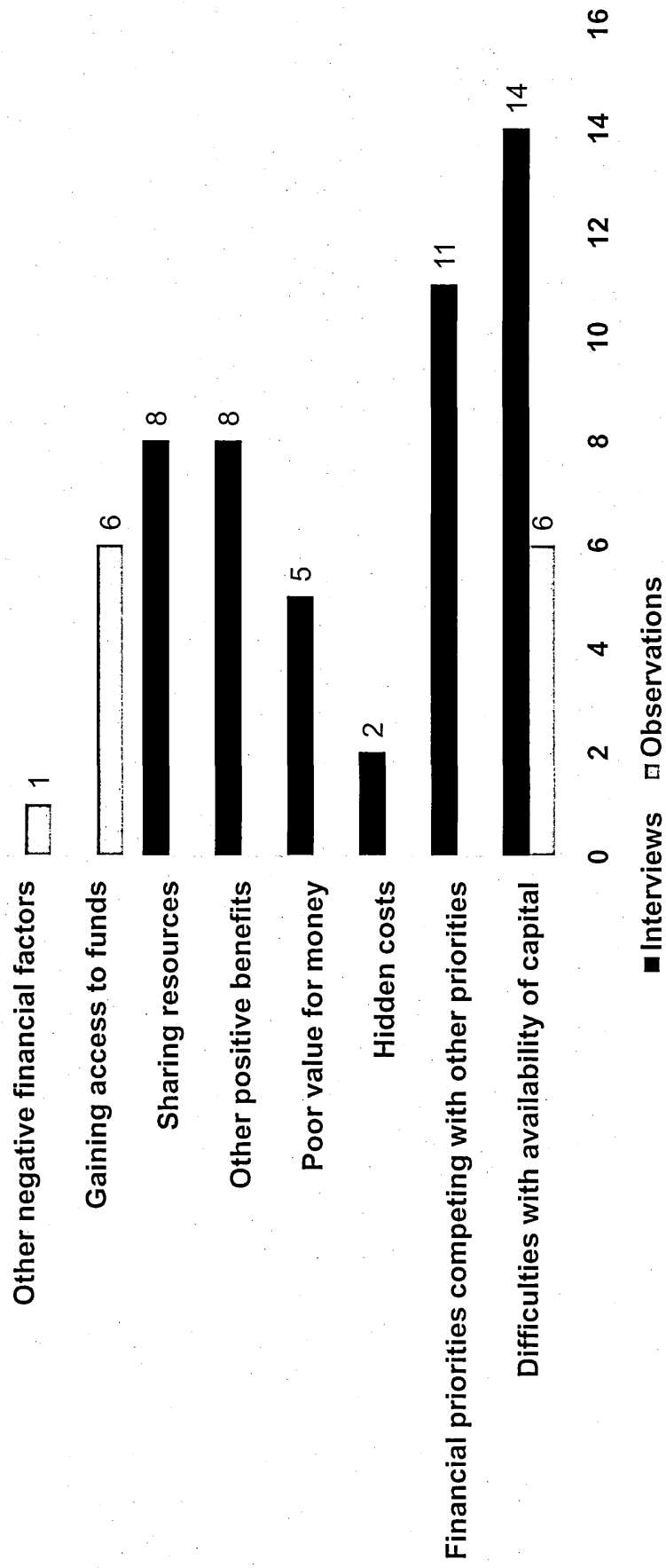


**Figure H2-** Chart showing distribution of different themes from responses coded as limiting factors

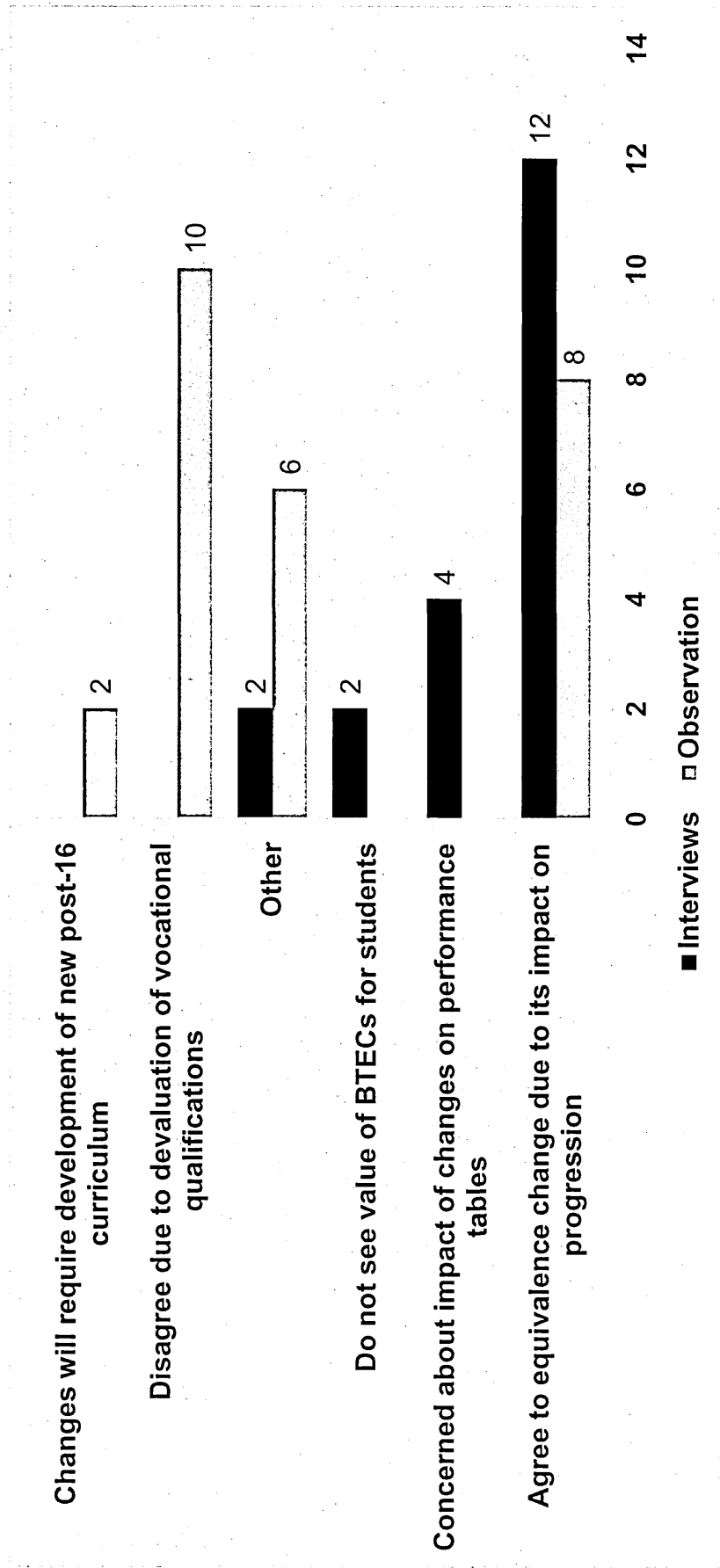


**Figure H3-** Chart showing distribution of different themes from responses coded as relating to curriculum reform

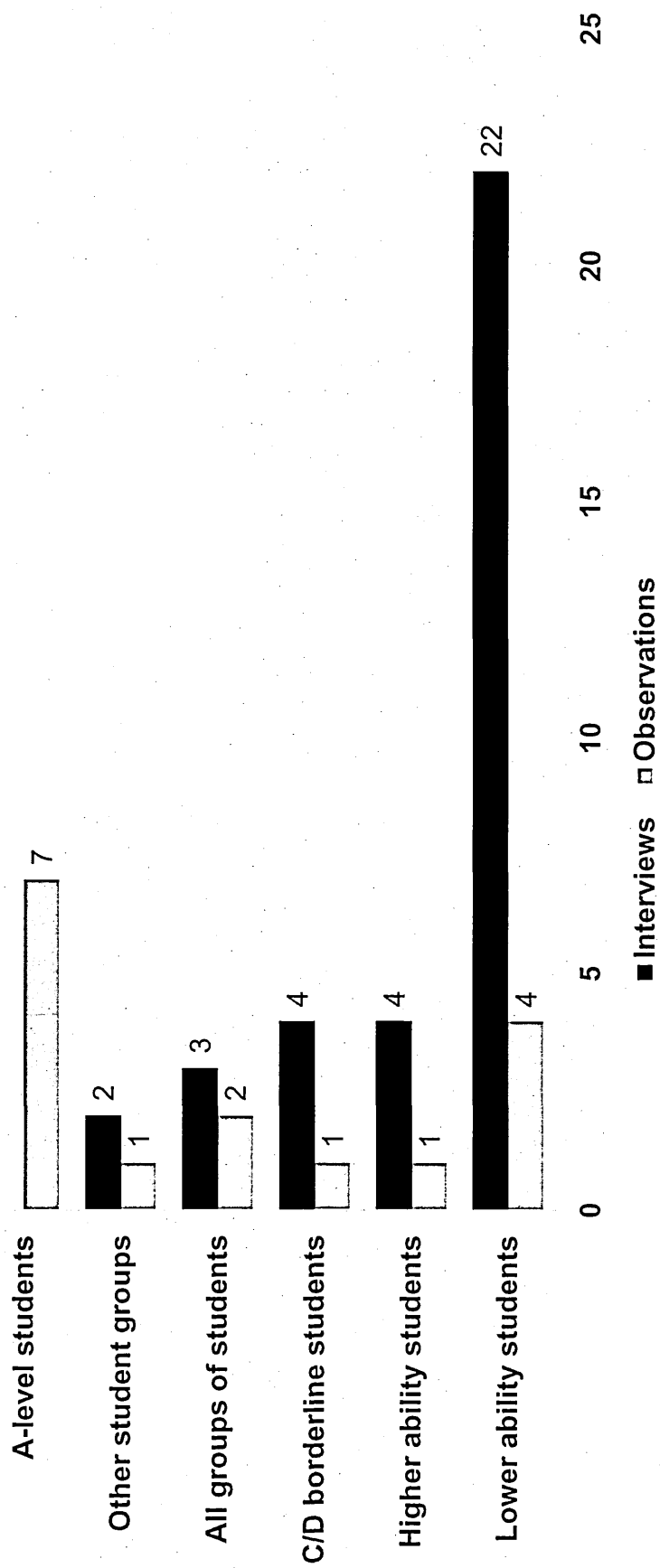




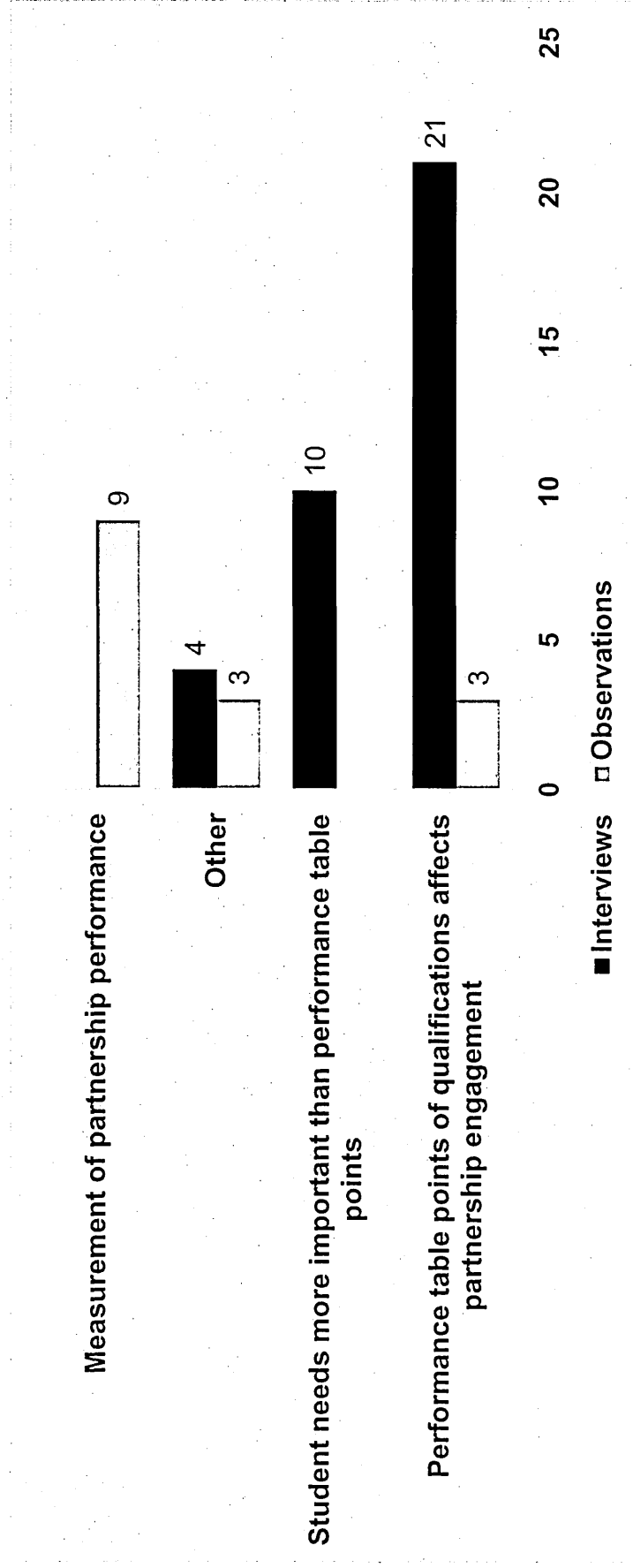
**Figure H4-** Chart showing distribution of different themes from responses coded as relating to financial factors



**Figure H5-** Chart showing distribution of different themes from responses coded as relating to BTEC equivalences



**Figure H6-** Chart showing distribution of different themes from responses related to different groups of student



**Figure H7-** Chart showing distribution of different themes from responses relating to performance table influences

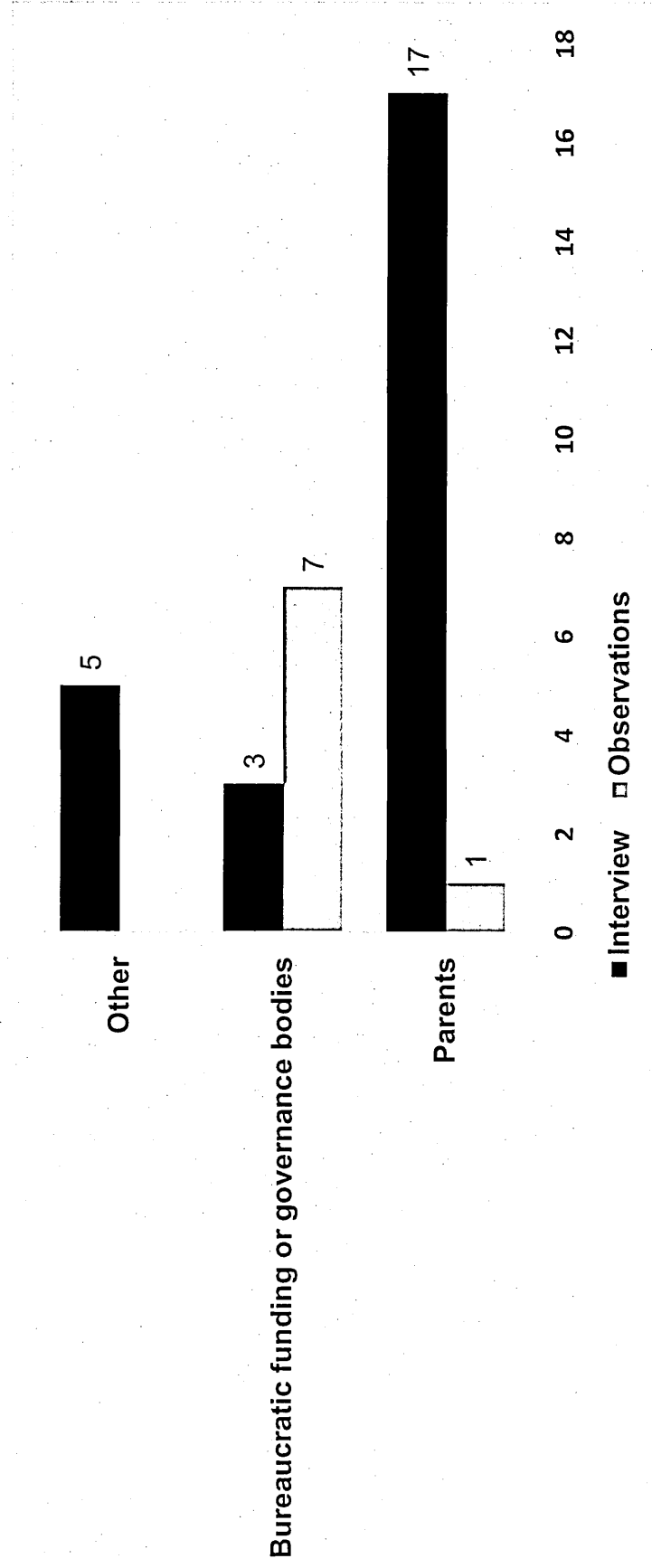


Figure H8- Chart showing distribution of different themes from responses coded as relating to different stakeholders



# Appendix I

## Key Recommendations from Wolf Reforms

These have been taken from: WOLF, Alison (2011). Review of vocational education: the Wolf report. [online]. London, DfE.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-vocational-education-the-wolf-report>

Where appropriate they have been abbreviated for inclusion in this appendix.

**Recommendation 1:** The DfE should distinguish clearly between those qualifications, both vocational and academic, which can contribute to performance indicators at Key Stage 4, and those which cannot.

**Recommendation 2:** At Key Stage 4, schools should be free to offer any qualifications they wish from a regulated Awarding Body whether or not these are approved for performance measurement purposes, subject to statutory/health and safety requirements.

**Recommendation 3:** Non-GCSE/iGCSE qualifications from the approved list (recommendation 1 above) should make a limited contribution to an individual student's score on any performance measures that use accumulated and averaged point scores.

**Recommendation 4:** DfE should review current policies for the lowest-attaining quintile of pupils at Key Stage 4, with a view to greatly increasing the proportion who are able to progress directly onto Level 2 programmes at age 16.

**Recommendation 5:** The overall study programmes of all 16-18 year olds in 'vocational' programmes (i.e. currently everything other than A levels, pre-U and IB, and including 'Foundation Learning') should be governed by a set of general principles relating primarily to content, general structure, assessment arrangements and contact time.

**Recommendation 6:** 16-19 year old students pursuing full time courses of study should not follow a programme which is entirely 'occupational', or based solely on courses which directly reflect, and do not go beyond, the content of National Occupational Standards. Their programmes should also include at least one qualification of substantial size (in terms of teaching time) which offers clear potential for progression either in education or into skilled employment.

**Recommendation 7:** Programmes for the lowest attaining learners – including many with LDD as well as those highly disaffected with formal education – should concentrate on the core academic skills of English and Maths, and on work experience.

**Recommendation 8:** The DfE and BIS should evaluate the extent to which the current general education components of apprenticeship frameworks are

adequate for 16-19 year old apprentices, many of whom may wish to progress to further and higher education.

**Recommendation 9:** Students who are under 19 and do not have GCSE A\*-C in English and/or Maths should be required, as part of their programme, to pursue a course which either leads directly to these qualifications, or which provide significant progress towards future GCSE entry and success.

**Recommendation 10:** DfE should continue and if possible increase its current level of support for CPD for mathematics teachers, and give particular attention to staff who are teaching post-16 students in colleges and schools.

**Recommendation 11:** Funding for full-time students age 16-18 should be on a programme basis, with a given level of funding per student.

**Recommendation 12:** There should continue to be no restrictions placed on a young person's programme in terms of which level or type of qualification they can pursue. If it is appropriate for a student or apprentice to move sideways (or indeed 'downwards') in order to change subject or sector, that is their choice.

**Recommendation 13:** Young people who do not use up their time-based entitlement to education (including apprenticeship) by the time they are 19 should be entitled to a corresponding credit towards education at a later date.

**Recommendation 14:** Employers who take on 16-18 year old apprentices should be eligible for payments (direct or indirect), because and when they bear some of the cost of education for an age-group with a right to free full-time participation.

**Recommendation 15:** DfE and BIS should review contracting arrangements for apprenticeships, drawing on best practice internationally, with a view to increasing efficiency, controlling unit costs and driving out any frictional expenditure associated with brokerage or middleman activities that do not add value.

**Recommendation 16:** DfE and BIS should discuss and consult urgently on alternative ways for groups of smaller employers to become direct providers of training and so receive 'training provider' payments, possibly through the encouragement of Group Training Associations (GTAs).

**Recommendation 17:** At present teachers with QTS can teach in FE colleges; the FE equivalent – QTLS – should be recognised in schools, which is currently not the case.

**Recommendation 18:** Clarify and evaluate rules relating to the teaching of vocational content by qualified professionals who are not primarily teachers/do not hold QTLS.

**Recommendation 19:** Make explicit the legal right of colleges to enrol students under 16 and ensure that funding procedures make this practically possible.

**Recommendation 20:** All institutions enrolling students age 16-18 (post-KS4), and those offering a dedicated entry route for 14-year old entrants, should be required to publish the previous institutions and, where relevant, the qualifications and average grades at the time of enrolment of previous entrants.

**Recommendation 21:** DfE should evaluate models for supplying genuine work experience to 16-18 year olds who are enrolled as full-time students, not apprentices, and for reimbursing local employers in a flexible way, using core funds.

**Recommendation 22:** DfE should encourage Ofqual to move as quickly as possible away from regulating individual vocational qualifications and concentrate on regulating awarding bodies.

**Recommendation 23:** DfE should confirm and clarify that qualifications offered to 14-19 year olds and funded through YPLA will not in future need to be either QCF-compliant or belong to a specified group with additional approval criteria (GCSE, A Level, Diploma etc).

**Recommendation 24:** DfE and BIS should discuss and consult on the appropriate future and role of National Occupational Standards in education and training for young people, and on whether and how both national employer bodies – including but not only SSCs – and local employers should contribute to qualification design.

**Recommendation 25:** The legislation governing Ofqual should be examined and where necessary amended, in order to clarify the respective responsibilities of the regulator and the Secretary of State

**Recommendation 26:** DfE should introduce a performance indicator which focuses on the whole distribution of performance within a school, including those at the top and bottom ends of the distribution.

**Recommendation 27:** At college and school level the assessment and awarding processes used for vocational awards should involve local employers on a regular basis.

## Appendix J

### Extra Information from Field Analysis

School	% 5AC	No.	Diff	% LC	Ofsted	Income	%Ebacc	Pos prog
1	48%	169	1%	9%	2	5591	6%	96%
2	78%	202	2%	9%	1	5385	35%	98%
3	74%	300	4%	13%	2	4398	23%	98%
4	60%	281	8%	13%	3	5018	6%	96%
5	57%	175	0%	3%	2	4389	15%	94%
6	55%	218	7%	23%	3	5480	1%	94%
7	40%	134	1%	4%	3	6230	11%	93%
8	63%	161	3%	15%	2	5321	21%	98%
9	50%	208	7%	14%	3	5009	12%	94%
10	40%	112	9%	12%	2	7930	3%	93%
11	55%	150	13%	11%	2		2%	95%
12	38%	183	12%	22%	3	6022	5%	91%
13	82%	198	1%	0%	2	4593	46%	99%
14	44%	240	6%	9%	2	5403	4%	95%
15	67%	319	10%	18%	3	5011	10%	95%

**Table J1-** Data that was used in the field analysis. (see table 4.1 for key to row and column labels)

School	% 5AC	No.	Diff	% LC	Ofsted	Income	%Ebacc	Pos prog
13	82%	198	1%	0%	2	4593	46%	99%
2	78%	202	2%	9%	1	5385	35%	98%
3	74%	300	4%	13%	2	4398	23%	98%
15	67%	319	10%	18%	3	5011	10%	95%
8	63%	161	3%	15%	2	5321	21%	98%
<b>Group mean</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4942</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>98%</b>
4	60%	281	8%	13%	3	5018	6%	96%
5	57%	175	0%	3%	2	4389	15%	94%
6	55%	218	7%	23%	3	5480	1%	94%
11	55%	150	13%	11%	2		2%	95%
9	50%	208	7%	14%	3	5009	12%	94%
<b>Group mean</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4974</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>95%</b>
1	48%	169	1%	9%	2	5591	6%	96%
14	44%	240	6%	9%	2	5403	4%	95%
7	40%	134	1%	4%	3	6230	11%	93%
10	40%	112	9%	12%	2	7930	3%	93%
12	38%	183	12%	22%	3	6022	5%	91%
<b>Group mean</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>167.6</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6235.2</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>94%</b>
<b>Mean</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5413</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>95%</b>

**Table J2-** Ranking of schools in the learning community based on 5A\*-C measure (see table 4.1 for key to row and column labels)

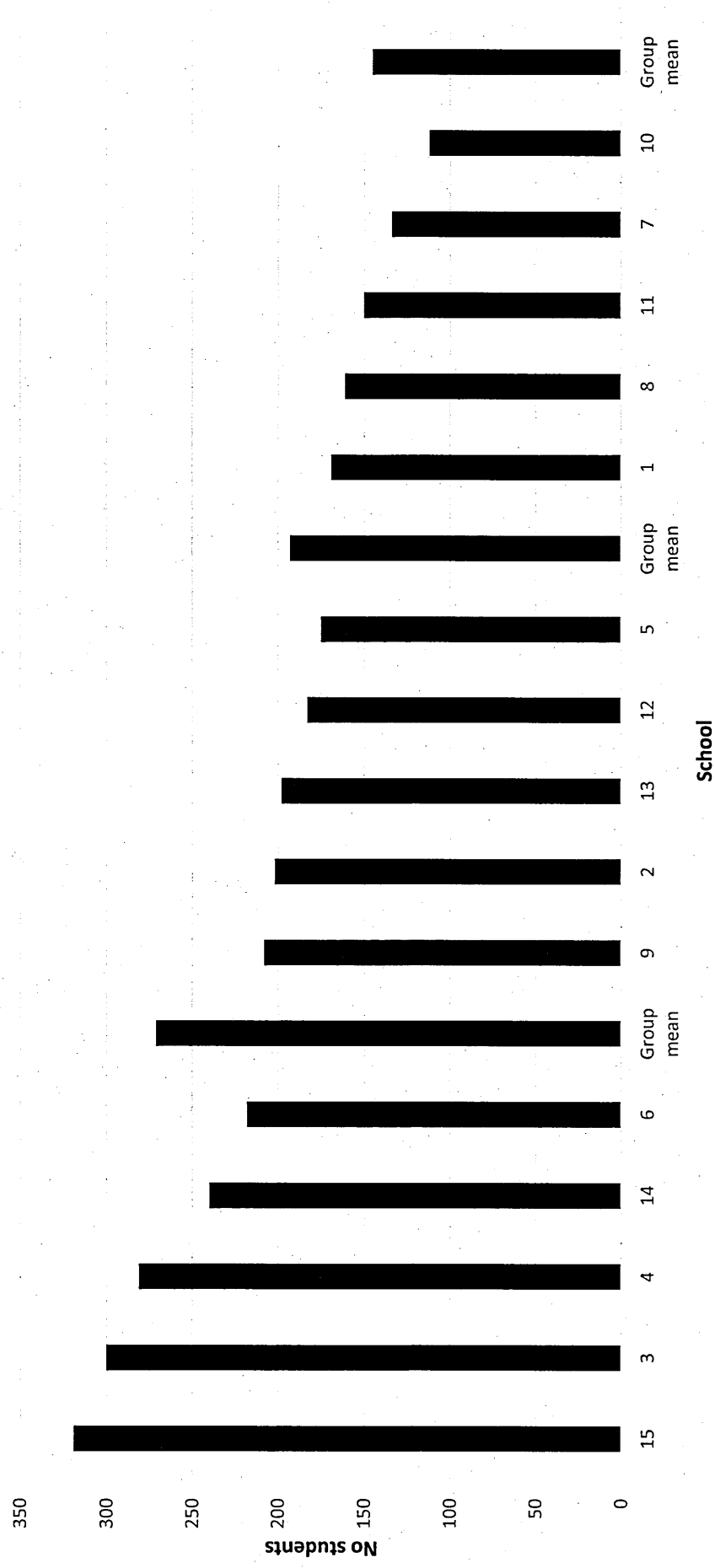


School	% LC	No.	% 5AC	Diff	Ofsted	Income	%Ebacc	Pos prog
6	23%	218	55%	7%	3	5480	1%	94%
12	22%	183	38%	12%	3	6022	5%	91%
15	18%	319	67%	10%	3	5011	10%	95%
8	15%	161	63%	3%	2	5321	21%	98%
9	14%	208	50%	7%	3	5009	12%	94%
<b>Group mean</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5369</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>94%</b>
3	13%	300	74%	4%	2	4398	23%	98%
4	13%	281	60%	8%	3	5018	6%	96%
10	12%	112	40%	9%	2	7930	3%	93%
11	11%	150	55%	13%	2		2%	95%
14	9%	240	44%	6%	2	5403	4%	95%
<b>Group mean</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5687</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>96%</b>
2	9%	202	78%	2%	1	5385	35%	98%
1	9%	169	48%	1%	2	5591	6%	96%
7	4%	134	40%	1%	3	6230	11%	93%
5	3%	175	57%	0%	2	4389	15%	94%
13	0%	198	82%	1%	2	4593	46%	99%
<b>Group mean</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5238</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>96%</b>
<b>Mean</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5413</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>95%</b>

**Table J3-** Ranking of schools in the learning community based on Learning Community engagement (see table 4.1 for key to row and column labels).

School	Diff	No.	% 5AC	% LC	Ofsted	Income	%Ebacc	Pos prog
11	13%	150	55%	11%	2		2%	95%
12	12%	183	38%	22%	3	6022	5%	91%
15	10%	319	67%	18%	3	5011	10%	95%
10	9%	112	40%	12%	2	7930	3%	93%
4	8%	281	60%	13%	3	5018	6%	96%
<b>Group mean</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5995</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>94%</b>
6	7%	218	55%	23%	3	5480	1%	94%
9	7%	208	50%	14%	3	5009	12%	94%
14	6%	240	44%	9%	2	5403	4%	95%
3	4%	300	74%	13%	2	4398	23%	98%
8	3%	161	63%	15%	2	5321	21%	98%
<b>Group mean</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5122</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>96%</b>
2	2%	202	78%	9%	1	5385	35%	98%
1	1%	169	48%	9%	2	5591	6%	96%
7	1%	134	40%	4%	3	6230	11%	93%
13	1%	198	82%	0%	2	4593	46%	99%
5	0%	175	57%	3%	2	4389	15%	94%
<b>Group mean</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>175.6</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5237</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>96%</b>
<b>Mean</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5413</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>95%</b>

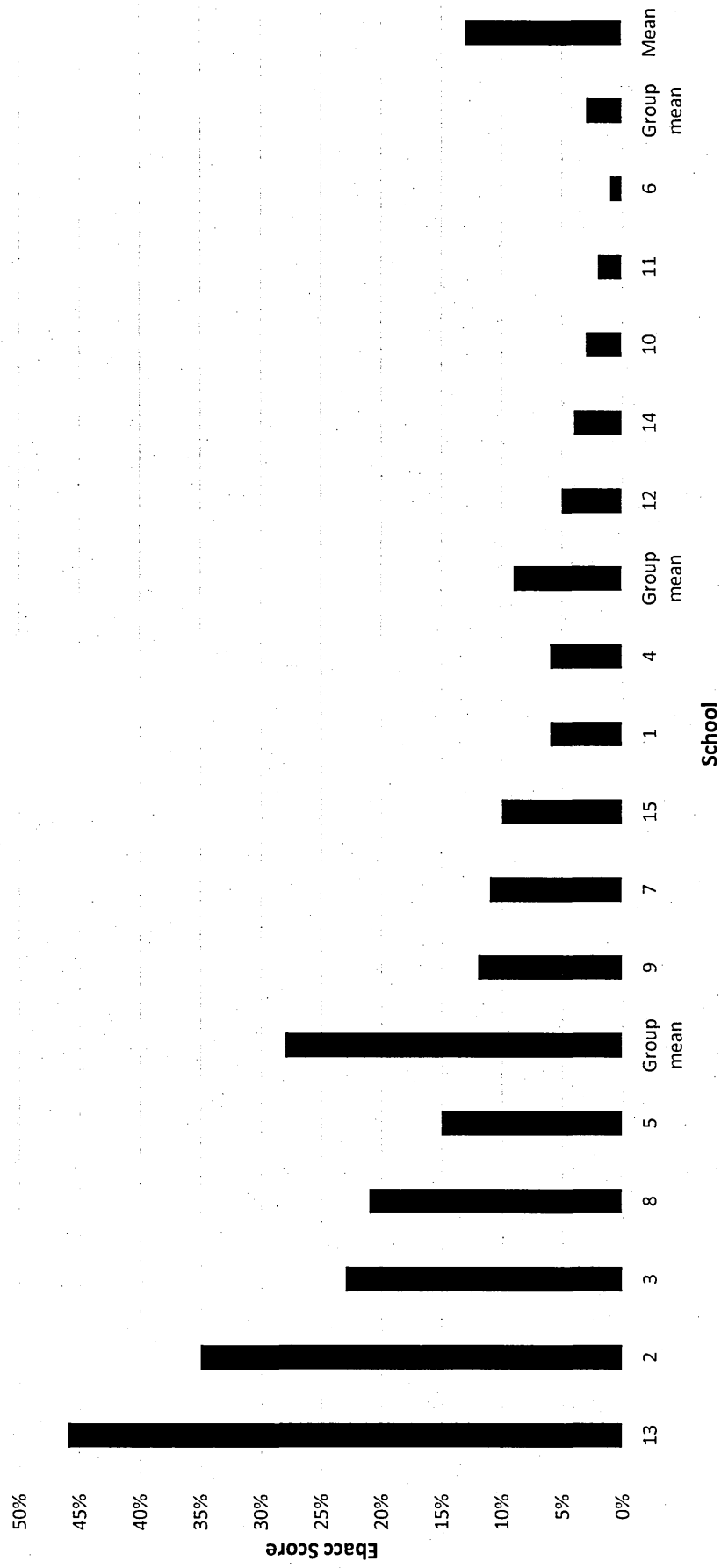
**Table J4-** Ranking of schools in the learning community based upon reliance on vocational qualifications (see table 4.1 for key to row and column labels).



**Figure J1-** Ranking of schools in the learning community based on number of Y11 students (see table 4.1 for key to axis labels and section 4.3 for information on graphical presentation).

School	No.	% 5AC	Diff	% LC	Ofsted	Income	%Ebacc	Pos prog
15	319	67%	10%	18%	3	5011	10%	95%
3	300	74%	4%	13%	2	4398	23%	98%
4	281	60%	8%	13%	3	5018	6%	96%
14	240	44%	6%	9%	2	5403	4%	95%
6	218	55%	7%	23%	3	5480	1%	94%
Group mean	271	60%	7%	15%		5062	9%	96%
9	208	50%	7%	14%	3	5009	12%	94%
2	202	78%	2%	9%	1	5385	35%	98%
13	198	82%	1%	0%	2	4593	46%	99%
12	183	38%	12%	22%	3	6022	5%	91%
5	175	57%	0%	3%	2	4389	15%	94%
Group mean	193	61%	4%	9%		5079.6	23%	95%
1	169	48%	1%	9%	2	5591	6%	96%
8	161	63%	3%	15%	2	5321	21%	98%
11	150	55%	13%	11%	2		2%	95%
7	134	40%	1%	4%	3	6230	11%	93%
10	112	40%	9%	12%	2	7930	3%	93%
Group mean	145	49%	5%	10%		6268	9%	95%
Mean	203	57%	6%	12%	2	5413	13%	95%

**Table J5-** Ranking of schools in the learning community based on number of Y11 students (see table 4.1 for key to row and column labels).

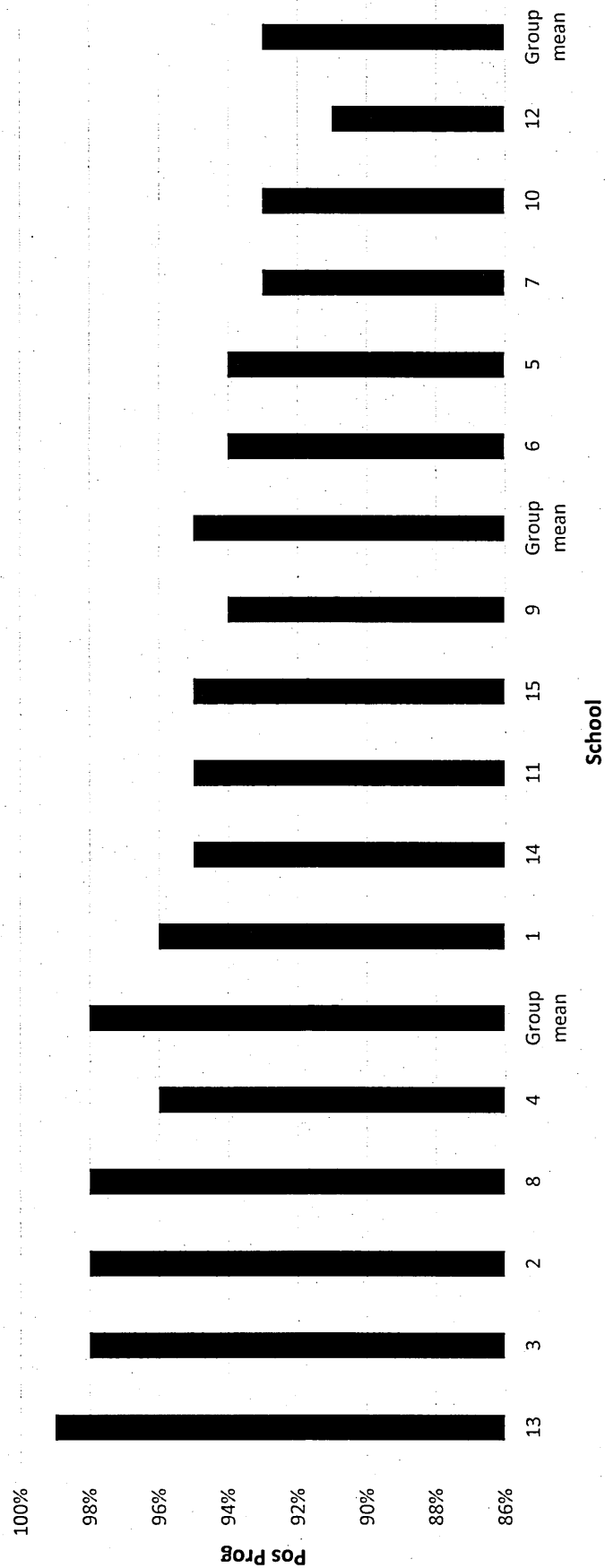


**Figure J2-** Ranking of schools in the learning community based on EBacc score (see table 4.1 for key to axis labels and section 4.3 for information on graphical presentation).



School	%Ebacc	No.	% 5AC	Diff	% LC	Ofsted	Income	Pos prog
13	46%	198	82%	1%	0%	2	4593	99%
2	35%	202	78%	2%	9%	1	5385	98%
3	23%	300	74%	4%	13%	2	4398	98%
8	21%	161	63%	3%	15%	2	5321	98%
5	15%	175	57%	0%	3%	2	4389	94%
<b>Group mean</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4817</b>	<b>97%</b>
9	12%	208	50%	7%	14%	3	5009	94%
7	11%	134	40%	1%	4%	3	6230	93%
15	10%	319	67%	10%	18%	3	5011	95%
1	6%	169	48%	1%	9%	2	5591	96%
4	6%	281	60%	8%	13%	3	5018	96%
<b>Group mean</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5372</b>	<b>95%</b>
12	5%	183	38%	12%	22%	3	6022	91%
14	4%	240	44%	6%	9%	2	5403	95%
10	3%	112	40%	9%	12%	2	7930	93%
11	2%	150	55%	13%	11%	2		95%
6	1%	218	55%	7%	23%	3	5480	94%
<b>Group mean</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6209</b>	<b>94%</b>
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5413</b>	<b>95%</b>

**Table J6-** Ranking of schools in the learning community based on percentage Y11 students achieving the EBacc measure (see table 4.1 for key to row and column labels).



**Figure J3-** Ranking of schools in the learning community based on percentage Y11 students progressing into positive post-16 destinations score (see table 4.1 for key to axis labels and section 4.3 for information on graphical presentation).

<b>School</b>	<b>Pos prog</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>% 5AC</b>	<b>Diff</b>	<b>% LC</b>	<b>Ofsted</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>%Ebacc</b>
<b>13</b>	99%	198	82%	1%	0%	2	4593	46%
<b>3</b>	98%	300	74%	4%	13%	2	4398	23%
<b>2</b>	98%	202	78%	2%	9%	1	5385	35%
<b>8</b>	98%	161	63%	3%	15%	2	5321	21%
<b>4</b>	96%	281	60%	8%	13%	3	5018	6%
<b>Group mean</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4943</b>	<b>26%</b>
<b>1</b>	96%	169	48%	1%	9%	2	5591	6%
<b>14</b>	95%	240	44%	6%	9%	2	5403	4%
<b>11</b>	95%	150	55%	13%	11%	2		2%
<b>15</b>	95%	319	67%	10%	18%	3	5011	10%
<b>9</b>	94%	208	50%	7%	14%	3	5009	12%
<b>Group mean</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5254</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>6</b>	94%	218	55%	7%	23%	3	5480	1%
<b>5</b>	94%	175	57%	0%	3%	2	4389	15%
<b>7</b>	93%	134	40%	1%	4%	3	6230	11%
<b>10</b>	93%	112	40%	9%	12%	2	7930	3%
<b>12</b>	91%	183	38%	12%	22%	3	6022	5%
<b>Group mean</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6010</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>mean</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5413</b>	<b>13%</b>

**Table J7-** Ranking of schools in the learning community based on percentage Y11 students progressing into positive post-16 destinations (see table 4.1 for key to row and column labels).