

Knowledge, Experts and Accountability in School Governing Bodies

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Background to the paper

- Published as: Young, H. (2017) 'Knowledge, Experts and Accountability in School Governing Bodies', *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 45(1), pp. 40-56.
- From my PhD: 'Ambiguous Citizenship: Democratic practices and school governing bodies' (2014)
- Empirical research (2011-12) - before:
 - the majority of schools became academies
 - Michael Gove's 2016 comment, 'people in this country have had enough of experts'

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Governing bodies of local authority maintained schools in England

- Powers and duties:
 - Setting the budget
 - Appointing the head
 - Setting the school's broad direction
 - Basic composition:
 - Head
 - Staff elected by staff
 - Parents elected by parents
 - Local authority nominated by local authority
 - Community nominated by the governing body
- } Referred to as 'external'

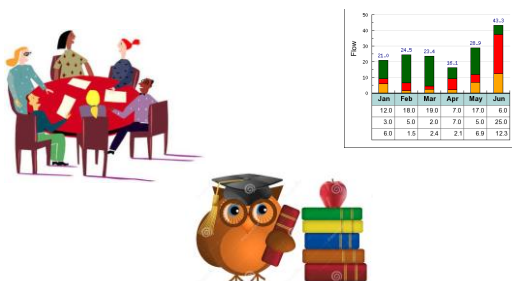
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Research approach

- In 2 primary and 2 secondary maintained schools
- Broadly ethnographic drawing on:
 - Interviews
 - Observations
 - Agendas and minutes
 - Policy documents
- Deliberative democracy (Dryzek, 2002; Young, 2002 [2000]) as a sensitising concept

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Struggles over which forms of knowledge are claimed and valued



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'Lay' knowledge



- Non-expert knowledge such as parental experience or local knowledge
- Difficult for 'lay' to be defined as more than an absence of expert knowledge, particularly educational knowledge
- Strongly valued – associated with conceptions of democracy and community

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'Lay' has positive connotations



'Governors are ... lay people and their strength has always been seen in these terms'
(Creese and Earley, 1999: 71)

'the most important thing is obviously a love for ... education. And also a sense of commitment. And a head full of **common sense**. That is all you need. Because at the end of the day anybody [can] understand hopefully, what is right and what is not right' (Chaman, community governor and chair, Tyne Secondary)

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Expert knowledge constitutes objects

- Expert knowledge is powerful
- It constitutes objects such as 'good education' or 'performance'
- 'expert knowledges give rise to much of what we "say" and "see" or the objects that we take to exist in the world and how we talk about them' (Walter, 2008: 540)
- Ball's 'performativity' (2006 [2003]) shows how (managerial) knowledge constitutes 'good' education and the role of teachers

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Educational knowledge



- Educational knowledge is a form of expertise
- Its boundaries are fuzzy
- External governors frequently made claims to educational knowledge - from work in other schools or from Ofsted reports etc
- They tended to draw on any educational knowledge they had – suggesting it was valued

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Discourse of derision of educational knowledge

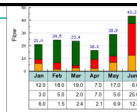
the valuing of external governors with lay knowledge



'discourse of derision' (Ball, 2006 [1990]) of professional educational knowledge

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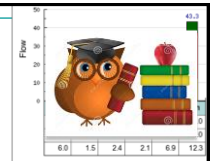
Managerial knowledge



- transferable
- seen as coming from business
- 'The powers once accorded to positive knowledges of human conduct are to be transferred to the calculative regimes of accounting and financial management' (Rose, 2005 [1996]: 54)

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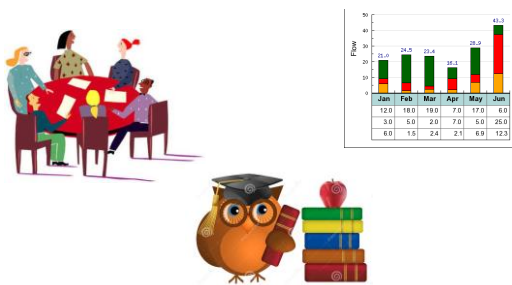
Education as an auditable product



- There is an emphasis on aspects of education which can be measured
- Education becomes 'intelligible', through data analysis, to those with managerial knowledge

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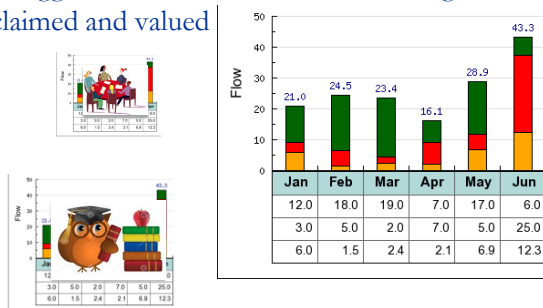
Struggles over which forms of knowledge are claimed and valued



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Thank you!

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