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## **Governance of Social Enterprises in South Yorkshire UK: Towards a new orientation.**

### **Abstract**

Social enterprise as a concept is at the core of the United Kingdom's government strategies of ameliorating socio economic deprivation and has experienced phenomenal growth across the country over the years. Globalisation and increased demands for effective social welfare interventions is increasingly forcing social enterprises to evaluate their governance structures in addition to business models to ensure success and longevity of their operations. Consequently, there has been an upsurge of interest in the governance of social enterprises over the past 15 years as it has become apparent that financial sustainability of social enterprise also depends on effective decision making at strategic level and their ability to engage with a variety of stakeholders outside the social economy. Despite this increased in interest there are still significant gaps in the understanding and knowledge of how nature and type of governance model influence the operational efficiency of social enterprises. This is particularly in view of apparent shift from democratic to stewardship types of governance models of governance by some social enterprise. The focus of this paper is on generating additional knowledge on the reasons of this paradigm shift in social enterprise governance, given lack of in-depth academic scrutiny on this phenomenon. The paper presents and critically analyses key results emerging from a doctoral investigation on the governance of social enterprise in South Yorkshire.

Key words

**Governance, Non-profit sector, Social enterprise, Sustainability**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Globalisation and increased demands for effective social welfare interventions are forcing social enterprises to evaluate their governance structures in addition to business models to ensure success and longevity of their operations (Douglas, 1994; Palmaas ,2002). These external forces, particularly increased competition for resources have made it imperative for social enterprises to review their governance models to mobilise resources and expertise essential for growth, particularly beyond the social economy (O'Regan and Oster, 2005; Simons,2000). The nature of traditional social enterprise governance models however is posing the greatest challenge to achieve these aims (Low, 2006). Historically, social enterprises have been governed through democratic models that emphasises the development of trust and solidarity among those involved and not necessary geared towards supporting commercial activities (Low, 2006). It is not surprising that contemporary discourses in social enterprise governance suggest that some social enterprises are drifting towards stewardship governance models as the complexities and shortcomings associated with democratic governance models become more apparent (Low, 2006; Cornforth, 1988; Mason et al, 2006). This includes recruiting directors on the basis of their skills as well as fostering a much closer and professional working relationship between the boards and managers (Callen et al, 2009; Mason et al, 2006).This shift in discourses and practice from democratic to other forms of governance models of social enterprise have provided the motivation for this study. It is against this background that the governance of social enterprise the UK and specifically, South Yorkshire is discussed and critically analysed in this paper. Discussions will start with contested understanding of social enterprise as a concept, then a general discussion of corporate governance theory, underpinned by Agency theory (AT), Stewardship Theory (ST) and Resource Dependency theory (RDT. This is then followed by analysis and discussion of governance of social enterprise in the context of corporate governance theory. Using a case study approach, the paper then analyses governance of social enterprise in South Yorkshire. The paper will conclude by discussing findings of the investigation on social enterprise undertaken in this region and their implications on policy formulation.

## Social Enterprise: A Definition

Social enterprise is an emerging concept and still suffers from largely unresolved conceptual and definitional issues (Martin and Thompson, 2010). However, researchers and academics generally agree that a social enterprise is a business that seeks to bring people and communities 'together for economic development and social gain' (Martin and Thompson, 2010:6). The UK defines a social enterprise as a business with 'primarily social objectives and whose surpluses are principally re-invested for that purpose in the business, or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners' (DTI 2002:7). Alter (2004:1) puts it more simply as the new 'institutional animal, which is part business and part social'. Unlike conventional commercial businesses, surpluses or profits generated by social enterprises are reinvested into the organisation to develop its capacity to deliver more services or goods to the communities that they serve (Reis, 1999; DTI, 2002). This implies that there is no distribution of profits or material gain to those that are involved in the enterprise (Martin and Thompson, 2010, DTI, 2002). Despite different views on its definition, there is consensus that a social enterprise is first and foremost, a business engaged in some form of trading to produce a surplus or profit (Stutt, 2001). Social enterprises, by their nature, embedded in the communities they serve. They come in a variety of forms such as development trusts, co-operatives, social firms, credit unions, community finance initiatives, community businesses and trading arms of charities (Marshall and Lovatt, 2004).

## **Governance of Social Enterprise Firms**

The governance of firms, and particularly the role of the board and its impact on performance, continues to attract the interest of researchers (Nicholson, 2004). Monks and Minow (1995:1) describe corporate governance as 'the relationship among various participants in determining the direction and performance of a corporation'. The board, according to Daily et al (2003), is the locus of the internal governance of a corporation and performs several key roles. These include making key decisions and providing the necessary direction and strategic focus required for the organisation to achieve its objectives (Low, 2006, Bridge et al, 2009, Nicholson and Kiel, 2004;

Zahra and Pearce, 1989). The board can also be a link to the firm's external environment, providing the infrastructure to access the resources and advice required to achieve its objectives. This particular function is associated with the resource dependency approach (Daily et al, 2003; Dalton et al, 1998; Hung, 1998). Several researchers, amongst them Daily et al (2003), Mason et al (2006), Muth and Donaldson (1998) and Hillman and Dalziel (2003), argue that the board can also act as an agent of its stakeholders such as shareholders and investors and perform the task of monitoring and controlling management activities on their behalf. This particular role is associated with agency theorists. The board of directors also recruits, appoints and holds accountable the top management of the firm responsible for operational issues (Cohen and Cyert, 1965). Zahra and Pearce (1989) summarise the above functions or roles of the board as service, control and strategic.

#### Agency Theory (AT)

The emergence of the modern corporation resulted in the ownership and control of resources being separated (Berle and Means, 1932; Machold and Vasudevan, 2004) and this separation is one of the dominant themes of the economic theory of the firm (Demsetz, 1983). Cohen and Cyert (1965) suggest that the reason for this separation might be the owners' or stockholders' reluctance to get involved in the day to day operations of the firm. They therefore appoint a board of directors to shape the firm's strategic direction and development. Berle and Means (1932) argue that the separation of ownership and control can result in a divergence of interests between owners of firms and managers. For example, managers have the potential to pursue their own interests if they have effective control of the firm's resources (Cohen and Cyert, 1965). Furthermore, the owners of the business stock can lose control over their resources if ownership becomes spread across a number of shareholders. This may provide autonomy for managers in the utilisation of resources and increase the likelihood of them pursuing their own interests (Berle and Means, 1932; Demsetz, 1983). This separation of power and control in modern corporate forms gives rise to

the principle–agent problem which gave rise to the Agency Theory (Berle and Means, 1932). This theory is grounded in the fields of economics and financial research and is considered as one of the dominant theoretical perspectives in the literature on corporate governance (Daily et al, 2003; Muth and Donaldson, 1998; Zahra and Pearce, 1983). Agency theory is underpinned by the 'model of man' which assumes that shareholders will lose control as the firm grows and that managers will prioritise their own interests above those of the organisation (Donaldson and Davis, 1991; Muth and Donaldson, 1998). As a firm develops and expands, it is not uncommon for the owners or stockholders to delegate responsibility and authority to managers (agents) to run the firm on their behalf (Davis et al, 1997). The key concern for owners of the organisations has always been the amount of control that managers should have (Jensen and Meckling, 1976). Agency theory therefore, in its paradigmatic form, analyses the relationship between the principal (stockholder) and the agent, who is responsible for implementing the tasks delegated by the principal (Eisenhardt, 1989). Agency theory however has been criticised for its underlying economic assumptions. Doucouliagos (1994) and Perrow (1986), argues that there is a need to consider non-economic motivations when analysing human behaviour in firms. Jensen and Meckling (1976) agree that agency theory takes an over simplistic approach to analysing corporate and human behaviour which is actually much more complex and influenced by a wider range of factors.

#### Resource dependency theory (RDT)

Given the importance of the board of directors' role in corporate governance, extant literature does not sufficiently reveal the relationship between board independence and the financial performance of firms (Dalton et al, 1998; Hillman and Dalziel, 2003). Whilst the AT theory focuses on the board's monitoring and controlling role, the Resource Dependency (RD) theoretical approach explain how directors ensure that their organizations access the resources they need.(Daily et al, 2003). This relatively underexplored approach focuses on the exchange relationship between the firm and its

external environment (Davis and Cobb, 2009; Corcoran and Shackman, 2007). In order to ensure its long term survival, the firm co-ops scarce resources key to achieving this objective (Muth and Donaldson, 1998). Work from this theoretical perspective is mainly associated with Pfeffer and Salancik (1978). Other authors who have written extensively on this concept include Daily et al (2003) and Hillman and Dalziel (2003). However, despite its increasing prominence in the literature on governance there is very little empirical work based on RDT (Davis and Cobb, 2009; Mudambi and Pedersen, 2007). Bazerman and Schoorman (1983) suggest that the Resource Dependency Theory approach has four benefits in that it focuses on network connections among directors, horizontal coordination, vertical coordination and expertise and reputation. Hillman and Dalziel (2003) refer to these collectively as board capital, consisting of both human and relational capital necessary in assisting an organisation to mobilise key resources.

What underpins the RDT is the notion that the external environment is the source of scarce resources that the organisation requires for survival and access to these resources is competitive (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978; Dwyer et al, 1987). The greatest challenge for organisations comes from their inability to exert any form of control over this environment and its negative effect on managerial discretion. Pfeffer and Salancik, (1978) and Scott (1998) argue that this creates uncertainty and dependency for organisations and so provides the impetus for them to develop creative strategies to exploit these resources and therefore minimise this dependency and uncertainty (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978;Heide 1994). These authors go on to argue that firms need either to develop internal mechanisms to minimise resource dependency or to adapt to the demands of the external environment. A board is therefore successful from an RDT perspective when its ability to raise necessary resources is strengthened (Callen et al, 2009;Ulrich and Barney, 1984).

The RDT approach provides a useful lens that allows a firm to identify key resources needed to achieve its objectives. Like any theoretical approach, the RDT has its weaknesses. The literature on RDT does not, for example, provide insight on customer satisfaction and values. In addition, while this theory acknowledges multiple dependencies, Hillman et al, (2009,) argue that RDT does not explicitly outline how a firm prioritises them.

## Stewardship model (ST)

Stewardship Theory (ST) is a relatively new approach to corporate governance and offers an alternative perspective in which managerial motivation can be more comprehensively critiqued and analysed (Davis et al, 1997). This theory which emerged from the fields of sociology and psychology is associated with the work of researchers such as Muth and Donaldson (1998), Donaldson and Davis(1991).

Under the ST model, which is typical in for-profit organisations, the role of the board of directors is that of an adviser and strategy formulator (Nicholson, 2004; Silk, 2004). The role of the manager is that of a ‘steward’ rather than an individual seeking to maximise his/her own utility as agency theory assumes (Muth and Donaldson, 1998, p.5). The motivation of senior managers in the corporation is not a matter of concern under this theory. They are assumed to be essentially trustworthy and pro-organisation and their role is to ensure that the resources of the organisation are efficiently employed to attain financial sustainability in contrast to the AT approach (Donaldson and Davis, 1991; Jenkins et al, 2007). Stewardship theory acknowledges the importance of non-financial motivational factors for management. These include intrinsic factors such as the need for achievement, affiliation, recognition, autonomy and authority (Muth and Donaldson, 1989).

The ST approach assumes that there is no conflict between shareholders and management as the latter’s interests are assumed to be isomorphic with those of the former (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978; Davis et al, 1992). It is taken as read that, as managers (stewards) work autonomously towards the maximisation of shareholders wealth through high performance, their own utility functions are simultaneously maximised (Low, 2006, Donaldson and Davis, 1991; Davis et al, 1997). Essential to achieving this objective are flexible governance structures which empower senior managers to make executive decisions and exploit opportunities for the organisation to attain its objectives efficiently . (Donaldson and Davis,1991; Donaldson, 1985). Such governance structures can, for example, allow the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the firm to chair the board of directors, a situation that would not occur under the AT approach due to its insistence on the separation of ownership and control (Donaldson and Davis, 1991). This shift of corporate control from



stockholders to operational managers or executives can be regarded as a significant improvement on agency theory.

However, recent high profile corporate failures in such huge organisations as Enron, Worldcom and Parmalat challenge this assumption and therefore also the ability of the stewardship model to ensure accountability and efficiency in firms (Guthrie and Turnbull, 2002; Doherty et al, 2009; Low 2006).

The paper now focuses on governance of social enterprise .This is discussed in the context of Agency Theory (AT), Resource Dependency Theory (RDT) and Stewardship Theory (ST) and their implications for social enterprise.

## **GOVERNANCE OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISE**

Whilst corporate governance is not new in the commercial sector, it is increasingly coming under scrutiny in the social economy (Low, 2006). There is consensus among researchers that the governance of social enterprise is still theoretically underdeveloped (Mason et al, 2006). However over the years researchers such as Abzug and Galaskiewicz (2001), Child and Rodrigues, 2004 and, most recently, Low and Chinnock (2008) have undertaken insightful empirical work on social enterprise governance. Traditionally, social enterprises have been governed through democratic models that emphasise the value of participation and stakeholder involvement rather than personal ownership and surplus distribution (Pfeffer, 1973; Iecovich, 2005; Pearce, 2003, Chell, 2007; Birkhoelzer et al, 1992). The democratic governance model therefore implies that personal ownership and profit distribution should not be part of the defining characteristics of a social enterprise ( Birkhoelzer et al (1997) .Pearce (2003) argues that shared ownership is what makes the governance of social enterprise unique and sets it apart from conventional businesses

This type of governance has its origins in the philanthropic organisations of the nineteenth century and continues to be a key feature of the governance of contemporary social enterprises (Evers, 2001). The boards of directors or trustees associated with the governance of social enterprises are usually voluntary in nature (Barker, 2003; Pearce, 2003; Evers, 2001; Paton, 2003). The individuals on these boards do not receive any form of financial remuneration for their participation in

these organisations (DTI, 2002). This is consistent with the view of most contemporary researchers on management theory and practice of non-profit organisations such as Cohen and Cyert (1965) who argue that not all stakeholders are motivated by financial considerations. (2001) and Campbell (2007) argue that, despite being voluntary, such boards of directors are pivotal to the success of social enterprise because they are vital in ensuring accountability, legitimacy and transparency in the operations of such organisations. Other researchers, such as Etchart and Davis (2003b) and Ridley-Duff (2002b), however, are of the opinion that the democratic governance associated with volunteer-dominated boards is inconsistent with the operations of a modern business. They argue that this type of governance model is characterised by a lack of macro-perspective and does not promote ownership or foster partnerships with a wider stakeholder base involving institutions beyond the social economy.

### ***Agency theory and governance of social enterprise***

Given that a social enterprise has no shareholders or stockholders in a commercial sense, Abzug and Galaskiewicz (2001) and Low and Chinnock (2008) argue that it is difficult to identify the principal and the agent. In addition, since the governance of social enterprise is underpinned by democratic and participatory principles, it is highly unlikely that senior managers of such enterprises would engage in self serving activities (Mason et al, 2006). Since social enterprises are traditionally driven by democratic models of governance, it is evident that this type of governance contradicts the AT approach, at the core of which is an independent board free from managerial influence (Muth and Donaldson, 1998). Furthermore, McNulty and Pettigrew (1999) note that a lack of clear separation of powers between the executive and operational staff in non-profits can create a minimalist board and negatively affect efficiency. This type of board tends to be run by an individual or dominated by strong founder members, with little or no conflict, challenge or dissent occurring either amongst themselves or from external stakeholders (Spear et al, 2007). Such situations are inconsistent with the AT approach that advocates for a clear separation of roles between the board and the executive to ensure efficiency (Muth and Donaldson, 1998). Unlike for-profit organisations the board is regarded as a 'tool of democratic participation' (Low, p.4 .2006).

Despite these criticisms, Callen et al (2009) believe the AT approach is still relevant to the critical analysis of how social enterprises operate. The researchers cite specifically the role that the board plays in protecting the organisation's assets and controlling the activities of managers so as to maintain costs and prevent misallocation of resources. The function of the board is to represent the interests of the community as well as the interests of various constituents and groups and to ensure that enterprise's assets are not abused (Iecovich, 2005). Barker (2002) concurs, noting that there is evidence of independent boards of nonprofits developing mechanisms to control the activities of their senior managers in order to ensure that their actions and interests are in tandem with those of the social enterprises. This view is supported by Fama and Jensen (1983) who suggest that mechanisms to control assets and monitor activities and staff of non-profits are essential, since these organisations do not normally possess residual assets.

### ***Resource dependency and social enterprise***

RDT is relevant to the social enterprise sector because boards on nonprofits are keen to increase the flow of resources from external constituencies. Indeed having difficulty in raising capital is a chronic problem in the social enterprise sector (Callen et al, 2009). Social enterprises are increasingly looking for innovative ways to mobilise resources and expertise beyond the social economy (O'Regan and Oster, 2005; Barker, 2003). Strategies include recruiting directors on the basis of their ability to positively influence the outside world to the advantage of their organisations (Callen et al, 2009). This approach is particularly useful to social enterprises as they tend to rely on human and social capital rather than material resources. The board therefore acts as a link to the external environment, which can facilitate access to resources. Pfeffer (1973), in his research on the governance of hospitals in the USA, discovered that boards tended to co-opt well known community leaders as a fundraising strategy. Researchers such as Iecovich (2005), Provan (1980) and Muth and Donaldson (1998) refer to this type of strategy as 'boundary spanning'. It is evident that this is consistent with the RDT approach. Barker (2002), observes that some social enterprises deliberately target specific individuals for recruitment to their boards, based on their potential to assist the social enterprise in gaining access to specific resources or technical expertise.

### *Stewardship theory and social enterprise*

There is little literature on stewardship theory in the non-profit and social enterprise sectors. Researchers such as Pfeffer and Salancik, (1978), O'Regan and Oster (2005), Miller and Millensen (2003) and Iecovich (2005) and most recently Low (2006), have written extensively on the nature of non-profit governance and how this affects their outcomes. It is clear that some social enterprises are considering the stewardship governance model. Van Slyke (2000)'s findings in his study on social enterprises involved in public sector contracting support this contention. His findings showed that the stewardship model is becoming a viable alternative for social enterprises seeking to be competitive in a hostile economic environment.

Globalisation and increased competition for resources has made it imperative for social enterprises to consider other forms of economic relations (Douglas, 1994; Palmaas, 2002). In addition, dwindling public and philanthropic support has exposed weaknesses in institutional forms of traditional social enterprises in terms of their capacity to acquire additional resources (Etchart and Davis, 2003). Low (2006) argues that such economic developments may force social enterprises to move from democratic to stewardship models of governance in order to attract the investments essential for their growth. In support of this view, Cornforth (1988) stresses that the social or democratic type of ownership is not attractive to venture capitalists. Given that social enterprises are hybrids, pursuing both commercial and social objectives, their boards and management need to have the autonomy necessary to operate and generate value for the organisation and the communities it serves.

There is evidence that contemporary social enterprise governance appears to be drifting towards a stewardship model because of the complexities of trading associated with democratic governance models. (Low, 2006; Dart, 2004). Although the traditional democratic governance structures of social enterprises are still relevant within the social economy, several researchers such as Batra, (1996); Etchart and Davis (2003), Barker (2003), Ridley-Duff (2002b) and influential support organisations in the social economy such as Social Enterprise London (SEL, 2001) have questioned their effectiveness given the current economic competitive environment facing social enterprises. They argue that organisations with

independent, predominantly voluntary boards are incapable of managing their commercial activities effectively and transparently, hence the increasing interest in the stewardship model of governance. In addition, as more opportunities for social enterprises emerge, particularly in public service delivery, they are likely to engage more with external stakeholders including suppliers, investors and the community (Lewis et al, 2004; Low, 2006; Salamon and Anheier, 1996). These developments and views strongly suggest a multi-disciplinary and more inclusive approach to management and decision making for social enterprise so that they can exploit opportunities as they arise (OECD, 1999a; Batra, 1996).

Nevertheless, researchers and academics urge caution in this drift towards the stewardship model. For example, Spear et al (2007) and Low (2006), argue that the expansion of social enterprises' thematic activities inevitably raises concerns about their ability to manage entrepreneurial activities without compromising their social ethos.

## **METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION**

Being a relatively new concept social enterprise is under researched in the UK and indeed the world over (BRASS, 2006). Consequently a lot of literature on this concept is largely in the grey form. Where it exists, it is largely fragmented. Salamon (1994) concurs by saying that by their nature, non-profits are quite diverse and this further exacerbates their documentation and analysis. Social enterprises in South Yorkshire exist within a formal and informal structure, influenced by both internal and external factors. Researching social enterprise in this region was a particularly complex undertaking given lack of published information on the sector. It was therefore crucial to employ a robust methodology to gain a deeper understanding of the social enterprise concept and how it continues to evolve.

The investigation used an in-depth case study approach, a methodology which is increasingly gaining prominence in social sciences despite not being listed in major research texts (Tellis, 1997). The increased use of this method has resulted in an extensive body of knowledge dedicated to its development and refinement (Kohn,

1997; Yin , 2003; Tellis, 1997; Stake, 1995). Kohn (1997) in particular argues that the use of the case study research method is gaining ascendancy because of the shortcomings of other data collection methods in providing answers to important questions researchers are asking parallel investigation on social enterprise support organisations within the study area was undertaken. This method provided an opportunity for the researcher to analyse different stakeholders within the target population and to strengthen conclusions from the data collected through triangulation (Webb et al, 1996, Stake 1995).

Due to the diversity in types and thematic activities of social enterprises, a multiple case study approach was considered as the most ideal in this investigation. This approach allowed the researcher to explore new areas and themes where very little theory was available to explain a phenomenon (Kohn, 1997). Towill (2006) notes that the use of a multi-method approach also makes it easier for a researcher to achieve validity by triangulating different sources of evidence and theory. The case study analysis involved a comparative analysis of four (4) case studies, as shown below in Table 2.

**Table 2: Cases under investigation**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Thematic Activity</b>	<b>Type of legal structure</b>
The Trainer	Provision of basic education and training	Share capital (CLS)
The Landscaper	Environmental management & consultancy	Share capital (CLS)
The Cafe	Environmental preservation and renewable energy	Limited by Guarantee (CLG)
The Community Champion	Provision of non-accredited skills training	Limited by Guarantee (CLG)

Selecting case studies for scrutiny has always generated debate among researchers. The selection process often raises issues of internal and external validity (Kohn, 1997). There is consensus however that case study based research is different from

sampling research (Tellis, 1997). The process of case study selection needs to be carried out in a way that maximises learning. Therefore the selection of case studies for this investigation was based on the need to illustrate the diversity, representativeness, nature and character of the social enterprises under scrutiny (Pharaoh et al, 2004). For the purpose of this investigation, social enterprises operating across the South Yorkshire region comprised the accessible population. Despite evidence of some mapping exercises having taken place in the subregion, the number of social enterprises operating in South Yorkshire has been difficult to ascertain (DTI, 2003). However based on current knowledge, experience and extrapolation of figures from information held by sub-regional social enterprise support organisations, it was possible to estimate number of social enterprises in the region. This number was put at no more than 400 social enterprises at various stages of development. The researchers used their knowledge and contacts in key social enterprise support organisations across the region to identify suitable cases for scrutiny.

Four (4) case studies were selected and given fictitious names to anonymise them. Two had CLG legal structures (The Cafe and the Community Champion) and the remainder (The Landscaper and The Trainer), with CLS legal structures.

Social enterprises with IPS cooperative legal structures were not considered despite this being a common structure for social economy organisations. A large body of knowledge already exists on this type of legal structure, whose origins can be traced back to the early nineteenth century. Social enterprises with CLG and CLS legal status is an area requiring further investigation to understand the development and operations of social enterprises (Low, 2006;Barker,2003). Two examples of social enterprises structured as company limited by shares were selected from Sheffield. The reason for this is that at the time of the research, such structures were only available in Sheffield. It is important to note that during this period the Community Interest Company (CIC), which has a share capital variant, had just been unveiled and no social enterprises within the survey sample had adopted it. The share capital model under analysis in this study preceded the CIC and was developed and pioneered in Sheffield as explained in preceding sections of this paper. A semi-structured interview guide attached as Appendix 1 was used to collect relevant data from the selected

cases. The key informants selected and interviewed were the founders of the social enterprises and senior managers.

### **Analysis of case study qualitative data**

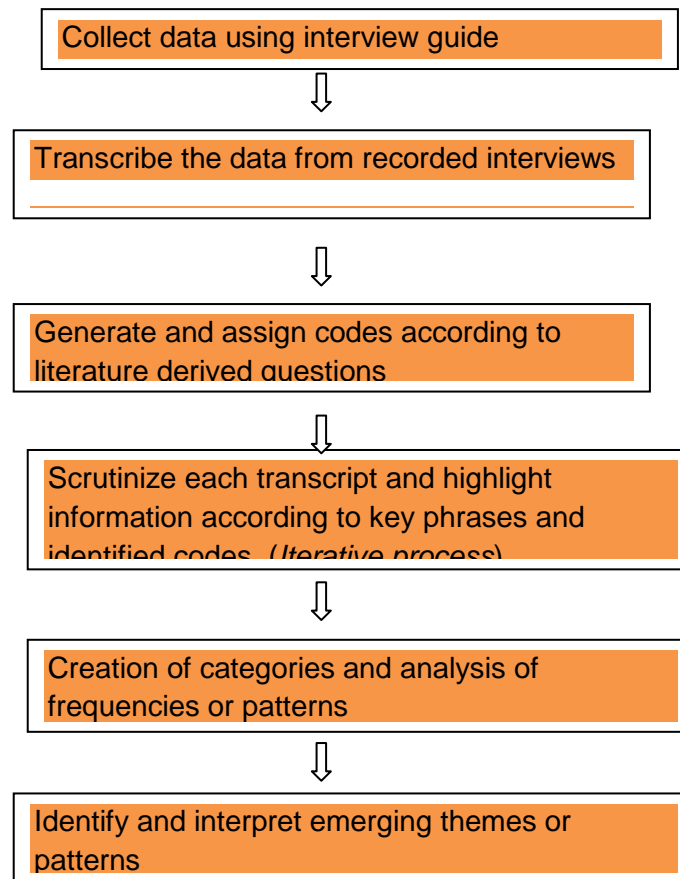
The data collected from interviews of key informants was recorded, transcribed and manually analysed through an inductive process of replication, which enabled the researcher to critically analyse each case study and manually identify the emerging themes. This method of textual data analysis is consistent with the work of researchers such as Kohn (1997), Miles and Huberman (1994), Bryman and Bell (2003), Yin (2003), Straus and Corbin, (2008), Cassell and Symon (2004) and Basit (2003), amongst others. Comparisons were then made to ascertain if there was a similar pattern across all four case studies that could be generalised, a method recommended by Kohn (1997) and Miles and Huberman (1994). While the researchers were aware that the use of computer aided qualitative data analysis software CAQADS can make analysis of qualitative data more efficient, a manual approach, though time consuming was deemed more appropriate. For example, trials using NUD.IST showed that it was difficult to accurately identify emerging themes because respondents used different terms to explain the same issue (Catterall and MacLaran ,1997)

Codes were then generated and assigned to key words and phrases relevant to the research question. This made it possible to identify relevant information or construct themes relevant to a specific research question (Bryman and Bell, 2003 ;Agar, 1980). Each transcript was then examined highlighting any words, sentences, illuminative quotes or phrases that related to a specific theme, such as ‘type of legal structure’ . Further analysis of these highlighted excerpts revealed additional or sub themes, thereby enabling the researcher to organise the data into coherent categories that were interlinked (Agar, 1980; Taylor-Powell and Renner, 2003). This method therefore facilitated cross case analysis by ‘surfacing common themes and directional processes’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994 p.69), a process that Tesch (1990) describes as data distillation. The frequency of occurrence of each phrase, word or sentence was recorded under each case study’s transcript. When these frequencies were compiled at the end of the analysis, they revealed a pattern of themes or an anatomic framework of



emerging data (Kaplan, 1964; Basit, 2003; Chen and Meindl, 1991). The data analysis process used is shown in figure 1

**Figure1. Analysis of data**



## **RESULTS AND KEY FINDINGS**

Analysis of the composition of the board of directors and the functions of the boards of the cases under investigation painted an intriguing picture.

### **Board structure and composition of CLG case studies**

Focussing on the governance of The Cafe and The Community Champion, results show that their boards consist entirely of unpaid volunteers. These volunteers sitting on the board also include operational management staff. The respondent from The Community champion said '*we are all volunteers; we don't want to get anything out of this...I mean...financially. We are here to help the community*'. These volunteers

are therefore motivated by philanthropic rather than economic considerations in their involvement in the governance of these social enterprises. The individuals on the boards of these organisations have not been selected on the strength of the specific skills or knowledge that they bring to the organisation, but rather because of their passion for the community and its well being. The respondent from The Cafe made this clear when he said, *'we [the directors] could be doing other financially rewarding things in our life....we want to help the community and this is what brought us together'*.

### **Board structure and composition of CLS case studies**

The results show that social enterprises with CLS legal structures have an added dimension to their boards of directors. In addition to typical for-profit shareholders, voluntary organisations and their respective lead entrepreneur hold some shares. In this case, there is a distinct move from traditional forms of participative and democratic management principles as social entrepreneurs take the lead and provide hands-on management of the social enterprise. One of the social enterprises had a representative of a funder on its board. As the Landscaper informant said, *'Of course having a funder on the board is good thing...perhaps they will give us more money when they can see how well we are doing'*. The development of such multi-stakeholder boards in social enterprises reveals the need for innovation in order to meet the challenges of globalisation and other external influences in particular the need to adapt and widen sources of expertise, a significant feature of modern firms .

The presence of voluntary boards of directors in the governance of share capital social enterprises also raises eyebrows. Closer scrutiny of these organisations' memoranda and articles of association revealed that this voluntary board of directors, in essence, hold shares that do not benefit from capital gain, but serve the purpose of a social lock. This social lock, ensures that the organisation does not compromise the achievement of its social aims. This vital purpose was confirmed by the respondent from The Trainer, who ,in reference to these board members, remarked *'they vote on decisions pertaining to the overall direction of the company... They ensure that social ethos is maintained and that the company remains a social enterprise'*.

## **Board functions**

### ***CLG Board Functions***

For cases with CLG legal status their boards demonstrate democratic governance principles, associated with social enterprise, such as social ownership and participation of community members in the running of the organisation. In addition to setting the strategic direction of the organisation and ratifying decisions, the boards of directors of The Cafe and The Community Champion also control and direct the organisations' day to day activities. These activities, particularly monitoring and control of activities are consistent with the Agency theory. In this case the boards are agents of their stakeholders

For example, the respondent from The Community Champion remarked, *'the board works closely with the manager and operational staff...we monitor everything because as I have said, our activities are funded and we have to be accountable to funders'*. Regarding the function of its board, the respondent from The Cafe said *'everything is done democratically, but it is our duty to ensure that the staff are doing their duties, because we are accountable to the community and funders'*. These responses show that, although not usually possessing residual assets, social enterprises do need to protect the assets they have from abuse.

The boards' functions, however, appear to be incongruent with the democratic governance models associated with social enterprise. This type of governance emphasises values of participation and employee involvement in the governance of the social enterprise. However, it appears to be presenting operational problems, typified by The Community Champion. By closely controlling the activities of managers as well as making and ratifying decisions, the board is effectively implementing its own decisions, a situation the organisation itself acknowledges. *'We need a management team....we don't find time to sit back and try to look forward to find our direction...it's an area we badly miss out on'*. These statements reveal that executive and governance roles in social enterprise governance models are not clearly delineated and therefore can create dysfunction.

Curiously, senior management positions in both organisations were unpaid and their respective boards stated that they expected volunteers to fill these posts. The chief executive of The Cafe showed the characteristics of a volunteer in the true sense of the word when he said *'I am the manager, but volunteer manager really, but also a director...I am employed elsewhere and I come here a couple of days per week'*. Similarly, the manager of The Community Champion runs a commercial organisation of his own and volunteers his time, one day per week, to the social enterprise. He said, *'My background is commercial, I come out of business and volunteer my services, but charities and charitable businesses are all new to me'*. Although these individuals are part of the boards of their respective organisations, it does not appear that their commercial expertise is being exploited for the benefit of the organisation.

While The Cafe and The Community Champion do not have any external share holders whom they have to satisfy financially, they have stakeholders such as the community members who vote and appoint directors onto the board. The duties of these boards are largely fiduciary i.e. holding the organisation and its assets in trust. This is a characteristic of democratic governance models associated with the non-profit sector. Although the boards of The Community Champion and The Cafe perform a strategic role, this is severely limited by lack of an enterprise culture and failure to clearly separate the roles of the board and executives.

### **CLS Board function**

The functions and roles of the board of directors of the enterprises with CLS legal status differ from those discussed above. Unlike those with CLG legal status, there is a clear attempt by the board to provide autonomy for senior managers to work in the best interests of the organisation. Perhaps this is because of the extended stakeholder interest arising from their legal structure and the need to take into account views and inputs from those who have vested interests in the organisation. As the respondent from The Trainer said, *'We have a good board... they let us do the work. We go to them for advice on issues affecting the organisation... the senior managers here ...we let them get on with it'*. The respondent from The Landscaper also said, *'the board members are similar to what they would be in a private company....it's a practical choice rather than a social choice... They [the board] are responsible for strategic*

*issues including ... help with key decisions*'. In both cases the lead entrepreneurs perform the CEO role and are also central in the decision making process of the board as they are part of it. They are mandated to make operational decisions and their expertise is recognised by their respective boards, a point made by a respondent from The Landscaper when he said *'I still make the day to day decisions and go to them [the board] for legal and financial advice*'. This response highlights the role of the board as adviser and strategy formulator i.e. making key decisions and providing the necessary direction and strategic focus required for the organisation to achieve its objectives.

The two CLS organisations had also had mechanisms to co-opt individuals or funders onto their boards for the benefit of their organisations. This resonates with the resource dependency theory . The Trainer managed to attract three social enterprises onto its board, two of which actually bought dividend bearing shares valued at £2500 each, while The Landscaper was in the process of exploring potential voluntary organisations that might be so co-opted. When asked to elaborate further on the purchase of shares by social enterprises, the respondent from The Trainer said, *'yes, they [the social enterprises] also want to grow their capital...and it's good for us that we can raise finance this way, without seeking a loan*'. He explained further *'they sit on the board and can vote*'. The Landscaper made some concessions to allow one of its funders, the South Yorkshire Key Fund for social economy, to be included on the board. This funder had expressed a commitment, not only to sit on the board, but also to purchase dividend bearing shares. This development shows us that even funders and Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) are now seriously considering their financial survival. The funder's expectations however were clearly stated in their share agreement communication with the social enterprise:

*'The shares that the Key fund will take will be preference shares that provide a return on interest of 6%.....the interest of this share will be paid in priority to any declared dividend*' (South Yorkshire Key Fund, 2004).

Although the dividend rate of return of 6% is quite low compared to commercial rates, it nonetheless shows that support organisations are now more interested in growing

their capital. These are significant developments in the social economy. By co-opting a funder onto the board, the Landscaper was establishing links with external organisations and ensuring access to financial resources essential for its survival. This is a characteristic of the RDT approach . It is important to note that this participation of the funder in the governance of the organisation was facilitated by a share capital legal structure. It would not have been possible for individuals or organisations such as funders to invest in organisations with CLG legal status and expect financial benefits through capital growth since CLG has '*no concept of sharing profits with those who are involved in it*'.

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper argues that democratic governance models of social enterprise are still relevant in the social economy as they conform to the philanthropic ideology underpinning the concept of social enterprise, with a clear desire to protect assets of the organisation on behalf of the community and an aversion to trading. However this also results in a multiplicity of functional problems and organisations with such models struggle to compete in the market for resources and expertise. This paper has shown however that innovation in governance models has become an important prerequisite for success in competitive markets. In this instance, moving towards for-profit stewardship models that are driven by share capital legal structures has opened up opportunities that traditional social economy organisations cannot exploit. Enterprises with stewardship governance models empower individuals in their organisations. The role of the board is restricted to activities such as strategy formulation, advising and recruitment, leaving top management to address operational issues. These are key features of the stewardship approach to governance which is a new trajectory that the social enterprise sector is exploring.

The emergence of stewardship governance models of social enterprise reflects their need to adapt to the pressures of the external economic environment to remain viable. Opting for such governance models therefore implies acknowledgement of the weaknesses of democratic models of governance as well as a willingness to take risk. The stewardship model, though untested, provides social enterprises with the flexibility to operate in increasingly competitive environments

The authors acknowledge the need for further research to explore the stewardship governance model for social enterprise as this is a dramatic shift from the ideology underpinning the concept. It is therefore important to note that the economic environment of non-profits is complex and heterogeneous compared to that of the commercial sector.

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