



The Importance of Values for Good Governance.

A report of a research study conducted by Leeds Beckett University and the Worshipful Company of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators, the City of London Livery Company for Governance Professionals.

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Executive Summary

Much of the debate surrounding corporate governance practice has centred on addressing practical issues such as corporate fraud, the abuse of managerial power and social irresponsibility. In essence, the debate has been reactive and about how to solve these perceived problems in corporate practice. However, corporate governance codes that promote only a compliance agenda are insufficient to address these shortcomings alone. Values are often implicit in how leaders and managers make decisions but such values affirm how life proceeds in any organisation and they influence governance – for good or for ill. Good governance should be ‘lived and breathed’ and demonstrate how it links to company values. The enactment of values within an organisation will promote a culture of good governance.

A research project jointly funded by the Worshipful Company of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators (WCCSA) and Leeds Beckett University (LBU) commenced in June 2023 and focused on the importance of organisational values for governance. Its aims were to: consider how organisations in different sectors determine, embed and review their stated values; and understand whether those values are relevant in a post-Covid world of hybrid working.

13 organisations of varying sizes and from different sectors and geographical locations within the UK participated in the study. These included: financial services; education; city council; housing and social care; and logistics. 40 interviews were conducted with the company secretary or equivalent and other postholders within the organisations. Analysis of the data from these interviews led to the identification of 17 themes that related to the aims of the study. These themes fell broadly into three categories: communication; behaviours; and context.

Communication involved: specific values; visibility; codes of conduct or statements of behaviour; cascading values; strategies; and annual reports. Behaviours involved: leadership; governance; Human Resource Management working practices; board meetings; challenging failure; and change management. Finally, the context included: history; risk; the Covid pandemic; generational differences; and raised awareness/Action Research. The findings under these three categories are presented and discussed in this report.

The study highlighted the challenge and complexity of ensuring the effective embedding and enactment of organisational values. It points to those approaches and practices that can assist with and support that process across the organisation. These are underpinned by the existing literature on the topic as well as the findings of this study. It is hoped that this information will motivate organisations to revisit and review their approach to values to assess whether they are enhancing the potential for effective embedding and enactment of their values so that they are alive and embodied across the organisation and in all its working practices.

1. Introduction

This research study focused on how organisational values are related to good governance through an exploration of how values are espoused and enacted across a range of organisations. Much has been written about organisational culture and the role of values. As Sullivan et al. (2001) put it, “values help the organisation to engage the hearts and minds of employees in pursuit of the corporate goals” (p.247). Previous research has drawn out various effects of values within an organisation. Dearlove and Coomber (1999) reported that values-led companies outperform others and that turnover amongst 1,000 U.S. graduates was lower when the employing company valued respect and teamwork. They describe the role of values as a way of both motivating employees and a way of evaluating actions. Other writers refer to a corporate ecosystem where there is a strong link between organisational climate and managerial values (Wallace *et al.* 1999).

Much of the debate surrounding corporate governance practice has centred on addressing practical issues such as corporate fraud, the abuse of managerial power and social irresponsibility. In essence, the debate has been reactive and about how to solve these perceived problems in corporate practice. It has been suggested that corporate governance codes that promote only a compliance agenda are insufficient to address these shortcomings alone (Financial Reporting Council 2024; Quoted Companies Alliance 2023.). The Financial Reporting Council’s code states that boards should establish company values and ensure that they are aligned with culture, purpose and strategy: an obligation on all UK listed companies. However, codes of governance in different sectors have tended to be reactive, responsive to particular issues and their currency is becoming increasingly short (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2009). In particular, values are implicit in how leaders and managers make decisions, often uncritically, but such values affirm how life proceeds in any organisation and they influence governance – for good or for ill. We believe that a more holistic approach must be taken that considers the moral values embedded within company cultures and its governance systems. Our fundamental premise is that good governance is not about adherence to codes but about our ‘way of life’. Good governance should be ‘lived and breathed’ and demonstrate how governance links to company values. Codes provide a basis for external validation of our good governance but the enactment of values within the organisation will promote a culture of good governance. This research sought to find out to what extent organisations are embracing this view of governance through effective espousal and enactment of values.

The aims of the research were as follows:

- To consider how organisations in different sectors determine, embed and review their stated values; and
- To understand whether those values are relevant in a post-Covid world of hybrid working.

To meet these aims, this report proceeds as follows. Firstly, we complete a brief literature review relating to the key concepts of corporate governance, organisational values and codes of practice. We then outline our research design based on case study and action research before presenting our findings. We then move into a critical analysis to provide an indication of what works and what needs attention to align stated values with behaviours in the changing workplace. We end with reflections on the importance of values for good governance and our conclusions.



2. Governance and Values in Organisations: A Literature Review

Values creation

The literature on good governance and values in organisations is broad and divided (De Graaf and Paanakker, 2015). However, some clear and consistent findings can be drawn out. Corporate governance and corporate values go hand-in-hand. Governance, at its fundamental level, is concerned with the oversight of the organisation, providing direction that both ensures the effective performance and the protection of interests as well as adding value to its relevant stakeholder communities (Bain and Band, 1996). It should provide effective stewardship and balance “between economic and social goals and between individual and communal goals” (The Cadbury Report, 1992). In this way, it ensures effective use and accountability of resources and equality: by, closely as possible, aligning the interests of individuals, corporations and society. Good governance manages the dialectical tension between shareholder (Sundaram and Inkpen, 2004) or stakeholder (Freeman *et al.* 2004) value creation. The latter reflects a movement that requires firms to recognise their ethical and social responsibilities, consider their place in a broader social context and transparently act as a good ‘corporate citizen’ (Letza *et al.*, 2008). This highlights both the ‘active’ role (Huse, 2007) governance mechanisms and governance actors (directors and company secretaries) play in both value and values-creating and in assurance within their day-to-day decision-making praxis (Forbes and Milliken, 1999; Yar Hamidi and Machold, 2020). Here we take a more holistic view of directors, emphasising concepts of service, collaboration, co-creation and systems-thinking: where multiple governance participants discharge their craft as ‘value-in-use’ and co-created value process. (Bettencourt *et al.*, 2014)

Three decades have passed since the landmark book by Collins and Porras (1994), ‘Built to Last’, in which they introduced the concept of core values and highlighted how organisations with clear values outperformed others. They defined core values as ‘essential and enduring tenets – a small set of general guiding principles’ (Collins and Porras 1998, p.73). They pointed out that these should not be confused with particular ‘cultural or operating practices’, nor ‘compromised for financial gain or short-term expediency’ (p.73). Sagiv and Schwartz (2007) remind us that societal culture influences organisational values directly and indirectly through its impact on members’ values and on the nature of organisational tasks. Although much of the literature is dominated by Anglo-American writers, we also draw on sources from other contexts and the findings appear to resonate. Lencioni (2002) outlined four categories of organisational values: core values which are a set of principles that form cultural cornerstones; aspirational values which the organisation currently lacks but needs; permission-to-play values which set the minimum behaviours and standards expected; and accidental values that arise spontaneously and take hold over time. Huse (2007) explored how boards can contribute to values creation, highlighting how it is important to adopt a contextual approach to understanding boards and that corporate governance and board effectiveness are concerned with accountability and who and what really

counts. Thomsen (2004) argued that values were determined by corporate governance in a broad sense emphasising three governance mechanisms: ownership structure; board composition; and stakeholder influence.

Differences between organisational actors

The impact of values has been described as differing between the various actors within an organisation: namely, leaders are important for role modelling and engaging; managers are important for embedding and reinforcing; and employees are important for empowering and reciprocating. In order for values to be internalised, leaders, managers and employees need to enact at the different levels of the organisation (Harvey *et al.* 2021). Adamoniene *et al.* (2021) note that not all values that are important to leaders are important to subordinates. They comment that it is important to determine the organisational values considered important by the leaders and determine how those values are perceived by their subordinates. Tuulik *et al.* (2016) found that gender affected an overall values perception more than position in the organisation or working experience. This echoes the work of Martins and Coetzee (2011) who found that gender, race and age had a significant effect on some of the dimensions of organisational values and that those biographical groups differed significantly in their perception of the importance of certain organisational values as well as how their organisations enacted them. This is supported also by research conducted by the UK Institute of Leadership and Management (2020) which found a significant gulf between organisational values of UK businesses and those of their workers. They also reported differences between genders, age and sectors. The study reported that up to 70% of personal values held by staff were not the same as those presented by employers. For example, work life balance is highly rated by millennials and Gen Z but did not feature in those presented by organizations.

During the Covid Pandemic, a balance between home and work was enabled by policies of 'Working from Home' which created an alignment with personal values and also enhanced productivity and creativity (George *et al.* 2022). The notion of balance has continued since the pandemic eased with the emergence of the practice of 'hybrid working' allowing staff to work more flexibly from home with enhancement to subjective feelings of wellbeing (Tao *et al.* 2023). The unfolding of such dynamics during and after the pandemic, in addition to geo-political and economic disruption, gives prominence to how the guiding principles of organisation values can be reconciled with the preferences of different stakeholders and this falls to the work of leaders. Miller and Huichun (2003) suggest that the individual values of employees are rarely uniformly shared and congruence with the organisation's espoused values is at best problematic. Murphy and Mackenzie Davey (2006) showed that political considerations, including powerful unofficial cultural and subcultural norms, will override the impact of officially espoused but unembedded values. Cennamo and Gardner (2008) found that where individual and organisational values showed a poor fit there was reduced job satisfaction and organisational commitment with increased turnover across all age groups.

Leadership

Research by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2022) points to leadership that needs to be responsible and values-based. The particular importance of leaders and boards has been brought forward in the literature. Thomsen (2004) argued that in smaller companies, founder-owners often play a pivotal role in shaping corporate value systems that influence corporations for years to come whilst in larger companies that separate ownership and control, managers and boards come to play a powerful role. However, in both cases repeated interaction with customers, employees and other stakeholders shapes corporate values by way of corporate reputation and culture. The City Values Forum (2020) was set up on behalf of the Lord Mayor of the City of London and had three aims: research in the financial and business sector; development and provision of free access to best practice guidance and resources to support boards, managers and individuals to embed the highest standards; and the promotion and dissemination of best practice with a forum in which to exchange views. Their findings indicate that boards who govern well take on a systemic and holistic approach. They highlighted the crucial role played by leaders and how purpose and values should embrace both strategy and behaviour so that companies are performance-driven but values-led. Ghosh and Shejwal (2006) found that perceived organisational values and leadership styles are related. Employees scored high on a participative style of leadership if they perceived organisations to be operated by human values.

Change management

The impact of values on organisational change has also been reported in the literature. Sullivan *et al.* (2001) reported that in embarking on an organisational change programme, the most powerful forces are the individual and organisational values and by aligning the values of the people in the organisation and those of the organisation itself, rapid change can be brought about. Branson (2008) referred to the failure of organisational change due to the failure to attend to values alignment. Change needs deliberate clarification of values and then support for values alignment. This is not always successful and Speculand and Chaudhary (2008) describe how, more often than not, there is a phenomenal gap between identifying organisational values and actually living them. Cunningham *et al.* (2011) highlighted the importance of a 'safe' culture for lapses to be discussed. In essence, the literature supports the view that a favourable organisational culture, founded on the values of employees and organisational leaders, must be created to achieve goals, innovate and maintain a well-functioning organisation (Adamoniene *et al.* 2021).

Values-conflict

De Graff and Paanaker (2015) describe how performance values such as efficiency and effectiveness most frequently collide with procedural values such as lawfulness and transparency in procedure. They argue that incommensurability, particularly between procedural and performance values, is inherent to values-conflict in public governance.

Public administrators are often faced with making difficult choices between incompatible and incommensurable values and these value conflicts in governance take many forms and exist at the different levels of individual, governmental and policy formulation. They conclude that public actors executing policy most often perceive values-conflict rather than those formulating policy. Adamoniene *et al.* (2021) highlight that there is a great deal of research on the differences in values of the private and business sectors but less research on differences within the public sector where different types of public organisations have different organisational values. The literature emphasises the importance of the clear articulation of values through a number of organisational structures and supports. There is not a 'one size fits all' and organisations need to consider their own needs and context (Cunningham *et al.* 2011). They also need to consider the different levels of the organisation and how the perception of values differs between strata within the organisation.

Bourne and Jenkins (2013) point to the dynamic nature of values in organisations, which can take different forms beyond espousal to include: those which are shared within and between different group; those which people attribute to the organisation whether espoused or not; and those values which are deemed more desirable by different people at work. The interplay between differing forms can create tensions and problems but also opportunities for change over time. Above all, as the literature identifies, governing culture through values represents both a risk and an opportunity and the tone set by leaders of organisations is crucial as is their understanding of how the organisational values are perceived by their employees (The City Values Forum 2020). Only then can genuine efforts be directed at bridging the potentially significant gap between espoused and enacted values. In particular, both during the years of the Covid Pandemic and since, when significant disruptions have occurred, attention to the working of the impact on values and norms at all levels needs an ongoing consideration based on cycles of learning, reflection and critique (Choflet *et al.* 2021; Amah and Ogah 2023).

3. Methodology and Design

Our approach to the aims set above is based on a collaboration between The Worshipful Company of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators and Leeds Beckett University. Given the problems identified relating to how values featured in organisations during times of significant disturbance, we proposed to inform the design of the project with the key ideas of Action Research (AR). As argued by McNiff (2017), AR is problem-oriented and concerned with improving understanding. Understanding in AR is gained by taking actions to reveal data and it is common to follow a cyclical process that covers stages of diagnosis, planning, action, reviewing, learning/evaluation and replanning. This allows the project to proceed and change as the cycle is repeated (Kemmis and McTaggart 2000). Of particular value in AR is the potential for ideas for theory and practice to emerge as cycles unfold. AR also allows a variety of data collection methods to be used.

In our project, diagnosis and planning was completed by a group of experienced professionals and academics. This resulted in the formation of a steering group (Appendix 2) and the setting of initial questions for data gathering (Appendix 3). Working with a researcher, a two-stage process was designed to approach organisations. This involved:

- a. Online interviews with a senior leader – a company secretary or equivalent - to identify locations of good practice in the enactment of declared values
- b. Follow up interviews with other postholders in the location of practice.

As data was collected, it was analysed to reveal key themes and details relating to the project (Braun and Clarke 2006). The organisations we worked with are listed below:

Organisation	Sector
1	Financial
2	Public - local authority
3	Financial
4	Public - education
5	Public - education
6	Financial
7	Housing
8	Logistics
9	Financial
10	Housing and social care
11	Insurance

12	Financial
13	Public - education

We report on the findings in the following chapter.



4. Findings

A thematic analysis has been conducted on the 40 interviews that took place across the 13 organisations that participated in this study. Thematic analysis involves line-by-line analysis of the interview data to identify specific themes that emerge. 17 themes were identified and these fall broadly into three categories: communication; behaviours; and context.

Communication

4.1 Values: a variety of values were reported by interviewees and they included one word values, short phrases and, in one case, long sentences. Inevitably, the long sentences proved harder to recall and the short phrases were reported to be positively 'edgier' and more focused. Financial sector organisations reported the following values: responsible finance; customer first, integrity, agility; say it straight, get it done, push for better. One of the financial organisations used the term 'shared beliefs' in place of values and another used 'strategic drivers'. The city council reported values of teamwork, open and honest, value for money, diversity and equality, and community engagement. The education sector organisations included: dignity and care, solidarity and service, honesty and integrity, respect and inclusivity, knowledge and excellence, collaboration and improving educational outcomes. The logistics company values comprised: make a living; give to charity; and leave a legacy. They also recounted the importance of trust and empowerment. Their subordinate companies did not have stated values but reported that, if they did so, they would be fairness, engagement, safety, openness and inclusivity. It was an educational sector organisation that had long sentences for each of their values and interviewees were unable to recall them all individually. The educational sector organisation that had two-word values resulting in ten words for five values also had difficulty in reciting them from memory. The housing and social care organisations included: ambitious, kind, responsible, positive, empowered and compassionate. Unsurprisingly, the shorter worded values were more consciously recalled and so appeared more prominent than values that were framed in long sentences.

"The values are the glue between the lines".

"I think that the values are just what we do. So, rather than just having to call them out all the time, they feel like they're part of our DNA".

4.2 Visibility: some of the organisations clearly displayed their values on walls or, in one case, on the reverse of their staff ID cards. Other sources were staff briefings, newsletters and away days. Organisations included their values on their websites for external reference and prominently on their intranet where, in some cases, more detailed explanations of how to deliver the values could be found. Some interviewees were more sceptical about physical visibility of values preferring to emphasise that they should be 'lived and breathed'.

“One thing is the values are not up on all the walls. Perhaps we are past that as that can be a less mature stage”.

“I want it to be lived and breathed rather than painted on walls”.

“In the Head Office atrium, the whole of one side has the values printed as big as my house”.

4.3 Code of conduct and statement of behaviours: some of the organisations codified their values in a specific document such as a code of conduct or a statement of behaviours. In several of the organisations, emphasis was placed on the importance of clearly stipulating behaviours that delivered the values. This was seen as an important way of ensuring values were translated into action and could be evaluated and this will be referred to again in a consideration of working practices below.

“We unpack the values with a series of behaviours”.

“We distil the behaviours we wish to see under each value”.

“The values are what the behaviours are and are not”.

“It’s about clarity: what do I have to deliver and what are those measures”.

“We have a new set of behaviours called the ‘customer first behaviours’ that incentivise people to come together and deliver those behaviours. Underneath that we have three sets of behaviours we want people to display. I am talking about behaviours rather than values but that is because it is about the behaviours we value and want people to have”.

4.4 Cascading of values: when asked to nominate colleagues for second tier interviews, company secretaries and equivalents pointed to senior managers or board members rather than subordinate colleagues nearer the front-line of the organisation. Further attempts were made to secure interviews with front-line staff but this was not achieved. Two of the organisations did candidly acknowledge that front-line colleagues may not be as clear on the espousal or enactment of the organisational values as senior managers.

“It does cascade, it has to cascade”.

“Within the schools who are a step removed from the trust it may be that the values become diluted because of the day to day business and the hustle and bustle of the school. It may not be something they think of when faced with ‘you’ve got to do this, you’ve got to do that’. It may not be the first thing on their minds so perhaps the values enactment could be strengthened at school level”.

“The board gets to make decisions before the front-line sees what’s coming. The challenge is trying to get down the levels of management as quickly as you can so the messages land”.

4.5 Strategy: organisations reported the importance of their values featuring in their strategies and for some it was a case of their strategies being directly ‘values-driven’. Some organisations reported explicitly referring to their values in strategic decision-making.

“We had a strategic refresh and it was all about the purpose, the strategic drivers and culture and the behaviours. It was all divided up into that values-led purpose”.

“They started with the main strategy which had the values in it and then the other strategies that come from it link back to the values. The values are kept in mind for developing all the separate strategies”.

“What are the aims of those strategies in relation to the values and setting specific actions”.

“The strategy is reviewed annually. It’s a corporate 3 or 5 year strategy, which is reviewed by the chief executive with the executive team and the board in consultation with staff. We look at the main projects that are part of the strategy. We perhaps focus on the projects issue and not are these still the right values. Maybe we need to bring that into the annual review. Do we need to think about is there something missing. We could use the values as part of a new conversation about where we want to get to and addressing behavioural factors within the organisation”.

“It’s in the strategy so it starts from a strategic perspective”.

“There’s definitely a loop in terms of setting the strategy, cascading down the strategy including the values. How is all that acted on and delivered across the organisation and the loop comes back up in the reporting. Ultimately to the boards”.

“There is a trust strategic plan that is crafted by the executive team but ultimately it’s the trust board that decides. It is driven by the trust vision and values in order to identify priorities in order to deliver that vision”.

4.6 Annual Report: organisations reported that values did feature within their annual reports and this was viewed as important in reviewing performance and progress as well as in communication with stakeholders.

“The CEO also produces an annual report to stakeholders and that does talk about the trust’s vision and values”.

“Most processes are reviewed annually. The values would be used as a lens to look through the policies and practices. The most recent annual report touched on them but the next report will be underpinned by them. It will be about how everything we’ve done ties back to these things”.

“We do a lot of things around values in the director’s report for remuneration which is part of the annual report for accounts”.

Behaviours

4.7 Governance: participants reported that the enactment of their values led to good governance rather than the other way around and that good governance was holistic. Values were important in improving and achieving good governance.

“Crucially what has helped with good governance is openness and transparency. That has a strong tie across to good governance. Values are integral to good governance from our perspective”.

“Our values run through everything we do, like a stick of rock”.

“We don’t see governance as a bolt-on. It’s about how we have a governance process that aligns with our values and helps us consistently achieve them”.

“Governance and values are absolutely inextricably linked. If you don’t live your values, which should be the core purpose of your business, expect to be over-governed”.

“Generally working to your values and good governance go hand in hand. Good governance supports the values rather than the other way round”.

“Values are about doing the right thing and governance is about doing the right thing”.

“We have a clear governance and reporting structure making sure that information travels up from operations to board level and down again as it needs to. Having a good culture where people can collaborate and have these values it helps to embed good governance.

“There is one level of the organisation where the link between values and good governance could be strengthened and that is at school operating level with their advisory boards. Because schools are busy they concentrate on that and the detail should be lifted up to a strategic level and concentrate more on the vision and values but I don’t think that is always the case at that level of governance”.

“The governance has an important role to play. We are trying to assist the cultural shift we are going through by using the formal papers as a way of ensuring that we are focused on the values, the purpose and the behaviours”.

4.8 Human Resources (HR) working practices: HR working practices were cited as being particularly important vehicles for embedding values within the organisations. Linking their values to staff appraisal and performance management was seen by some organisations as an important process for embedding their values and ensuring that they were enacted in individual practices. It also ensured accountability for the enactment when staff at all levels were required to report on their achievement of the values across the reporting period. Recruitment was also seen by some organisations as a particularly important process in which to refer to the values to ensure that employees’ and the organisational values were aligned: achieving a ‘good fit’. Several of the organisations linked their values to questions in their regular staff surveys to monitor how the organisation was living up to its values in terms of reported staff

experiences. One organisation had a committee called the ‘employee voice’, which provided a forum for employees to report on how managers lived up to the organisation’s espoused values. These practices allowed for communication on values to move upwards from the bottom to the top of the organisation as well as the reverse.

“Half of the appraisal is about how you worked to the values”.

“Another example is the staff recognition scheme where one of the awards is about living the values. So, staff are rewarded for demonstrating the values and promoting that so that people see the importance of values and are prepared to embrace them and practise them”.

“The values and how you act are now 50% of your performance rating in your role”.

“We also have a values-based recognition scheme. That’s called ‘Appreciate’ where we have peer to peer recognition of the demonstration of the values”.

“Values are included in recruitment. A recent person was recruited and the selectors were very focused on the values. The recent recruitment of the chair elect involved the values in their applications”.

“We do a 360 appraisal for the executive team and management and we ask staff, colleagues and board members to say how someone has contributed to those values and whether they are acting in accordance with the values”.

4.9 Board Meetings: some organisations reported that they explicitly considered their values in relation to board discussions whilst others felt their consideration was more implicit. Two organisations ensured values were considered regularly by the board by creating a template for board papers that specified the values in the headings for agenda items. Explicit consideration of the values by the board appears to strengthen the overall prominence and profile of the values.

“A section in the board papers covers values: particularly around diversity and equality and value for money”.

“The drivers, behaviours and values are discussed at board level. As decisions are taken that would cascade down through the organisation and inform policies”.

“As the board’s decision-making guides what we do, it is important that those values are in the papers. That then flows down and we have a nice eco-system”.

“As the chair of the board everything I do is based on the values”.

“We don’t use them in board decisions and papers per se. We look at impact on things like sustainability and risk and don’t use the values for that. I hope the values would be evident in our thinking. Getting the board specifically talking about it more would be good. Also, including it as part of the board pack with a question about values”.

“When papers are taken to the board and we are looking at what is being delivered we ask how that is affecting staff, customers and the business and values are a part of that”.

discussion. There is that direct link there. The values formulate part of the decision making. It is heavily linked there”.

4.10 Challenging Failure: several of the organisations reported specific examples of how they tackled failures in meeting the organisation’s values and this was seen as very important to them in maintaining the authenticity of their espoused values. In one case a governor was challenged more than once about his failure to enact the organisation’s values and it resulted in his resignation due to the lack of ‘fit’ between his behaviours and the organisation’s espoused values. A building society reported how they ‘celebrated’ failure rather than challenged it so that they could encourage staff to innovate and not be afraid of failure but actively learn from things that didn’t work. The challenging of failure represents the opportunity for an upwards movement on values from bottom to top.

“The values are on the back of each staff pass so one can hold that card up as a very physical manifestation of the challenge to keep the values. Where the values are not being manifested there is a ‘freedom to speak up guardian’. Also, the staff networks are really good at holding managers to account in terms of the values and whether they are always acting in line with the values”.

“where the behaviour is not right, x is very willing to call it out instantly and his team are doing that”.

“They called it out in a really sensible, constructive way, they fixed it, moved on and everyone is in a better place”.

“we are trying to create a safe space for people to call out things”.

“The executive and management teams try to develop psychological safety where people are able to challenge each other and having the values central is a good way of doing that with people. It’s good if people have permission to say that doesn’t work with our values. It’s easier for people to say that doesn’t align with what we’ve agreed and we’ve agreed those values. They do use them for challenging behaviour”.

“If you’re not demonstrating the values people feel confident about pointing out that that’s not the way we go about things here”.

4.11 Leadership: organisations where the top leader demonstrated a passion for the values appeared to have embraced those values across the organisation and its processes more clearly. Leaders were reported as being particularly important in translating the values into practice and cultivating a values-driven approach. In some cases, a change at the top of the organisation had resulted in a change to the vision and values and this was reported as having been beneficial.

“To affect that culture you have to give it a really clear purpose and leadership”.

“The key thing is it has been led from the top. That is absolutely crucial”.

“it’s embodied in the behaviour of leaders”.

“you naturally personify your leadership, you naturally follow with the behaviours you’re setting”.

“Where the exco are exhibiting and leading, you see the teams start to get comfort and confidence to do that”.

“How are we demonstrating the values is a key part for us as leaders. If we are living those values and demonstrating them regularly then other people will be looking to us to see that that is happening”.

4.12 Change management: some organisations cited how they had specifically used one or more of their values to address a negative aspect of their culture. In one organisation they consciously chose ‘positivity’ as one of their values to move people on from a default position of being negative and three years on they felt this had worked really well. In a second, they had changed their values to become ‘edgier and more commercially focused’ which they felt had positively sharpened the culture.

“We had a new CEO join a year ago and she recognised things needed to change and to double down on what we do and how we do it. The leadership went away for 3 days and were asked what x should stand for and what it should do in order to set the purpose”.

“Culture takes time to embed but equally at times if there is a gorilla you move it”.

Context

4.13 History: a number of the organisations expressed how their current values drew on their historical roots. For example, in a catholic university and in a housing association they reported that their values emanated from how they had worked over years rather than the other way round. A national building society reported how their current culture was still influenced by their historical culture despite the introduction of some significant changes. This emphasises the importance of an organisation’s foundational values and how they can endure over time.

“The history influences the culture today a lot. The downside of having a lot of years’ service is around entitlement. It can be about you owe me this because I have committed x years of my life to this organisation”.

“We have a legacy policy that is 100 years old. I can’t change that overnight”.

“The work on values is more exposed in terms of the legacy and where we’ve come from and the foundation as to who we are and what we are about”.

4.14 Risk: unsurprisingly risk management featured prominently in the financial sector organisations, which are highly regulated and open to risk and they linked these processes directly to their values. Non-financial organisations tended not to have considered how their values related to risk assessment and risk management and by raising this question in interview they were prompted to think about the connection.

“Some not living the values creates reputational risk”.

“We have a number of risk metrics that are driven by the values as opposed to values supporting them”.

4.15 Covid: when asked about the Covid pandemic most organisations recounted how they had successfully initiated home working during lockdown and that hybrid working continued post-pandemic. However, it was felt necessary to encourage a return to office-working in order to promote teamwork and the benefits of face-to-face dialogue with colleagues. Several organisations described how, in keeping with their organisational values, they had worked hard with their client base, the community and/or other agencies to deliver services, support and assistance during lock-down. The Covid pandemic was not found to have been as problematic for organisations as we had anticipated.

“We facilitated working with partners to establish hubs in each community. It was to facilitate delivery of food, medicines etc. To help around loneliness and isolation as far as you could through lockdown. That is an example of where the values came to life”.

“Covid has had some positive and negative effects for culture. You didn’t have that natural allegiance, collaboration, integration into the team that you would normally have had pre-covid”.

“If you’re sat at home and fixated on your own area, you do create silos more quickly in that environment”.

“I think the way we dealt with Covid and the pandemic was a real testimony to the delivery of all those values”.

“It was pretty tricky to determine what the values meant on a day to day basis during the pandemic”.

4.16 Generational differences: some participants had observed generational differences in attitudes to organisational values. As part of this study, we spotlighted this issue and worked with two organisations to explore these differences further with an emphasis on improved communication between different generations in the workplace.

“There is a generational difference. The younger generation expect you will give me more flexibility over my life rather than tell me how to do things”.

“I have observed differences between generations culturally. There’s a gap where it’s about what they want and that’s more important than what’s important for the company”.

4.17 Raised awareness and Action Research: some organisations reported how the research interview had raised their awareness about how they could improve their focus on values within the organisation as well as in specific areas such as how values related to risk assessment and management. The interview appeared to have served as an audit of how the organisation espoused and then enacted their values. This suggests

that a self-audit aide memoire, as an output of this research, would be valuable to organisations.

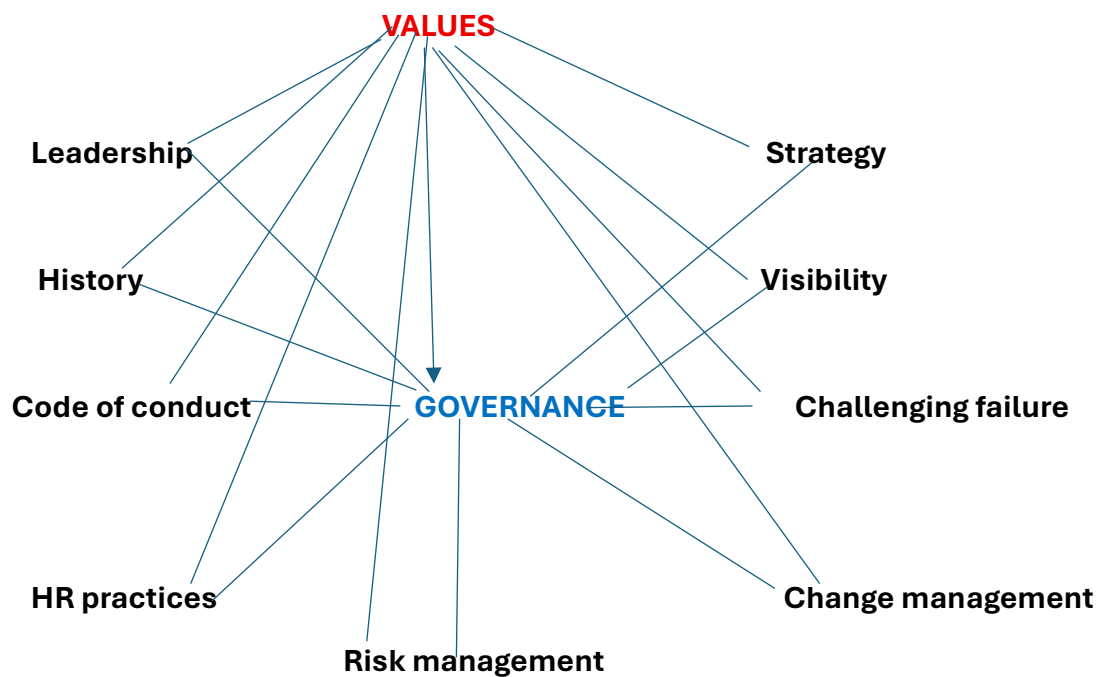
“It’s been a really useful download”.

“The interview has given me food for thought and made me be more conscious about how we demonstrate those values in what we do rather than just assuming it happens”.

5. Discussion

The thirteen organisations that have participated in this research to date comprised a heterogeneous group in terms of sector, size, location and approach to values. Individual interviewees also represented a mix of gender, age and length of service. There appeared to be a number of different approaches to the topic of espoused and enacted values amongst the group. Some organisations presented a strong, articulate and embedded grasp of values both in terms of espousal and enactment. Others presented a more diluted approach where their approach to considering values was more implicit and taken for granted. Considering the themes that have emerged so far, we can begin to suggest a pattern of connections that allow values to become pervasive and affect performance and outcomes in organisations. Figure 2 provides our first presentation of these.

Figure 2



While not all interviewees were explicit in expressing the influence, several were able to point to the importance of history and the effect of the past on current values. There is an inevitability to the work of history given the expression of values and articulation as codes of conduct and statements of behaviour in language. As argued by Wadhvani *et al.* (2018), history can be viewed in performative terms that feeds practice in the present on a daily basis, both consciously and implicitly. Through repetition, views of the past become accepted as truthful and factually right. This is particularly important in the way that boards consider values in strategic talk.

As we have found so far, few boards considered values explicitly but two used stated values more openly as part of the template for their discussions. Whether explicit or implicit in strategic talk, boards perhaps need to pay more attention to what Bourne and Jenkins (2013) highlight as the dynamic working of values and the variety of forms that values might take in their organisations. Boards that presented a strong and comprehensive approach to the espousal of values usually expressed them in short and focused language and participants could readily recount them. They were translated clearly in a code of conduct or statement of behaviours expected of staff. The values were visible through a variety of sources accessible by all staff. However, making espoused values visible may not be sufficient since their presentation does not take place in a social, cultural or historical vacuum. The visibility of values can play a crucial part in influencing practices that feed organisational effects but only if consideration is also given to how enactment creates an engagement with all the senses that make values sensible to everyone (Küpers 2014)

Tying the values to HR management practices such as appraisal and recruitment appeared to be particularly important means of ensuring they were embedded and enacted throughout the organisation. Indeed, such processes are recognised as necessary for success in HR management and constitute a way for HR practices to connect to staff performance and motivation and organisational outcomes based on high commitment (Kerdpitak and Jermsittiparsert, 2020). Further, HR has a crucial role to ensure that as Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning become more prominent, they also ensure that human values are visible too (Aftab and Khalid 2024). Similarly, linking the values to regular staff surveys was a means of maintaining their high profile as well as measuring the effectiveness of espoused values.

Research suggests that organisations that seek to understand staff perceptions provide the possibility of reinforcing the commitment to organisation values that becomes a virtuous path to a positive culture (Martins and Coetzee 2011). Given the presence of differing values among staff in organisations, the declaration of visible, espoused values needs to offer the potential of a degree of fit with other values that underpin staff attitudes. Staff surveys allow an understanding of whether espoused values are shared by staff but also whether there is a fit with aspirations of what an organisation ought to value. Amos and Weathington (2008), for example, found important links to job satisfaction, satisfaction with the organisation as a whole and turnover intent in creating such a fit. The work of leaders at all levels in translating espoused values through appraisals and performance management provides an important pathway to enabling the fit and reducing the gaps found in many organisations (Institute of Leadership and Management 2023). A crucial feature of the gap relates to differences that underpin espoused and personal values such as honesty, doing the right thing and making a difference, which were identified by the Institute of Leadership and Management study. In particular, there is a need to understand how Millennials and Generation Z staff perceive such differences. For example, research suggests that Generation Z staff prefer face to face interactions and leaders who are appreciative, wise and honest (Dwidienawati *et al.* 2022).

Our work to date has revealed the impact and importance of values for influencing culture, risk management, change management and challenging failure. The latter especially gives rise to interest during times when there has been significant media exposure of organisational mismanagement and corruption particularly, but not exclusively, in the financial sector as the Post Office Horizon scandal has highlighted.

5. Reflections on values and culture



Discover the power of company values to shape your culture, ignite passion and inspire your employees to reach new heights. How do organisations determine what values to espouse? How do they make them visible and enacted throughout the different levels and sections of the organisation? What is the relationship between organisational values and good governance and how might values improve governance?

These are critical and pressing questions, especially as research reveals a significant gap between espoused values at the top of organisations and the day-to-day delivery on the front-line. For example, organisational history and leadership commitment to living the values were found to be significant in influencing the approach to values and the culture of the organisation. Linking espoused values to Human Resource Management practices - notably, recruitment and performance appraisal - was crucial in successfully embedding the values within the organisation. As well as celebrating successes, it was beneficial for organisations to create a climate in which failure to act in accordance with the values could readily be challenged. Participants described an holistic, eco-system in which values were 'lived and breathed' and not simply made visible on walls and in documents.

At the core of effective leadership lies the stewardship of an organisation's purpose, embodying its values with integrity and passion. This fusion of purpose and values forms the cornerstone of good governance. In the realm of corporate governance, the debate often centres on practical issues such as corporate fraud, the abuse of managerial power and social irresponsibility. However, this reactive approach merely skims the surface, addressing the superficial symptoms rather than delving into the deeper problems. It begs the question: what values are absent that allows such practices to happen? It has been suggested that corporate governance codes focused solely on compliance are insufficient to address these shortcomings and complexities

of modern business. Such codes often are reactive in nature being responsive to particular issues and therefore their effectiveness and relevance can quickly wain over time.

Values serve as the silent architects of decision-making for leaders and managers; they are deeply engrained in people's being. Yet they are often accepted without scrutiny, leading to prevalent myopic, uncritical assumptions. However, such values shape the very essence of organisational life embedding accepted governance practice for better or worse. This calls for a more holistic approach that recognises moral values entrenched within company cultures and its governance systems. Good governance is not about adherence to codes but is intertwined with an organisation's identity and is an accepted "way of life".

To truly embody good governance, it must be ingrained in daily practice and behaviours of every individual within the organisation. This is why governance needs to be inherently linked to company values. While codes provide external validation, the true measure of success lies in how governance aligns with the organisation's core and shared values and lived practices. No matter the challenges your organisation encounters, the board must remain steadfast in their identity, providing strategic direction and oversight to ensure that they and the organisation adhere to its purpose and core values.

Strong values and culture have been identified as critical components in building organisational resilience, a factor that has high significance in a modern environment where complex and accelerating change appears ubiquitous, raising calls for leaders to be more agile, visionary, responsible and responsive. Further, during the Covid Pandemic, governance systems may have been compromised and the emergence of hybrid working is challenging patterns of social capital and well-being. Disturbed and unsettled labour markets provide new uncertainties for staff turnover and movement and in recruiting high calibre staff, especially millennials. Therefore, governance processes and resources, including moral resources, need to enable leaders and managers to act confidently but with due regard to the risks involved; this includes taking account of their obligations to their broader stakeholder communities.

A strategic board possesses the foresight to visualize the future while retaining its integrity, protecting its values, and honing its purpose. There is not a 'one size fits all' approach, as organisations must tailor their strategies to their unique needs and context. It is crucial to consider the different levels within the organisation and how values are perceived differently between organisational strata. Research illuminates the dynamic nature of organisational values, which can take many different forms including beyond what is officially stated. These include values shared within and between groups, those attributed to the organisation whether formally affirmed or not, and those favoured by individuals at work. However, this interplay can provide a dynamic tension and provide opportunities for change and growth over time.

Directors need to step up as the torchbearers and champions of espoused values, proactively shaping and monitoring the organisation's cultural landscape. In this journey they encounter both challenges and opportunities, but their role is pivotal in guiding the organisation to greater heights. The tone set by organisational leaders is paramount, as is understanding of what employees perceive the organisation's values mean to them and the gap between that and the organisation's espoused values. Such insights are vital for bridging the gap between stated and practiced values. It's through this understanding that leaders can truly inspire alignment and foster a culture in which the values espoused by the organisation are not just spoken but lived in practice.

Navigating this landscape can be challenging, especially during times of significant disruption. Yet, ongoing attention to the impact of values and norms at all levels is critical. This demands a steadfast commitment to continuous learning, reflective critique and mastering the art of mindful attention to events, actions and stories to adjust the organisation's cultural health. It is through this dedication that organisations can adapt and emerge stronger from the challenges they face.

In our research, organisations that demonstrated an approach where companies' values were implicit and taken for granted presented a weaker prominence of values both in espousal and enactment. In the financial sector, unsurprisingly due to heavy regulation, values were often linked to risk assessment and management unlike other sectors. Several organisations reported that the interview highlighted areas for improvement in their approach to values, inspiring them to revisit these areas. This underscores the importance of clarity and higher visibility of embodied values to ensure that they are consistently espoused and enacted.

Creating the right values should not be a solitary pursuit; it's a collaborative journey that unites the board, management, staff and stakeholders in a shared commitment to long-term success and sustainable growth. Together, they forge a path towards a brighter future, where every voice is heard, and every action is guided by a common purpose.

6. Next Steps

Appendix 4 outlines potential outputs and outcomes of this research project. This study focused on establishing the importance of values for good governance and identifying the key features of this crucial relationship between values and good governance. In so doing, the research process uncovered themes and issues that give rise to further, in-depth exploration and so highlight the potential for valuable, future research attention. These include:

a) Governance: This study clearly established the importance of values for good governance. However, there is potential for important insights to be gained in unravelling this relationship further by focusing on the specific practices that achieve good governance as influenced by the values.

b) History: the foundational values of an organisation were found to be influential in the translation and reception of current values and practices. It would be valuable to explore further how the historical roots of an organisation are analysed and addressed in the formulation and communication of contemporary values and how this is involved in achieving positive change.

c) Diversity: The academic literature identified differences in the understanding and communication of values between different genders, cultures and generations. Although this study highlighted differences between generations, there would be a benefit from exploring this further and together with other aspects of diversity in the workplace.

d) Cascading: This research study was limited in accessing the views of the front-line in the participating organisations as the interviewees nominated were positioned at the higher levels. There would be important insights to be gained from directly researching the front-line in relation to their acceptance, understanding and enactment of the espoused values.

e) Boardroom practices: leadership emanating from the Board was identified as vital for the embedding and enactment of espoused values. However, it would be valuable to drill down into establishing what particular styles and specific practices at board level enhance the embedding of values throughout the organisation and particularly down to the front-line.

f) Risks: Although this study identified the importance of espoused values in challenging failure and shortfalls in individual and organisational performance, it did not address the potential threats to achieving successful embedding and enactment of values throughout the organisation. It would be valuable to identify the barriers and weaknesses encountered in translating espoused values into practices at the different levels of the organisation

There is significant potential in pursuing these issues further and in more depth: thereby building upon the important foundations of this research. A case study approach would enable a focus on how these issues manifest themselves in the life of an organisation and allow for fruitful comparisons between a variety of organisations to be made.

7. Conclusion

This study has addressed the two aims of: considering how organisations in different sectors determine, embed and review their stated values; and understanding whether those values are relevant in a post-Covid world of hybrid working. 17 specific themes were identified, which broadly fell into three categories: communication; behaviours; and context. For communication, this included the importance of: specific values; visibility; codes of conduct and statement of behaviours; cascading values; strategies; and annual reports. For behaviours this comprised the importance of: governance; HR working practices; board meetings; leadership; challenging failure; and change management. Finally, for context this included the importance of: history; risk; the Covid pandemic; generational differences; and raised awareness/Action Research.

Organisations in this study that demonstrated an approach where their values were implicit and taken for granted at board and senior management levels presented a weaker prominence of values and articulation of their enactment. Financial sector organisations, unsurprisingly given their heavy regulation, linked their values to risk assessment and risk management whilst the other sectors did not tend to make that connection prior to the interview. This was a point that organisations took away with them to adopt in their own practice. Several organisations reported that the interview process had raised important areas for improvement in relation to their approach to values and they were inspired to revisit this following the interview. This reinforces the importance of clarity and maintaining the higher prominence of values in order to ensure that they are consistently espoused and enacted at different levels of the organisation and over time.

The limitations of this study are two-fold. No account has been taken of potential differences in gender, age and length of service of interviewees, which are found in the literature to affect values. Also, participants were keen to nominate senior colleagues for interview and none readily nominated front-line staff. This gives rise to further questions around the effective cascading of values and the need to gain insights into how the values of leaders and managers reach the different organisational strata and the lower levels in particular and the different roles of those various levels in enacting values. Nevertheless, this study makes a substantial contribution to the literature on the importance of organisational values for good governance and provides valuable information for managers and practitioners seeking to enhance the embedding and enactment of their organisational values. It also points to the need for and further potential in focusing more sharply and in-depth on the nature of specific boardroom and leadership behaviours connected to delivery of organisational values and how precisely those values become embedded and enacted throughout the organisation as a whole.

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Appendix 1

Leeds Beckett University has its origins in the Leeds Mechanics Institute, founded in 1824. It later became Leeds Polytechnic in 1970, which gained the right to award degrees and became Leeds Metropolitan University. In 2014, the university changed its name to Leeds Beckett, named after one of its founding colleges, Beckett Park. **Leeds Business School** has a rich history with roots dating back to 1898. Over the years it have evolved with and impacted on the city of Leeds, helping to establish and support a rich business landscape in the region. It offers courses across six subject areas with expertise in the school spanning a wide range of specialisms, and it has partnered with education providers across the globe. The Business School contributed funding for this research project to be conducted.

The Worshipful Company of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators (WCCSA) is one of the 110 Livery Companies of the City of London. It became a Livery Company in 1977. It ranks 87th in order of precedence. The Company is a member of the Financial Services Group of Livery Companies and its principal aim is to support its profession by promoting excellence in corporate governance and to align itself with the work of The Chartered Governance Institute, in maintaining the highest standards of professional practice. Its membership currently stands at around 300 senior company secretaries or administrators working in commerce, financial services, public service and not-for-profit organisations. The WCCSA contributed funding for this research project to be conducted.

Dr Marija Krlic's first degree was in Psychology from the University of London. She then joined HM Prison Service and worked for 13 years as a prison governor grade in a variety of prisons. She has held posts with the Home Office Drug Prevention Advisory Service, as a resident expert for prison reform with the Council of Europe and as a senior policy officer with the Ministry of Justice. Following Marija's PhD, she has worked on a number of multi-disciplinary research projects focusing on the topics of surveillance and change management in policing. She is currently working for Leeds Beckett University as the researcher on this project examining the importance of values for governance.

Dr Nick Beech is a course director at Leeds Business School. Nick's expertise is in the areas of leadership, coaching, governance and boardroom behaviours. He has a wealth of experience having worked with a wide range of organisations across the private, public and voluntary sectors. An accomplished entrepreneur, having sound local and international experience and is an inspiring organisational change agent. His focus is to help people to recognise and mobilise their and their organisations capabilities, to help them sense change in their environment, to see new horizons, to move the agenda and seize opportunities. His forte is to help leaders gain a deep understanding and insights into Board governance and grasp what is good and great practice is for their board, this includes the promotion of wellbeing within the organisation and the boards appetite for risk taking and consequence accepting. Through coaching he helps executives critique themselves to clarify their goals, aspirations and motivations and develop the skills and

behaviours to make change happen, so they understand how to inspire and leader their people on their collaborative journey.

Jeff Gold was Professor of Organisation Learning at Leeds Business School. For most of his time in Higher Education, he has worked with businesses and organisations. From 2006 to 2014 he was co-founder of the HRD and Leadership Research Unit at Leeds Business School, a collaborative project with several organisations including Hallmark Cards, Morrisons plc, Skipton Building Society, BUPA, LBBC Ltd, Webanywhere and TheWorks. The projects sought to support leadership and talent development in each organisation and allow knowledge to be shared between partners. He was also the Director of the DBA programme at Leeds Business School. The programme started in 2009 and recruited 9 cohorts over 4 years. He has delivered a wide range of seminars, programmes and workshops on change, strategic learning, futures and foresight management and leadership with a particular emphasis on participation and distribution.

David Lock is Secretary General of the Magna Charta Observatory based at the University of Bologna. This global network of approaching 1,000 universities is concerned with promoting and protecting the fundamental values of autonomy and academic freedom and universities' responsibility to society. The Living Values project which he co-designed is used by universities around the globe. David was previously Director of International Projects at the UK's Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, the founding Registrar and Acting Chief Executive of the British University in Dubai and head of the administration of two British universities. He also chairs Gulf Education Conferences. David was Master of the Worshipful Company of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators from 2017-18. He chaired the Education Committee from 2019 – 23 and chairs the steering committee for this research project.

Appendix 2

The project **steering group** met from June 2023 to November 2024 and comprised the following members:

David Lock (Chair) – WCCSA

James Ashton – Quoted Companies Alliance

Rafal Budzinski – Financial Reporting Council

Peter Swaybe – Chartered Governance Institute

Lorraine Young – WCCSA

Mariana Pexton – Leeds City Council

Professor Jeff Gold – Leeds Beckett University (LBU)

Dr Nick Beech - LBU

Dr Marija Krlic (Research Assistant) – LBU

Appendix 3

The following is the **first interview schedule** used with company secretaries or their equivalents.

1. What are the organisation's stated values?
2. How are the values determined, articulated and documented?
3. To what extent are these values embedded and applied in the way the organisation operates?
4. To what extent are management and staff aware of the organisation's values?
5. To what extent do values underpin processes e.g. recruitment?
6. To what extent are practices reviewed and assessed against the organisation's values and appropriate action taken?
7. In what ways are those values connected to good governance in your organisation?
7. How are values included in Risk Assessments and Risk Management?
8. To what extent are values considered by the Board Secretary, management and the board when preparing and discussing board papers?
9. How and to what extent do values feature in the annual report?
10. To what extent in practice do values feature in the strategy formulation, implementation and review processes?
11. How often do you conduct staff surveys and do the values feature?
12. How does the organisation cascade out the values agreed by the board.
Examples.
13. How do you challenge failure to meet the values?
14. Do tensions or conflicts ever arise between the different values and how are these overcome?
15. How did the Covid pandemic affect enactment of your values and have there been residual effects within the organisation?
16. What staff turnover do you have?

The following is the **second interview schedule** used with postholders nominated by the company secretary or equivalent.

1. What are the values of your organisation?
2. Where are these values espoused? Are they visible externally (Eg. Website)?
3. How are these values enacted within the organisation? Examples.

4. What experiences have you had of where these values have been enacted?
5. How are you responsible for enacting these values? In what ways have you enacted them?
6. How do these values affect your experience of working for your organisation?
7. In what ways are those values connected to good governance in your organisation?
8. How would you ensure greater visibility of the espoused values within and outside your organisation?
9. In what ways could the values be better enacted in the life of your organisation?
10. How could the connection between the organisation's values and good governance be improved?
11. How far are you able to challenge failures to meet the values? Examples.
12. Do tensions or conflicts ever arise between the different values? How are they overcome?
13. How has the Covid pandemic affected the enactment of your values? What residual effects have there been?
14. What staff turnover do you have?
15. If one is the lowest and 5 the highest, where would you place the fit between your own and the organisation's values?
16. How often do you conduct staff surveys and how do the values feature in them?

Appendix 4

The following **future steps** will be considered as opportunities to build upon the research findings and conclusions but are not exhaustive:

1. A project **website** page to provide access to -
 - a) Final project report
 - b) Links to useful resources
 - c) On-line tool for users to respond to a series of questions about their organisation, values and governance and view information related to each question
2. Production of an **aide-memoire** for companies to apply to support self-audit in relation to values and governance.
3. Dialogue and exploration of the potential placement of **future research** with the **Leeds Business School Sustainable Business Research Institute (SuBRI)**. SuBRI's mission is to engage in applied research that supports future sustainable business performance, leadership and responsibility. Our work could serve to enhance the profile of governance, values and ethics within the work of SuBRI.
4. Exploration and determination of specific **future research topics** arising from this project for further focused and in-depth study, which may include -
 - a) Governance: This study clearly established the importance of values for good governance. However, there is potential for important insights to be gained in unravelling this relationship further by focusing on the specific practices that achieve good governance as influenced by the values.
 - b) History: the foundational values of an organisation were found to be influential in the translation and reception of current values and practices. It would be valuable to explore further how the historical roots of an organisation are analysed and addressed in the formulation and communication of contemporary values and how this is involved in achieving positive change.
 - c) Diversity: The academic literature identified differences in the understanding and communication of values between different genders, cultures and generations. Although this study highlighted differences between generations, there would be a benefit from exploring this further and together with other aspects of diversity in the workplace.

d) Cascading: This research study was limited in accessing the views of the front-line in the participating organisations as the interviewees nominated were positioned at the higher levels. There would be important insights to be gained from directly researching the front-line in relation to their acceptance, understanding and enactment of the espoused values.

e) Boardroom and leadership practices: leadership emanating from the Board was identified as vital for the embedding and enactment of espoused values. However, it would be valuable to drill down into establishing what particular styles and specific practices at board and executive level enhance the embedding of values throughout the organisation and particularly down to the front-line.

f) Risks: Although this study identified the importance of espoused values in challenging failure and shortfalls in individual and organisational performance, it did not address the specific, potential threats to achieving successful embedding and enactment of values throughout the organisation. It would be valuable to identify the specific barriers and weaknesses encountered in translating espoused values into practices at the different levels of the organisation