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INTERESTS IN THE FIELD OF PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP: INSIGHTS FROM BOURDIEU'S SOCIAL PRACTICE

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Although public private partnership (PPP) contract has been the subject of numerous debates and controversies, governments across the globe have increasingly used PPP to modernise public services. This study attempts to examine the attractiveness of the PPP policy, by analysing the interests of the government, private sector, and users in the field of UK school PPP contracts. Bourdieu's analytical concepts of habitus, capitals and field are used to analyse interests in PPP and shed light on the insidious power relations in PPP processes. Interviews were conducted with public and private sector respondents familiar with UK school PPP contracts, to understand their interests. The field of PPP is animated with players and interests. Players use their positions and predispositions (or *habitus*) and their economic, social and symbolic capitals to generate strategies consistent with their interests in the success of PPP. PPP is particularly attractive to governments that are faced with increasing demands to keep public debt under control, whilst at the same time improve public services. It is argued that the value for money and efficiency arguments (*doxa*) used to justify PPP mask a number of interests and the governments' neoliberal ideology, which are not readily apparent in policy documents. The PPP policy, through conferring symbolic power to the private sector, has reconfigured power relationships in the field. This study provides a scholarly analysis of the interests at stake in the field of the UK government's school PPP programme by using Bourdieu's theory of practice. At the practical level, this study explains the popularity of the PPP policy by unmasking interests which are not easily captured in the government's value for money discourse.

Keywords: interests, neoliberalism, public private partnership, austerity, Bourdieu's theory of practice, school PPP contracts, United Kingdom.

ИНТЕРЕСЫ В СФЕРЕ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННО-ЧАСТНОГО ПАРТНЕРСТВА: ОСМЫСЛЕНИЕ С ПОЗИЦИЙ СОЦИАЛЬНОЙ ПРАКТИОЛОГИИ БУРДЬЕ

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Несмотря на то что контракты государственно-частного партнерства (ГЧП) являются предметом многочисленных споров и дискуссий, правительства во всем мире все чаще используют ГЧП для модернизации государственных услуг. В статье предпринята

попытка исследовать привлекательность политики ГЧП, анализируя контракты в системе школьного образования Великобритании, а также интересы их участников: правительства, частного сектора и потребителей. В основе исследования лежат ключевые аналитические концепты П. Бурдьё: габитус, капитал и социальное поле. Такой подход позволил пролить свет на скрытые отношения между различными силами в процессах ГЧП. Чтобы понять интересы взаимодействующих сторон, были проведены интервью с теми респондентами государственного и частного секторов, которые хорошо осведомлены о британских контрактах ГЧП в сфере школьного образования. Поле ГЧП активизируется агентами и их интересами. Для разработки стратегий, позволяющих успешно реализовать проекты ГЧП, но при этом соответствующих их собственным интересам, агенты опираются на свои относительные позиции в социальном пространстве, свои predispositions (или габитус), а также экономический, социальный и символический капитал. ГЧП особенно привлекательно для правительства, поскольку оно сталкивается с растущим требованием держать под контролем государственные расходы, одновременно повышая качество предоставляемых услуг. Для обоснования необходимости ГЧП используются такие аргументы (докса), как эффективность, обеспечение наилучшего соотношения цены и качества, однако они лишь маскируют ряд интересов и неолиберальную идеологию правительства, которые явным образом не прослеживаются в имеющихся документах о провозглашенной политике. Предоставив символическую власть частному сектору, политика ГЧП изменила структуру взаимодействия сил в данном поле. В настоящей работе представлен научный анализ интересов участников ГЧП государственной программы Великобритании в области школьного образования, в основе которого лежит теория практик Бурдьё. Это исследование объясняет популярность политики ГЧП, раскрывая интересы, которые нелегко уловить в правительственном дискурсе о наилучшем соотношении цены и качества предоставляемых услуг.

Ключевые слова: интересы, неолиберализм, государственно-частное партнерство, режим экономии, теория практик Бурдьё, контракты ГЧП в сфере школьного образования, Великобритания.

The language of a political leader is an authorized language, which exercises a power, which can bring into existence what it states. In that case an error can be a blunder ...it is important that the space in which discourse on the social world is produced continues to function as a field of struggle in which the dominant pole, orthodoxy, does not crush the dominated pole, heresy — because, in that area, so long there is struggle there is history and therefore hope [Bourdieu, 1993, p. 39–40].

INTRODUCTION

The UK public private partnership policy (PPP) can be traced back to the 1979–1997. Conservative government’s “New Public Management” ideology of modernising and improving public services by using private sector management techniques. The Conservative government made a radical move away from traditional public administration, rooted in Max Weber’s hierarchical bureaucracy [Weber, 1978], to embrace a lean and efficient public management rooted in the scientific management movement of Frederick Taylor [Taylor, 1911] and free market ideals [Hayek, 1944; Friedman, 1962]. Traditional public administration was criticised for inefficiencies arising from the focus on administering rules and guidelines, reliance on bureaucracies and using incremental

budgeting, and hegemony of professionals and administrators in public service delivery. New Public Management resulted in a new discourse of policy formulation and implementation. It asserted the superiority of private sector practices, focussed on distancing policy making from public services delivery, emphasised the use of performance measures and zero based and performance based budgeting [Hood, 1991; Osborne, 2010]. Privatisation was a crucial ingredient to the Conservative government's neoliberal ideology of increasing the role of the private sector in the delivery of public services. However, critics have argued that both extremes of public administration and New Public Management do not adequately capture the complex realities surrounding the provision of public services and have failed to deliver value for money to the public sector [Osborne, 2010].

The PPP policy was formulated during the backdrop of the 1990–1992 recession and officially introduced in 1992 by the UK Conservative government as a means of obtaining much needed private finance to fund public services [House of Commons, 1992a; 1992b]. Subsequent UK governments have portrayed PPP as a policy that serves the public interest and enables the public sector to obtain better value from taxpayers' money than conventional procurement [HM Treasury, 2003a; 2003b; House of Commons, 2011]. However, a number of studies have found that PPP generally offers poor value for money to the public sector primarily because of the problem of incomplete contracts [Froud, 2003], flawed value for money analysis [Shaoul, 2005; Shaoul, Stafford, Stapleton, 2010] and the potential of risks reverting back to the public sector [Demirag et al., 2012]. Despite these criticisms in the literature, the PPP policy has been embraced by the 1997–2010 Labour government and the Conservative and Liberal coalition government from 2010 to date, although these governments strongly opposed PPP when in opposition.

This study attempts to explain the popularity of the PPP policy by unmasking interests which are not easily captured in the government's value for money discourse and the voluminous critiques of PPP in the literature [Broadbent, Laughlin, 2005; Asenova, Beck, 2010]. Its main objective is to provide a scholarly analysis of the interests in the field of the UK government's school PPP programme by using Bourdieu's theory of practice [Bourdieu, 1990; 1993; 1998; 2005]. Bourdieu's analytical concepts are helpful to understand the *habitus* and capitals of the PPP players, and the insidious power relations in the field of PPP [Xu, Xu, 2008; Gracia, Oats, 2012; Cooper, Joyce, 2013]. Bourdieu moves beyond Marx's spectacles of economic capital to provide an understanding of the influence of social and cultural capitals on structures [Marx, 1976]. Unlike a Marxist framework which focusses primarily on the economic base, Bourdieu's analytical framework weaves together Marx's superstructure (e.g. culture, society, institutional structures, interests, power and politics) to provide an understanding of the dispositions and strategies of key players arising from the positions they occupy in society and the capitals they possess.

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows. The next section provides an introduction to Bourdieu's intimately linked theoretical concepts of *habitus*, field and

capitals in the field of PPP. The third section explains this study's methodology and methods. The fourth section analyses the interests of the interviewees in PPP and the impact of PPP in reconfiguring power relationships in the field. The final section discusses the findings and concludes the paper.

BOURDIEU'S SOCIAL PRAXEOLGY AND THE FIELD OF PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

Bourdieu has attempted to unsettle and efface the deep rooted anatomies of objective and subject, structure and agency, macro and micro, material and symbolic, and practice and research, by proposing a "social praxeology" that weaves together the "structuralist" and "constructivist" approaches [Bourdieu, Wacquant, 1992, p. 11]. Bourdieu and Wacquant argue that social science researchers should employ a double focussed analytic lens that capitalises on the strengths and virtues of these anatomies whilst skirting their vices and pitfalls when examining social and practical problems [Bourdieu, Wacquant, 1992]. Objectivists and structuralists who argue that society needs to be studied from the outside through observations, experiments and measurements do not effectively grasp practices, other than through the execution of models and paradoxically end up projecting their own understanding of practices into the minds of readers, individuals and groups [Bourdieu, 1990; 2005]. Contrary to this view, the subjectivists and constructivists argue that individuals and groups actively and continually construct practices through "expressions", "practical actions", and "contingent ongoing accomplishments of organized artful practices of everyday life" [Garfinkel, 1967, p. 11]. However, conceiving structures as the sum total of individual strategies and symbolic interactions [Berger, Luckmann, 1967; Blumer, 1969] fail to explain how, why and according to what principles the reality itself is socially produced, perpetuated or challenged.

Bourdieu proposes key analytical concepts (e.g. *habitus*, capital and field) which transcend conventional dualities when examining social and practical problems. Bourdieu and Wacquant caution that Bourdieu's work should not be "apprehended and incorporated in 'bits and pieces'" [Bourdieu, Wacquant, 1992, p. 4], as fragmented and partial absorption of any theory may lead to serious misreading and misinterpretation. Bourdieu does not develop a "theory *stricto sensu* so much as a sociological method consisting essentially in a manner of posing problems, in a parsimonious set of conceptual tools and procedures for constructing objects and for transferring knowledge gleaned into one area of inquiry into another" [Bourdieu, Wacquant, 1992, p. 5].

Habitus, field and capitals. Interests, actions, and practices are generated through "a system of dispositions" and "biographical experience" which Bourdieu [Bourdieu, 1993, p. 46] conceptualises as *habitus*. Bourdieu states that *habitus* is "a system of dispositions acquired by implicit or explicit learning which functions as a system of generative schemes, generates strategies which can be objectively consistent with the objective interests of their authors without having been expressly designed to that end" [Bourdieu,

1993, p. 76]. It is a type of capital which is acquired, innate, embodied and linked to individual history to become “durably incorporated in the body in the form of permanent dispositions” which direct thinking and action [Bourdieu, 1993, p. 86]. Bourdieu “wanted to insist on the idea that *habitus* is powerfully generative” because “*habitus* is a product of conditions which tends to reproduce the objective logic of those conditionings while transforming it” [Bourdieu, 1993, p. 87]. Bourdieu states that “the *habitus* is not only a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices, but also a structured structure: the principle of division into logical classes which organizes the perception of the social world is itself the product of internalization of the division into social classes” [Bourdieu, 1984, p. 170–171]. Bourdieu argues practices are harmoniously produced by agents according to the specific logic of a particular field, “without any deliberate pursuit of coherence, and objectively orchestrated, without any conscious concertation” [Bourdieu, 1984, p. 173].

Bourdieu defines a field as “an area, a playing field, a field of objective relations among individuals or institutions competing for the same stakes” [Bourdieu, 1993, p. 33]. A field comprises of specific stakes which determine the very existence of the field and would be of interest to certain players, but may “be perceived as absurd, irrational, or sublime and disinterested” to other players [Bourdieu, 1993, p. 72]. Fields have specific properties, players and spaces of positional power that are peculiar to them. For a field to work, Bourdieu states that there must be “*illusio* in the sense of investment in the game and outcome, interest in the game, commitment to the presuppositions — *doxa* — of the game”, and people endowed with their *habitus* who are prepared to play the game according to the laws of the field [Bourdieu, 1990, p. 65]. Knowing and “believing the game is ‘worth the candle’, or simply, that playing is worth the effort” is what Bourdieu [Bourdieu, 1998, p. 76–77] refers to as *illusio*. The *habitus* of players in a specific field determines how they reproduce structures of the game, whilst *illusio* is their ‘feel for the game’ and interest in playing the game. Bourdieu states that in a field, there are things called “orthodoxy and heterodoxy, but there is also *doxa*, everything that goes without saying, and in particular the systems of classification determining what is judged interesting or uninteresting, the things that no one thinks worthy of being mentioned, because there is no *demand*” [Bourdieu, 1993, p. 51]. *Doxa* are practices that are difficult to capture because they are usually unwritten, masked, tacit, unconscious, self-evident, beyond question and go without saying.

Players use their capitals to engage in power struggles to maintain or transform hierarchies in fields and gain privilege positions. The capitals apprehended by the players are usually the outcomes of history (e.g. inheritance or struggles). Social capital (or connections) is used to accumulate economic capital and is acquired through membership of a particular group “such as clubs, or quite simply, the *family*, the main site of the accumulation and transmission of that kind capital” [Bourdieu, 1993, p. 33]. Cultural capital refers to knowledge, expertise, competences and dispositions. It is acquired through the education system, family, and “in case of activities like the visual arts, or playing a musical instrument” it is generally acquired through social class [Bourdieu, 1984, p. 14].

Symbolic capital refers to prestige, honour, reputation and name and enables the holder “to conclude a deal without having to lay a penny in cash ...by virtue of the credit and capital of trust that stems from a reputation for honour as well as wealth” [Bourdieu, 1990, p. 119]. Focussing on analysing society solely through economic and objective lenses fail to capture the power that symbolic and social capitals command in the market place. Bourdieu argues that “because of the trust they enjoy and the capital of social capitals they have accumulated” holders of symbolic and social capitals “can afford to go to market with only their faces, their names and their honour for money” and even “to bid whether they have money on them or not” [Bourdieu, 1990, p. 119].

Bourdieu argues that not all capitals are equally important in all games and fields. For example, in the intellectual field, to win a literary prize or the esteem of one’s peers, economic capital is not important. Economic capital has to undergo a transmutation by spending time, money and energy to transmute economic capital into nobility. Socialising in conferences, “publishers’ cocktail parties, or reciprocal reviewing are the equivalent, in the intellectual field, of the ‘social work’ of the aristocracy” who make high-society socializing as their principal occupation to obtain power and authority [Bourdieu, 1993, p. 33]. Receptions and gala dinners provide a platform for social exchanges to take place and the accumulation of social capital.

Bourdieu states that “the strategies of the different players will depend on their resources in tokens, and more specifically on the overall volume of their capital (the number of tokens) and the structure of this capital, that’s to say the composition of the piles (those who have lots of red tokens and few yellow ones, that is, a lot of economic capital and little cultural capital, will not play in the same way as those who have many yellow tokens and few red ones)” [Bourdieu, 1993, p. 34]. Each player observes the way other players play their game, their style to derive clues of their hands to get a sense of the game and guide his own play and achieve “a practical mastery of the relationship between tokens and play... This sense of the game is the product of the progressive internalization of the immanent laws of the game” [Bourdieu, 1993, p. 34]. The established players in the field employ “*conservation strategies*, aimed at deriving profit” from their capitals while newcomers employ *subversion strategies*, to overthrow the hierarchy or very principles of the game but without destroying the game itself [Bourdieu, 1993, p. 133–134]. One way of achieving such a revolution is by questioning the key principles by pronouncing anathemas, “but in the name of a purer, more authentic definition of the principles in whose name the dominant dominates” [Bourdieu, 1993, p. 134]. To counter the subversion strategies of new players those who possess legitimacy and occupy dominant positions often resort to using ineffable and *doxic* discourses that go without saying.

Symbolic power and the role of the government. Bourdieu uses the notion of symbolic power to refer to the inequality and domination stemming from social structures that one experiences from childhood, in the family, at school, and in society in general, to denote the acceptance of practices. In contemporary society, the reproduction

of inequalities is attributable mostly through the transmission of economic and cultural capital [Bourdieu, 1998; 2005]. Access to prestigious schools and universities are determined by economic capital and cultural capital which are primarily transmitted through family inheritance. These inequalities tend to perpetuate themselves, so long they are transmitted from one's milieu and social background and there is no state intervention. Bourdieu argues that the weapons necessary for defending against cultural and symbolic power (used for domination) ought to be part of the same culture. This counter culture may involve mobilisation and protests, against the violence of ideologists (or governments) who rationalise certain dominant ideology. Power struggles can be in the form of real, physical struggles or symbolic confrontations [Bourdieu, Wacquant, 1992]. Symbolic confrontation "is exercised, as soft, disguised violence" [Bourdieu, 1993, p. 173] and may manifest in the form of demonstration, affirmation of group cohesion, and breaks from everyday order.

Government's intervention in specific economic fields often changes power relations and redistributes capitals among players. Whilst the electorate confers symbolic power to the government through the parliamentary process, Bourdieu and Wacquant argue that competing "'private' agents or organisations... work to orient 'state' policy in each of their domains of economic or cultural activity" by forming "coalitions and ties with other bureaucratic agents whose preference for a given type of measure they share" [Bourdieu, Wacquant, 1992, p. 112–113]. Private sector agents lobby and confront "other organisational entities with their own interests and resources" [Bourdieu, Wacquant, 1992, p. 113]. They use their economic and social capitals to support political campaigns, and use their influence to obtain symbolic power from elected governments. As pointed out by Bourdieu:

Competition among firms often takes the form of competition for power over state power — particularly the power of regulation and property rights — and for the advantages provided by various state interventions: preferential tariffs, trade licences, research and development funds, public sector contracts, funding for job-creation, innovation, modernization, exports, housing, etc. In their attempts to modify the prevailing 'rules of the game' to their advantage, and thereby to exploit some of their properties which can function as capital in the new state of the field, dominated firms can use their social capital to exert pressures on the state and to have it modify the game in their favour [Bourdieu, 2005, p. 204].

Government exercises power and sways public opinion through rational and efficiency discourses. The often taken for granted private sector efficiency arguments used to legitimise (PPP) policies found in policy documents form "the basis of the of the whole of the neoliberal economic thinking, which is one of the pillars of... *doxa*" [Bourdieu, 2005, p. 11]. However, these discourses may result in symbolic violence, as behind government's policies, scientific questions of efficiency and value for money, there may be political covert agendas stemming from the influence of the dominant classes in the private sector who tend to legitimise inequality and justify them.

In the light of the preceding exposition of Bourdieu's concepts, school PPP contracts may be conceived as a field where social actors — equity and debt financiers, contractors, government departments and school users — accumulate and maximise their capitals through insidious struggles. The concept of *habitus* would help provide insights into the interests and motivations of these social actors, based on their positions and dispositions in the field. The concept of capital is expected to provide the analytical tool for understanding the types of capital that private and public sector actors possess and deploy in the field of PPP. The next sub-section examines the UK government's interests in the field of PPP.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Researchers are predominantly holders of cultural capital who may take up political stances through the studies they carry out, and are generally a (dominated) fraction of the dominant class in contemporary society. Bourdieu states that “the logic of research is the intermeshing of problems in which the researcher is caught up and which drags him along, often despite himself” [Bourdieu, 1993, p. 29]. Bourdieu advises that the role of a researcher “is not to ‘know what to think’ about everything that fashion and its agents designate as worthy of being thought, but to try to discover everything that the history and logic of the intellectual field require him to think, at a given moment, with the illusion of freedom” [Bourdieu, 1993, p. 43].

Bourdieu argues that researchers, as “social engineers whose function is to supply recipes to the leaders of private companies and government departments” [Bourdieu, 1993, p. 13], may be complicit in the process of legitimising dominant discourses and forcing dominated agents to see things in a particular manner. For example, researchers may unwittingly provide governing elite with the logic and rules of a particular game, such as wealth maximisation or value for money, to enable them legitimise their domination via accounting numbers or rational arguments which are difficult to radically question. Simplistic ideas and slogans that the elite and the government use to legitimise public policies in the name of value for money and public interest may mask their own self-interest.

Bourdieu's analytical lens helps “uncover the most profoundly buried structures of the various social worlds which constitute the social university, as well as the ‘mechanisms’ which tend to ensure their reproduction or their transformation” [Bourdieu, Wacquant, 1992, p. 7]. Whilst Bourdieu's analytical tools have been used to uncover interests, norms and practices in the field of PPP, Bourdieu cautions that such analyses that contradict accepted norms and practices are open to suspicion of ideological bias and political axe-grinding. Bourdieu [Bourdieu, 1990] states that structures live a double life which can be uncovered through ‘first order’ and ‘second order’ analyses. First order structures are constituted in the distribution of resources or capitals and are relatively easier to uncover, whilst second order structures exist in the mental and bodily schemata of agents (e.g. judgements, gut feelings, thoughts and insights) which they use as symbolic

templates to guide their practical activities and routines. These second order structured can be apprehended subjectively through discussion, via interviews.

Whilst prior PPP studies have mainly focussed on the first order structures by critically examining accountability, value for money and risk transfer processes and PPP governance structures [Broadbent, Laughlin, 2003; Broadbent, Gill, Laughlin, 2008; Demirag et al., 2012; Shaoul, Stafford, Stapleton, 2012], this study provides insights into the popularity of the PPP policy by uncovering second order structures through interviews with participants involved in the field of UK school PPP contracts. Twenty-one semi-structured interviews were conducted between 2013 and 2015 to understand the interests at stake, the written and unwritten rules and the capitals employed in the field (see the appendix for questions asked to 'guide' the semi-structured interviews). The *habitus* of the interviewees, which cannot be empirically observed, was apprehended interpretively [Cooper, Joyce, 2013]. The interviews took the form of the Socratic method of dialogic questioning [Plato, 2007] to provide insights into not only the objects and operations of PPP but also the interviewees' positions and counter-positions in the field. The interviews broke down the standard monologue present in scientific and authoritative work that separates objects from subjects to enable critique, made possible through the "intervention of otherness" [Bourdieu, Wacquant, 1992, p. x]. The semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to engage in a dialogue with the interviewees. This approach compelled the rejection of self-closure, helped reflect on the limitations imposed by focussing on objects or language, and enabled the study of research questions/issues in a wider semantic space. In sum, the semi-structured interviews dislodged the researcher from a position of authority and the interviewees and readers from a position of passivity, to bring to the fore the PPP research issues being investigated and studied.

Bourdieu's theory of practice (or practical sense) elucidates the perceptive and evaluative schemata that interviewees use in their everyday activities [Bourdieu, 1990; 2005]. Perceptions and viewpoints of interviewees will undoubtedly vary depending on the positions they occupy in social spaces and their *habitus*. Five interviews were conducted with senior managers from the Department of Education and local education authorities to understand the government's interests in school PPP contracts. Eight interviews were conducted with head teachers and deputy head teachers to understand why they have embraced PPP and how PPP has changed power relationships in the field. Eight interviews were conducted with private sector advisors and contractors to gain insights into their capitals and stakes in PPP.

The interview data collected were analysed to identify key issues and apprehend the interviewees' interests in the school PPPs they were actually involved in. All interviews were tape recorded, with the permission of the interviewees, and were transcribed. The transcripts were typed in Microsoft Word and imported into the NVivo software to facilitate data organisation and analysis. NVivo was not used for sophisticated coding but enabled the researcher to: organise and store data related to the project in one database, conduct text searches of key terms across interview transcripts; and, code

interesting themes and issues while reading the transcripts to quickly retrieve them later when writing the findings. To obtain candid replies, the interviewees were informed that their views would be reported in such a manner that readers would be unable to attribute specific statements to particular individuals. The anonymity of the interviewees has been maintained by reporting the job title of the interviewees and the interest group they represent.

HM Treasury rules and guidance on PPP, the full business cases of three PPP schools, Public Accounts Committee and National Audit Office reports, and the academic and professional publications on PPP were also consulted. These publications provided an understanding of the written and unwritten rules which are often loaded with tensions and controversies and helped inform both the interview discussion and the writing of the findings.

FINDINGS: INTERVIEWEES' INTERESTS IN THE FIELD OF SCHOOL PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

This section starts by discussing the players' interests, positions and capitals in the field of school PPP contracts. It also examines the power relationships among the players. This is followed by a discussion of the potential for conflict of interests when implementing PPP rules, and the unwritten rules players follow to maximise their returns on capitals and make PPP work.

Interests and power relations in the field of PPP. Interviewees from the department of education, local education authorities and schools explained that their 'feel for the PPP game' was the result of perceived shortages in conventional capital funding that hindered the development of cultural capital. Their main interests were to use economic capital to generate cultural capital, although this involves relinquishing power to the private sector. Cultural capital (i.e. a well-educated workforce) in turn is expected to contribute to the future development of economic capital. A chief finance officer from a local education authority explained that they use a scoring mechanism when allocating economic capital among schools:

We review our schools stock to check if they are seriously substandard or if extensions are required. There is a scoring mechanism that we use to allocate capital because capital is very, very limited... some schools stick out like a sore thumb and naturally float to the surface through the economic appraisal... Economic appraisals are prepared for traditional route while detailed outline business case and full business case are prepared for PPP route.

PPP is attractive to local education authorities because it enables them obtain schools from their recurrent revenue funding when no or limited capital funding are available. As pointed out by a PPP project manager from the local education authority:

All PPP funding is recurrent revenue funding as opposed to capital funding. There are two separate pots of monies... For the traditional procurement methodology, you have

to spend capital funding. For PPP, you only spend recurrent. Obviously, there is a limit each year on the capital funding that we get and therefore there is a limit to the amount of traditional builds that we can get done... we want to get as many schools built in this area as possible.

Similarly, the chief finance officer explained that PPP was 'created' to enable them procure more schools by using debt finance:

The main reason PPP was created was to enable the procurement of more schools. I always think of it like a mortgage. If you have not got the capital money to build a school, or a house, the only way to do it is to get a mortgage. We just happen to call the mortgage PPP which is paid over 25 years. It is often said it is the only show in town to get a new school, so we have to take it or we won't get a school. It is as basic as that.

PPP also enables local education authorities to transfer their maintenance and support staff to the private sector, as both hard and soft facilities management services were transferred to the private sector. Although local authorities have purportedly implemented the Transfer of Undertaking Protection of Employment (TUPE) legislation when transferring staff to the private sector, the National Audit Office found that in early PPP contracts "TUPE does not protect all terms and conditions; most notably it does not preserve pension rights" [National Audit Office, 1998, p. 2]. However, a PPP advisor argued that PPP offers the opportunity to reduce the size of the public sector:

There are numerous benefits for transferring all asset related services, which includes maintenance and site cleaning, to the private sector. Only one person would be responsible and the head teacher of the school would have to interface with the facilities manager... At the macro level, there is the case for downsizing the public sector which is huge... OECD guidance states that having a large public sector is structurally not sound for the economy.

Head teachers were interested in the PPP route because it was a faster means to obtain a new school to discharge their downward accountability to pupils, staff and community — that is, the lack of economic capital to build new schools hindered their ability to create cultural capital. One head teacher pointed out that they were told, 'PPP or nothing':

We were told, PPP or nothing. So, we were not going to turn down a new school, no matter what way we are getting it. Waiting was not an option for us, because our building was so bad. I cannot describe to you, how appalling the building was. We do not make the decision whether our new school is going to be PPP or not. We could not justify turning down the offer for a new school under PPP.

To make PPP viable to the private sector, projects are often bundled. One project manager from the local education authority argued that the department of education controls the bundling decision:

We didn't actually choose which schools would be amalgamated. The department made the choice. If they gave us the option, we would probably have asked them to think

again and go for a different solution... Right now there is no alternative to PPP, really. There might be one or two projects which may go through conventional procurement. But the bulk of our schools are likely to be delivered through PPP.

Bundling of PPP schools also enables the private sector to maximise their return on economic capital through economies of scale. However, these cost saving measures were not necessarily in the best interest of the school because, as pointed out by a head teacher, “*the facilities manager is not always available on site when the school is part of a bundle.*” Another head teacher stated that the design of her school was very similar to the design of another school in the same bundle. The fact that standard designs were used and the procurement process was driven by architects and advisors from the local education authority led to tension:

The local education authority negotiators — architects, curriculum advisors and technology advisors — have an arrogant sense of their own knowledge of what a school needs. There was too much reliance on architects, whose expertise is not necessarily educational and a failure to recognise that different schools have different needs. The design of this school was made for another smaller school which is part of the same bundle, just scaled up and dropped in here... We needed a bigger music department because we had more pupils interested in this area... The design is flawed as our music departments are not detached from our key summer examination areas... Our views were expressed in meetings but were filed.

The schools were consulted during the procurement process but the department of education and the local education authority had relatively greater power through their approval and funding of the PPP project that is, the *habitus* of the school stakeholders were exploited by government departments which controlled the allocation of resources.

As discussed in the literature [Shaoul, 2005; Demirag et al., 2012], the private sector usually finances PPP by using 10% equity and 90% debt. The equity financiers explained that they maximise their return on investments by using debt to finance their share of equity capital in the special purpose company — that is, their 10% equity is comprised of 90% debt and 10% equity. The construction companies generally had relatively shorter investment horizons than facilities management companies and pure equity providers (e.g. pension funds). An equity financier explained their ‘feel for’ and interest in the PPP game as follows:

We decided to incorporate a joint venture company to look at this thing called PPP, invest, bid, and make money. We are in the property development business. We spot opportunities for PPP projects, set up a bidding consortium, get a design team, builder and operator and arrange the financing. We raise 10% equity finance which is not all pure equity — for even one pound pure equity and nine pound is subordinated debt which is a tax efficient way for transferring funds from the special purpose company.

In the field of PPP, social and symbolic capitals provided players with the means to generate economic profits. One small player in the equity market explained that, because of its size it has made the strategic decision to collaborate with others, focus on serving

a niche market and sell off its investments after the construction phase is over to recycle its equity investments:

We serve a niche market and collaborate with others to be able to play. We have taken a strategic decision that because there are too many large players out there, we should stay small and focussed to add value in what we do, build a reputation and survive... We sell our investments during the operational phase which is traditionally perceived as risky, after the building has been successfully constructed and delivered... We use our profits to invest in other projects, recoup costs on unsuccessful bids and projects that don't work.

When probed about refinancing gains on debt finance, the equity financiers pointed out that they have little incentive to undertake refinancing partly because of the cost of arranging refinancing exceeds the benefits, the PPP market has matured and became efficient, the uncertainty brought about by the recent financial crisis has made financiers more cautious, and the public sector wants a bigger share of the refinancing gain. As pointed out by an equity financier:

The credit crisis has made banks nervous and killed the refinancing market... The banks are now less receptive to beating rates... The cost of arranging for financing is huge, made worse by the public sector acting like complete idiots by reducing incentives and asking for fifty-fifty share and the adverse publicity we get.

Banks imposed restrictions on distribution of income in early years and required contractors to provide covenants and the government to provide guarantees to protect their investments and returns. Safeguarding their economic capital was a key concern to them. As explained by a PPP advisor:

We need to reduce everything to financial terms... A key issue is that the Special Purpose Company's financial model will need to be approved by the funders. The risk profile of a new PPP is quite high, before the construction stage is over. The banks will be asking for all sorts of covenants. They will want to see reserve accounts, cash balances requirements, facilities management costs, funding costs, construction costs, development costs, insurance costs, cash flows, profit and loss and balance sheet. They will then want to run the sensitivities in terms of decline, delay, cost increases, and check whether the project is deliverable and feasible.

Bank financiers had significant control over performance monitoring of equity financiers to protect their investments. Because the special purpose company is highly geared, failures in performance can adversely affect profitability and going concern. A director from the bank explained how banks perform due diligence and their control over equity providers:

We get the technical due diligence guys to read through all the background documents, check all covenants, make sure that all are working like they are supposed to, all are fine and in line with standard market practice and provide assurance by signing off, prior to us lending. We will then have on-going regular monitoring to protect the bank

lenders, make sure that things are on track, before they start drawing out funds and paying dividends. They are tightly monitored by our guys, appointed by the bank... They do get some profits from their construction and operation contracts, so they are not relying exclusively on their equity return.

The debt financiers were reluctant to exercise their step in rights to impose sanctions on the equity financiers, because this may signal the market that the project is in trouble and eventually affect the bank's ability to sell the PPP project. As explained by a director from the bank:

We have a contractual right to demand reports and remedial action if a project is experiencing difficulties. If remedial action fails and the project is in deep trouble, then we can step into the project and control it or appoint another operator. But we would only use our step in rights as a last resort because we would prefer to try to work things out. Step in rights send signals to the market that the project is in really deep trouble and may eventually push the value down, which is not in our interest because we may have to sell the project in the market.

Playing by the (written and unwritten) rules. Bourdieu [Bourdieu, 1993; 2005] states that written rules and procedures are created to safeguard capitals when *habitus* or disposition of players may potentially conflict and fail to produce the practices or conduct desired by society. From the public sector's perspective, the logic of practice in the field of school PPP requires government departments to adhere to rules and procedures to demonstrate probity when spending public funds and to valorise the production of cultural capital over economic capital. The department of education and local education authorities followed HM Treasury's rules and guidance to demonstrate probity and discharge their accountability for using public funds. They also endeavoured to maintain fairness among the schools by not favouring PPP schools *vis a vis* traditionally funded schools. However, a deputy head teacher pointed out that strictly stipulating what a PPP school can or can't have may result in poor value for money:

The department of education did not approve melamine table in science labs, because they were aware that the public accounts committee and the audit office would be crawling all over these things. They were watching their backs and wanted to be beyond criticism. The Parliamentary bodies which are there to ensure value for money and probity, may actually inhibit value for money... They did not allow a school to be advantaged, because it was a PPP school. I think this is sheer madness.

The private sector consortiums were primarily concerned with delivering the school building to time and budget, and setting contract and risk management processes in place to mitigate the impact of adverse events on their profits. The PPP contracts contained a performance based payment mechanism, which is a rule aimed at rewarding contractors for good performance and penalising them for poor performance. A contract manager from the PPP consortium argued that, partly because of this PPP payment mechanism, there is greater accountability for services under PPP procurement than conventional procurement:

There is myth of accountability in the public sector... If the private sector does not deliver under PPP, it doesn't get paid which is not the case under conventional procurement. Under the PPP model, the private sector gets penalised in their pocket, which incentivises them to perform well. Whereas, if you look at the current public sector provision, if the local authorities don't provide the schools with what they want, there is no sanction, there is no threat of losing contracts.

Similarly, a facilities manager from the PPP consortium argued that they are contractually obliged to provide services which make their performance better than comparable landlord maintenance services provided by the local authority under conventional procurement:

The private sector provides better value for money than what the school would get from the local authority's technical services, whether it is catering or cleaning. If for example a window is broken, we have to repair it within eight hours, if that was within conventional contract that may lie unrepaired for longer. We have a contract and have to adhere to that contract.

However, in practice it was difficult to apply the payment mechanism because it is complex, costly, time consuming to implement and may sour working relationship. As pointed out by a PPP advisor:

The payment mechanism is overly complex. There is a set of examples of how the payment mechanism should work in government documents but these require tracking of performance... The schools themselves may not be tracking performance. For example, the principal may not be willing to monitor these.

The head teachers and facilities manager explained that they follow unwritten rules when implementing PPP because of their desire to maintain good working relationship and make PPP work. Good working relationship provided the players with the space to play the games to the limits up to the point of minor transgression of PPP rules (*virtuosi*) but without taking any penalty [Bourdieu, Wacquant, 1992]. As pointed out by a head teacher:

If we were all very rigid and intransigent, then PPP would not work, there is give and take. The contract states that the school has to give 60 days' notice if we want to stay after 5.30 in the evening. In any school, that would be sheer impossibility. So, we do not give 60 days' notice but we give as much notice as we can. The facilities manager accepts that from us, and we accept other things that they cannot deliver in the same way, and that is why the relationship works.

Similarly, a contract manager from the PPP consortium explained that they work in the 'spirit of partnership' with their client by not penalising each other for quality failures:

We work in the spirit of partnership. For example, if a pupil damages the door, we have the right to charge the school to replace or repair the door. But generally we would say, we would repair that out of our cost, however, if the bin did not get emptied last night,

we would offset that against the quality failure. If the client does not have trust or faith in you, as the operator, and you don't have trust and faith in the client, then they will go by the contract, by the letter, as will you. You will charge the client for every bit of vandalism or misuse and they in turn will deduct for any quality failure that they can find. The contract is there for a purpose, but generally you have to try and work together, and find a balance otherwise the PPP will never work.

However, a contract manager from the PPP consortium explained that written rules are followed for 'major' costly transgressions — e.g. vandalisms resulting in major repairs and unavailability of a classroom:

If a pupil vandalise 4 or 5 doors, which cost £200 a door to replace, then the client has to hold their hands up and pay for these repairs. If four or five classrooms are not heated to 18 degrees and teachers cannot teach, then we have to hold our hands up and say, right the classrooms were unavailable. Those sorts of things are not negotiable, but little things like, a bin was not emptied or pupils broke chairs are negotiable. But serious matters like unavailability or vandalism which are costly would be non-negotiable.

An advisor concurred that the key to obtaining value for money from (incomplete) PPP contracts is not by strictly following written rules but by working in partnership, with contractual rules used as fall-back. As pointed out:

A contract should be like a pre-nuptial agreement which should be used only when relationship breaks down. If you don't establish a genuine partnership, if you are not willing to see the other's point of view, and help one another out, then you are going to struggle... You've got penalties, market testing, benchmarking in the contract and you've got profit sharing mechanisms for capping and sharing super profits made by the private sector. But, the ultimate mechanism to ensure value for money is the quality of the working relationship because you can never legislate for the future, you can never put everything in writing, you can never legislate for human behaviour.

Although the level of services specified in the contract and the performance payment mechanism are meant to safeguard the public sector's interest, these are self-monitored by the contractors and largely within their control. A head teacher was sceptical about the self-monitoring mechanism and argued that the profit motive may lead to conflict of interest. She pointed out that when money is involved, there needs to be careful procedures in place to monitor what the schools are getting:

Good working relationship is critical for getting quality services. But when money is involved, there needs to be careful procedures in place to monitor what the schools are getting. The contractor needs to make profit. How can you be sure that the facilities manager would provide the evidence that they have failed to meet their own performance standards? Are you aware of any facilities manager who would put their hands up and say we have failed? I still feel that there needs to be somebody in the school to monitor that services are delivered according to service level agreements.

The PPP contract contains clauses for dealing with changes in service requirements. However, change orders were perceived to be costly and difficult to implement. As pointed out by a PPP manager from the local education authority:

When you enter into this contractual arrangement to have the school provided, for say 25 years, if you don't put your requirement clearly in the contract of the outset, then if you want anything more or anything added or changed, you pay for it. You may have to a pay premium price for that because you have to go back to your service provider for a change order. If you asked for a school to be built for a certain number of pupils and if population grows in that area, then you would have to add on an additional wing to your school for which you may have to pay over the odds. The other scenario is falling numbers.

Whilst the head teachers can choose to use a third party for additional services, a mark-up is added by the PPP service provider. The fact that the school is owned by the PPP service provider creates difficulty when negotiating the installation of new fixtures, fittings and equipment which were not part of the original PPP contract. As pointed by a head teacher:

Negotiating with the facilities manager if anything has to be done to the building has been a nightmare. For instance, negotiating the installation of data projectors and interactive whiteboards. That's because the information technology infrastructure was not included in our PPP contract. The facilities manager puts a mark-up on that, but I don't feel that it is an undue mark-up.

Falling pupil numbers (i.e. demand risk) was a key concern to all the parties. As compared to conventional school, PPP contracts are relatively more difficult and costly to terminate. The chief finance officer explained that falling pupil numbers would lead to a reduction in the recurrent budget making PPP unaffordable:

The local education authorities are funded basically for everything based on pupil numbers. If pupil numbers fall, we would get less money and we would come under pressure to reduce services. Now, we can reduce the services pretty quickly in our own schools but not in PPP schools. We don't have the same flexibility in a PPP. It is a 25 year risks.

Similarly, a deputy head teacher explained that although they were receiving good value for money from the PPP services, they were concerned about falling pupil numbers, the fixed PPP costs that is now part of their budget and the indexed linked nature of PPP payments. She pointed out that the local education authority may be motivated to divert pupils from conventional schools to make PPP schools viable:

We are getting a very good service, but we are also paying a huge price, which is index linked at 2,5% year on year and has to be paid no matter what, irrespective of pupil numbers. It is a bit scary. In an ordinary school, you have the option to close down part of your school; you would not have to incur the service costs there, heating, maintenance or whatever. But this school must be kept afloat and the bills must be

paid, no matter how many pupils we have... The local authority and the department of education would tell you that it would be in their best interest that our school is kept full of pupils because they are going to suffer, as well as ourselves.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This paper has analysed the interests of the government, private sector and school users in PPP contracts by using Bourdieu's analytical concepts. The field of PPP is animated with players, capitals and interests. The UK government has created the field of PPP to improve public services and keep debt under control in the short term by using private sector financing and to pursue a neoliberal agenda of valorising the *habitus* and capitals of private sector actors. However, PPP has committed future governments and generations to service PPP payments and reconfigured power relationships in the field of public services. The transfer of power to the private sector has weakened the control of local education authorities and schools and has enabled the private sector to dominate the field of public services.

Private financing of public infrastructure projects is appealing to governments during an era of austerity which poses unprecedented challenges when procuring public services. The Conservative government's main argument for introducing the PPP policy was that economic recovery would be sustainable if led by the private sector instead of the over expanding public sector. Subsequent governments have emphasised that PPP enables the public sector to obtain better value for money, achieved through risk transfer and private sector efficiency, than conventional procurement. However, the veil of public interest masks the government's own political interests of downsizing the public sector, reducing public spending in the short term and keeping PPP debts off the public sector's balance sheet. Moreover, PPP commits future generations, which may or may not need the PPP services contracted by the current government, to service PPP debts.

Bourdieu's concept of *doxa* provides insights into the taken for granted value for money rhetoric used by the UK government to justify the adoption of the PPP policy, which masks a number of interests that are not readily apparent in policy documents. The value for money *doxa* has enabled the UK government to pass off as necessity what is in fact a political choice between conventional procurement and PPP. Value for money and private sector efficiency are taken for granted and often beyond question, but behind these arguments there is a covert struggle for the imposition of the dominant systems of classification in the field of public services. As pointed by the interviewees, the dominant position of the private sector in the provision of public services has the potential to create conflict between those who value cultural capital against those who value economic capital.

A key logic of the field of PPP is its distributive potential among players who are endowed with diverse tokens of capitals and who occupy different positions in the field. Economic capital for building of new schools is scarce, but is important to government

interested in maintaining and improving the country's cultural capital. PPP has been used as a mechanism to enable the department of education, local education authorities and schools to meet their obligations/duties of enhancing cultural capital by unlocking and deploying the private sector's economic and social capital. Cultural capital is most valued in the public sector which has traditionally relied on taxpayers' economic capital to provide public services.

Private sector players use their economic, social and symbolic capitals in the field of PPP to play the game to the limit (*virtuosi*) and maximise their returns on economic capital. The *habitus* of the private sector could be apprehended as the belief in their ability to build and manage schools efficiently and the acceptance of private sector values by other players in the field. It was essential for the private sector players to develop their social and symbolic capitals in order to accumulate economic capitals, in the form of dividends and/or capital gains and profits from sub-contracting of construction and facilities management to their related companies. Whilst large established players have accumulated symbolic and social capitals in the field, small equity financiers chose to compete in the field by forming strategic alliances through their social connections and choosing to focus on a niche market.

The school users and private sector players have mutual interests in making PPP work. They place significant reliance on unwritten rules, with the written rules used as backup when relationship fails. Reliance on good working relationship, 'give and take', and the practice of playing the PPP game up to the point of minor transgression may explain the lack of performance deductions in PPP contracts. One of the claimed benefits of PPP in education sector was that it would enable teachers to focus more on the creation of cultural capital and less time on administrative matters. However, in practice PPP has created structural changes in the management of the education state, and introduced inflexibility and uncertainties for the school. The head teachers were generally unhappy with the relatively dominant influence of the local education authority and the department of education over PPP matters, and the loss of control of their schools to the private sector.

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INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. How long have you worked in the public sector? What is the nature of the roles you have occupied over this period of time?
2. Could you please explain what do you understand by the term accountability? Could you give me an example? Could you please identify the parties to whom you feel the school is accountable to?
3. For what is the school answerable to the above parties? Provide some examples in terms of tasks, duties, responsibilities.
4. (a) What is your understanding of the term value for money (VFM)?
(b) In the context of your school, do you feel that your school is obtaining VFM? Please provide some examples.
(c) Would you agree that better accountability for PPP activities, at the pre and post implementation stages will improve VFM? How? Please provide some examples.
5. What role did the school stakeholders play in the PPP appraisal process? Do you feel that there was adequate consultation and consideration of needs? Please provide some examples.
6. What was the role of the school stakeholders in the evaluation and selection of bids submitted by contractors? How were they involved in this process?
7. Based on your experience of PPP schools and traditionally procured schools, taking into consideration *cost* and *quality* which one do you feel provides better value? Would you choose PPP if the school has the option to choose freely between PPP and traditional procurement? Why or why not?
8. How are PPP contracts monitored in terms of quality of services provided by the contractor? Who are the parties involved in the monitoring process? What types of information do you receive and use? Who prepares the information and for whom? How do you feel the monitoring process could be improved?

9. Was there any performance assessment carried out in terms of the impact of the PPP programme and the extent which it is meeting its objectives? For example, through a user satisfaction survey. If so, what did this process involve?
10. In your opinion, are the PPP contracts flexible enough to provide for changes in service requirements? What types of changes do they cover and not cover?
11. Is the contractor responsive to requests for service improvement? Does the contractor provide a reliable level of service? Were there any cases of disagreement over the service quality? Please provide some examples.
12. What are some of the improvements you would like to see in the PPP procurement and post implementation process?