



---

PRIFYSGOL CYMRU

**Y Drindod Dewi Sant**

UNIVERSITY OF WALES

**Trinity Saint David**

---

MBA Dissertation  
BMMB7003D

Politics, Power, and Decision-making in Faith-based Organisational Change

By  
Max McKenzie-Cook  
27001629

In partial fulfilment of MBA Dissertation Module

# Declaration

## DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed ..... (candidate)

Date .....

## STATEMENT 1

This work is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s).

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed ..... (candidate)

Date .....

## STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my work, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

Signed ..... (candidate)

Date .....

## Acknowledgements

I would like to take a moment to give special thanks to certain individuals:

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Glenn Behenna who was extremely supportive and steered me in the right direction throughout my course.

I would like to thank those who participated in my study, I could not have done it without your willingness to take part in this study.

To my dissertation mentor Paul Boldeau, I am so grateful for all those hours on the phone. Just talking things through proved to be extremely enriching. You were supportive and yet challenging, which helped me more than you realise.

To my wife and daughter for their support and patience with me while I completed my dissertation.

Finally, I want to thank God, I have been blessed to have gone through this whole process and come out the other side.

## Abstract

The South England Conference is a faith-based membership-driven organisation. They are part of a large Christian denomination and are integral to serving the European division. Yet, there has been a sharp decline in growth in recent years. Successive leaders have tried to address the issue but have failed so far. Considering the uniqueness of this organisation, this study has investigated the extent to which political drivers impacted decision-making within the organisation. When exploring the political themes surrounding decision-making, this paper adopted a qualitative approach, using networked thematic analysis. The 'cultural web' tool was used as a framework for this study. They interviewed members of the board of trustees both past and present and found political drivers were significant and pervasive. Consequently, it has had a negative impact on the organisation. This paper proceeded to make recommendations on how they could reduce the negative impact of political behaviour and improve the quality of the organisation's decision-making capabilities.

## Glossary

**Faith-leader:** This refers to a spiritual leader which could be a pastor, vicar, priest, or reverend.

**Lay-member:** This refers to people who have a religious faith and are part of a specific denomination but are not a faith-leader.

**Ofcom:** This refers to the executive team and usually includes the CEO, CFO and the Company secretary.

**Nomcom:** The nomination committee is selected at a session and is composed of both members and employees. The purpose is to elect officers for the coming term.

**President:** Is usually the executive leader of the organisation (CEO)

**Executive Secretary:** Is usually considered the company secretary.

**Treasurer:** Is usually considered the CFO of the SEC.

**Executive Committee:** This is the board of trustees who are regulated by the charity commission.

**Tithe:** An Individuals' financial donation to the organisation. Usually, 10% of their salary.

**Session:** This is an equivalent version of an AGM. This is where the SEC reports to its members on their charitable activities.

**Pierson Package:** An informal agreement that stipulates that you must have a white company secretary if you have a black president.

## Table of Contents

.....	1
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Glossary</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>8</b>
The South England Conference (SEC) .....	10
Research Topic.....	16
Research Question/Aim.....	16
Objectives .....	16
<b>2. Literature Review</b> .....	<b>17</b>
Academic Focus .....	17
Classical Organisational Theory .....	18
Human Relations Theory .....	21
Contingency Theory.....	23
Summary.....	31
<b>3. Methodology</b> .....	<b>32</b>
Introduction .....	32
Research Method .....	33
Semi-Structured Interviews .....	34
Interview Framework .....	35
Data Collection .....	36
Sampling Framework.....	38
Sampling Size .....	39
Method of Analysis .....	41
Reliability, Validity, Limitations and Ethical Considerations .....	42
Limitations .....	43
<b>4. Analysis of Cultural Web</b> .....	<b>44</b>
Stories .....	44
Inequality .....	46
Rituals and Routines .....	50
Symbols.....	53
Control Systems .....	58
Power Structures .....	61
Organisational Structure .....	63
Structural Reforms.....	64
Faith Leaders .....	64
Executive Team.....	65
Summary.....	66
<b>5. Conclusion</b> .....	<b>66</b>
Inequality a Political Driver .....	67
Executive Team.....	68
Faith Leaders as Political Actors .....	68
Board of Trustees .....	69
<b>6. Recommendations</b> .....	<b>69</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>72</b>
<b>Appendices</b> .....	<b>81</b>

[Blank Page]

## 1. Introduction

There is a mythology that exists around organisations that fail to change when the situational context demands it. Academic literature highlights organisations like Kodak, which acts as a cautionary tale to those who do not respond quickly to the need for change (Sarkar and Osiyevskyy, 2018, p.48). Furthermore, with the global impact of COVID-19, many organisations are forced to enter rapid and transformational change (Amis and Greenwood, 2021, p.583). This is an interesting phenomenon because it is generally accepted that change initiatives have a high failure rate. Kirby (2019, p.155) believes the rate of failure stands at around 50%–75%.

However, Charity Commission (2018) statistics reveal an increase in charitable organisations from the early 2000s. It would stand to reason that such organisations would also need to think about organisational change. Lynch (2021, p.641) acknowledges that charities and non-profits have special considerations and characteristics in comparison to for-profit organisations. These considerations include the use of volunteers for service delivery, fundraising, specialist technical knowledge, and leadership and governance. Leaders' ability to motivate and carry their workers with them is given greater emphasis by Lynch.

Additionally, it is interesting to note that Lynch highlights in his footnotes that this is an area lacking research.

This is an important point for the purpose of this paper. The Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church is a global charity that is also faith-based. According to its annual statistics, in 2020, it brought in \$3.2bn in revenues globally (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2021, p.9). Also, on a global level, the SDA church operates 10,000 educational institutions, 22 food related organisations, and 229 hospitals. Its NGO has 130 regional offices serving over 20m beneficiaries (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2022). It would be



fair to say that the SDA church has a significant presence within the non-profit sector. As a result, there is merit in understanding how organisational change impacts a faith-based non-profit. However, studying the entire organisation stands outside the scope of this study. Yet, it is important to understand how a regional unit sits within the larger organisational structure.

Another important point to consider is the nature of decision-making within non-profit organisations. Roy and Perrin (2021, p.62) recognise that some non-profit organisations are more predisposed to an organisational culture where decision-making is based on negotiation and compromise, inevitably leading to political behaviour designed to win support for a particular position. They argue this culture leads to high levels of conflict, which, in turn, impacts the quality of the decision-making.

Consequently, this paper aims to examine the culture of a South England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and how their decision-making process would impact the change initiatives it seeks to undertake. This paper will establish its background based on the SDA global structure. It will provide a rationale for choosing the South England Conference as its basis. We explain their need for change and the importance of this study, with its focus on culture, power and politics. We will then look at the aims and objectives of this research. Following Chapter 1, we will examine the literature around this topic in Chapter 2, and this paper will then explain how it will contribute to that literature. Chapter 3 will focus on our research design, methodology and data collection. Chapter 4 will analyse the data and highlight the key insights. Meanwhile, Chapters 5 & 6 will discuss the implications of our findings and the present conclusions and recommendations.

The South England Conference (SEC)

*SEC as a Strategic Business Unit*

To grasp the importance of the SEC as the choice of this

study, we must first understand how it sits within the

wider organisational structure. The SEC is part of the

wider World Church of Seventh-day Adventists. The

General Conference (2022) states that they are a global

body with 21m members across every continent. Their HQ is in America, and for efficiency

and impact, the HQ has 13 regional offices called ‘divisions.’

There are four layers to the organisational structure. The first layer is the General

Conference and its 13 divisions. They have strategic oversight over all missional activities

across the world. Next, under an individual division, you have the second layer called

‘unions.’ They usually have oversight for a collection of national territories’ charitable

activities. Moreover, the relevant division will oversee the union’s operations. The third

layer falls under the jurisdiction of the relevant ‘union.’ They are called ‘Local Conferences’

and are usually responsible for the charitable activities within a local region of a nation: The

SEC is a local conference. Finally, the last layer of the structure is called the local church.

This is where members join locally, return their donations, and participate in local charitable

activities as well as spiritual ones.

Therefore, when we look at the South England Conference, we can see where it sits within

the wider organisation. The division responsible for the SEC’s region is called the ‘Trans-

European Division.’ Among other union entities, they are responsible for the ‘British and

Irish Union Conference.’ The Union oversees the missional work in England, Scotland,

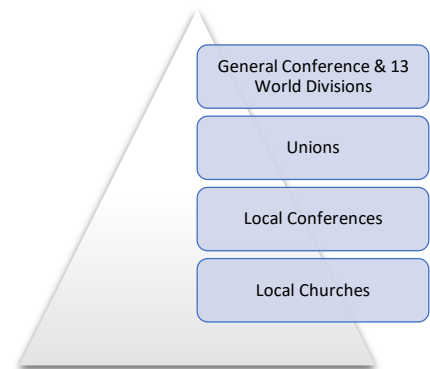


Figure 1

Ireland and Wales. Within that Union, we have the South England Conference. Within the

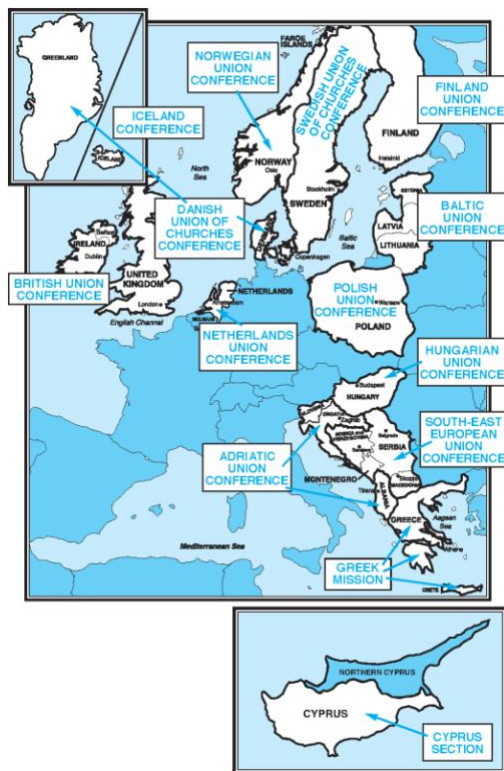


Figure 2

South of England, they are responsible for all local churches and missional activity in that jurisdiction.

Furthermore, because of the way it is structured,

Fuller (2019, p.25) argues the SEC is a strategic

business unit. They organise and manage their

human, financial and physical resources.

Consequently, their success will have a direct

impact on their union and division. Data on the

Trans-European Division indicates that the British

Union is their largest territory, accounting for the

largest revenues, contributing 49% to its combined

revenue intake. Additionally, the SEC is the largest conference within the British Union and

brings 65% of the total revenue (Adventist Archives and Statistics, 2022, p.54). As such, each

SBU is responsible for its own management, but they also contribute to the administration

of the organisations mentioned above (GCAS, 2022). This means that what happens in the

SEC has a significant knock-on effect throughout the Union but also throughout the wider

divisional SBU. Therefore, studying organisational change and the decision-making

processes is critical to the sustainable future of the entire divisional SBU. As such, we will

now look at the structure of the SEC in more detail.

### *SEC Structure*

The South England Conference (SEC) is part of a global Christian denomination. According to

their constitution, their purpose is to present the Gospel within their territory, which

includes the South of England, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Wight, and the Isles of Scilly.

In practice, this includes operating a network of publishing houses, educational institutions, and non-governmental development organisations (SEC Constitution, 2015, p.1).

The constitution also makes two more important points. This is a membership-based organisation, and their primary source of income is from their members through the tithe system (SEC Constitution, 2015, p.9). Members who join this organisation usually give 10% of their salaries to support the charitable activities of the SEC. Taking everything into account, we can surmise that for the SEC to grow successfully, they need to add members who are willing to donate 10% of their salaries to the organisation.

### *SEC in Need of Change*

However, we can calculate the organisation's net growth by looking at how many members they lost compared with how many members the SEC added: They have been on a downward trend since 2013 (Office of Archives and Statistics, 2020).

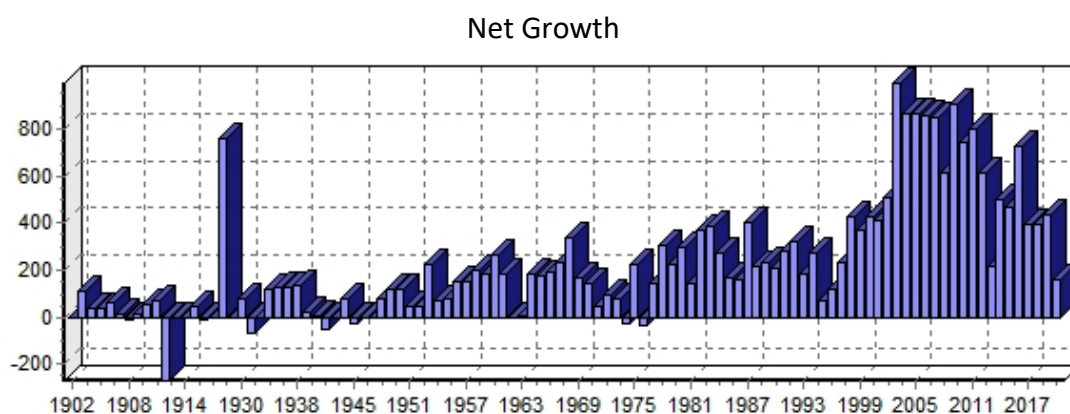


Figure 3

Furthermore, as found through a global membership survey, 62% of their members were 40 years old or older, with an average age of 49 years old (Andrews University, 2018, p.5). We can add to this picture by looking at the financial report from the Charity Commission

(2022). Over the last five years, their report income has been essentially flat, with a sharp decrease in 2020 due to the pandemic.

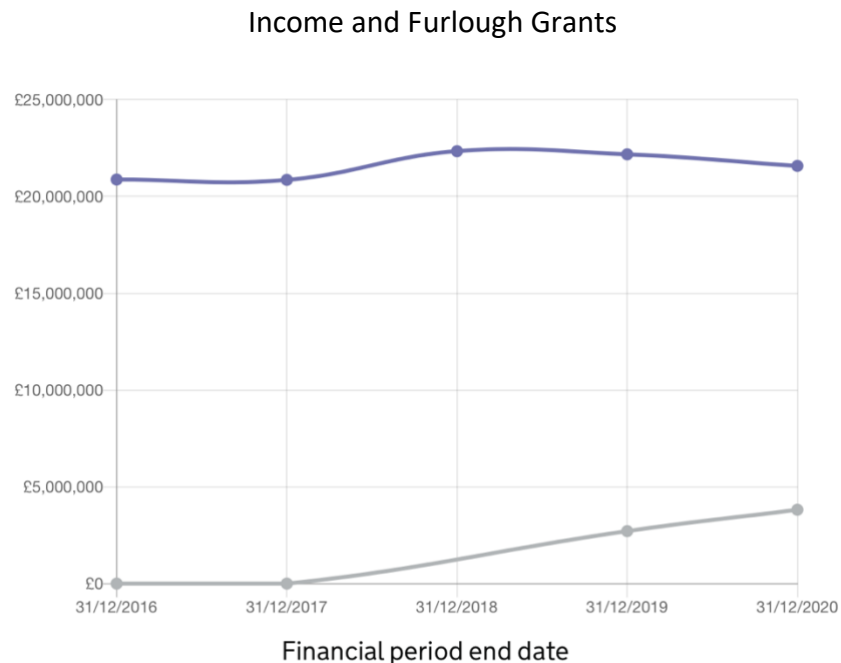


Figure 4

From this data, the SEC's rate of growth is declining, and as this is a membership-driven organisation, that fact is having an impact on their revenues. They also have an ageing membership, which means that the longevity of the SEC is in danger, and change is needed if the organisation is going to survive the next 20 years.

The SEC has unsuccessfully attempted to address this for a few years. In a members' meeting, called a 'session,' the issue was discussed at length, with recommendations given to the senior executive team for further exploration. Some of the problems highlighted included a lack of consensus on the organisation's identity, decision-making process on resource allocation, better support for staff, and a plan to engage younger members (South England Conference, 2015, p.35). However, no empirical data was used to back up any assumptions made at that meeting. It was also difficult to see any tangible improvement in

the next 'session' as evidenced by the continued decline in net growth. This suggests that the SEC are aware of the struggles that face them but find it challenging to address them and do not seem to use much empirical evidence in their decision-making process.

Furthermore, with the impact of COVID, the ability of the SEC to see problems and manage them quickly has become even more urgent.

#### *Organisational Culture and Political Undertones*

The SEC requires a change, and this paper would like to explore some of the underlying reasons why it struggles to do so. According to the SEC constitution (2015, p.2), a 'session' is where the highest decision-making authority exists, and it only meets once every four years. Therefore, in between sessions, the constitution gives a small representative body called the executive committee 'all the powers of the Conference in session' subject to the constitution to ensure the organisation is operated competently (SEC Constitution, 2015, p.6). Additionally, for the benefit of the Charity Commission, the executive committee is also the board of trustees and is to act in the charity's best interest (Charity Commission, 2018, p.3). It also mentions that the executive committee must have at least 14 people to represent their membership base. They should also work with the 'officers committee' Ofcom to execute the SEC's plans. Ofcom consists of the President (CEO), Secretary (Company Secretary) and Treasurer (CFO), and the Constitution (2015, p.6) states that the President is also chair of the executive committee.

What is interesting about this paper is the current organisational structure and the underlying culture that drives its decision-making process. For example, the CEO is also chair of the board of trustees; how might that impact decision-making? Additionally, the CEO does not have final decision-making responsibilities. According to the constitution, Ofcom makes decisions by consensus on the day-to-day activities (SEC Constitution, 2015, p.7).

Furthermore, the members are held to account by the executive committee. As a result, there is ambiguity in the leadership chain within the organisation. Also, as a membership-driven organisation, it operates a representative model in its structure, which means it desires to represent voices from all parts of the organisation (Adventist Review, 2015, p.27). Within membership-driven organisations, there is a predisposition towards negotiation and bargaining with all representatives of the membership body. While there isn't a consensus on the definition of political behaviour, there is a general acceptance that organisations that focus their decision-making and goal setting on the process of negotiation could be described as political-driven organisations (Jovanovic, 2019, p.89). This has been a point of contention in recent times as the SEC's global HQ commissioned a paper to outline each regional office's hierarchical structures and authority (General Conference, 2016, p.1). This was seen when recent democratic votes taken on a global level were not accepted by all SBU lower down in the organisational structure. This led to the General Conference to provide clarification on the authority available within each level of the organisation (General Conference Secretariat, 2015 p.6). Consequently, it highlights the importance of each voice at each level. This would indicate there needs to be a level of negotiation and bargaining that is embedded within the entire organisational structure. Furthermore, it is also possible that due to this fact, a political culture guides some of the decision-making processes within the SEC as the interest of members must be considered, and this is reflected in the composition of the executive committee.

In summation, we have explored the extent to which faith-based, membership-driven organisations contribute significantly to the non-profit sector. Moreover, we have also looked at the structure and importance of the SEC within the wider structure. We have explored the case for change within the SEC and how organisational culture favours a

representative democratic approach over an empirical evidential approach. As such, if the SEC is to consider its need to change, it needs to understand the extent of those political drivers, and this provides the rationale for our study. Therefore, this paper seeks to explore how political drivers impact the SEC's decision-making process.

#### Research Topic

The topic of research is exploring organisational and political power in faith-based organisational change.

#### Research Question/Aim

This research is designed to understand the extent to which political drivers impact decision-making over rational, empirical drivers in the context of organisational change.

#### Objectives

- Establish and understand the structure of the SEC
- Understand how the current board of trustees (Executive Committee) perceive the current SEC culture regarding their decision-making and compare it with what they believe it should be. I will use Johnson and Scholes' 'Cultural Web' in a semi-structured interview process.
- Critically analyse the extent of political drivers using 'network thematic analyses'.
- Use findings to highlight potential opportunities and challenges for organisational change.

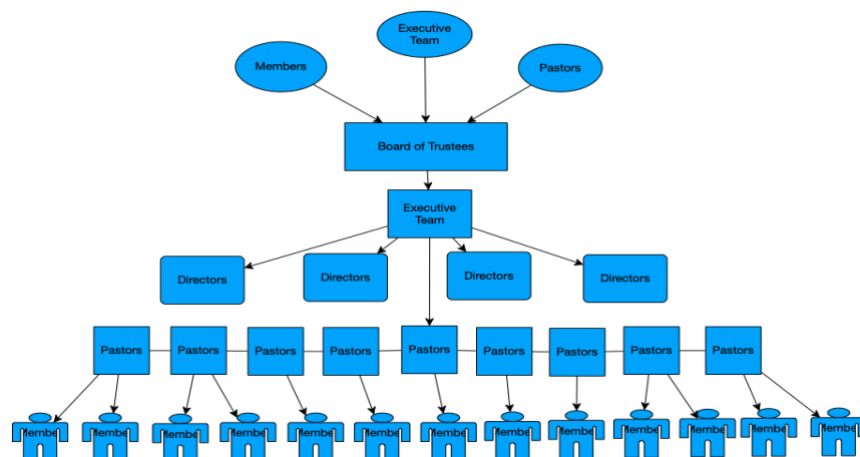


Figure 5



## 2. Literature Review

### Academic Focus

Considering the decision-making process within a faith-based, membership-driven organisation is a complex task. It requires an understanding of the organisational structure, culture, and modes of operation. Also, delving deeper into political behaviour requires careful consideration. Amah (2021, p.342) suggests that the word politics has a negative connotation but that there is a positive view of it as well. Going further, they suggest that most behaviours are driven by ethical values and what is considered right and wrong. Furthermore, Elbanna (2018, p.617) agrees with both positive and negative understanding of political behaviour, further suggesting that it provides a voice for the more diverse factions within that organisation. This complexity means that we need to consider the development of organisational theory through the lens of decision-making. Moreover, we can provide a platform to understand how the literature has developed, which will also help us contribute to the under-researched area of faith-based, membership-driven organisations. When you have various stakeholders with a voice and authority, there will be some mechanism for collaboration within your decision-making process (Bryson, Crosby and Seo, 2020, p.167). This is also true for faith-based, membership-driven organisations like the SEC. Thus, we need to examine the literature on organisations and their development, looking at it through their assumptions regarding how they viewed the decision-making process.

Therefore, we will take a brief understanding of classical organisational theory, human relations theory, contingency and open systems theory, organisational culture, and political behaviour, all through the eye of decision-making. We will consider both seminal and

current research to provide a comprehensive overview of the academic literature in this area.

### *Classical Organisational Theory*

Organisational or management theory starts with what some call classical organisational theories (Burns, 2017, p.74). Critical thinkers around classical organisational theory include Fredrick Taylor, Max Weber and Henry Fayol. Classical organisations were considered very mechanical and process-driven. The aim was to set up the organisation to maximise productivity and efficiency (Tabiu, 2019, p.494). Organisations were based on a solid command and control hierarchical structure. An organisation with clear and stable authority structures could make the right decisions that would provide the blueprint for a successful organisation (Bourgoin, Bencherki and Faraj, 2020, p.1134). The underlining assumptions revolve around rationality. Rationality transcended any influence from outside or within the organisation. Once the proper structure was in place with clear leadership and a chain of command, they could make the right decisions that would lead them to success (Cameron and Green, 2020, p.107). Sambumbu (2018, p.3) explained the rationale behind these assumptions. It was believed that organising around simple tasks would make decision-making and planning easier. Therefore, decisive leadership would ensure that production would take place as quickly as possible and with the lowest cost.

### *Digital-Taylorism*

Classical organisational models seemed to have faded into history as organisational theory continued to develop. While we will look at the maturity of the field in further sections, there seems to be a resurgence of some classical theories as technology has increased. Organisations have always needed to operate to find a way to operate as efficiently as possible while at the same time maximising profits. This is due to how governance is

thought about in the UK. Companies House (2021) makes it clear that directors are to act in the best interest of the company. Which is usually to return a profit for their shareholders. As a result, this has led to bigger discussions around the role of technology within the organisation. Lykourantzou, Robert Jr. and Barlatier (2021, p.64) highlighted that outsourcing was always a strategic option, viable for many due to technological advances. Various forms of artificial intelligence are able to take over routine and specialised tasks, leaving more creative roles for workers. This paper makes an interesting point that digitalisation has the potential to reorganise companies where outsourcing to technology can lead to highlighting specialised roles and more of a command-and-control structure in their leadership. Gundhus, Talberg, and Wathne (2022, p.36) built on the body of literature within the police service and its possible merits under public management. The paper agreed that within a highly structured organisation like the police force, digitalisation could be useful. They went on to add that because the police force is a public service and there is always a need for efficiency, digital Taylorism lent itself well to such an organisation. While digital Taylorism may work well in such an organisation, one may wonder about its merits within a faith-based, membership-driven organisation. It might entail lower costs, but the decision-making process found in many Taylor-like organisations may not fit well within the representative model under which the SEC operates. Additionally, while Ouma, S. and Premchander, S. (2022, p. 419) agree with the recent development of digital Taylorism, they caution that digitalisation also brings similar concerns to those of the classical models. They cited the alleged labour conditions abuse in organisations like Amazon. They are highly specialised and technology-driven. Yet, the working conditions have some question marks around them.

This is still a top-down model that views employees as cogs in a wheel. They also seem to have very little autonomy or ability to contribute. With an organisation like the SEC, this model is very different. As a membership-driven organisation, people join because they believe in the organisation's mission. Consequently, there is a stronger employee voice which has been growing and seen as very important in recent times (Singh, S. and Vanka, S. 2019, p.268).

### *Weber and Bureaucracy*

Weber was also a child of the classical organisational school with his work on bureaucracy.

According to Featherstone (2020, p.100), his work evolved from the enlightenment and was strongly based on rationality, i.e., the idea that humans could solve problems through logic and reasoning. Featherstone (2020, p.104) continues to explain the foundational concepts of Weber's bureaucracy were based on hierarchy, task specialisations, processes, rules and regulation. The capacity to solve an organisational problem resided with the roles and the responsibilities assigned to each person, and the leaders appointed to coordinate them.

There are a few elements that have important considerations for our study. The first is on how modern literature focuses on the 'leader', but it is adapted for the modern world Lumby, J. (2019, p.14). For example, Kim (2020, p.1245) analyses a body of research around servant leadership. This is a type of leadership that leads with values and authenticity, which in turn increases employee engagement by inspiring the workers. Within this study, they highlight how servant leaders thrive in organisations that are formalised but decentralised. As an organisation grows, there is a need for greater complexity but also greater delegation. This is an environment that is ripe for servant leadership.

Secondly, faith-based organisations have had to adapt to the modern world, and as such, some of Weber's work has proven helpful. Patrikios S. (2020, p.419) argues this point when

analysing how the orthodox had to change in order to meet the changing demand of their church and activities. Generally speaking, most activities were led by faith leaders. However, their training did not lend itself well to the growing demands placed on the church. They turned to specialisations found among their members who were trained in other areas to assist their decision-making.

We can see that the merits of classical organisational theory are still finding a role within modern organisations and even faith-based ones. However, there is still a strong rational theme that runs through the decision-making process. Also, while leadership is prominent in the literature, it is not so much within the limited faith-based literature. There is little discourse on how the rationality of bureaucracy and the faith of religious members operate within faith-based organisations .

#### Human Relations Theory

However, even at the time of the classical model, there was a reaction to that organisational structure and philosophy. In contrast to the mechanical cogs in a wheel approach, human relation approaches looked at how reducing the intensity and improving the treatment of workers could enhance productivity (Omodan, Tsotetsi, and Dube, 2020, p.2). One of the major contributors to the early research on productivity was Elton Mayo and the Hawthorne experiment. His work led to two major propositions, the importance of groups and the desire to be recognised and belong (Burns, 2017, p.82). This work provided the foundation to examine workers' emotional and psychological needs. This led to Mary Follet, Maslow, Moore, Herzberg, and McGregor's ground-breaking work (Carson, 2005, p.450). The human relationship approach moves away from the classical management theory by making organisations look at the structure and how individuals and groups reacted in those

structures, yet it was still a one-size-fits-all approach that may not fully appreciate the complexity and dynamism of people and systems.

#### Leadership's Different Horizon

There was a different view which implied that leaders could not do it all on their own.

Rather, it was their responsibility to inspire and motivate their employees – this was key in their decision-making processes. The recent work of Lichtenstein, Lichtenstein, and Higgs (2017, p.20) analysed the impact that personal values had on executive leaders' decision-making. They concluded that there was a relation between the personal value system of an executive and their decision-making within the organisation.

They highlighted that there was still a place for Maslow's work but that it also had other implications. For example, what happens if there are different value systems involved in the decision-making process? In a representational system like the SEC, it may be the case that members' representing various aspects of the membership will have different values, which may cause conflict and tension. Furthermore, how would the different values impact how empirical data is viewed? Would empirical data be minimised in the pursuit of having the organisation's value system prevail? To what extent would this form be a part of the overall culture of the organisation?

The environment is rapidly changing, which means that leaders require more and more complexity from their workforce. The ONS (2019) highlights that the UK has moved away from a production economy to a service-based economy. This requires a different set of skills from the employees and, similar to service industries, relationships and connections. There has been a rise in the number of discussions about the complexity of tasks, the need for creativity, and the rapidly changing environment (Chima and Gutman, 2020, p.2).

The implication is that leaders must pay more attention to how they can help their employees succeed. The view shifts away from command and control and towards the autonomy and creativity of the employees, who need the right conditions to succeed (Chukwusa, 2018, p.6). Finally, leaders with a command and control view will find it difficult to work in an ever-changing world. Linthorst (2020, p.14) states that mega-trends, which include the rise in technology and the ever-changing workforce, mean that organisations need to be more nimble and engage in scanning .

From our view of the literature, the human-relation theory tried to address some of the limitations found in the classical model. There is a strong focus on leadership and its relationship with its workers. Their focus on the emotional and psychological factors certainly developed the literature, which is still acknowledged in recent literature. Still, their focus on people highlighted the complexity of people. As such, it is difficult to sustain a one-size-fits-all approach and requires intensive attention of the leaders. We can infer that the limits of the human-relations approach also reflected the limits of their decision-making. An ever-changing environment with changing workers and values would all have an impact on the organisation. This led to the subsequent significant development in organisational theory: the contingency approach.

#### Contingency Theory

Classical and human relations theories assumed rational approaches to organisations and management. The implicit implication for decision-making was that taking the correct, rational approach would increase the success of your organisation. However, this did not always prove to be the case and led to a new way of thinking where organisational success was 'dependent' on the capabilities of each organisation, often called the best fit for their own organisation. Some of the assumptions of a contingent approach and its thinkers were

summed up by Aubry and Lavoie-Tremblay (2018, p.15). It included situational variables, environmental factors, technology, the size and complexity of the organisation and open systems theory development. One of the major developments was the idea of environmental scanning, which is the process of studying external forces and how they could potentially impact the organisation as the best way to improve decision-making.

Wong, H. and Hung, J. (2012, p.30) argued that the rational approach taken was limited and, as such, organisations needed to be prepared to look at external variables. To that point, many thinkers would look at organisations as a system where inputs from the environment and technology have a major impact on the outputs. Afshar Jahanshahi, A. (2016, p.962) believes that environmental scanning can improve the quality of decision-making within an organisation. Mahmud, Soetanto, and Jack (2021, p.3) built on this viewpoint; their study found that the quicker one was able to identify relevant insights from the environment, the quicker they could take action. In order to do so, they found that decentralising the organisational structure gives autonomy to workers to get accurate information quickly and respond quickly to any relevant change.

On the other hand, there was a growing discussion about the fact that much of the literature was focused on Western countries, and there were questions about whether the cultural impacts had any impact on the activity of scanning the environment. However, there has been research that has looked at contingency methods and environmental scanning, which has found that there is some value in environmental scanning. For example, Abu-Rahma and Jaleel (2019, p.690) found that environmental scanning has a positive impact in areas where there was no certain outcome.

One final area that needs to be considered is how the development of artificial intelligence will impact environmental scanning. Shrestha, Ben-Menahem, and von Krogh (2019, p.78)



believe that as technological development advances at a rapid pace, scanning will need to be robust and guard against some of the drawbacks of using artificial intelligence as part of their decision-making process. This would include scanning the environment, which should inform how the algorithms are changed. Also, this study goes on to highlight the wealth of information available on how the algorithm is biased by human inputs. This would also be a key variable to consider.

#### Open Systems and Structures

Contingency recognises that there isn't a one-size-fits-all but that each organisation has a best fit for them. However, the concept of open systems and especially environmental scanning believes there is a need to understand dynamic variables and how they impact their organisation. It starts with the understanding that those within the organisation do not have all the necessary knowledge to make the decisions they need. Yet in a faith-based organisation, belief in a higher power might negate the need for external data.

There isn't much literature that examines organisations that have a culture where authority is not based solely on empirical data. Additionally, with contingent approaches, we can see that they were limited in the variables that would impact the organisation. There was a growing recognition that it was not only hard, tangible variables that could affect the organisation. Instead, softer, more hidden variables were just as influential. Gilbert et al. (2012, p.31) looked at behaviours that could create poor working conditions in contrast to behaviours that could create positive working environments.

This would have a significant impact on how an organisation would make its decisions. It also led to organisational culture as a focus of study. French and Bell (1999, p.18 ) built on this idea using the metaphor of an iceberg. The tip of the iceberg was the formal tangible aspects of an organisation; however, there were more informal structures within an

organisation, such as values and beliefs. Puranam P. (2018, p.134) stated that analyses of the informal structures could shift over time and at different rates. This can create a misalignment between workers and the formal structures, meaning greater emphasis is placed on irrational approaches to decision-making. This led the academic literature to shift once again, with recent work focusing on culture, politics and power.

### *Culture, Power, and Politics*

We can see the development of the literature from a place where rational management was the prevailing underlying assumption. Well-structured organisations would make the correct type of decisions based on sound operating models. This shifted to a place where organisations were not seen as rational but irrational and complex, with various variables. Organisations are built with people that operate in changing environments. This has led to a greater focus on people and how their values and assumptions create cultures. There are various thinkers on culture; Hofstede is considered a leading thinker on culture, but his focus is on nationalities and their impact on organisations.

Additionally, there is very little agreement on the effects of his research; yet, it remains a good starting point for those exploring the idea of culture and organisations (Beugelsdijk and Welzel, 2018, p.1469). The GLOBE leadership built on the work of Hofstede in a significant way. They decided to research 62 countries and their managers to understand the impact of national cultures on organisations. They largely followed the same categories outlined by Hofstede but expanded some of the areas in order to provide some nuance. Their conclusions listed 9 cultural dimensions along with 6 leadership characteristics. A matrix could be created to determine which cultures were similar and which were different. This provided depth and richness to their data, which was not found in Hofstede as he only researched IBM (GLOBE, 2020).

Utilising the global paradigm, Western, S. and Garcia (2018, p.163) looked at the cultural dimensions in the UK. They found that the UK favoured charismatic leadership but also participative decision-making. However, they cautioned against overgeneralisation within the UK. This would be wise counsel as the SEC has an extremely diverse workforce.

According to SEC records, over 60% are from ethnic minorities (McCormac, 2019). This may mean the reality in the SEC might not be the same as the broad generalisations found in the Globe studies. Furthermore, it should be noted that understanding how those various views and values form on an organisational level also needs to be explored.

When we look specifically at organisations on a micro-level, Schien (2017, p.17) argues that there are layers to a culture. The first layer is the most visible actions and behaviours; the second layer is the espoused values, i.e. what the organisation says about itself. Finally, there are the tacit assumptions. These are usually the hidden values that drive how the organisation operates. The implication is that if there is misalignment between the three levels, conflict and tension arise. On the other hand, a question arises related to the deeper tacit assumptions: Can an organisation truly change or manage one's more deeply held assumption? Thornbury (1999, p.4) was a landmark case study on culture change.

Thornbury was tasked to look at culture change for KPMG.

Some interesting points were raised during the process. First, there was a broad acknowledgement of Schien's layer model of culture. However, the second point recognised that deep-rooted values could not be changed. As a result, their approach was to change some of the artefacts and espoused values. This was possible because they were changeable. It seemed to be a type of behaviour modification that needed to be applied throughout the whole organisation. Organisational Culture remains extremely difficult to get consensus on within the academic literature. However, there are some broad

observations that seem to provide some broad guiding points. We have observed the move away from a rationale model as externalities can influence how an organisation sees itself. Within the context of culture, nationality can play an important point. Although the literature cautions against overgeneralisations, this is probably the greatest indicator of humanity's complexity. It is difficult to provide clear identifying markers. Still, the research by Hofstede and built upon by others, including GLOBE, broadly keep the same categories. As such, we shouldn't completely dismiss their importance. Additionally, we can see that on a micro-level, cultures within organisations are formed largely by their unseen values and assumptions.

We can acknowledge that the research is not clear on the question of whether a culture can be changed or not. Yet, there has been some research identifying some levels of culture that are malleable. On the other hand, as with much of the data, this does not apply to membership-driven, faith-based organisations, in which there would be strong voices from different backgrounds, with different values and assumptions. This difference is something that this paper could explore, along with its impact on decision-making.

#### [Power and Politics](#)

While there is much discussion on this model, it provides a reasonable basis for understanding the implications of power and authority in the decision-making process. Those who have power will influence the organisation's agenda based on their values and assumptions. A seminal paper on the sources of power was done by French and Raven (1959, p.351), who believed that in order to understand where the sources of power came from, they had to analyse those who had power and those who were its subjects. They concluded that there were six sources of power, which include legitimate power, power based on rewards, power based on one's expert knowledge or skills, and power based on

one's charisma, worthiness, or respect from others. The other two sources of power are coercive power and informational power. Their work has been highly influential over the years. Many have tried to expand on the original six sources of power and have even called for their inclusion in management practices (Elias, S. 2008, p.278). However, over the years, the original six bases of power seem to remain rather compelling; however, this comes with a caution that the six bases aren't always distinguishable among users (Lyngstad 2017, p.941). Also, the environment has become more complex and dynamic, with a need to give employees greater autonomy and creativity over their workflow (Hartner-Tiefenthaler 2021, p.260).

This inevitably means that more power is put into the hands of employees, and when we tie that to employee commitment and engagement, there seems to be a positive relationship between referential, expert or informational power and job satisfaction (Deniz Dirik and İnan Eryilmaz 2018, p.536). We may conclude from this that a person's perception of importance to a project or organisation creates higher levels of job satisfaction. Taking everything together, there is a possibility that this view opens the door for discussing power in relation to political behaviours. Buchanan and Badham (2020, p.36) define politics in the context of organisational behaviour as actions designed to influence others. When there are various members with different views, values and assumptions, there may be a need to win others over to support their agenda.

Organisational politics was generally seen as negative, where people are self-serving and commit acts like sabotage or backstabbing. However, the literature became more balanced with academic work looking at the perceptions of the actions. For example, those with political will and skill could be seen as acting in pursuit of justice or fairness (Hochwarter, W.A. et al. 2020 p.879). This is of particular importance for our study of the South England

Conference. When taking a cursory view of the literature, we see that the SEC is a global membership-driven organisation. Its organisational structure is self-described as representational. This description would mean that it lends itself to political behaviour. It may also be the case that decision making is not rational, as earlier theories would advocate. Furthermore, the South England Conference is a faith-based organisation. This has a significant impact on how they as an organisation view themselves, others and their approach to decision-making. The SEC state that their belief in God succeeds any human authority because God is their creator (SEC, 2022). What impact would that have on their decision-making? If one leader believes that their point of view is the will of God and another leader has a different point of view but also believes their point is the will of God, then what impact would that have on the organisation? How does faith as a tool of power operate? Additionally, what about faith leaders' status of power and their ability to influence decisions? Dressing (2021, p.274) has highlighted the ability of faith leaders to abuse their position.

Moreover, organisational politics do not seem to impact men in the same way that it impacts females (Buchanan and Badham, 2020, p.129). One of the few female CEOs, Carly Fiorina, who led Hewlett Packard, made this point in her memoirs: women are perceived differently, and as such, the political games are different (Fiorina, 2006, p.70). Given this point, what impact does gender play in a faith-based membership-based organisation? This question is worth exploring in the context of organisational culture. As the SEC is in a period of decline, they face complex decisions of change. This study would analyse a unique organisational structure, which is membership-driven and faith-based. We would also get insight into how organisational theory and the culture of politics and power may apply in such organisations.

## Summary

When we look at the literature, we can see its development over the years. What has been most interesting for our study is the link between the rational organisational model and the irrational organisational model. While the literature has moved towards a contingency and irrational approach like organisational culture, there have been modern developments that have brought back some elements key in the classical models. This has been brought about largely by the development of artificial intelligence and the ability to outsource tasks to machines. The use of technology is not an area explored in great detail by the SEC documents. We have noted their lack of empirical data within some of the decision-making, so it would be interesting to note how the use of data might be viewed within the SEC. We also recognise that there are multiple areas from which the SEC could be impacted. These are through both their formal and informal structures.

These influences could shape the way the organisation views itself and the changing world and, in turn, could impact the way it views information for decision-making. Attached to the documentation on informal structures, we can see the impact of culture, power, and politics. With the SEC being a membership-driven, faith-based organisation, it would be reasonable to suspect that power and political behaviour are at play. This is important to know as we seek to understand why the SEC struggles to address its declining position.

To move forward to address the changes needed within the SEC, understanding the organisation's culture and examining how its artefacts, values, and assumptions are informed by sources of power and manifest in political actions could provide insight.

Furthermore, we can contribute to the literature on organisational change by analysing the culture of a membership-driven, faith-based organisation that works within the charitable sector. The unique composition of the SEC and its significant contribution to the charitable

sector would provide a basis for further research for others looking to develop organisational change within this sector.

### 3. Methodology

#### *Introduction*

This chapter seeks to deal with the methodological steps taken in order to research and study our stated research question. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019, p.7) argue that methodological rigour is designed to make others aware of the decisions made and the reasons why they were made. It allows others to look at the data and replicate, develop or critique the data as needed. Therefore, this chapter will outline the research premises, aims and objectives of the research. Furthermore, we will discuss our research design and data collection methods and the rationale behind those choices. We will explain how we built our sample framework and the sequence sample size. This will allow us to explain how we analysed the data, and finally, we will explain our ethical considerations, the validity of the data and any limitations we took into consideration.

#### *Rationale*

Following on from our literature review, we recognised the SEC is a unique organisation. If looking at the various layers that comprise the SEC's unique complexity, we would consider their organisational structure as an important strategic business unit. However, it is of critical importance for their European division. Additionally, we can factor in the fact that they are membership-driven and faith-based with a representational system. This lends itself well to an organisational culture, where political behaviour plays a prominent role. Therefore, before we can optimise the organisation for growth through change, it would be important to know how the unique composition of this organisation makes its decisions and to what extent the political culture impacts the way decisions are made. Consequently, new



insights might provide recommendations that could help the organisation make changes for growth in the SEC. As mentioned in chapter one, the SEC's global operations are a significant contributor to the charitable sector, yet the research doesn't feature much on organisational change in faith-based, membership-driven organisations. This research could provide insights that might be useful to similar organisations that also contribute significantly to the third sector.

#### *Aims and Objectives*

As a result, the aim of this paper is to understand how the primary decision-making bodies understand the extent of the political culture within the SEC, if there is any. Our objectives are to analyse how the SEC's executive committee understands their organisational culture, with a special emphasis on decision-making. The SEC Constitution (2015, p.6) considers this body the highest decision-making body outside of an SEC session. Furthermore, we would seek to understand if there are any political drivers and, if so, what they are and how are they viewed. Finally, we would seek to understand any perceived challenges that may exist within the current culture and the possibility of any solutions that would allow them to improve their culture as it relates to decision-making. In doing so, they may find a pathway to addressing some of the factors causing their decline in growth at present.

#### *Research Method*

##### *The Case for Qualitative*

A study that seeks to understand a culture as it is perceived by the executive committee is essentially trying to understand the human experience from a specific perspective.

According to Williams, Boylan and Nunan (2020, p.3), a fundamental premise of qualitative research is to provide a way to analyse the human experience – something that isn't always accessible by quantitative research. As such, our research lends itself to qualitative research

as this is an inductive approach, which is one of the strengths of qualitative research (Van Bavel and Dessart, 2018, p.7).

Consequently, our research will use a qualitative approach that will study a representative sample of the SEC's executive committee. As they are the highest decision-making body outside of their constitutional 'session', it will seek to understand how political drivers impact decision-making within the SEC. This question would lend itself well to a qualitative approach (Bryman, 2016, p.392).

#### Semi-Structured Interviews

Our goal with this project was to understand how political drivers may affect decision-making. As such, we also needed to take into consideration that the SEC is a membership-driven and faith-based organisation. That information would have implications for our choice of approach. As a membership-based organisation, the SEC has various factions, including general membership, faith leadership, and the executive team, formed by members' voices and opinions. Yet when we took into consideration the constraints on time, approval process, and financial capabilities, it was clear that we needed to be intentional in our approach. As such, we would need to find an approach that would be flexible, easy to implement, and not time-consuming for the interviewees.

Therefore, we decided to focus on the executive committee, as the South England Conference (2019) appointed members to represent all levels and areas of the SEC.

Consequently, we would be able to get rich data from the entire membership and not just one section. It would also mean that it would be reasonable within the current constraints mentioned previously.

Additionally, Bryman (2016, p.468) suggests that interviews are a popular choice because they are less structured and more flexible in their use. This would mean we would be able to

capture rich data truly focusing on interviewees' views and how they viewed political drivers. However, as we focused particularly on political drivers and decision-making, this study required some direction while encouraging tangential discussion. Therefore, we took a semi-structured approach where we would provide some framework around the interview but would allow the interviewee to respond as they saw fit within that framework. Our next challenge was to decide what was the best framework to use for our semi-structured interviews.

#### Interview Framework

This study looks at political behaviour as part of the organisational culture. Our framework needs to take into consideration the complexity of organisational structures, including both formal and informal parts of that structure. Moreover, we also need to consider the cultural assumptions that underpinned those designs. As a tool that will explore all the structural elements, we just mention this paper will use the Cultural Web developed by Johnson and Scholes (1987). The Cultural Web explores six areas of an organisation that it believes looks at formal elements and informal elements. Those seven areas include stories, rituals, symbols, power structures, control systems, and organisational structures.

The Cultural Web is also designed to look at behaviours but also the assumptions that lie beneath those behaviours. Organisational theory, change and culture are complex subjects because they cover a range of disciplines, and the Cultural Web was designed to take all of those complexities into consideration (Doherty and Stephens, 2020, p.332). Additionally, the Cultural Web framework is practical because it is simple to implement but provides rich data (McDonald and Foster, 2013, p.353). Part of the data capture would include the underlying assumptions upon which the organisation was built. In other words, it could uncover the purpose behind the behaviour (Smith and Stewart, 2011, p.113). With that information, you

could analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the organisational culture based on the themes that emerged from the analysis. From that analysis, the strengths and weaknesses could be highlighted with potential recommendations brought forward due to the insights. Finally, the Cultural Web is a tool that has credibility and has been used successfully in the past (Freemantle, 2013; Mossop et al., 2013).

Consequently, our research question is best suited to a qualitative approach. The focus on political drivers and decision-making means that a completely unstructured approach might not be appropriate. A semi-structured approach would allow us to build a framework to glean the correct information, but that framework would have to provide rich data in a complex and uncertain area. As a result, this paper will seek to use the culture web as a framework where we will conduct seven semi-structured interviews of the SEC's executive committee.

#### Data Collection

We aim to conduct seven semi-structured interviews using the culture web, which will give us a framework as to how political drivers impact decision making. We are using a semi-structured approach that will give the participants the flexibility to express their understanding of the various subjects in their own way. In addition to the framework, we prepared for the interview itself.

Seminal work by Kvale (1996, p.98) outlined some important guidelines for preparing for the interviews. These included proper formulation of the questions to ensure they were open-ended and not leading. Furthermore, they should be specific to the question that we are trying to answer. The questions should also be easy to understand. The lack of clarity may result in inaccurate data. Finally, we ensured that we had the right equipment needed to capture the data required. Therefore, at the beginning of every question, the interviewer

read out a context statement. This clarified the definitions and means to ensure that the participants were clear about what we were talking about. The second step of the interview was to read them a statement and ask them if they agreed or disagreed with the statement using a five-point Likert scale.

This would give us a quick snapshot of our participant's views but would give them the opportunity to qualify their reason. Finally, we asked some open-ended questions to drill down further into their understanding of the culture. Another important study by Roulston (2003, p.648) highlighted some common mistakes from interviewers. These mistakes include unexpected behaviour from an interviewee or surrounding environments, interviewer bias, maintaining focus on the research question, dealing with sensitive issues, and transcriptions being difficult and time-consuming. Bryman, (2016, p.475) outlines how the use of technology and interview tips might help mitigate some of the major pitfalls. As a result, interviews will be conducted via Zoom with the transcript function turned on. The transcription tool will capture what is said in the interview both in audio recording and written form. This would save time in the transcribing process. The interviewer will use the transcript as the base document for coding.

The interviewer will need to review the transcription to ensure that the technology has recorded the conversation correctly. Consequently, the interviewer will use the recorded audio to ensure that Zoom transcribed the interview correctly. Interviewers will conduct test runs to familiarise themselves with the process, so that they can highlight any problems and fix them before conducting the actual interviews. Also, the scores from the Likert were put on a Google Doc but were anonymised so the data would not be identifiable. The Google Doc allowed us to create quick graphs which would be helpful when we want to present our findings.

Finally, under the cultural web framework, several guiding questions will be fleshed out as presented below.

- **Stories** (Heroes who solved problems well and villains who did not solve issues well).
- **Symbols** (What visual representations do they have, what do they say about the SEC, and does that align with how they approach their decision making?).
- **Power Structures** (Where are the lines of power within our organisation? How do they work when it comes to critical decision making?).
- **Organisational Structures** (What type of organisation structure do we have, what are the formal and informal parts of the system, and what role do they play in making decisions?).
- **Control Systems** (What are the strongest and weakest controls in our system? Are all control systems explicit, or are there implicit systems?).
- **Rituals and Routines** (What are the standard decision-making routines?)

#### Sampling Framework

Sampling in a qualitative study can be different to sampling in a quantitative study. Bryman (2016, p.408) suggests that quantitative studies tend to focus more on random selection processes. However, the nature of qualitative studies is to understand the human experience and, by extension, the research questions. The research questions are designed to guide what answers should emerge from the study. As a result, qualitative research prefers what is typically known as purposive sampling. Campbell et al. (2020, p.653) suggest that because the research questions drive the sampling decisions, the sampling selection process should be based on an intentional selection criterion.

There are various sampling techniques; according to Bryman (2016, p.410), these include theoretical, generic and snowballing sampling. For this study's purposes, generic sampling is most important. Jahja, Ramalu and Razimi (2021, p.7) argue that generic purposive sampling is based on understanding how your participants view their reality, and as such, the selection criteria must be relevant to the questions that the study is trying to answer. So for this study, we are concerned with how a faith-based, membership-driven organisation is influenced by political drivers in their decision-making. As a result, the executive committee

makes the most important decisions for the SEC on a daily basis. Consequently, it makes that part of our criteria important to the question. Furthermore, within that body, they must be a member of that organisation and believe in Christianity as prescribed by the SDA. We also want to ensure that we have all levels of the organisation represented, as this would unearth the assumptions and viewpoints from different factions of the organisation. Therefore, as part of the criteria and using the organisational structure as a guide, we should have representation from the local membership level, faith leaders employed by the SEC, directors of the SEC and those who are part of the executive team, known in the SEC as Ofcom.

Finally, we also will include perspectives from an age, gender and nationality perspective. They are all represented within the executive committee and will give a wide view of the different factions of the membership. From this, we can compare and contrast how political motivations would influence the decision-making process.

#### Sampling Size

There are 19 members of the executive committee (Charity Commission, 2022). They are representative of all levels of their organisation and every region within their jurisdiction. Furthermore, when thinking about the right amount of interviews to conduct, Baker (2012) rightly suggests that it depends; some of the factors to consider include the time frame, resource limitations, and how close you can get to saturation. There is no defined answer to this question. When we consider the time frame and limited resources, we can suggest that studying seven members of the executive committee is adequate. They would represent all levels of the organisation, diversity and cultures and provide a general sense of what drives the decision-making process. This would also provide a basis for further research.

Additionally, as the SEC is a membership-based organisation, we wanted our choice of

executive committee participants to represent the membership. There is little data on the SEC membership; however, we were able to source some information from their general management system (SEC, 2019). According to the SEC management system, our membership has around 61% females, while 60% of members identify as black. As such, this will provide the framework for who we will interview.

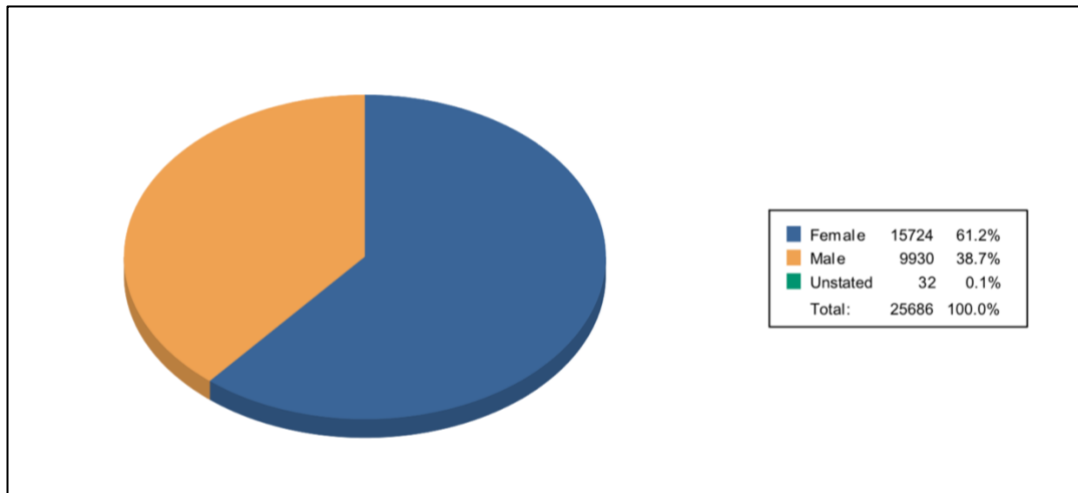


Figure 6

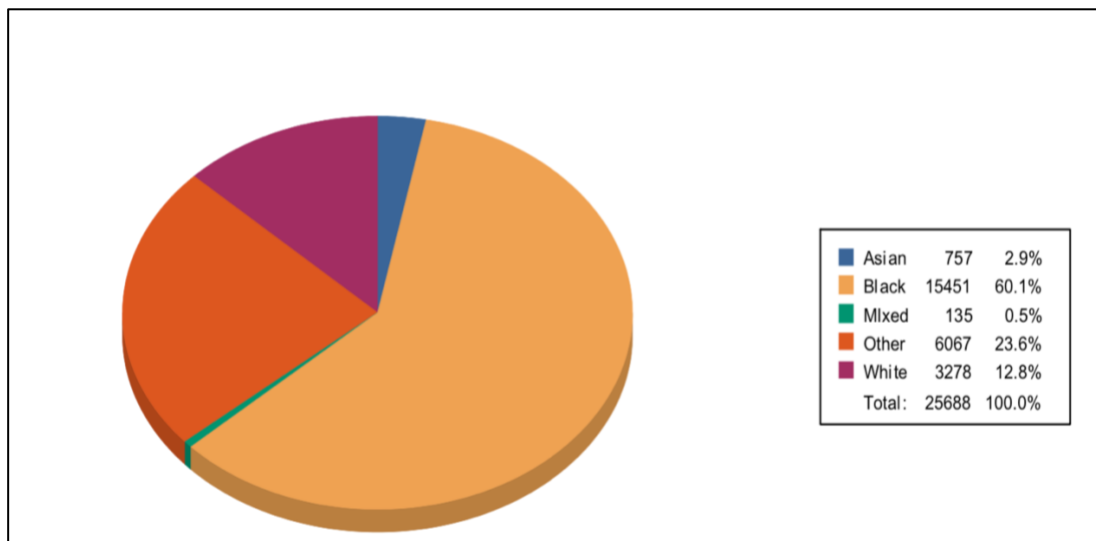


Figure 7



## Method of Analysis

Transcripts gave us raw but rich data. Our next step would be to utilise a process that would help us interpret the meaning behind the answers given. One of the tools most used to do this was the thematic analytical approach. Nowell et al. (2017, p.2) highlighted that thematic analysis was widely used but also misunderstood. Rightly understood, it would be a flexible approach that would allow a theme to emerge. However, Bryman (2016, p.585) claims this approach does not have a defined historical development, and that as such, there are very few explanations on how to conduct a thematic analysis. For example, how do you know exactly what to code and what not to code?

Although early works have attempted to provide a solid framework for thematic analysis, Attride-Stirling (2001, p.386) recognised the need for a methodical approach. As a result, Attride-Stirling created the networked approach where the data was coded into a few broad themes, and then under each theme would be a series of sub-themes. Your interpretation that follows would be based on the connection between the sub-theme and the main theme. The researcher would have to evidence their interpretation from the transcripts. While there is a lot of debate around thematic analysis, it is still a credible approach for analysis and seems appropriate for our research question.

Consequently, I will use Nvivo software to code and draw out a network of themes which will allow me to tease out my insights. Bryman (2015, p.587) suggests that uncovering patterns and connections with those who are interviewed could provide insight into how they understand the topic of discussion. This would fit well with this paper's aim and objectives as we aim to uncover the culture within the SEC as the executive committee understands it.

## Reliability, Validity, Limitations and Ethical Considerations

### *Reliability and Validity*

Rose and Johnson (2020, p.5) believe that issues of reliability and validity centre around the issue of trust. In other words, to what extent is this work trustworthy? The precise meaning of these words has been debated with little consensus. However, there are broad patterns that we can use to guide our understanding.

Rose and Johnson (2020, p.5) continues suggesting that reliability speaks to the rationale and the soundness of the methods chosen to address the research question ? Are the methods appropriate, and could someone else replicate the study with ease? Validity speaks to the accuracy of the research; this is taken from the point of view of the researcher and the participants. Robustness was required to ensure that this research was taken with the utmost integrity. As such, the research design, questions, and interviews were given to third parties that have expert knowledge in business research. This would be to ensure that the research is reliable in its choices and valid in its conclusions.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Bryman (2015, p.120) highlights the importance of taking extreme care and consideration when conducting research. This includes ensuring no harm to the participants, researchers or supervisors; they are to be fully informed and should give full consent, and their privacy is to be respected. Additionally, the study will be conducted in a manner that is honest and that has the highest levels of integrity. Consequently, this research will abide by the University of Wales Trinity St David's policy on 'Research Integrity and Ethics Code of Practice' via their PG2 E1 application.

## Limitations

Considering the size, scope, resources and timeframes in which this research was undertaken, there are some limitations that need to be highlighted. It is important to state them here as they could have an impact on the results and the claims found in the conclusion.

The first limitation is that this research was conducted at the South England Conference.

While this is a faith-based, membership-driven organisation, we clearly should not overgeneralise all faiths and membership organisations. Each faith will have its own organisational culture, and further research may be needed to understand its unique circumstance.

The second limitation is that this research has focused internally on the organisation. While external factors are also important and may factor into some of the answers, they were not a major consideration within this paper. For example, since the Second World War, organised religion has been declining, and that might have an impact on the organisation. There was not enough time or space to consider external factors.

The third limitation is exploring the gender imbalance in decision-making roles. While this study will hear the voices of women, we observe that men are disproportionately represented in leadership roles. This would be an interesting question for further research, but this study could not focus on it.

The fourth limitation was on organisation culture. This paper has limited its focus on how culture impacted the SEC from an organisational point of view. However, we do acknowledge that culture can also have an impact on individual and group levels.

The fifth limitation was exploring, in-depth, a bottom-up view of the organisational culture. We have focused on interviewing members of the organisation who have sat on the board

of trustees, and that is where the decisions are made. However, the membership is a big stakeholder, and this paper acknowledges that members who do not sit on the board of trustees may be impacted by the culture and impact it in a way that affects decision-making. However, in scope and time constraints, this is a question for further study.

Finally, the sixth limitation revolves around our focus on status as a symbol and faith as a tool of power. A unique feature of the SEC is that it is a faith organisation; therefore, we have chosen to focus on the most influential areas of political behaviour and power. For a faith-based organisation, this revolves around faith and status. We acknowledge the SEC would have other symbols, and there might be other elements of power as a tool. However, time constraints meant we focused on the most important elements.

#### 4. Analysis of Cultural Web

This section seeks to present the findings from the semi-structured interviews based on the culture web. We will look at each section of the culture web individually from those key findings, and we can construct the cultural paradigm as it is perceived by our interviewees. We started by asking our participants to agree or disagree with a statement using a Likert scale. That provided a snapshot of their thinking but also a platform to enter a semi-structured dialogue. This conversation provided the basis for our networked thematic analysis and the construction of our paradigm. One critique that must be noted is that the interviewee was sometimes a little leading in their questioning at times. This may have impacted the direction of conversation slightly and needs to be noted for further research.

##### Stories

The question that participants were asked to agree or disagree with was 'Does political behaviour exist at the board level?'

Political behaviour exists at the board level.

7 responses

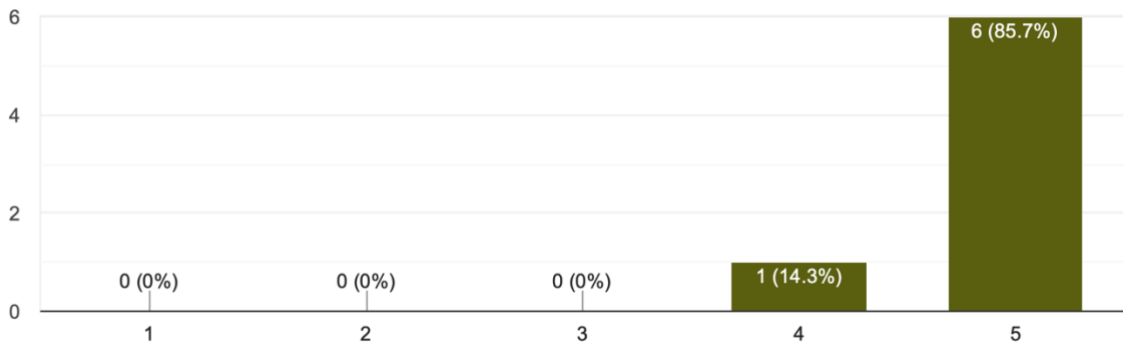


Figure 8

There was a strong belief from the participants that political behaviour exists within the SEC.

There seems to be very little ambiguity that the SEC is a political organisation. Using thematic analysis, we were able to highlight some of the themes as they pertained to political stories and decision making.

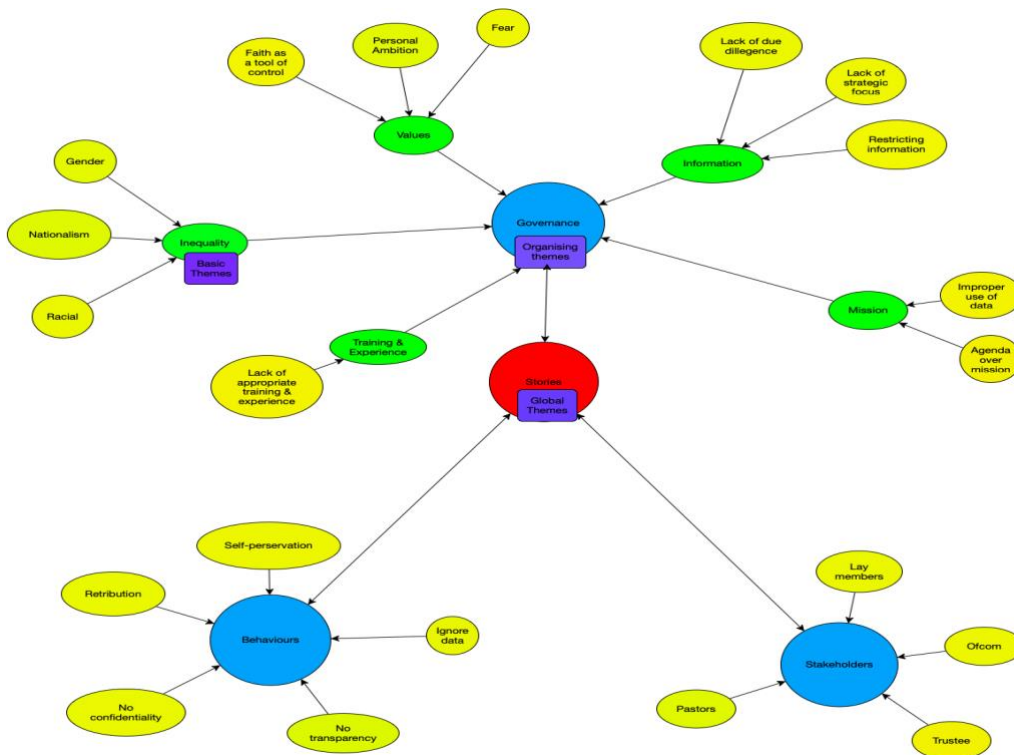


Figure 9

Within the stories section of our Cultural web, we were able to identify what the participants felt were the drivers of political behaviour, as well as some of the behaviours and the major actors of politics. As we can see from the themes, the major drivers of politics feed largely into conversations about governance. This in turn resulted in how political drivers impacted decision making.

### Inequality

Inequality is a major theme that kept recurring within the conversation. The SEC is a diverse organisation, and there is a belief that shifting dynamics in diversity have caused an imbalance of power. The shift in power has been categorised along racial lines. For example, one participant described it this way.

White people have traditionally held power, but then that power base shifted to those from a kind of Caribbean background (mostly Jamaicans) and then to those from an African background.

[Participant 2] (2022) [Participant 2] *Interview Response*. From the perspective of the executive committee (also known as the board of trustees) and the executive team (Ofcom), power is viewed in racial terms, and there are nuances to that story. For example, one of the stories underlying this drive is the idea that the influx of immigration and the shift of power to a more diverse leadership impacted the SEC's ability to achieve its mission. This view has its origins in the 1960s but persists today.

Consequently, a decision was taken to introduce a quota to the executive team, where there should be one black person and one white person. This was called the Pierson package, named after the head of the global organisation at the time. It impacts how leadership is viewed and chosen. However, the definition of black and white shifted over time and became more nuanced as both black and white people from different nationalities equally felt left out. Conversely, the overarching story has been challenged. For example, one participant used the Church of England as a case study. Their leadership is considered to

reflect the type of leadership desired. However, they too face the same issues of a declining membership base and lack of mission impact. As a result, it creates a culture where trust is lacking, and that trust is driven by the racial makeup of the leadership.

We are not good at making generous assumptions about people. So, if we take, for example, race, race has been a big issue within our church for the longest while. If a decision is made at a particular level by a person from a particular cultural background. They can often be an assumption that it's a racial motivation.

[Participant 3] (2022) [Participant 3] *Interview Response.*

There seems to be a culture of suspicion that exists within the SEC, which in turn leads to a breakdown in trust. The motivations of decision-makers are negatively questioned, and these dubious motivations may impact how decisions are made.

Another story that seems to be told is that the voices of females are hidden within the organisation. If females are to be respected, then they need to conform to certain traits; otherwise, their opinions are usually ignored or dismissed.

There is this idea of histrionics with women and being hysterical. An old kind of Victorian ideology. And so if a woman's name was suggested and she was deemed to be emotional. She would not consider a suitable person for that particular role.

[Participant 7] (2022) [Participant 7] *Interview Response.*

Issues of inequality are pervasive within the SEC, and seems to drive how the organisation is governed. There are a few interesting points to note from the participant's response. The first is that the issues of inequality revolve largely around race and gender. We could infer that this is because the participants were personally impacted by those issues or because those of a similar identity were impacted by those issues. However, there was no mention of disability or LGBTQ issues. It may be the case that those issues do not exist, but perhaps they were not represented at the board level. This may mean there are other issues regarding inequality that are hidden within the organisation.

The second interesting point is that very few participants pointed to objective data. It does not seem the organisation collects empirical data on these issues. Therefore, it is difficult for the organisation to highlight issues and address them if needed. Finally, the Pierson package, which is the only quota measure, does not seem to be working as intended, largely because it is not viewed as constitutional, and the definitions are outdated.

### *Faith Leaders*

An interesting discovery in our stories revolves around leadership. The SEC is primarily a faith-based organisation, and as such should be led by faith leaders, who are called pastors within the organisation. For example, according to the constitution, the president (CEO) should chair the board of trustees. Additionally, according to interviews, there is a strong presence of pastors at all levels of the organisation. This includes the board of trustees, the executive team, and local faith leaders' access to the executive team. As a result, there is a belief that the political culture is primarily driven by their faith leaders.

Primarily, the employees of the organisation, which are both Ofcom and also members of the committee, which are the pastors or directors. That's where the politics reside primarily, there is also politics from non-employees of the board but they may have a personal issue with someone else.

[Participant 1] (2022) [Participant 1] *Interview Response*.

One of the reasons suggested for the faith leaders being the primary actors within the political game is that there is an inherent conflict of interest. Pastors constitutionally are the only ones able to be the CEO of the organisation. The CEO sits and chairs the board of trustees. They occupy most of the director positions and have a high presence on the board of trustees. It would be fair to say that they could have an interest in what decisions are being made about them.



### *Training and Experience*

Building on the last point that political behaviours stem primarily from faith leaders, questions were raised about the pastor's level of training and experience and if they were adequate for the needs of the organisation. The themes around training and experience were largely negative.

The skills needed that pastors needed to know 20 years ago, they now need to know things that are very different today, things as safeguarding things around business management and things around A.I. things around technology.

[Participant 7] (2022) [Participant 7] *Interview Response.*

But people may not have been trained or experienced in the roles to which they've been appointed, and I think that's one of the key challenges. If we accept that point then we need to provide the support. But sometimes the roles are big and you need to have people of experience, or they need to understand when to go get help.

[Participant 1] (2022) [Participant 1] *Interview Response.*

There seems to be a tension between the skills needed to manage the organisation and the desire to have a faith leader in some of the most critical decision-making roles. As a result, there is a feeling that the quality of decision-making is impacted because the skills are not adequate and the experience is lacking. Furthermore, there is another tension that seems to exist between the faith leaders of the organisation and its general members. Some of the members come from backgrounds where they can provide the correct skills. Yet, there is a feeling of reluctance to allow this to happen.

### *Behaviours and Values*

When combining everything, we can see that this leads to a culture that lacks transparency, accountability, and psychological safety. Politics are largely driven by pastors based on the view that there is pervasive inequality and will seek to correct the imbalance by applying political pressure. The knock-on effect will be further political behaviour based on self-preservation and maintaining the status quo. The perception of the SEC culture and the

stories they tell about themselves are mostly negative. It creates a vicious cycle, and there is a feeling that the mission objectives of the organisation are lost to political manoeuvrings.

#### Rituals and Routines

The statement that participants were asked to agree or disagree with was 'Information presented to Excom is used to confirm a decision.'

Information presented to Excom is used to confirm a decision.

7 responses

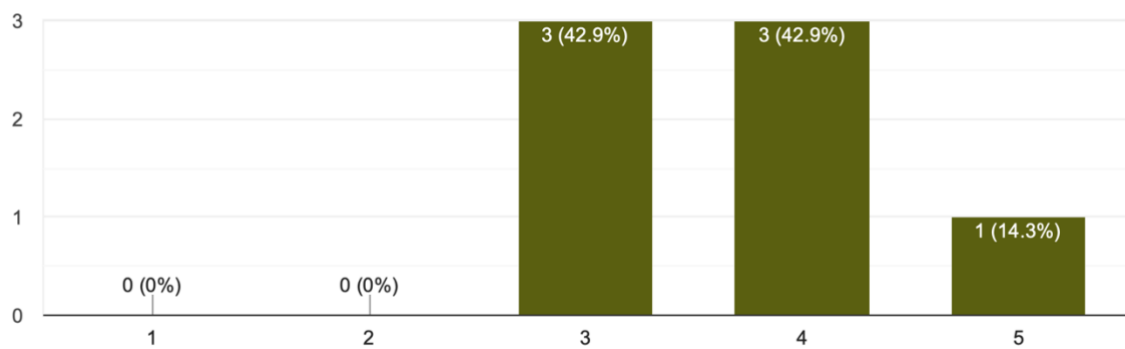


Figure 10

There was a little less certainty about how information was used within this statement. Slightly more agreed that information was used to confirm decisions already made. Using the culture map, we were able to discover deeper insight into their thinking.



Figure 11

As we can see, many of the same drivers feed into the rituals and routine, including inequality, training and experience and stakeholders. Prioritising a job based on race is an important point that drives how others respond to information. Personal agendas and the hidden voices of women all play important points. Therefore, within this section, we will focus on the use of information and the behaviours that occur as a result in light of the drivers that we have discovered.

### *Use of Information*

Information is sometimes, but not always, used to progress a particular agenda. There are times when a decision that needs to be made is not controversial or does not include personal benefit. Participant 6 (2022) suggested that ‘it depends on the information, if the

information is urgent, and it's beyond personal agenda, then I believe at those times it's more effective.'

It was highlighted by the participants that Ofcom used information as a way of controlling power. Ofcom may do this by attempting to restrict the flow of information. This could be seen in a number of different ways. One example would be presenting papers late so that the trustees do not have enough time to review the documents. Another would be verbal updates, as well as critical information being left out and only presented on the day. It was also highlighted that information was requested by the board of trustees, but that information was never presented. This makes the trustees feel that they are being forced into making a decision that they may not be ready to make.

sometimes you can even tell by the nature and the way the material is, you're almost being bounced into an action. And there's none of this, okay; We have considered three or four options, and these are the pros and cons of each action.

[Participant 4] (2022) [Participant 4] *Interview Response*

Conversely, the participants were willing to recognise that the board did, in fact, have the ability to challenge. There was an acknowledgement that sometimes time constraints, both in the day to day affairs of Ofcom and at trustee meetings, were short. As such, it would make sense that information would become selective.

Ofcom have to put information together for the purpose of an excom meeting. And they obviously have to be selective about how much information they give. They've got limited time in order to conduct business and so you can't put everything out there.

[Participant 2] (2022) [Participant 2] *Interview Response.*

This is a question that speaks to training and experience regarding how to select the right information and present it for the consideration of the board of trustees. Additionally, it speaks to the need for the board of trustees to be aware of their roles and responsibilities. Otherwise, it will be very easy to sidestep the structures of governance.

It is important also to note that sometimes the board of trustees were considered so challenging that they, too, ended up hindering progress. [Participant 3] (2022) stated that the 'executive committee stood in the way, you know, for four months, four months. The executive committee dismissed this again and again.' Considering the negative feelings around political behaviours and the lack of trust, perhaps this could be a by-product of the lack of trust that is experienced by the trustees.

### *Behaviours and Values*

It seems that there is a tendency to prioritise agendas over objective information, although this is not always clear-cut. Yet, the feeling is that restricting information seems to be a common tool. This primarily comes from Ofcom, who largely possesses the information and needs to decide what information gets presented and what does not.

On the other hand, the board of trustees do not always feel that they are presented with the relevant information to make a decision, and there isn't always a willingness to exercise some of the powers at their disposal to ensure accountability and transparency. When you consider some of the drivers of political behaviour, such as inequality, a lack of training, and conflicts of interest with employees occupying the most important position, a lack of accountability could occur.

### *Symbols*

One person's status is tied up in a variety of symbols. This section sought to discover where status symbols resided, if at all. To get a general sense of the presence of status symbols, this is where we focused our questioning. As you can see, there was strong agreement that status was not only present but played an important role in decision-making.

Again, similar themes of inequality were a major driver in understanding how status impacted power and, in turn, influenced decision-making. This section will focus on the drivers of status and their impact on power and decision-making.

A persons status is important when making decisions at the board level

7 responses

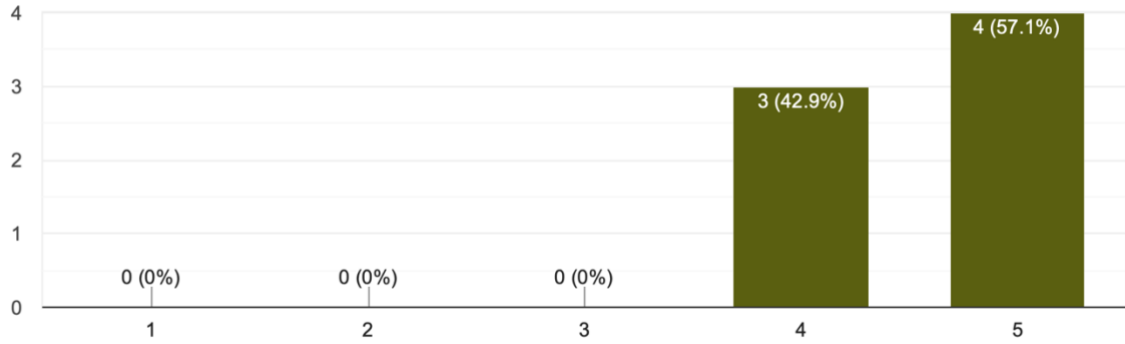


Figure 12

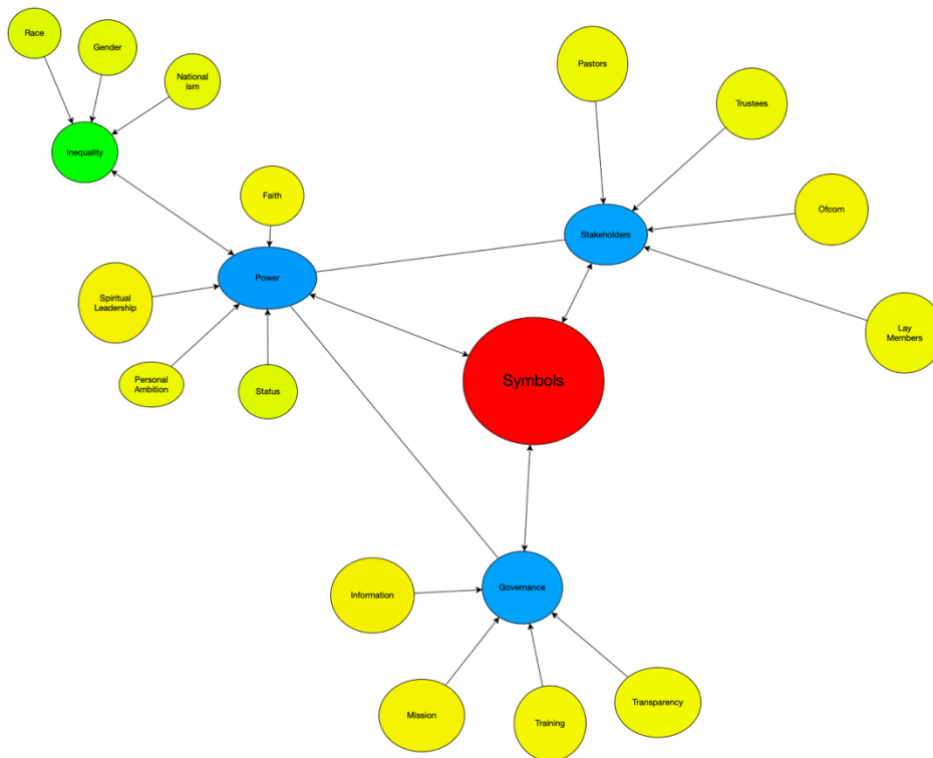


Figure 13

### *Male Faith Leaders Top of Hierarchy*

There is a general acceptance that the SEC is a hierarchical organisation. For the majority of participants, a person's status is extremely important and has a massive influence on the decision-making process. What seems to drive the dynamic influence of status is a sense of inequality. Inequality is largely based on your standing within the organisation, as it makes a difference whether you are male or female and also whether you are a pastor or a lay member. We will look at the use of faith by pastors and how it affects lay members, both male and female.

### *Pastors*

As the SEC is a faith-based organisation, pastors are considered to be the spiritual leaders of the organisation. Participant 6 (2022) described it as follows: 'Pastors are considered as God leader on earth'. There is a sense that sometimes deference is shown to a pastor because of their status. The reason why this may be is twofold, according to the participants. One reason is that within some cultures, there is a tendency to show deference to leadership and authority ([Participant 2], 2022). Also, part of the role of a faith leader is to administer pastoral care. There is an emotional conflict among members who love their pastor but who, at the same time, may occupy a space on the board of trustees and might be required to challenge leadership ([Participant 6], 2022).

This power imbalance is rooted in how faith is viewed within the SEC. It must be noted that not all participants believed status was important. One participant's experience was that members and pastors did not care about titles or positions and that the level of reaction would be strong no matter who you were. This view was in the minority, and it might

suggest a reaction to the power of a faith leader rather than an absence of status. However, the data isn't clear on this point.

Furthermore, due to the SEC's constitution, pastors are elected and not interviewed for positions. As a result, pastors who hold all the power of a faith leader begin to experience internal conflict.

There is a very kind of bittersweet relationship with pastors. There are people in the system when pastors become either directors or administrative offices. They start to despise pastors. Their colleagues.

[Participant 7] (2022), [Participant 7] *Interview Response*.

This also goes the other way as well. Pastors who are in local or regional positions begin to despise other pastors who enter positions with higher authority. [Participant 2] (2022) stated that he believed they had no problem speaking truth to power, and some may even believe they should be in the position currently occupied by someone else.

Consequently, you have a pastor who is the chair of the board of trustees who may receive political pressure from other pastors who are either in local regional positions or who sit on the board of trustees.

### *Women*

On the other hand, it is felt that the voices of women are lower down the hierarchy within the SEC. [Participant 7], (2022) recounted a story of a female who was more qualified for a position that was occupied by a less qualified male. They recalled strong resistance to the idea of allowing that person to occupy the role. It is felt that their voices aren't valued in the same way and are not given the same weighting as male pastors. It is also interesting to note that although 60% of the SEC members are female, their voices are poorly represented in all positions of power.



### *Members*

Finally, the voices of members are equally low in the hierarchical structure. Their skills and expertise come from a variety of fields, and these abilities do not seem to have the same weight as those of spiritual leaders. [Participant 5] (2022) said, 'Whilst we look for spiritual leadership, we also should look for people, skills and talents.' It would seem that faith leadership may feel the skills and contributions of the members are inadequate.

Pastoral employees are always decrying the over the presence of those lay members in these executive committees. But actually, they are the ones from my experience who keep the church in check and balance.

[Participant 4] (2022) [Participant 4] *Interview Response.*

When we are reflecting on decision-making and the responses to our decision-making, it is clear that a lot of power is held by faith leaders. These include faith leaders at a local level, faith leaders in the executive teams, and faith leaders sitting on the board of trustees. Furthermore, not all faith leaders are equal in this hierarchy. The voices of females are not given the same weight of power as those of males, even though they are the largest group in the SEC's membership base.

### *Impact of Status and Power*

The immediate question that follows such an analysis is the following one: What is the impact of such an understanding? One important point that came out of the research was the declining influence of pastors on the general membership.

Nowadays, the members are more educated, they're very knowledgeable, and they expect the pastors to have 21st-century skills. And a lot of pastors don't because there's no particular avenue in place for them to be trained in 21st-century skills. I'm talking about 21st-century skills that can be utilized on a daily basis, not just to go attend a seminar for a couple of hours and walk away. Some proper training and some proper implementation of the training. So our pastors are actually are not trained to handle a lot of the stuff that's out there. And as a result, their members think, well, why don't you know this? And why haven't you got this skill? And why can't you do this? And then that that actually makes those members think, well, you know, you're not very skilled and they start to kind of judge them and treat them, treat them badly accordingly.

[Participant 7] (2022) [Participant 7] *Interview Response.*

The level of inequality, the centralisation of power to male faith leaders, and the outdated training enhance the lack of trust in the way leaders make decisions but also increase the level of political behaviour.

### Control Systems

The cultural web looks at both hard controls and soft informal ways of controls. As a result, we decided to split this question into two. As you can see, there was a lot of variation, more so with the hard controls as opposed to the soft controls. Most of their thinking revolved around the word *effective* and what that might have meant in practice.

What was clear when we looked at the cultural web was that there was a focus on the utilisation of power and its impact on governance. This can be seen where the basic themes coalesce around the organising themes. This section will explore how the processes and policies are used in comparison to some of the more informal control mechanisms.

#### SEC hard control systems work effectively

7 responses

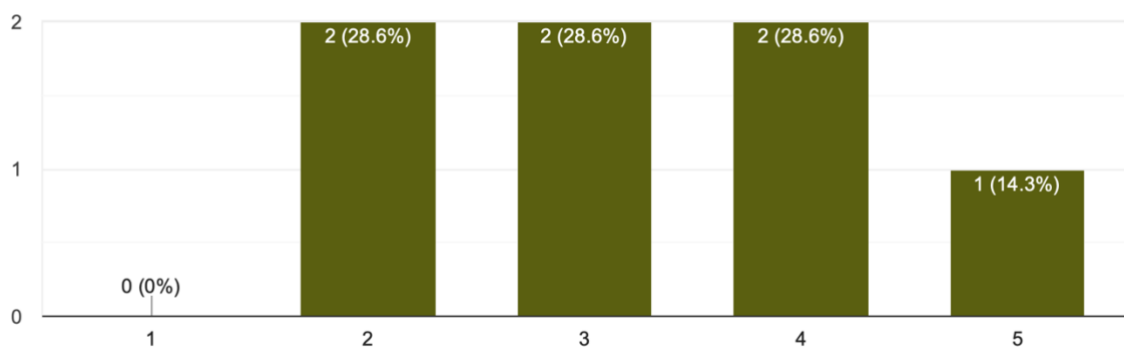


Figure 14

SEC soft control systems work effectively  
7 responses

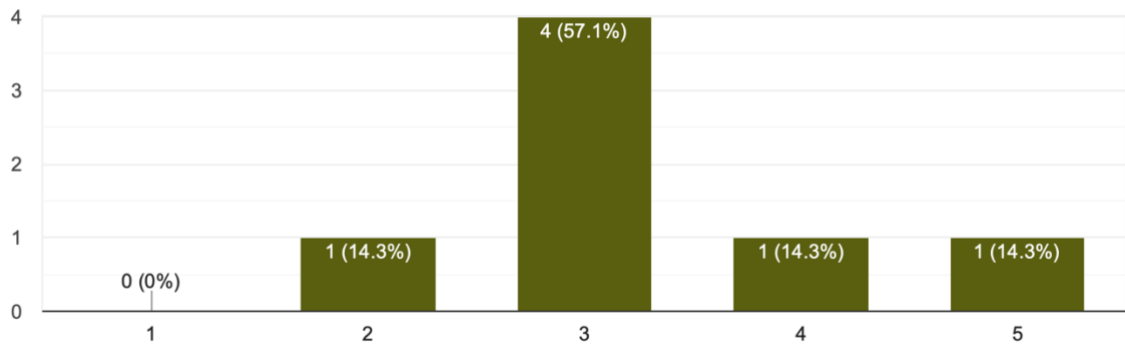


Figure 15

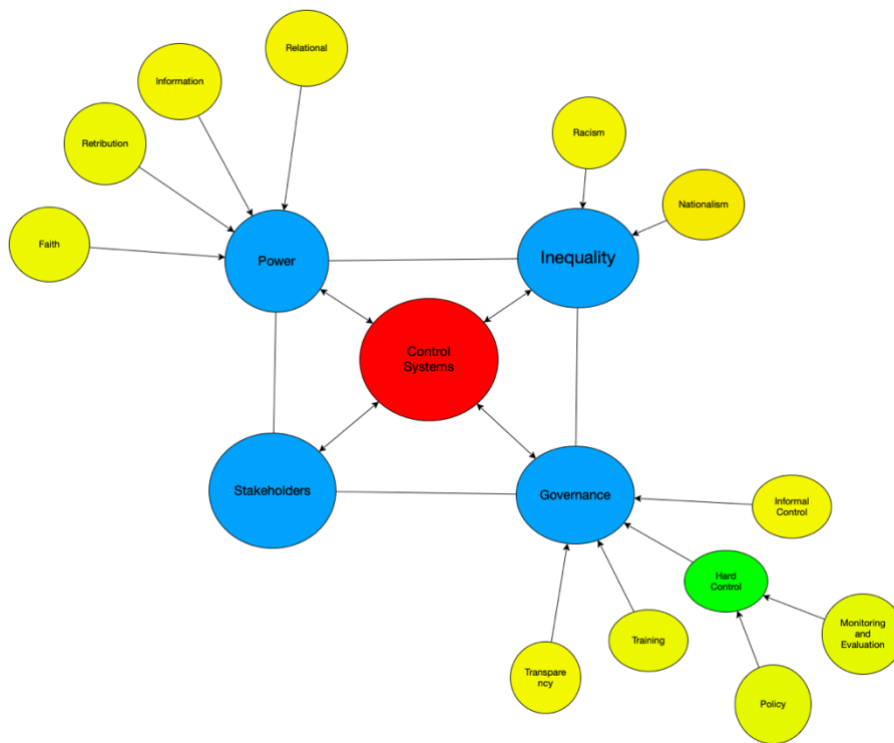


Figure 15

## *Governance*

As a charity, the organisation has a comprehensive system of policies and procedures that are designed to govern the organisation. For the most part, the participants felt that the policies and procedures were adequate but that the leaders did not effectively use the policies or procedures.

I feel that the organization has strong policies and processes that if used effectively we will have less fear of consequences, and less fear of repercussions, because there are policies the policies and processes are being used which protect individuals. This allows me to have a voice which helps limit the amount of politics or manipulation.

[Participant 6] (2022) [Participant 6] *Interview Response*.

When we explored some of the reasons for the lack of effective use, the themes that came up again were the lack of training and experience of the executive officers and the apathy of the board of trustees to fully utilise their own power. The consequence is that there is a lack of accountability, transparency, monitoring, and evaluation. Furthermore, faith leaders who are not trained in governance will have to rely on something else in order to maintain control, and these are usually faith-centric.

There is an expectation that you are called by God, and that is the only thing you can ever do. The words lazy have been used: you have loyalties to the church... I've heard this in three different ordination sermons. That's a very subtle way of control because I'm telling you very clearly, publicly and to your members so they know what the expectation is and you know what the expectation is.

[Participant 7] (2022) [Participant 7] *Interview Response*

Building on this view, there is a view that the soft systems are deployed more frequently, and the hard systems are only used when they have no choice or when it is to the benefit of the organisation. There is clearly ease within, enabling the organisation to sidestep its policies and procedures, and at present, there is difficulty in truly holding the organisation accountable for their actions. Furthermore, the use of faith as a tool of control seems to be prevalent which we will explore in the next section.

## Power Structures

This paper wanted to explore the role of faith in political behaviour and decision-making in a faith-based organisation. When we look at the question asked and their response, we discover some interesting insights. While there is general agreement that political behaviour is prevalent within the organisation, the participants are less sure about the role faith plays in the SEC power structures.

Religious faith has a strong influence on the SEC power structures.

7 responses

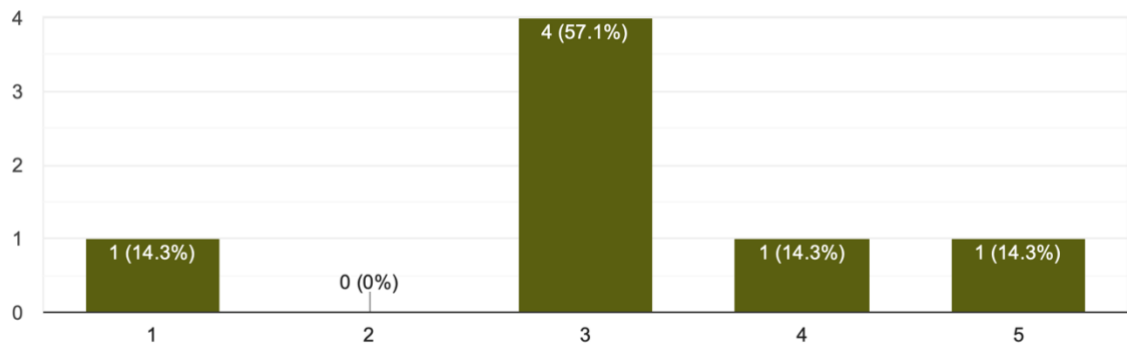


Figure 16

### *Faith as a Tool of Control*

Religious faith is seen as a significant contributor to the value system of its believers. Yet, this proved to be a difficult question for our participants to answer. [Participant 5] (2022) echoed the thoughts of many when they stated that ‘we can use our faith as a tool, as a means of power to get what we want.’ Another participant stated that ‘we pray and politic as well’ (Participant 4, 2022). There seems to be a sense that the political behaviour is not

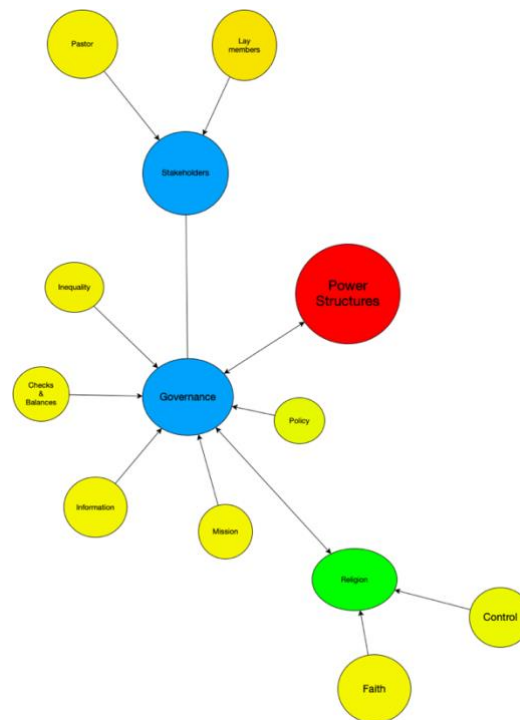


Figure 17

aligned with the spiritual values that the organisation believes in. When asked what true faith would look like, the majority of participants gave answers focused on increasing the visibility of spiritual disciples such as through prayer. This is a difficult question to quantify, and, of course, spiritual disciples are easy to manipulate. Although, there was an acknowledgement that even the best leader will make mistakes and have deficiencies. Participant 2 (2022) argued, ‘we have to be brutally honest with ourselves’ and speculated that political behaviour and using faith are influenced by the deficiencies in ourselves. This thinking led to an interesting point of convergence. Assuming that we know even the best

leader makes mistakes, is it a spiritual value to subject the organisation and its members to proper checks and balances? Are the policies rooted in the values of the organisation? One potential solution to this dilemma of faith and governance came from [Participant 6] (2022), who stated that true faith means ‘trusting that the policies and processes that have been put in place by your organization, a faith-based organization are aligned with the word of God.’ However, as we have noted before, there is a culture within the SEC that makes it easy to side up governance policy and processes. Therefore, one must look at the organisational structure to understand why that might be.

#### Organisational Structure

The structure is designed to facilitate the mission of the global organisation while at the same time attending to the regional demands of the SEC. When we asked our initial question, there was, for the most part, a clear consensus that the structure did impact decision-making.

The organisational structure affects decision-making.

7 responses

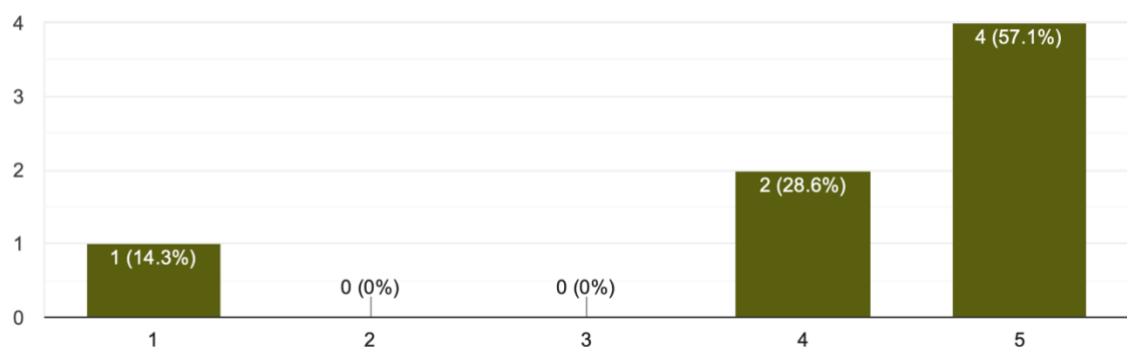


Figure 18

When the participants were asked to explore their answers further, the majority felt that decision-making was negatively impacted and that it was due to some of the main drivers behind political behaviour. They included a sense of inequality, lack of training, and lack of accountability. In this section, we will explore some of those areas in further detail.

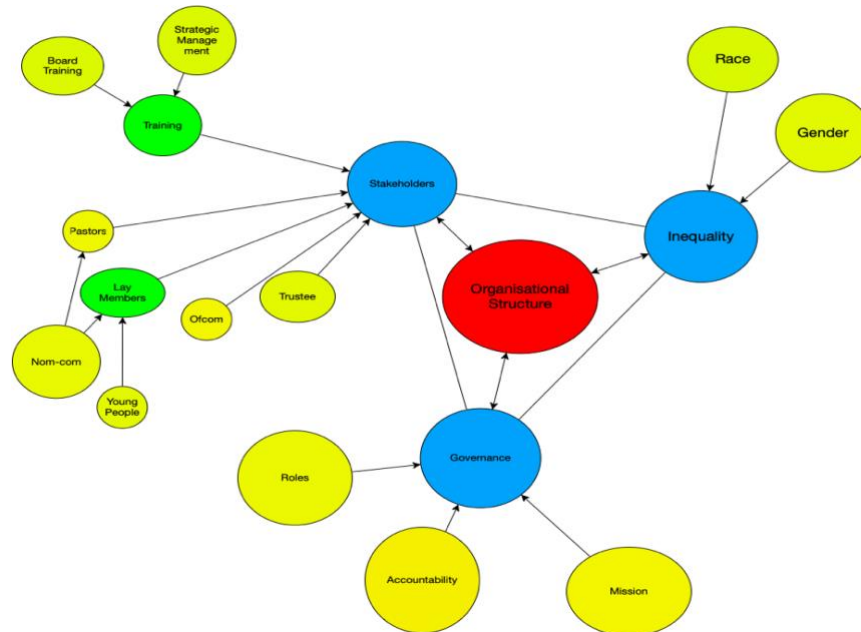


Figure 19

### Structural Reforms

There was little consensus on whether there needed to be major reforms or slight tweaks to the structure. [Participant 5] (2022) highlighted that we do little monitoring or evaluation, and we do not know what changes need to be made. Conversely, [Participant 1] (2022) suggested that ‘the structures might need a bit of tweaking, but the ultimate factor in this is really who those key decision-makers are who sit on the board.’ For them, it is less about the structure and more about leaders’ training and experience.

### Faith Leaders

Pastors have a strong influence, especially on the board of trustees. This is considered detrimental because of their lack of experience in issues of governance and strategic management. [Participant 1] (2022) highlighted that ‘people who understand how boards



should work are in the minority and have been abused quite badly. Without challenge.' As mentioned previously, faith leaders do believe they are more qualified than lay members because they have an overall understanding of the work. However, those who are faith leaders but also observe what happens on the board do not necessarily believe this is always the case.

#### Executive Team

The executive team, also known as Ofcom, seem to suffer from what is an ill-defined power base. As the constitution does not define a name personally accountable to the board of trustees, it can create a situation where there is no leader, or the assumed leader is driving a vision that they do not believe in. [Participant 4] (2022) stated, 'You're actually saying these people, three people can veto each other's decision making, and we have an example where the lack of clear authority is actually effective.' Additionally, Ofcom is where the strong informational power base resides. They hold all the information that is needed to make quality decisions.

However, the constitution states that the president (CEO) is also the chairperson of the board of trustees. This means that they have control over what information is presented to the board of trustees. Finally, the lack of strategic management skills is seen as a major sticking point in making the right day-to-day decisions for the organisation.

They cannot give leadership to the directors beneath them because I don't know what they want to see. So, what often happens is they say Oh, let's have a big program, let's have some bells and whistles and then we can kind of justify and say we did this. But there's no long-lasting impact to anything that happens in the SEC because the leaders aren't strategic.

[Participant 7] (2022) [Participant 7] *Interview Response.*

#### Board of Trustees

As mentioned previously, the board of trustees have many faith leaders, which may present a conflict of interest. Yet, a bigger problem seems to be that, in spite of board training taking

place, there isn't a willingness of the board to exercise the powers that are available to them. At the same time, it is a struggle to get all the information they need in order to make the decisions they need to make.

#### Summary

As we can see, the organisation's ability to make decisions resides largely with the executive team, the board of trustees and the role pastors play in the wider process of decision-making. When we take all the elements of the Cultural web together, we get a sense of the SEC's culture as it pertains to the political behaviour and the impact that it will have on the organisational culture.

## 5. Conclusion

When we started our study, we highlighted that, as an organisation, the SEC was declining in growth. Furthermore, they are aware of this decline yet have not found a way to address the problem. When we look at the Cultural web of the SEC, we can see that the executive committee's level of political behaviour plays an extensive role. For the most part, it seems to negatively impact the quality of decision-making within the SEC.



Figure 20

### Inequality a Political Driver

What drives political behaviour is largely a sense of inequality among those who work for the organisation and, especially faith leaders. This sense of inequality revolves largely around race and nationality. This started with the Pierson package and the quota that stated there must be one black person and one white person. Yet, as the organisation became more diverse and socially conscious, it is clear that those definitions of race became outdated. This sense of inequality drives a desire for greater representation and control based on race. However, as the organisation fights for equality, the largest body within the membership is not represented well. Women are not seen to be valued in the same way as men, and as such, their voices are hidden. Furthermore, what was not brought out in the data was any mention of other protected characteristics such as those with disabilities and the LGBTQ. This might be an indication that their voices are also hidden or silenced within the organisation. There is no data available to see if any of these members are part of the organisation. Therefore, the fight for equality drives the organisation, but it is not complete.

Finally, the cultural web has some limitations which wasn't identified prior to undertaking this study. This study highlighted that the organisation is not designed to be inclusive and cultural web is not designed with inclusive cultures in mind. We have found that voices have been hidden due to a lack of inclusivity and this has a significant impact on the culture. Consequently, further research should be conducted to see how the cultural web could be adapted so that the social context is not missed within the organisational culture.

#### Executive Team

Furthermore, our Cultural web finds that those chosen for the executive roles (Ofcom) do not fully understand the needs of the organisation and are ill-equipped to lead it. Basic management skills are not present in any curriculum designed to train faith leaders. There is no training on safeguarding, charity governance, financial management, or strategic management. These are skills not needed for pastoral care but are needed when managing a multi-million-pound caring profession. This contributes to the poor use of policies and procedures and compounds feelings of inequality.

#### Faith Leaders as Political Actors

An important insight that we discovered in our research was the fact that faith leaders were the main actors in political behaviour. This does not mean that other stakeholders did not engage in politics. Rather, the most consequential stakeholders engaging in political behaviour were faith leaders. This was mainly due to the political drivers, i.e. the sense of inequality, but also the poor application of governance. Political pressure is applied by pastors either from those who sit on the board of trustees or those in the field. The executive team, in turn, uses its informational power and positional power to not only defend itself against political pressure but also to advance its own agenda. For example, consider the stories highlighted by our participants. If the executive team faced political

pressure, it could restrict the information that others could use against it, withhold rewards, or administer punishments.

#### Board of Trustees

Finally, the board of trustees does not seem willing to understand or may misunderstand the power that is available to it. This may stem from a variety of different areas. As part of the perceived fear of Ofcom and Ofcom's power and ability to defend against political pressure, faith leaders on the board may not be willing to exercise the authority that the board gives them unless doing so might come with a personal benefit. Lay members defer to faith leaders, who are considered the spiritual leaders of the church. Also, there is a lack of awareness about the role of the board and its purpose.

## 6. Recommendations

Therefore, this paper seeks to put forward a list of recommendations that may improve the quality of decision-making and reduce the negative impact stemming from negative political behaviour.

- Make a constitutional change that allows for an independent chairperson, preferably an experienced lay member. This would nullify political pressure from other faith leaders, as lay members do not work for the organisation. This would also reduce the level of informational power, as the chairperson would have access to the same information as the executive team.
- Amend the constitution so that there is a named individual who is accountable to the board of trustees. They can still work collaboratively with the other members of the executive team. But it is important to have a clear distinction on who is ultimately responsible for the strategic direction and is accountable directly to the board of trustees.

- Reduce the number of employees sitting on the board of trustees as there is a conflict of interest. There is value in having a few members to give a 360-degree perspective. However, when their presence unduly impacts the functioning of the board then reducing their influence would enhance the quality of decision-making.
- Embed strategic management training at the grassroots level in order to prepare future leaders for the demands of executive management. Spiritual leadership does not have to be minimised but can be strengthened by strong strategic skills.
- Introduce enhanced training for the board of trustees with a view to increasing their engagement. This can take place within their current learning and development programs which exist at all levels of the organisation.
- Commission a review of the Pierson package. It is not a constitutional instrument, and although it might have been needed when it was first introduced, it does not create a sense of equality. Rather, it seems to be compounding inequality. It may need to be replaced with something that meets the needs of the modern faith organisation, which has greater levels of diversity than it did in the 1970s.
- Additionally, the membership base is largely female, yet their voices are hidden within the organisation. They are major stakeholders and, by extension, major contributors to the finances of the organisation. Highlighting their voices would enable us to understand the needs of major stakeholders, which in turn would enhance our decision-making. A review should be commissioned on how to make the organisation more inclusive and safe for females.
- The SEC needs effective monitoring and evaluation. There needs to be a greater appreciation of data and its ethical dissemination throughout the organisation. That means doing a diversity audit and monitoring the performance of the board: Who

has done the training, and who has not? Who attends regularly, and who does not?

A similar audit should be performed for all employees and the organisation as a whole. What are the needs of your target audience? What gaps exist within the organisation that will prevent you from meeting those needs? What do you need to do to bridge those gaps?

- Introduce regular corporate prayer into the SEC calendar. This ensures the faith-based organisation is always engaging in spiritual disciplines and not just when contentious issues arise.
- Adapt the cultural web so the social context is intentionally examined. This will help an organisation understand its culture better by intentionally capturing the level of inclusivity.
- Due to the various constraints and limitations of this study further research should be conducted in the following areas: external factors influencing the SEC, individual and team dynamics, the role of members and their impact on the wider organisation, the impact of other symbols and power structures. Research in those areas will add greater understanding to the SEC's organisational culture and its impact on decision making.

## References

[Participant 1] (2022) [Participant 1] *Interview Response*.

[Participant 2] (2022) [Participant 2] *Interview Response*.

[Participant 3] (2022) [Participant 3] *Interview Response*.

[Participant 4] (2022) [Participant 4] *Interview Response*.

[Participant 5] (2022) [Participant 5] *Interview Response*.

[Participant 6] (2022) [Participant 6] *Interview Response*.

[Participant 7] (2022) [Participant 7] *Interview Response*.

Abu-Rahma, A. and Jaleel, B. (2019) 'Perceived uncertainty and use of environmental information in decision making: The case of the United Arab Emirates', *International journal of organizational analysis* (2005), 27(3), pp. 690–711.

Adventist Archives and Statistics, (2022) 'TransEuropean Division (1986-Present)' Available at: [https://adventiststatistics.org/view\\_Summary.asp?FieldID=D\\_TED](https://adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldID=D_TED) Accessed: 28th February 2022.

Adventist Review, (2015) 'Church Manual of Seventh-day Adventist' USA: Review and Herald Publishing Available at: [https://www.adventist.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/seventh-day-adventist-church-manual\\_2015\\_updated.pdf](https://www.adventist.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/seventh-day-adventist-church-manual_2015_updated.pdf) Accessed: 18th February 2022.

Afshar Jahanshahi, A. (2016), 'Disentangling the emergence of perceived environmental uncertainty among technology entrepreneurs' *Kybernetes*, 45(6), pp. 962-976.

Amah, O. (2021) 'The Role of Political Prudence and Political Skill in the Political Will and Political Behavior Relationship', *Journal of business ethics*, 176(2), pp. 341–355.

Amis, J. and Greenwood, R. (2021) 'Organisational Change in a (Post-) Pandemic World: Rediscovering Interests and Values', *Journal of management studies*, 58(2), pp. 582–586.

Andrews University, 2018 'Trans-European Division Global Church Member Survey' Available at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2488&context=pubs> Accessed: 18th February 2022.



- Attride-Stirling, J. (2001) 'Thematic networks: an analytic tool for qualitative research', *Qualitative research : QR*, 1(3), pp. 385–405.
- Aubry, M. and Lavoie-Tremblay, M. (2018) 'Rethinking organizational design for managing multiple projects', *International journal of project management*, 36(1), pp. 12–26.
- Baek, P. Chang, J. and Kim, T. (2019) 'Organizational culture now and going forward', *Journal of organizational change management*, 32(6), pp. 650–668.
- Baker S. and Edwards, R. (2012) 'How many qualitative interviews is enough?' National Centre for Research Methods Review Paper. Available at: <https://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/id/eprint/2273/> Accessed:24th February 2022.
- Beugelsdijk, S. and Welzel, C. (2018) Dimensions and dynamics of national culture: Synthesizing Hofstede with Inglehart. *Journal of cross-cultural psychology*, 49(10), pp.1469-1505.
- Bourgoin, A., Bencherki, N. and Faraj, S. (2020) "'And Who Are You?": A Performative Perspective on Authority in Organizations', *Academy of Management Journal*, 63(4), pp. 1134–1165.
- British Union Conference, (2020) 'British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Financial Report' Available at: [https://adventist.uk/fileadmin/shared-data/resources/treasurer/BUC\\_Sept\\_2020.pdf](https://adventist.uk/fileadmin/shared-data/resources/treasurer/BUC_Sept_2020.pdf) Accessed: 18th February 2022.
- British Union Conference, (2022) 'Structure of the Seventh-day Adventist Church' Available at: <https://adventist.uk/who-we-are/our-structure/> Accessed: 28th February 2022.
- Bryson, J. Crosby, B. and Seo, D. (2020) Using a design approach to create collaborative governance. *Policy and Politics*, 48(1), pp. 167-189.
- Burns, B. (2017) 'Managing Change' 7th edn. Harlow: Pearson.
- Cameron, E. and Green, M. (2020) 'Making Sense of Change Management' 5th edn. London:Kogan Page.
- Campbell, S. et al. (2020) 'Purposive sampling: complex or simple? Research case examples', *Journal of research in nursing*, 25(8), pp. 652–661.
- Carson, C. (2005) A historical view of Douglas McGregor's Theory Y. *Management Decision*, 43(3), pp. 450-460.

Charity Commission (2018) 'Charity Register Statistics for Previous Years: Charity Commission. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/charity-register-statistics/charity-register-statistics-for-previous-years-charity-commission> Accessed: 28th February 2022.

Charity Commission, (2018) 'Trustee Welcome Pack' Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1055729/Trustee\\_welcome\\_pack\\_final\\_version\\_170222v1.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1055729/Trustee_welcome_pack_final_version_170222v1.pdf) Accessed 18th February 2022.

Charity Commission, (2022) 'South England Conference Financial History' Available at: <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/1045587/financial-history> Accessed: 18th February 2022.

Charity Commission, (2022) Trustees, Available at: <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/1045587/trustees> Accessed: 24th February 2022.

Chima, A. and Gutman, R. (2020) 'What it Takes to Lead Through an Era of Exponential Change' *Harvard Business Review Online* Available at: <https://hbr.org/2020/10/what-it-takes-to-lead-through-an-era-of-exponential-change> Accessed 3rd March 2022.

Chukwusa, J. (2018) 'Autocratic Leadership Style: Obstacle to Success in Academic Libraries, Library philosophy and practice, p. 1–.

Company House, (2021) 'Being a Company Director' Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/being-a-company-director#your-responsibilities-to-companies-house> Accessed: 2nd March 2022.

Deniz D. and İnan E. (2018) 'Leader Power Bases and Organizational Outcomes: The Role of Perceived Organizational Politics 1', *Journal for East European management studies*, 23(4), pp. 532–558.

Doherty, O. and Stephens, S. (2020) 'The cultural web, higher education and work-based learning', *Industry & higher education*, 34(5), pp. 330–341.

Dressing, H. et al. (2021) 'Child Sexual Abuse by Catholic Priests, Deacons, and Male Members of Religious Orders in the Authority of the German Bishops' Conference 1946–2014', *Sexual abuse*, 33(3), pp. 274–294.

Elbanna, S. (2018) 'The constructive aspect of political behavior in strategic decision-making: The role of diversity', *European management journal*, 36(5), pp. 616–626.

Elias, S. (2008) 'Fifty years of influence in the workplace: The evolution of the French and Raven power taxonomy', *Journal of management history* (2006), 14(3), pp. 267–283.

Featherstone, M. (2020) 'Towards a Bureaucracy of the Body', *New formations*, 100(100), pp. 97–113.

Fiorina, C. (2006) 'Tough Choices: A Memior' London: Nicholas Brealey.

Freemantle D. (2013) Part 1: the cultural web – a model for change in maternity services. *British Journal of Midwifery* 21(9): 648–653.

French, D. and Bell, C. (1999), 'Organizational Development' 6th edn. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

French, J. Raven, B. and Cartwright, D. (1959) The bases of social power. *Classics of organization theory*, 7, pp.311-320.

Fuller, A. (2019) 'The Effectiveness of the Performance Appraisal within the South England Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church' University of West London: MBA Dissertation.

Galati, F. et al. (2021) 'Managing structural inter-organizational tensions in complex product systems projects: Lessons from the Metis case', *Journal of business research*, 129, pp. 723–735.

GCAS, (2022) 'Follow your Money' Available at: <https://www.gcasconnect.org/follow-your-money> Accessed: 28th February 2022.

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, (2021) 'Annual Statistical Report' Available at: <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR2021A.pdf> Accessed: 28th February 2022.

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, (2022) 'How is the Seventh-day Adventist Church Organized and Structured' Available at: <https://www.adventist.org/world-church/> Accessed: 28th February 2022.

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, (2022) 'Seventh-day Adventist World Church Statistics' Available at: <https://www.adventist.org/statistics/seventh-day-adventist-world-church-statistics-2021/> Accessed: 28th February 2022.

General Conference Secretariat, (2015) 'Unions and Ordination to Gospel Ministry' Available at: <https://www.adventistarchives.org/unity-in-mission.pdf> Accessed: 1st March 2022.

General Conference, (2016) 'A Study of Church Governance and Unity' Available at: <https://www.adventistarchives.org/a-study-of-church-governance-and-unity.pdf> Accessed: 18th February 2022.

Gilbert, J. et al. (2012) Toxic versus cooperative behaviors at work: the role of organizational culture and leadership in creating community-centered organizations. *International Journal of Leadership Studies*, 7(1), pp.29-47.

GLOBE, 2020. 'An Overview of the 2004 Study: Understanding the Relationship Between National Culture, Social Effectiveness and Desirable Leadership Attributes' Available at: [https://globeproject.com/study\\_2004\\_2007](https://globeproject.com/study_2004_2007) Accessed: 7th March 2022.

Gundhus, H. Talberg, N. and Wathne, C. (2022) 'From discretion to standardization: Digitalization of the police organization', *International journal of police science & management*, 24(1), pp. 27–41.

Gundhus, H. Talberg, N. and Wathne, C.T. (2022) 'From discretion to standardization: Digitalization of the police organization', *International journal of police science & management*, 24(1), pp. 27–41.

Hartner-Tiefenthaler, M. (2021) 'Supervisors' power to deal with employees' inner resignation: How perceived power of the organization and the supervisor relate to employees' voluntary and enforced work behavior', *European management journal*, 39(2), pp. 260–269. doi:10.1016/j.emj.2020.08.001.

Hochwarter, W. et al. (2020) 'Perceptions of Organizational Politics Research: Past, Present, and Future', *Journal of management*, 46(6), pp. 879–907.

Jahja, A. Ramalu, S. and Razimi, M. (2021) Generic qualitative research in management studies. *JRAK (Jurnal Riset Akuntansi Dan Bisnis)*, 7(1), pp.1-13.

Johnson, G. (1987) 'Strategic change and the management process' Oxford: Blackwell.

Jovanovic, M. (2019) The Political Behaviour of Managers and Employers as an Instrument for Advancing Career- Influence and Factors on Individual and Organizational Effectiveness. *Ekonomika*, 65(4), pp. 87-105.

- Kim, J. (2020) 'The emergence of servant leadership and its effectiveness in bureaucratic organizations', *International journal of manpower*, 41(8), pp. 1235–1249.
- Kirby, D. (2019) 'Changing the nature of organizational change', *Strategic HR Review*, 18(4), pp. 155–160.
- Kvale, S., 1996. The 1,000-page question. *Qualitative inquiry*, 2(3), pp.275-284.
- Lichtenstein, S. Lichtenstein, G. and Higgs, M. (2017) 'Personal values at work: A mixed-methods study of executives' strategic decision-making', *Journal of general management*, 43(1), pp. 15–23.
- Linthorst, J. (2020) 'Megatrends and Disruptors and Their Postulated Impact on Organizations', *Sustainability (Basel, Switzerland)*, 12(20), p. 8740–.
- Lumby, J. (2019) 'Distributed Leadership and bureaucracy', *Educational management, administration & leadership*, 47(1), pp. 5–19.
- Lykourantzou, I., Robert Jr. L. and Barlatier, P. (2021) 'Unleashing the Potential of Crowd Work: The Need for a Post-Taylorism Crowdsourcing Model', *Management (Paris, France : 1998)*, 24(4), pp. 64–69.
- Lynch, R. (2021) 'Strategic Management' 9th edn. London: Sage Publications.
- Lyngstad, I. (2017) 'Legitimate, expert and referent power in physical education', *Sport, education and society*, 22(8), pp. 932–942.
- Mahmud, M. Soetanto, D. and Jack, S. (2021) 'A contingency theory perspective of environmental management: Empirical evidence from entrepreneurial firms', *Journal of general management*, 47(1), pp. 3–17.
- SEC (2019) 'Adventist Church Management System' South England Conference.
- Mcdonalds, S. and Foster, R. (2013) The Use of Johnson's Cultural Web to Improve Understanding of Organisational Culture: A Critical Review. *International Journal of Management*, 30(4), pp. 340-354.
- Mossop L. et al. (2013) Analysing the hidden curriculum: use of a cultural web. *Medical Education* 47(2): pp.134–143.
- Nowell, L. S. et al. (2017) 'Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*.

Office of Archives and Statistics, (2020), 'South England Conference' Available at: [https://adventiststatistics.org/view\\_Summary.asp?FieldInstID=6432](https://adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldInstID=6432) Accessed: 18th February 2022.

Office of National Statistics, (2019) 'Service Sector, UK: 2008 to 2018' Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/economicoutputandproductivity/output/articles/servicessectoruk/2008to2018> Accessed: 3rd March 2022.

Omodan, B. Tsotetsi, C. and Dube, B. (2020) 'Analysis of human relations theory of management: A quest to re-enact people's management towards peace in university system', *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 18, pp.1–10.

Ouma, S. and Premchander, S. (2022) 'Labour, Efficiency, Critique: writing the plantation into the technological present-future', *Environment and planning. A*, 54(2), pp. 413–421.

Patrikios, S. (2020) 'Ideological traditionalism and organisational innovation in Greek Orthodox ecclesiastical governance', *Journal of contemporary religion*, 35(3), pp. 415–432.

Puranam, P. (2018) *The Microstructure of Organizations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Roulston, K. DeMarrais, K. and Lewis, J. (2003) 'Learning to Interview in the Social Sciences', *Qualitative inquiry*, 9(4), pp. 643–668.

Roy, A. and Perrin, C. (2021) 'Managing conflicts in the nonprofit sector through organizational culture change', *Journal of organizational change management*, 34(1), pp. 60–83.

Sambumbu, M. et al. (2018) 'Using Taylorism to make work easier : a work procedure perspective', *South African journal of economic and management sciences*, 21(1), pp. 1–10.

Sarkar, S. and Osiyevskyy, O. (2018) 'Organizational change and rigidity during crisis: A review of the paradox', *European management journal*, 36(1), pp. 47–58.

Schein, E. (2017) 'Organizational Culture and Leadership' 5th edn. Canada: Wiley.

Schneider, J. (2013) 'Comparing Stewardship Across Faith-Based Organizations', *Nonprofit and voluntary sector quarterly*, 42(3), pp. 517–539.

SEC, (2022) 'What we believe' Available at: <https://sec.adventist.uk/who-we-are/what-we-believe/> Accessed 10th March 2022.

Seventh-day Adventist (2022) 'How is the Seventh-day Adventist Church Organised and Structured?' Available at: <https://www.adventist.org/world-church/> Accessed: 18th February 2022.

Shrestha, Y. Ben-Menahem, S. and von Krogh, G. (2019) 'Organizational Decision-Making Structures in the Age of Artificial Intelligence', *California management review*, 61(4), pp. 66–83.

Singh, S and Vanka, S. (2019) Voice matters: why HR should listen to employee voice? *Strategic HR Review*, 18(6), pp. 268-271.

Smith, A. and Stewart, B. (2011) 'Organizational Rituals: Features, Functions and Mechanisms', *International journal of management reviews : IJMR*, 13(2), pp. 113–133.

Smith, J. (1998) The enduring legacy of Elton Mayo. *Human Relations*, 51(3), pp. 221-249.

South England Conference (2019) 'Session Minutes' Available at: [https://issuu.com/tgdh/docs/sec\\_annual\\_report\\_2019](https://issuu.com/tgdh/docs/sec_annual_report_2019) Accessed: 18th February 2022.

South England Conference, (2015) 'Session Minutes' Available at: [https://issuu.com/tgdh/docs/sec\\_session\\_report](https://issuu.com/tgdh/docs/sec_session_report) Accessed: 18th February 2022.

South England Conference, (2019) 'News from SEC Session' Available at: <https://sec.adventist.uk/news/article/go/2019-09-06/breaking-news-from-sec-session-2019/> Accessed: 10th March 2022.

Stewart, C. Nodoushani, O. and Stumpf, J. (2018) 'Cultivating Employees Using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs', *Competition Forum*, 16(2), pp. 67–75.

Tabiu, A. (2019) Do "high-performance" human resource practices work in public universities? Mediation of organizational and supervisors' supports. *African Journal of Economic and Management Studies*, 10(4), pp. 493-506.

The South England Conference, (2015) 'The Constitution of the SEC' Available at: <https://sec.adventist.uk/fileadmin/sec.adventist.uk/resources/Secretariat/SEC-Constitution-Sept-2015.pdf> Accessed: 18th February 2022.

Thornbury, J. (1999) 'KPMG: Revitalising Culture through Values', *Business strategy review*, 10(4), pp. 1–15.

Western, S. and Garcia, G. (2018) United Kingdom: Dis-United Kingdom? Leadership at a Crossroads. In: 2018. *Global Leadership Perspectives: Insights and Analysis*, 55 City Road, London: SAGE Publications Ltd. pp. 161-169 Available at: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781529714845.n20>, Accessed: 7th Mar 2022.

Wong, H. and Hung, J. (2012), 'Environmental scanning literature – past, present and future research propositions', *International Journal of Business Environment*, 5(1), pp. 30-50.



## Appendices

### *Appendix A: Questions for Participants*

#### **Stories:**

Political behaviour exists at the board level.

Disagree  
1      2      3      4      5      Agree

Explore where political behaviour influenced an important decision. What were the antecedents, behaviours and consequences?

What are the values and assumptions that underpin the actions and behaviours you observed?

#### **Routines and Rituals:**

Information presented to Excom is used to confirm a decision.

Disagree  
1      2      3      4      5      Agree

What actions repeatedly occur in the decision-making process?

#### **Symbols:**

A person's status is important when making decisions at the board level.

Disagree  
1      2      3      4      5      Agree

What might this reveal about the board's assumptions and values?

#### **Control Systems**

SEC Hard control systems work effectively

Disagree  
1      2      3      4      5      Agree

SEC Soft control systems work effectively

Disagree  
1      2      3      4      5      Agree

Explore any hidden systems of control that are used on a regular basis at the board level. What are they and how do they impact the decision-making?

**Power Structures**

Religious faith has a strong influence on the SEC power structures.

Disagree Agree

1      2      3      4      5

What are the underlying assumptions and values behind how power operates in the SEC?

**Organisational Structures**

The organisational structure affects decision-making.

Disagree Agree

1      2      3      4      5

Think about when the formal structures were not followed, and the process was not followed. What structure or process was used and were formal structures not followed?

**Final Question**

What could be done to improve the decision-making process on the executive committee?

## *Appendix B: Sample Transcript*

**Max:**

Political behaviour exists at the board level. Do you agree or disagree and to what extent?

**Participant 7:**

Five.

**Max:**

Tell me more.

**Participant 7:**

Stories are told. And sometimes the stories aren't necessarily untrue. They're not true in context. And so somebody can say, for example, Something that happened in a person's life that either is irrelevant to the situation, is a personnel matter or is hearsay. That person is then judged or assessed as suitable or unsuitable for that position based on irrelevancies. Matters that should be confidential. And they should not be discriminated against anyway based on hearsay, or even the fact that nobody on the board decides to verify the information with the individual or with a credible source. And those things at board level are very damaging because it can then label that particular individual in a certain way that is completely unfair.

**Max:**

So what would be the antecedents of such behaviours?

**Participant 7:**

I think one of the reasons why people are quick to give information is because the Seventh Day Adventist Church is a very information-driven organisation. So it's driven not only by doctrine, but by lots of information. We are a talking people, so we're always sharing information. And so as a result of that, as an information driven organisation, we assume the information given by other Christian people is correct. Also, because of so much information is given, oftentimes people become lazy. So because they have so much going on, they don't think, Oh, well, let me check this.

Because there's so much information given it's just a sense of OK, must be true, or somebody wouldn't have said it publicly. So let's just kind of move on because we don't have the time. So when you go to a board meeting, for example, and there were like 20 agenda items, how on earth are you going to get through that? So actually, if somebody says, for example, that this person is unsuitable, I haven't got time to go outside and check it because it's probably item number two and we've got 20 items. I'm tired and I'm a volunteer. I've got to be here all day and I'm taking my time out and it's a fun day or whatever, or I'm a director and I've got other things to do. So actually, yeah, it's fine.

**Max:**

And so you mentioned, I think you're talking about the wealth of the information, the length of the actual board meeting and the agenda, and you talked about tying that strategically to objectives. Do you mean is that a way of filtering out irrelevant information?

**Participant 7:**

An organisation that I worked for; what they did was every agenda item had to fit into the five strategic objectives of the organisation. And if it didn't fit into this, it was taken to a lower level committee. Who would address it and then would find a way to bring it into one of those five objectives and then it could be presented again.

So it meant that all the irrelevancies and so certain things could be then checked and clarified. However, with the SEC you could say, for example, if one of my objectives is to build a boat and somebody on the committee then says, Oh, OK, we're going to talk about building an aeroplane down the road. But It's not your objective. So that needs to go. And somebody may say, OK, in five years time, we want to put this on here. But right now, it's just not relevant. Often times the meetings are long and drawn out, and if they will just say this is not relevant for this meeting, let this committee handle this and report back to us. You may find that things are checked and clarified in advance. So when information comes, I can turn around and say, yes, this person actually is suitable.

**Max:**

So reflecting back on everything that you said, What are the values and assumptions that underpin the actions and behaviours you observed?

**Participant 7:**

I think there are a lack of values. And that is one of the problems. There was a lack of known values, so there might be values that people hold, but as the boards that I've sat on at church level. Values are not discussed, values are very rarely discussed, and so there are very little values that underpin it. So it's whoever has the loudest voice. And so values don't stick the values of, say, trust confidentiality don't exist...