

Developing middle managers in the Hong Kong Public sector:

A critique of leadership development
from a labour process perspective.

JENNIFER JAMIESON O'NEIL

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Abstract

Critical scholars have written about the 'squeezed middle' and the new labour process of front line and middle managers generally, but there is a gap in the literature relating to both how changes to managerial work have affected those subjected to them and how individuals and organisations have attempted to respond to, and cope with, public sector cuts and challenges. Much of contemporary HRD writing on change management suggests that leadership development has a privileged role in adjusting the 'worker' to the situation. However, given the implicitly unitarist nature of much HRD writing, this thesis argues that insights from such literature is inadequate or incomplete because it fails to consider the interests of managers as employees.

The focus of this thesis is on middle managers' (MM) ability to overcome the public sector challenges associated with work intensification; control and skills adaption via learning and development initiatives. This qualitative research comprises a data set of 17 in-depth interviews and 34 complementary semi-structured questionnaire's with middle managers in the Hong Kong Civil Service. Thematic analysis revealed that whilst managers and the organisation benefit from leadership development in terms of human capital development, power differentials and structural impediments limit the capacity to benefit from social capital and networking opportunities provided. As such LDP cannot compensate for work intensification, leading to a stressed-out, disempowered, squeezed middle management cadre, which in turn impacts on public service delivery.

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Abbreviations

CSTDI Civil Service Training and Development Institute

DoJ Department of Justice

HKCS The Hong Kong Civil Service

LEGCO Legislative Council

LMD Leadership and Management Development

LDP Leadership Development Program

MM Middle Manager

Confidentiality

For the purposes of this thesis, names cited are pseudonyms, to protect the identity of participants in the study.

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the mechanisms employed by organisations to 'help' middle managers upskill and overcome the difficulties of managing in a complex, changing environment – namely through leadership and management development (LMD) and to question the efficacy of this HRM tool. The premise of this thesis is captured in Thompson's (2003) notion of disconnected capitalism, where he argues that '*employers are finding it harder to keep their side of the bargain*' (p361). Whilst employers can offer tools to enable staff to work harder and smarter, via training and development, the facets of globalisation and the financialisation of the workplace inevitably means that training opportunity is never enough to compensate for job insecurity and work intensification.

Employers are increasingly demanding more of their staff, in terms of hours worked and effort employed, which is described as demanding more of the whole person (Thompson, 2003). But the mutual gains idealised by the focus on skill development investment has fallen short and I argue that whilst leadership development can have some benefit in aiding middle managers perform their job, the employment bargain falls mainly in favour of the employer, even in contexts where job security has traditionally played a bigger role in the employment relationship.

Middle managers are often depicted as 'squeezed in the middle' and there is a large body of literature recognising the difficulty of the middle management job (Lloyd and Payne, 2014; Hassard, McCann and Morris, 2012, 2009; Bolton and Houlihan, 2010; Mantere, 2008; Hales, 2005; Jackall, 1988). According to the literature, they have been 'de-layered', subject to increased workload and job complexity, diminished authority and often had job security reduced whilst simultaneously tasked with motivating staff to perform in ever changing, more competitive and pressurised workplaces.

Considering leadership development through a labour process theory lens allows for a critique which frames managerial challenges both from the perspective of the employee and acknowledging the precarious position of the middle manager as 'squeezed' in the middle and subject to conditions of work intensification and control. It allows us to consider management 'as' work as well as management 'of' work. As

such, this thesis attempts to bridge the gap in the literature by applying labour process theory to the training and development of middle managers in the public sector. The focus of this thesis shifts away from generic leadership skills development and onto identifying both changes to the effort bargain imposed and ultimately the barriers to public service delivery as perceived by middle managers themselves. Furthermore, conclusions are developed regarding middle managers ability to overcome structural impediments to work efficacy and public service outcomes and the types of skills required to cope with the reality of challenging managerial work.

In this thesis, the critique is taken into the public sector and the changing role of the middle manager is explored. This addresses a gap in the literature exploring both the difficulties of management 'as' work in different institutional contexts and the neglect of public sector leadership, which has been well documented in the literature, specifically when focussing on training and development (Seidle *et al* 2016; Van Wart, 2003).

Despite developments in models of public governance, which have spanned from a private sector aping NPM model with a 'doing more for less mantra' - to a post NPM style of governance which rejects some of the harsher private sector practices, public sector managers are finding it tough to deliver on public service outcomes. Social issues, such as chronic housing shortages, funding for healthcare and disputes in the education sector are a growing trend throughout the developed world. It is argued that market orientated reforms in the public sector are often implemented at the expense of social issues and that this is particularly prevalent in Asia (Koike, 2013). One such market-orientated reform is to offer leadership development to the managerial cadre, in an attempt to up-skill and empower managers to lead through the reform process and to manage both resources and public service delivery effectively. Nevertheless, how effective is this?

Whilst leadership development has received significant attention from a functionalist HRM perspective, this literature details mainly the positive aspects of skills development within a changing work context. Organisations attempt to overcome the challenges of the managerial role through a remit of up-skilling. Leadership and management development programmes (LMD) designed to enable and help the

manager adapt to and enforce change have firmly become part of the corporate rhetoric. However, the unitarist position of corporate action, rhetoric and prescribed learning solutions pays insufficient attention to the subjective experiences and contrasting motivations of the individual as well as the structural impediments to work efficacy. Alternatively, as one author puts it;

'Discussions of MLD have tended to ignore the realities of different levels of managerial and organisational contexts and concentrated on universalistic approaches to developing individual competencies as a way of addressing organisational problems' (McGurk, 2009, p457.)

As such, this thesis allows us to consider both the positive and negative aspects of leadership development. Although LDP can be seen as an enabling form of work, by connecting it to the wider political economy, we can also create a robust discussion concerning the limitations of LDP and take a perspective on practical implications at an individual and organisational level.

1.1 Rationale and Question formation

The central research question posed is:

To what extent does leadership development help managers to overcome the challenges associated with the managerial labour process in the public sector?

The connection between labour process theory and LMD lies in the focus on skills development and effort bargain. Labour process theory traditionally posits a de-skilling thesis (Braverman, 1989) and there is a growing body of literature examining de-skilling, the degradation of work and substitution within the public sector (Gale, 2012; Carter and Stevenson, 2013). The HRM literature within the public sector has specifically focused on the importance of the development of skills for leaders and managers, in order to meet the on-going changing environment and public service outcomes. The literature is overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the need for skills development as a tool for overcoming leader difficulty and enhancing performance

(Day 2001; Storey, 2004; Boaden, 2006; McGurk, 2009; 2010; Seidle, Fernandez and Perry 2016).

However, labour process theorists paint a contrastingly bleak picture about skills development in the public sector, particularly for middle and front line managers. The effort bargain is increasingly seen as one dominated by the goals of the organisation [and capital], with scant regard for the impact of increased work complexity and work intensification for the worker. They guide workers towards emancipation and resistance to overly controlling and cost cutting regimes, hampered by structural difficulties and limits to managerial agency.

Whilst middle managers are acknowledged to be key to the organisational change process (Gatenby *et al* 2015; Currie *et al* 2008; Floyd and Woolridge, 1994) and can be trained and developed to excel in new areas, training staff to work harder and smarter – or to motivate subordinates to do likewise - does little to combat actual increased workloads or manage employee well-being. Doing ‘more with less’ is difficult and has an impact on the lived experience of work at all levels.

These two positions are quite distinct highlighting both enabling and coercive/controlling forms of organisational activity. This thesis seeks to build on current research by examining the subjective experiences of middle managers caught betwixt and between these two positions.

Specifically, the gap in the literature is most prominent when considering public sector organisations. Whilst there is a body of literature exploring the managerial labour process and most notably the ‘new’ labour process of middle managers (Hassard *et al* 2012; McCann *et al* 2010, Hassard *et al* 2009; Armstrong 1989, Thompson 2010), the research conducted in the public sector has tended to be limited to structural failings (McCann *et al* 2010; Hassard *et al* 2009; McCann, 2008) without considering some of the internal and subjective challenges, or has focused on staff in non-managerial roles (Carter and Stevenson, 2013; Gale 2012; Bolton and Wibberly, 2013). Yet the pressures of public management and the importance of the managerial role in public service delivery are widely supported (Cheung 2013; Radner and Osborne 2012; Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe 2004 Hartley and Allison 2000) and

as Adler argues ‘enabling *forms of organisation either partially displace or coexist with coercive forms [of management control]*’ (Adler, 2007 p1325). As such, this thesis address’s the gap in the literature, by exploring the context specific challenges and barriers that middle managers face in a public sector setting and questioning the efficacy of the training and development initiatives offered as an enabling, organisational remedy.

Hong Kong is representative of a capitalist economy under transformation. Political transformation and developments to democratic systems can be observed throughout the world. Many nations operate under a system of devolved power. In Asia, we can look to the wider Chinese diaspora, such as Singapore, Taiwan and Macau to observe governments and public sector organisations that must grapple with transformation and varying levels of control from central government or political partners. In the UK, we can witness devolved Scotland bartering for greater devolution powers. In Europe in general, discussion over levels of central EU influence regarding domestic policy and legislation impact on the work of civil servants and the ability to control and provide services. As such, although this exploratory research is conducted in a single location, it can up to a point, be applicable to capitalist public sector contexts globally.

The Hong Kong Civil Service (HKCS) has been selected as representative of a public sector organisation, operating within a capitalist society and adds to the body of work conducted globally in other locations. The labour process for employees in HKCS has undergone significant transformative change since the 1997 transition to Chinese rule. Social, economic and political changes have impacted the experience of work, these include; the reduction of overseas staff within the civil service; headcount freeze due to the economic crash in the 1990’s; greater public dissatisfaction with provision of services which is underscored by the growing wealth gap and frequent public demonstrations; greater use of contractors and the perception of inefficiency, a lack of accountability and political upheaval linked to the implementation of a new ministerial system. Whilst it is acknowledged that Hong Kong presents some context specific political challenges, it also shares the global features of reform, adopted by many Western and Asian countries (Quah, 2013; Koike, 2013; Cheung, 2012; Cheung 2013). This is denoted by the implementation of new public management initiatives that ape the private sector, including: restructuring; downsizing; the implementation of

hard HRM initiatives such as reward re-alignment and performance management initiatives and an ethos of 'doing more with less'. This research is important as it challenges the idea that public managers are or should be empowered through leadership development and seeks to explore the wider issues affecting and contributing to middle management ability, motivation and capacity to deliver public services. Crucially for the public sector, success is not judged by the financial markets or shareholder interests but by the satisfaction of the [voting] public it serves – which is itself linked to political and economic stability. This point is prevalent in the literature and informs the rationale for the project;

“The government is effectively the employer in the public sector, so we might expect to see a commitment to ‘high skills’ exemplified in management processes, in approaches to human resource management (HRM) in general and to training and development in particular. In so far as the public sector is relatively labour intensive, it could be argued that the quality of service could be judged by the quality of interactions between public and front-line workers.” (Rainbird, Munro and Holly, 2004, p92)

1.2 Contribution to the literature

In seeking to answer this question I build on labour process theory concerning the two-way nature of managerial control (Armstrong 1989; Thompson and Van der Broek 2010); the prevalence of work intensification in the public sector (McCann, Hassard and Morris 2008;2010) and organisational attempts to empower and enable middle managers through skills development (Day 2001; Sawchuk 2006; Garavan 2007; McGurk, 2009,2010) specifically in a capitalist Chinese context. This is done by examining the subjective experience of management as work, not management of work, and adds to the recent application seen within the public sector of capitalist economies in the UK, USA and Japan. (Smith, 2012; Gale, 2012; Hassard *et al* 2012 and 2009, McCann *et al* 2008). Managerial work is defined as having 'its own levels of alienation and fragmentation' (Thompson and McHugh 2002, p350) and whilst current research may not support a Braverman type de-skilling thesis (quite the opposite) for white collar workers, intensification of work for managers and extreme pressure due to the changing structure of contemporary capitalism is widely acknowledged (McCann, 2014; Hassard *et al* 2009; McCann *et al* 2008).

This thesis makes a number of contributions to the literature. Firstly, when considering the theoretical implications, it supports and adds to the growing body of work critiquing HRD initiatives such as learning and development of managers and frames it through an alternative theoretical lens, namely labour process theory. Authors have acknowledged the implications of workplace learning in the public sector have a dual element, giving mixed messages, on the one hand of a 'return to the good employer' with a positive up-skilling message and on the other of combining this with a target driven culture which narrowing development to task-specific training and increased pressure to intensify work (Rainbird, Munro and Holly 2004). But this research takes general notions of the impact of leadership development and specifically applies it to the middle management cadre and the associated training and development programmes. This builds on middle management development literature and theory allowing for greater critique and insight into practice.

Secondly it is acknowledged that labour process theory has been applied in a unique context, specifically both an international and public sector context. Context is important as numerous studies have revealed the significance of context in shaping managerial performance and learning outcomes. Whilst Hong Kong may be considered on the one hand a unique political context, it does offer the opportunity to conduct this research in an environment which has adopted the principles of NPM alongside sophisticated HRM practices which include LMD. As it is part of the Chinese diaspora, the opportunity exists to compare and discuss research gleaned in a Western context whilst adding to the slim body of work conducted in a Chinese context.

Thirdly this thesis adds to the body of work observing the growing trend toward managerial practices in the public sector and builds on the New Public management and post NPM doctrines. Leadership and management development initiatives which are most notably associated with the private sector (Hassard *et al* 2009) – are at odds with the mechanism of the public sector, for example extensive use of outsourcing and contractors resulting in a lack of control and managerial issues of accountability. This thesis builds on the notion of managerial 'powerlessness' (Bolton and Houlihan 2010; Lloyd and Payne, 2014; Teulings, 1986) in the decision making process. This is most notable at a 'line' and 'middle' management level (Thompson and McHugh, 2002) and is concerned with the stratification of management and inherent conflicts that exist.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

As such Chapter one, the literature review, is broken up into three key areas; Firstly Middle management work, challenges and outcomes – which includes the theoretical underpinnings of the project (labour process theory) and a discussion around both public sector and middle management challenges. Secondly leadership and management development (LMD) of middle managers is considered and thirdly the context of the Hong Kong public sector.

Chapter two describes the research methodology and philosophical underpinnings of the thesis. This is an exploratory, qualitative study and two data sets have been collected. The first is the 'Employee Cohort' which comprises of 8 interviews and a survey designed to complement the interview structure – completed by middle managers. The second is the 'Organisational Cohort' which comprises of 9 interviews completed by HR and Nominating Managers.

This thesis moves away from a functionalist approach to examining LMD (leadership and management development) and takes a critical realist perspective, utilising labour process theory. This approach is considered useful as it allows us to move away from unitarist perspectives assuming that organisations and workers have the same goals to a more critical perspective, examining the challenges for the worker, both structural and subjective. Labour process theory allows us to consider the difficulties the individual has of reconciling organisational objectives with personal goals and the structural impediments which negatively affect both the experience and efficacy of work in the public sector.

But as well as identifying the difficulties with the 'system', realism also involves examining subversion and considering the ways individuals and the devolved organisation attempt to overcome power inequity and the contradictions inherent in the labour process of managers. The theoretical underpinnings are discussed in department in the literature review.

Chapter three is the presentation of results and chapter four presents the discussion and conclusion and draws out recommendations for future research. Whilst managers can be portrayed in the orthodox literature as highly skilled, knowledgeable and influential –benefitting from higher levels of pay, access to career ladders and training, this thesis, in considering the reality of managerial work, takes a more critical perspective.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to the Literature

This literature review spans a wide variety of topics in order to answer the research question and has essentially drawn together three distinct sets of literature; Human resource development literature; public management literature and labour process theory literature.

Whilst HRM writers have critiqued the challenges managers face relating to performance outcomes, labour process theorists depict a more personal perspective, offering insight to the structural and contextual factors which impinge on the emancipation of the middle manager in a changing work environment. Drawing these literatures together allows for an alternative perspective of public sector reform.

Orthodox HRM literature paints a picture of HRD and specifically leadership and management training and development, as a desirable, skill enhancing process which aids organisational outcomes (McGurk 2010; 2009). However, this functionalist research position can be quite unitarist in perspective. It fails to adequately take into account the needs and desires of employees in a work context or the nature of management 'as' work as well as management 'of' work.

Garavan (2007, p26) has suggested that "HRD professionals strive to implement activities which that are focused on both exploitation and exploration". Exploitative practices in his paper as defined as having a short term focus and are concerned with competency development such as 'socialisation skills', exploration concerns an employee's adaptive capability. Whilst this research moves in the right direction in that it is more pluralistic in outlook and does take into account individual expectations in terms of career development and employability, it falls short of considering the deeper challenges of the individual at work or alternative understandings of exploitation in a work context, such as via work intensification and squeezing the discretionary effort out of the individual.

Socio-constructivist papers which have a more critical leaning and take a pluralistic perspective, highlight the subjective experience of the individual and the importance of context. This perspective recognises the constraints and barriers to leadership development from the experience of the employee and takes into account the psychological, social, cultural and political dimensions which shape participants experience and outcomes. (Hotho and Dowling, 2010; Antonacopoulou, 1999 a, b, 2001). But this research, whilst illuminating, falls short of adequately debating the structural impediments to development which form the organisational context, such as the external political environment which is unique to the public sector and hierarchical impediments to learning transfer and access to power. The focus is on training design and outcomes and does not make clear connections with labour process or work design as contributing factors for the need and utility of skills development.

Conversely, labour process literature examines the lived experience of work and charts the struggle of middle managers in a variety of settings. These struggles are represented as the ability to cope with increased work intensification; changes to skill requirements – where this represents up-skilling, re-skilling or de-skilling and difficulties in capturing sufficient control in order to do the ‘real work’ of management, which Thompson and Van Der Broek, 2010 argue is decision making. This literature makes much of the structural impediments to work efficacy, and the underlying personal notions of the experience and enjoyment of work amidst a backdrop of re-structuring; increased job insecurity and increasing work complexity and intensification. It also shines a light on imposed barriers to autonomy and control in the work environment (Bolton and Houlihan, 2010) and governmental solutions of labour substitution leading to deskilling and degradation of workers in the public sector (Gale 2012).

What is missing from the literature is a connection between these camps, where the negative aspects of the ‘new labour process’ for middle managers can be recognised (McCann, Hassard and Morris, 2008), whilst simultaneously considering the efficacy and outcomes of methods to re-capture lost control and compensate for work intensification through skills development from both an organisational and employee perspective. Whilst there is significant literature debating the skills that employers need (Grugulis and Vincent, 2009) and the changing nature of skills requirement, more

discussion is needed around; a) employee perceptions of the skills 'they' perceive to need in order to overcome labour process challenges and create a greater sense of enjoyment and balance in the world of work. b) Acknowledging the effort bargain difficulties and the indeterminacy of labour which leads to employers striving after higher and newer forms of work intensification of employees. Whilst Thompson and McHugh (2002) may have identified that 'political skills' are crucial to the individual's (employees) survival and Sawchuk (2006) has identified this as 'the skills of making out' and an unintended outcome of the learning process, there is scope to develop these ideas further and make connections between the 'control' which organisations exert and the agency which employees (middle managers in this case) utilise to resist and as Thomson and McHugh put it 'survive'.

2.1.1 Structure of the Literature Review

There are two key papers that originally inspired this thesis. They are McCann, Hassard and Morris (2010) with their assertion that there is a 'new labour process' for middle managers experiencing fundamental changes to key areas of their work experience due to globalization, downsizing and other structural challenges. They have called for more research into the major international problem of excessive work pressure for middle managers and specifically cased the public sector as well as the private sector. The second is Bolton and Houlihan's (2010) paper on the 'powerlessness' of front line managers to resolve customer satisfaction and address structural failings. Both papers are examining the labour process of line and middle managers and are suggesting that MM's be viewed as employees who are subject to work intensification and complexity but do not have the power or capacity to resolve the ensuing tensions. As such the key authors framing this dissertation are labour process theorists (Braverman, 1974; Armstrong, 1989; Thompson, 2010).

As such the literature review is conducted in three sections: Firstly, we consider; Middle management work, challenges and outcomes. This is done by laying out the labour process position on middle management work and specifically both public sector challenges and outcomes for middle managers. The literature considers the work of middle managers through a labour process inspired lens and as such presents the theoretical underpinnings of the thesis. This section begins by taking a more critical

view and considering changing notions of work for managers, in both UK based and international settings, specifically related to agency, structure and power (or powerlessness) to enact decision making within a capitalist context (McCann 2014; Bolton and Houlihan, 2010; Hassard *et al* 2009; Rarick, 2009; McGurk, 2009; McCann *et al* 2008). Developments in the labour process theory, most notably applying it in both the public sector and specifically to managers are debated leading to ideas on how to re-capture power and support from above and a critique of the limitations of skill development in the face of structural challenges are presented. (Carter and Stevenson, 2013; Gale, 2012; Thompson, 2010; Thompson and Van Der Broek, 2010; Armstrong, 1989; Littler, 1982; Friedman, 1977; Braverman, 1974; Thompson and Smith, 2007; Adler, 2007; Sawchuk, 2006)..

Secondly we consider: Leadership and management development (LMD) for middle managers and examine the role; types and approaches taken to LMD and it's impact and effectiveness. Contextual issues specific to the training and development of MM's in the public sector are specifically addressed here.

Thirdly contextual factors relating to the Hong Kong public service are taken into account, notably potential cultural differences relating to management work and values and social, political, economic factors which are important in forming the thesis narrative. From this examination of the literature, key study propositions are presented.

2.2 Middle Management Work, Challenges and Outcomes

2.2.1 Labour Process Insights on challenges and outcomes

Braverman's Labour process theory, succinctly debated in his 1974 thesis 'Labour and Monopoly Capital: The degradation of work in the 20th century' was a landmark critique, questioning orthodox views of the nature of work. As he explained in the first page;

'The more I read the more I became aware of a contradiction that marks much of the current writing in this area. On the one hand, it is emphasized that modern work, as a

result of scientific-technical revolution and “automation”, requires ever higher levels of education, training, the greater exercise of intelligence and mental effort in general. At the same time a mounting dissatisfaction with the conditions of industrial and office labour appears to contradict this view. – work has become increasingly subdivided into petty operations that fail to sustain the interest or engage the capacities of humans with current levels of education; that these petty operations demand ever less skill and training; and that the modern trend for work by it’s ‘mindlessness’ and ‘bureaucratisation’ is ‘alienating’ ever larger sections of the working populations’ (Braverman 1974 p3).

Braverman espoused a deskilling thesis, where workers were subject to management control and scrutiny in order to capitalise on, or valorise, their labour output. The owners of capital achieved this by alienating workers from the process of production, for example by fragmenting tasks and differentiating between high skill and low skill jobs and workers. His work has inspired a raft of subsequent research. Whilst Braverman was essentially concerned about the impact of these changes to the labour process for the working classes, subsequent research has taken labour process analysis beyond class structure and applied the theory in different contexts. Significantly for this thesis labour process theorists have moved the debate to consider both; the labour process of managers (Armstrong 1989; Thompson 1989; McCann *et al*/2008; Bolton and Houlihan, 2010), the labour process of public sector workers (Gale 2012; Carter and Stevenson, 2013) and workers across the globe in emerging capitalist societies such as China (Chan *et al* 2013; Kai and Brown, 2013; Chan and Hui, 2012; Friedman, 2012).

Whilst Braverman’s original concept of labour process theory has been widely criticised for ignoring the subjective elements of work (O’Doherty and Wilmott, 2001), a failure to engage with neo-marxism which would include forms of struggle other than class (Knights and Wilmott, 2007) and for ignoring the re-skilling that often accompanies de-skilling (Adler, 2007), it is widely conceded that general trends of work degradation, increasing managerial control and skilled jobs being replaced by technology prevail in our ever changing capitalist work environment. His work is defended by those who suggest that Labor Monopoly and Capital, contains most, if

not all, of the ideas that the critics challenge, "*if only one has eyes to see them*" (Thompson and Smith 2000, p45).

It is asserted in this thesis that labour process theory is a useful lens from which to consider the changes of work for middle managers in the public sector. As such this chapter will debate the changing labour process for managers, predominantly junior and middle managers, from within the capitalist organisational regime of the Hong Kong Civil Service, which itself is subject to on-going change.

The importance of the state in the labour process debate had gained momentum since the mid 1980's, crucial to this debate has been the acknowledgement of growing levels of both employment and reform within the public sector. Whilst traditional accounts of the plight of semi-skilled or low-skilled staff exist, such as Margaret Cousins accounts within the NHS (Cousins in Knights and Wilmott, 1986) and more recently Bolton and Wibberly's case study of domiciliary care in UK (2013), a raft of recent literature has also examined the labour process of professional highly skilled staff and management level employees in the public sector. Gale argues that reforms to the probation service (UK) implemented through a performance management agenda have led to the 'Taylorisation'; labour substitution, deskilling and degradation of work within public services generally. This is seen in the employment of 'cheaper' lower skilled staff, to perform the more routine tasks that professionals might undertake as part of their role (Gale, 2012).

This observation is echoed by Carter and Stevenson (2012) who critiqued 'workforce re-modelling' within the education sector. This is a policy intended to combat work intensification and overload for teachers, through the expansion of the role of teaching assistants, but which they argue extended managerial hierarchies and increased intensity and control of teacher's workload as it was run parallel to a programme of raising standards, in the style of performance management. Mather and Seifert (2013) gave a very critical account of the labour process for Further Education lecturers, analysing two key LP areas of close observation (control) and professional development. They have suggested that CPD and other forms of professional development far from giving positive development in the form of professional up-skilling are actually regarded as 'punitive [measures] to be feared' (Mather and Seifert,

2013, p13) and that these have resulted in worker reactions of 'dull compliance, fear and resilience' [ibid].

Whilst these recent accounts are of 'professionals' within the public sector (albeit who sometimes have line management responsibility), other authors have also taken the debate into the stratum of middle managers. Bolton and Houlihan argue that front line service sector managers, rather than having insufficient skill, have insufficient power to resolve customer dissatisfaction and address structural failings (Bolton and Houlihan, 2010). This is echoed in a public sector study conducted in the USA, UK and Japan, where structural reform was seen to undermine the job security, increase the burden of work intensification and control of working time and radically alter the role of management. (Hassard *et al* 2008; McCann *et al* 2009; McCann *et al* 2010).

Significantly Carter also argues that whilst it is possible to apply the labour process to the public sector, it is not possible to come up with an over-arching single public sector labour process theory as the contextual challenges are different (Carter and Stevenson 2012; Carter 1997b). I would echo that view when applied to Hong Kong and other transitioning devolved governments worldwide and argue that whilst contextual differences make an over-arching theory difficult to propose, certain themes can be drawn from the analysis which add to the intensification, control and skills debate.

Intensification of Work

Work Intensification is comprised of a variety of components, variously made up of; longer working hours, unmanageable even 'health threatening' workloads; greater work intensity; 'doing more with less' in terms of reduced headcount and resources; 'presenteeism' as a trend and the increasing scrutiny or surveillance of staff within an HRM performance management remit (Thomas and Gale, 2002; McCann *et al* 2008; Hassard *et al* 2009; Thompson 2010; Gale, 2012). It is described as a feature of tertiary society and the 'pressure to labour excessively' (Standing, 2010), or to be seen to labour excessively. Work intensification is significantly influenced by the premise that in order for an organisation to be successful, efficient and productive, staff must

perform at optimum levels, putting in maximum effort, with minimal cost outlay to the organisation. Efficiencies are sought in the public sector to offer the tax payer 'value for money' and transparency in the process. But cost is not the only driving force, lack of available talent, bureaucratic process (for example relating to recruitment) and institutional barriers such as internal politics all play a role.

Braverman contends that management has become mere administration, conducted in order to exert control of the workforce. He describes it as a process which produces no discernible product. (Braverman, 1974). Whilst this idea has been widely criticised as a simplified and limited view of the management role (Armstrong 1989, p308) there is some truth to it. Current research suggests that many organisations are running at full capacity, with minimal staffing levels and an HRM remit of performance management that puts pressure on both management and managed staff to meet performance targets at all costs. It is suggested that 'many large firms are still getting by on the *goodwill* of white-collar employees' (Hassard *et al* 2008 p21), which is also described as 'informal labour' (Bolton and Wibberly, 2013) and commonly seen as either essential (often un-paid) overtime, or simply an impossible standard which cannot be met and inevitably leads to poor service provision – but within budget. Work that is not accounted for in the pay packet or work schedule is becoming a common feature of the public sector and are variously viewed as an imposition or worryingly out-with the scope of an individual's training and ability. Cited examples of this include; teachers out of hours preparation or domiciliary workers unaccounted travel time to and from elderly patients or performing nursing duties they are not qualified for; managers having to hold meetings early morning or late evening to fit it all in or taking phone calls in the middle of the night (Ford and Collinson 2011; Carter and Stevenson 2012; Bolton and Wibberly, 2013).

Where service provision in the public sector is poor, due to low staff levels; outsourcing and insufficient consideration of 'real' job requirements, workers have the added discomfort of dealing with public complaint and dissatisfaction, as witnessed in Hong Kong through public demonstration. Whilst in the UK there has been some resistance to this type of work intensification from relatively powerful, professionally specific groups with a strong union presence, such as Doctors – as seen in the NHS and Government reformation of GP contracts for out of hours service. I argue that this is

the exception not the norm, resistance is documented as mild at best, employee 'buy-in' and willingness to some extent having been achieved (Bunting 2004). Line and middle managers of a variety of professions and industries are subject to the same constraints and pressures of work intensification and informal labour process, coming from the upper echelons, to ensure that projects/tasks are completed on time to budget, irrespective of the level of effort required.

It is argued that the indeterminate nature of the labour contract, and the power afforded employers [and their representatives] over the use of labour, under competitive market conditions which typify the capitalist external environment, creates a constant striving after higher and newer forms of work intensification by employers (Smith 2006). Production struggles exist around wages and conditions, work pace and all of the other dimensions relevant to effort bargaining. In the public sector the indeterminacies evolve around provision of public services. Wages are traditionally lower than in a comparative post in the private sector, though benefits considered higher. As has been discussed public servants have seen the erosion of benefits, in the form of pension adjustment; pay freezes; in the context of Hong Kong 'localisation' – which means a reduction of expatriate remuneration packages and increased hours/pressures compounded by the use of contractors.

Employers utilise strategies to control employee effort and labour movement (exit/retention) through HRM tools including; reward; skills and career development – but where financial reward flexibility is limited (as in the public sector), training and development and the associated human, social and career capital accumulated, take on a greater significance in the employment bargain. This is described as the 'third bargain' (Thompson, 2003) that in return for the participation in micro-management of work and expanded responsibilities, what the management literature refers to as empowerment, but the more critical literature refers to as exploitation, employers will undertake commitment and trust building measures in the employment relationship. Investing in leadership development for middle managers is an example of one such potential trust building measure.

However, Tayloristic production regimes maximised work intensification and output for the benefit of owners of capital. In the public sector, work is intensified not as a

mechanism to increase profit, but as a mechanism to 'do more with less'. The resultant stress and difficulties experienced by employees (middle managers) would typically result in worker demotivation if not actual resistance. Managers are working longer hours and are dealing with more complex work than in the past, this is creating (or emphasising) divergent interests. For this is a two-way process and the argument is well established. Employers in their search for both competitive advantage and social legitimacy through consistent and effective customer service or public service quality are changing the balance of controls from the direct towards the *unobtrusive* (Thompson and Van Der Broek, 2010). They seek to incorporate middle managers tacit, inter-personal and affective skills and a degree of self-direction (autonomy) compatible with maintaining overall organisational prerogatives. Middle managers must find a balance between organisational control and individual agency in the employment relationship.

Whilst managers may enjoy the challenge of interesting work, intensification has a two-fold effect. Pressure is exerted down the chain of command to the workforce and is keenly felt at the managerial level tasked with implementing and justifying performance imperatives. The notion of the 'corporate man' who buys into the organisational and HRM inspired notion of corporate values is challenged in the literature. This perspective takes for granted that these corporate values and emergent 'identities' are perceived as attractive to workers and managers alike and that this 'identity' would uphold their individual sense of autonomy and control (Leidner, 2006; Thompson and O'Doherty, 2008). However other research suggests that 'buy-in' or perhaps, lack of managerial resistance, is achieved through fear, or the increasing global trend of job insecurity (Hassard *et al* 2009). Clearly the factors which affect managerial resistance to control – or comparative lack of it, are complex. In a Chinese context it is suggested that values, notably values of face, hierarchy and harmony contribute to managerial consent, (Hong and Lee, 2010; Warner, 2010; Warner, 2009) but there are significant tensions in the employment relationship.

Significantly it is suggested that work intensification seriously affects managerial efficacy, to the extent that severe stress and health depletion is an outcome of the employment relationship (Hassard *et al* 2009). Ahmad and Broussine (2008) suggest that alongside work intensification, trends in emphasising performance targets,

centrally driven change, financial stringency, loss of professional and organisational identities and perpetuation of 'private is best' mentality and contradictory accountability structures have added to stress levels. Public sector middle managers also have to contain unresolved and contested value conflicts and the moral ambivalence of society. Ahmad and Broussine's, (2008) research in a European context reveals public sector managers see themselves as passive recipients of policy imperatives received from on high as opposed to key actors in the policy making process. This challenges notions of personal agency and adds to an overall sense of 'anxiety, hopelessness leading to pessimism and debilitation.' In addition to this many of their research participants cited an experience of feeling that their organisation no longer stood for the principles and values which had initially attracted them to the job.

Control

Control traditionally is seen as managerial control over the labour efforts of the worker to maximize production and profit. The features of control have included; the supervision and design of workload and work task; surveillance of workers; monitoring and recording of performance and the use of either reward or punitive measures to ensure levels of performance. Control is also viewed from the perspective of the employee and framed in terms of the amount of discretion workers exert over their jobs. Research by Felstead based on the Department for Education's skills survey 1986-2001, tested workers using the following 5 criteria;

1. Choice over the way you do your job
2. Influence over how hard you work
3. Influence over what tasks done
4. Influence over how to do a task
5. Influence over quality standards

Their findings suggest that, in the UK, whilst the complexity of work has increased over time, this has not been accompanied by a corresponding rise in control workers exercise over their jobs (Felstead *et al* 2004, p166). As such we can see a trend in the workplace for diminished control within a context of work intensification and complexity.

Labour process theory has developed significantly since Braverman's 'Labour and Monopoly Capital' (1974) and is much contested as a middle-range theory (Bryman and Bell 2011). Whilst Braverman's work can be considered predominantly focused on objective process's and outcomes of the Tayloristic divisions of labour for the manual or non-managerial worker, there is a relevant subjective side to management 'as' work. It was Burawoy's early pioneering work that raised the question of worker consent to managerial control (1979) and Armstrong who initially considered managers as subject to control (1989). Significantly for this paper, the scope of the theory has widened to include the *managerial* labour process which is critiqued as 'obscuring the essential difference between junior and senior manager' (Armstrong 1989 p320). This is in terms of separating the decision making from the implementation of ideas - the locus of control which a manager may experience to challenge decisions, speak truth to power and take responsibility for policy in the public sector. The focus on power, real power to make and influence decisions is the key factor and adds to the debate on control. As such for the purposes of this thesis, where autonomy and control are in question, managers can be defined as workers.

'Managers are also subject to authority.....and contain the same antagonistic relations as in the process of production as a whole: its own forms of separation and execution; routinisation and rationalisation of lower-level activities; and techniques to monitor and control managerial work.' (Thompson, 1989 p238).

There is a distinction between layers of management, those who manage management work and higher level decision making and those who implement those decisions. This is representative of the diversity within managerial agency and is echoed by public sector researchers who recognise the ambiguous positions of managers with pressure from both below (subordinates) and above (their managers)

to implement performance measurement process's as opposed to following rules in the bureaucratic fashion.

The debate surrounding control within a labour process context has also shifted, since the original emphasis on wage-effort transactions, to include softer forms of control. For example, a trench of research has been conducted into modern day call-centre work (Garson, 1988; Taylor and Bain, 2002; Batt and Moynihan, 2002; Houlihan, 2002; Ellis, 2007), where control is viewed as integrated with technical (I.T.) systems and both normative and bureaucratic controls, as witnessed through automated call systems which automatically monitor call numbers and time spent on each customer/job by workers (Callaghan and Thompson, 2002). Workers in the call centre market have very limited control regarding time spent on each customer, with calculations having been made about how much time each call takes and the amount of break between each call, this has been described as the 'assembly line in the head' (Taylor and Bain, 2002).

Additionally, the marketisation of welfare services; growth of discretionary and emotional labour; Tayloristic values and the imposition of private sector practices such as LEAN and target driven imperatives has seen an increasing application of labour process theory in the public sector, as seen notably in the prison service, education sector and care giving professions. (Bolton and Wibberly, 2013; Gale, 2012; Carter and Stevenson, 2012; Thompson, 2010).

Managers in the public sector have experienced incremental loss of control through outsourcing of key areas (such as construction) which in turn have impacted on the nature of employment contracts offered. There is a greater degree of reliance on contractors and those in the precariat sector. This can have unfortunate consequences both for those denied permanent full time employment and for those tasked with managing a workforce who are subject to precarity of work, as naturally it necessitates a more individualistic locus. For example, contractors cannot afford too much corporate loyalty if they are to maintain a diverse portfolio of clients, which in turn leads to difficulties in job allocation and greater pressure on the 'core' workforce. Managers themselves may be living with the fear that their department is the next to go, should performance targets fail to be met.

However, the civil service is quite distinct from other organisations and sectors. The issue of control centres on the question of ‘who actually makes the decisions’? Whilst all public servants are accountable ultimately to their employer – the government, it is acknowledged that one of the key areas of concern for a public service working within devolution is ‘*allegiance*’. (McMillan and Massey, 2004, p231). This is echoed in Hong Kong where ‘*political neutrality appeared to be supplanted by the expectation that public servants should, above all, be loyal to the government and unquestionably obedient to the dictates of political appointees*’ (Scott, 2010, p81). This differed dramatically from the pre 1997 British stance taken by the Public sector in Hong Kong of political neutrality, which had been taken to mean the right of the senior public servant to speak truth to power.

The ‘real work’ of senior management has been described as decision making and control and in order to achieve this much of the transactional work must be entrusted to subordinates (Thompson and Van Der Broek, 2010). Taking this point further - whom to trust, who to answer to *and* how to enact decision making is the problematic of managerial agency in this case. The subtle change in the ability to directly communicate and challenge or defend decisions to both external stakeholders (the public) and internally (through the senior and political hierarchy) represents a key development in the labour process for civil servants.

Additionally, control of working hours and pace of work is cited as problematic as is referred to in the section on work intensification. Middle managers are expected to be available at all hours and technology fuels the blurring between home and work life, a scenario critiqued in the literature as having both strengths and weaknesses. (Ford and Collinson, 2012; Keillihier and Anderson, 2008). Whilst greater autonomy is achieved by workers who can work ‘flexibly’ from home or in alternative locations to the office desk, there is corresponding detriment to the pressure of being available and contactable at all hours.

The literature on one hand would suggest that managers seek to protect themselves, from blame and criticism by adhering the Weberian bureaucratic principles, in other words, sticking to procedure rather than taking risks or creative decisions, as they are subject the greater scrutiny by local politicians, control from the senior management

cadre and observation from both the Hong Kong public [via the media] and more widely in China (Brewer *et al.* 2014). On the other hand, managers frequently take personal responsibility (or blame) for their actions rather than seeking structural or other causes for the high volume of work and time pressures they are dealing with, these decisions and subsequent unrealistic workloads can go unchallenged and become endemic forms of control (Ford and Collinson, 2011).

In their paper examining the changing role of political and senior civil servants in Hong Kong, Burns *et al* (2012) cite examples of 'scapegoating' and suggest that political appointees perceived that they should only be held accountable for policy decisions rather than policy implementation (Burns *et al* 2012) thus pushing blame for failed or unpopular policy outcomes down the managerial line.

Harding *et al*'s 2014 research highlighted 'identity constitution' as important in understanding the duality of the middle manager role, which examined discourses of control and resistance. They classified middle managers as either: rational/managerialist; critical/managerialist or critical/resistant and argue that managers move between these positions and that their identities '*emerge...from their being subjects of control and subjects and objects of resistance.*' (Harding *et al* 2014 p1214). Whilst managers are actively involved in shaping and implementing strategy, they are also involved in resisting its implementation, particularly where it digresses from tried and tested administrative processes. Change management theorists often promote the importance of managerial and employee 'buy-in' to the change process (Kotter, 1995). What managers 'should do' in terms of organisational goals and what they 'want to do' in terms of their private concerns and personal values and what 'they actually do' in terms of their actions of resistance or subterfuge to control are three entirely different concepts. Harding goes on to argue that; the conformist managerialist conforms to instructions about how to implement strategy. The critical managerialist agrees with strategy but not the way it is implemented and the critical resistant is critical of the whole strategy and voices opposition to its implementation. But in order to voice opposition their must firstly be mechanisms to enact voice and secondly the skill to do so in a way that is efficacious to the individual.

Bolton and Houlihan (2010) cite an excellent example of what can be determined as critical resistance in action via an account of a front line manager, who works in a very dimly lit restaurant. When he suggests to senior management that the restaurant is too dark and this has resulted in: customer complaints; an inability to read the menu and difficulty for serving staff to perform their job, he is met with intransigence from senior management who insist he comply with company policy and keep the restaurant dimly lit. A game of cat and mouse then ensues whereby the front line manager subverts authority and changes the lightbulbs (to more brightly lit ones) when senior management are not present and back again to comply with spot checks. In this way the manager regains power to meet customer service and staff expectations but ultimately is powerless to influence company policy and cannot overcome hierarchical impediments to work efficacy.

Taking Kanter's (1979) notion of power failure in management circuits they (Bolton and Houlihan 2010) cite three areas where control can be stymied by organisational culture and structure:

- Lines of resource (budgets/staffing etc. capacity of managers to draw on and gain access to resources that their own domain/department needs.)
- Lines of information (the know-how of efficacy, access to formal/informal flows of information)
- Lines of support (access to power, the freedom to act with discretion and exercise judgement and the assurance that they have support from above).

Stripping middle managers of the capacity to shape strategy, make decisions and enact decisions which reflect their own thinking is an example of the degradation and reduction in the meaning of work in managerial circles – as that is the nature of managerial work. It can be argued that reducing middle managers access to resources; information and support for the capacity to shape decision making degrades the middle management job. It doesn't improve the experience of work for subordinates, it limits the flexibility middle managers have in making work more

acceptable to subordinates and achieving balance in the working relationship, which ultimately impacts on the generic organisational goal of enhanced performance.

By examining the literature on control, it can be concluded that the trend for degradation of work has extended beyond Braverman's traditional blue collar sector and can now be witnessed in the relatively high skill, high pay sector of professional (Gale 2012; Carter and Stevenson, 2013) and managerial workers.

Skills through a Labour Process lens

An orthodox HRM approach to improving managerial efficiency and performance is job enrichment via up-skilling. Often this is enacted as part of a leadership development programme. Definitions of what we come to understand as skill vary, whether we are considering hard or soft skills, skills which enhance human or social capital. Warhurst *et al* (2004 p5) have comprised a definition which has 3 key principles:

1. Skills includes internalized capacities resident in the individual worker.
2. Skill includes job design, divisions of labour, technology and control
3. Skill is socially constructed.

They argue that one of the biggest changes over time is the vastness of skill and qualities which may in the past have been viewed as personality traits, attitudes or characteristics are now seen as skills, for example 'emotional intelligence' or 'adaptability'. This argument is echoed by Thompson who suggest there has been a significant shift in the both the definition of and nature of skills, fuelled by the rise in 'generic skills' required for service work. (Thompson and Smith, 2009 p920.)

Thompson and McHugh (2002) advocate that '*political skills*' are 'vital' to the middle manager as he grapples with issues of control and resistance. They argue that the political view starts from the realist assumption that the manager is not merely a

servant of the owners, nor a technocrat serving the system, but in a nod towards the unique identity of middle managers, and quoting Lee 1985 MM's are seen as 'a manipulator trying to compete and co-operate with others in order to pursue his own end' (Thompson and Harding, 2003 p120). This is a contested view, presenting middle managers as mere political survivors, pursuing self-interest at any cost. Some of the more sympathetic literature, presents middle managers as potentially squeezed in the middle trying to do their jobs and retain employment in much the same fashion as any other worker, whilst retaining a sense of dignity and self-respect in the work environment. (Bolton and Houlihan, 2010)

In contrast to the orthodox HRM approach, labour process orthodoxy defends a de-skilling thesis (Braverman, 1974, Littler, 1982, Thompson, 2007) in that research was originally conducted on factory production workers whose skills were cut short and replaced by either technology or divisions in labour in a Tayloristic fashion. This is done in order to cut costs and maximise efficiency. Deskilling is defined as; the fragmentation of jobs; a reduction of skills requirements and the replacement of worker autonomy with management control. (Adler 2007)

However, it is acknowledged that 'de-skilling and re-skilling is a two way process' (Littler, 1982 p14). Braverman's de-skilling thesis has been challenged by the increasing body of evidence pointing to, amongst other things, an increase in middle management responsibilities (Grimshaw, *et al* 2002) and increasingly a pattern of evidence of up-skilling and examples of de-skilling occurring simultaneously (Adler 2004). It has been argued that up-skilling is more prevalent for knowledge workers in a knowledge economy (Sewell, 2005) and for well remunerated middle managers (McCann *et al* 2008) as a result of increasingly complex work in capitalist societies (Adler, 2007), as a compromise and a nod towards 'responsible autonomy' (Friedman, 1977, p78) or as part of a segmented workforce with the have-nots increasingly excluded from the advantages accruing the privileged (Bradley, *et al* 2000).

The debate surrounding de-skilling captured the issues of complexity and autonomy. Whilst, Thompson and Smith (2009 p919) support the importance of autonomy, stating that '*discretion in tasks is a core feature of the capacity of employees to utilize their skills.*' Adler views declining autonomy as potentially progressive. This is because he

views autonomy as backward looking, viewing traditional or historical work models, such as that of self-employment and craft workers owning their own business and therefor autonomous in their work effort, connected to both the product and valorisation outcome. He describes autonomy as 'merely the converse of interdependence' and argues that although through capitalism and the birth of corporate structures we have become more dependent on one another for and within employment, this represents a changing form of interdependence, which is not necessarily coercive dependence, but can be collaborative. He further argues that as firms seek valorisation of the labour effort from the collective workforce, they employ more enabling forms of bureaucracy instead of coercive forms, whilst admitting that this tendency towards enabling can be '*constrained and distorted by valorisation imperatives. As such enabling forms of organisation either partially displace or coexist with coercive forms*' (Adler, 2007 p1325). And here-in lies one of the contradictions in the up-skilling/de-skilling debate.

Sawchuk in an earlier paper claims we can get past the 'up-skilling/de-skilling passé by viewing the two concepts on a conceptually different plane...

'New skills refer to those necessary for working within new labour processes and emergent sectors...the 'use-value thesis' helps to bring into focus the new skills for working around restrictive work systems that can be either new or well established. Up-skilling must be understood in this dual sense as including both those skills that management hopes for and legitimizes, and the skills of 'making out', disengagement and resistance that they do not. Against this observation de-skilling can be understood on conceptually different plane; a process revolving around autonomy/control and not skills per se. It is a concept that theorizes formal disempowerment, appropriation and in a wider sense, cultural disinheritance, as old skills forms are displaced and the new ones that emerge are both limited and limiting in terms of anything but exchange-value generation' (Sawchuk, 2006, p611).

A polarised view of the up-skilling/de-skilling debate remains to an extent, with Adler (2007) taking the more optimistic view on trends towards up-skilling and Thompson (2007) being very critical of this and citing examples of Lean production and Taylorism as current examples of de-skilling in action. Whether taking an optimistic up-skilling

stance or a pessimistic de-skilling stance, Sawchuk advocates taking a unified analysis of both up-skilling and de-skilling which links the political economy, the labour process and significantly *the learning process* within the same unit of analysis.

It is also acknowledged that this is within a backdrop of increased pressure on performance and the incessant demands of international capitalism (McCann *et al* 2008). Public sector workers are increasingly exposed to private sector working practices, such as targets, league tables and 'value for money' in order to achieve accountability to the public. As such the same pressures of economy exist. This is termed 'entrepreneurial government' by Osborne and Gaebler (1992 p19). Although the aim of leadership development is to up-skill the management cadre in order to accommodate the changing political, economic and social environment it can be argued that the up-skilling is limited when leaders are separated from the capacity to influence decision making. This builds on research in other sectors which suggest that managers are highly constrained by the degree of centralised control or decision making disseminated from higher levels of authority, which raises questions regarding autonomy, job quality and the genuine ability to influence performance for junior to mid-level managers, even allowing for greater skill acquisition and higher level qualifications (Lloyd and Payne, 2014; Gale, 2012).

We also see this trend in professional sectors, for example, teachers are described as 'infantilized', receiving scripts to read out to students as part of a damaged de-skilled model of teaching (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011 p166). Macedo claims that teachers are de-skilled and that a 'stupification' of the curriculum [UK] takes place when teachers are seen as receivers rather than creators of knowledge (Macedo, 2006). Is it possible that civil servants are receiving the same treatment in their receipt of media training in order to give 'acceptable' sound-bites on contentious political policy?

It is established that the political context plays a role in the development of strong and effective leaders, who have the capacity to cope with and anticipate significant change within the public sector of Hong Kong and manage the relationship with China and other nations. But managerial leadership within the Hong Kong public sector is unique and distinct in characteristic. Public sector managers are required to have traits and skills which differ from that in the private sector, although it is acknowledged that

increasingly 'managerialism' in the public sector resembles that of its private sector counterparts with the shift from bureaucratisation to performance management (Farnham, 2010 p126). It is argued that above all other competencies, skills which enhance the employees' social capital such as; negotiating, persuading and relationship building capacity are the most distinct in the public sector (Bichard 2000, Hartley and Allison, 2000, Thac and Thompson, 2007, Pederson and Hartley, 2008, Hartley and Allison 2010) due to the need to build allegiances with both external partnerships and to gain collegial support internally. Whilst it is acknowledged that the development of skills which enhance human capital in the case organisation is important, social capital - gained via networking and relationship building - is revealed to have contextual significance in the public sector and is identified as a key theme for resolving issues of lost autonomy and discretion of decision making. Indeed, concepts of power sharing and devolution of authority as seen through the lens of distributed leadership are increasingly viewed as an efficacious strategy to combat power differentials in the public sector context (Currie *et al* 2011; Yukl, 2010 and Gronn 2008). In other words, irrespective of the goals of the organisations, individuals are trying to compensate for work complexity and degradation through the accumulation and use of networks and the exchange or sharing of power and authority. In line with Adler's work, this suggests an element of firstly discretion in how managers choose to utilize and enhance their skills but secondly within a framework of opportunity to up-skill, the process for which may be subject to further (senior) managerial control where nominations for formal development are within the control of specified nominating managers, therefor requiring 'interdependence' so that middle managers can gain access to development ladders. Where managers are working in new contexts with a new or altered labour process, new skills to accommodate this are acquired, both actively and tacitly. Whether the skills acquired are those in line with senior managerial strategy or whether they are acquired without legitimization from the top as a result of disengagement or resistance, it is still a form of up-skilling, which Sawchuk terms '*the skills of making out*'. (Sawchuck, 2006 p611) and Thompson refers to as political skills (Thompson and Harding, 2003). As such we can conclude that, at a managerial level, de-skilling cannot be assumed, but up-skilling may not be representative of organisational goals either.

To surmise it is established that public sector managers, as seen through the lens of labour process theory, are subject to work intensification and complexity, decreased levels of control and autonomy and a complex relationship regarding the [enforced] need to up-skill. Labour process theory offers a useful lens through which to study the experience of leadership and management development of employees and specifically to consider the key areas of; control, work intensification and skill. The 'contradictions' or 'tensions' which underpin labour process theory are most notably:

- a. The two-way nature of managerial control – that managers are both controllers and controlled; subject to resistance and potentially resisters. (Armstrong, 1989; Thompson, 1989)
- b. Where initiatives that seek to provide employees with more discretion and autonomy, possibly through new 'empowering' forms of work (such as LMD), fail to meet expectations because they are contradicted by managerial imperatives of cost reduction; work intensification and budgetary constraints (McCann, *et al* 2010; Bolton and Boyd, 2003).
- c. In the rise of public service and the service economy in general, where the senior Executive emphasis that front line managers should respond directly to the public's (customer) needs is contradicted by the demand that they should deal with large numbers of public enquiries regardless of the quality of customer care. (Bolton and Houlihan, 2010; Taylor and Bain, 2005).

Labour process theory is critiqued out-with the field by those concerned with the sociological implications. McGovern (2014) argues that the Marxist theme of 'contradiction' which underpins much of labour process logic, is overused and under-critiqued. For example, he cites the contradictions described in LPT such as contradictions of labour control – the need to control labour whilst simultaneously eliciting its co-operation. He specifically critiques many of the papers cited in this thesis, such as Bolton and Houlihan, 2010 and Armstrong, 1989. He argues that there are problems between differentiating between 'tension' and 'contradiction', he argues that the underlying assumptions, such as that workers are alienated or

exploited is difficult to test empirically and finally the Marxist view of contradiction as a central component of social change is merely wishful thinking as research suggests that those *'who are most alienated and most desperate are those who are least confident of their ability to change their situation'* (Mann, 1973 p70). Whilst this sociological debate and advance on the 'commentary' of terminological meaning is acknowledged, I take the view of Dundon and Dobbins (2015, p17) that *'workers respond to the real-life contexts they find themselves in, and to the conditions perceived to advance or thwart their concerns.'* Whether this is experienced as a tension or contradiction within the employment relationship can be open to interpretation and the nature of contextual challenges presented. Dundon and Dobbins go on to suggest that this complexity requires further scrutiny in order to reveal the dialectic interplay of conflict and consent, which shape patterns of workforce orientations within an increasingly globalised system of financial capitalism, revealing the need for more research.

2.2.2 Public Sector Challenges

The Hong Kong Government has traditionally been perceived as a 'good employer' in the eyes of the general public which is in stark contrast to the private sector which offers minimal unionisation and has a poor training record (Tan and Chiu 2010) . The public sector in general terms has many unique features which affect how management is practised and developed. Specifically, it is the nature of governance and serving the public, rather than running a business for profit and serving the shareholders which mark it out. The change to a customer service orientation, influenced by market driven practices, have created enormous tensions. Market driven practices often fail in the public sector due to the nature of the public service ethos and the 'human factor', for example in a case study of the NHS in Britain, Radner and Osborne (2012) highlight the failed logic of implementing Lean management systems in the NHS. Power relations within the service sector, where the relationship between senior manager, front line manager and customer are readily acknowledged (Bolton and Houlihan, 2010; Hales, 2005) could also be applied in the newly customer focused public service setting. It is argued however that in a public sector setting, the relational emphasis should be on two-way 'co-creation', rather than one way 'customer service' (Radner and Osborne, 2012), which highlights the duality of the role played by the

public in working with public servants and the need to set expectation. All of which requires a newly formed skill set for the civil service manager. Contextually, the public sector presents different challenges for leadership than the private sector. Much of the research into leadership and management development is based on private sector needs, but it is the unique and ever changing contextual setting of the public sector which should inform management development programmes.

Specifically in recent times, good leaders are needed to overcome employee stress, as public sector staff are less familiar with job insecurity (Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe, 2004) . Avian Flu, SARS and the earlier Asian property crash affected public sector budgets/recruitment significantly in Hong Kong. The public sector faces an increasing struggle to get the balance between the need for bureaucratic controls, ensuring transparency and commercial business practices delivering value for money, through sustainable performance, for the public stakeholder. Serving the public as opposed to shareholders and working with different layers of external bodies adds to that pressure. A CEO has a more limited remit and may be forgiven a mistake if the balance sheet shows a profit. The public sector is less tolerant (Kane, 2007) . Crucially a distinction has to be made between implementing policy (in the public sector) and implementing strategy.

'Public managers are not managers of a business. They can be business like, but policy is not strategy. Public managers implement policy whilst promoting the strategic and operational effectiveness of their employing organisations (MacKie, 2004 p357).

As such there is a growing literature that highlights differences between public and private sector organisations and their environments. In particular there are several features of the public sector which act as a constraint to the efficacy and ability to 'lead', these constraints considerably limit or diminish the impact of leadership on subordinates and organisations (Seidle, *et al* 2016).

For example the literature suggests that public sector managers have less freedom to implement controversial decisions as agreement and consensus is required from a larger number of people. UK based research suggests that public sector leaders do not have the power to implement decisions and be effective (Bennington and Hartley

2009) . This is in part echoed in Hong Kong where a lack of power at LEGCO (the Legislative council) to remove principal and bureau secretaries limits accountability (Lam, 2004) . It is noted that in the UK failure to meet government targets has resulted in sackings and diminished job security as seen in the old 'jobs for life' culture (Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe, 2006) .The accountability issue here only relates to meeting government imposed targets, which try to quantify services, but don't always succeed. Power is often needed at a variety of levels, not just positional power, given through the job role, but referent power built through developing networks and building coalitions of like-minded individuals.

Skills development programmes have the potential to be politicised in this way, by offering access to networks and only available to those who naturally have the influence to get nominated for it. Of course this is not new, Grint guides us to Plato claiming *'the ancient study of rhetoric provides one significant element of leadership training since it may be persuasive powers that hold the key to leadership success. Political networking, interpersonal skills, material wealth and negotiating skills are the hallmark of this approach'* (Grint, 1997 p06) . This starts to build a picture of the skills a leader in the public sector must develop, which may differ from those required in the private sector.

Research also suggests that risk management is a significant challenge to managers in the public sector (Pederson and Hartley, 2008), in that if public servants feel exposed or immersed in a blame culture, there is the potential to shy away from taking difficult decisions. This also poses questions regarding who takes the blame or credit for the outcome of policy implementation. What type of power does a manager actually have? Do they have the power to change a decision if the results are not successful? Further research suggests that in the public sector there tends to be greater goal ambiguity and goal conflict (Chun and Rainey, 2005; Rainey, 2014). This makes it more challenging for public sector managers to motivate, direct or evaluate staff.

In the private sector leaders tend to have more freedom to exercise power, or as one researcher suggest – 'there is no market that a government can choose to walk away from'. (Benington and Hartley, 2009). But public scrutiny and the transparency which has been traditionally required in the public sector (in the West) limit that freedom.

Increased volatility and changing environments, decreased trust in elected leaders and increased visibility and accountability of public managers has led to an increased sense of exposure amongst public sector managers (Pederson and Hartley, 2008, Kane, 2007). Mistrust between agencies/departments and power blocking has been cited as problematic between central government and devolution partner in the UK, where the Civil service at the time was seen as ‘too slow to change and to embrace a new more open engaged culture’(McAteer and Bennet, 2005). Specifically within devolved government (such as HK SAR) there is the challenge of managing the relationship between centralised government and devolution partner, or from a training and development perspective - handling the centralised control of HRM, whilst growing a learning and development strategy sensitive to local needs (Hockey, *et al* 2005).

Media commentary on the recent rejection by Hong Kong lawmakers of the ‘democratic’ reforms proposed by the communist party on voting systems and universal suffrage reveal the problems with accountability.

‘Compromise was now needed from Hong Kong’s leaders. “The government’s credibility is really low – if all they do after this vote is go back to their offices and do nothing ... then I think the problems of crisis and conflict in Hong Kong will persist’ (Phillips, citing Davis 2015, p1).

*‘What we are seeing is a very artificial calm. There is a lot boiling under the surface and it is really hard to say what is going to ignite the next bomb. Hong Kong people’s frustrations could explode again at any time. Pro-democracy politicians would now attempt to restart the political reform process and squeeze concessions out of Beijing but the Communist party was unlikely to cave in, **if they had wanted to make compromises they would have done so already** (Phillips, citing Hui 2015, p1).*

This excerpt, taken from the front page of the Guardian 18.06.2015, really highlights the reality of the external political problem of allegiance. In a culture which values harmony the system of governance in place is potentially not able to effectively manage conflict and differentiated polity. It is acknowledged that changing governance structures can upset administrative and political relationships, leading to contests for

power and instability (Burns, *et al*, 2012) and that this in turn has led to calls for institutional reform and re-defined internal relationships (Cheung, 2013).

Much of the research available on public sector managers, whilst informative, has a Western focus. Functional studies conducted in Hong Kong do raise the issue of accountability and suggest that public satisfaction must be an outcome of civil service training (Huque and Vyas, 2008). Within HKCS the new dynamics of governance are important as the legacy of British rule is often at odds and in stark contrast to the realities of governance and leadership in China. Within this context a large portion of Chinese officials are sent overseas to gain global exposure, skills and information. HK Civil servants have always traditionally benefitted from extensive training, the programmes for which were based on values predominant in Western liberal democratic societies. Post reintegration the focus has been more on looking towards China and training has included Chinese governance, culture and language. All civil servants must speak both Cantonese (Hong Kong dialect) and Mandarin (Chinese national dialect) and be able to write Phutonga (simplified mandarin) as well as English.

Although training is seen as beneficial in keeping participants informed, previous research has revealed that participants do perceive it as aiding the adjustment to changing circumstances (Huque and Vyas, 2008 p188). It is unsurprising then that a key initiative of 2011 of HKCS is to develop managers who can deal with and anticipate change. The complexity of contextual issues are such that leaders in the public sector must be competent negotiators in order to establish an effective way of leading, or as one researcher put it '*Managers may have to negotiate their own way of managing*' (Pederson and Hartley, 2008 p281).

To summarise, the literature suggests that challenges for managers in HKCS are on the one hand generic public sector challenges experienced and critiqued in a Western context of both the 'doing more with less' ethos of NPM and the post-NPM reaction this. On the other hand, the unique devolved context of Hong Kong presents the challenge of 'allegiance' (McMillan and Massey, 2005) between serving the needs of the Hong Kong people and meeting the obligations to China as part of the SAR (Special Administrative Region) post transition. Of course other nations have wrestled

with the issue of independence, such as: Scotland, Singapore and Taiwan, with very different outcomes. Quah (2013) contends that the success of governance in Singapore cannot be replicated in other potentially comparable Asian countries, such as Hong Kong, due to lack of political will and unfavourable policy contexts in other Asian countries or SAR's. Koike (2013) argues, in a study straddling 7 Asian countries (Singapore; Japan; Korea; Malaysia; Indonesia; the Philippines and Thailand) that Asian governance overlooks the post-NPM networked governance approach in favour of more market oriented reforms, and at the expense of social issues.

'In Asia, however, under NPM, political leaders have promoted market-oriented competitive governance in their administrative reforms, without taking into account the necessity for co-operation and networked governance. In such a market-driven environment, achieving the immediate performance targets within their own organization, as stated in performance agreements, becomes a central priority for executives and public managers, taking precedence over cooperating with and helping other organizations in meeting complex social problems' (Koike, 2013 p347).

But clearly within the context of Hong Kong and perhaps what makes the SAR unique within the Chinese diaspora and Asian context (and more representative of Western notions of democratic society) is the engagement of the public and their concern for democracy. If we focus specifically on the work of managers this leads to questions of, how (or) can managers bridge those tensions and meet those needs for transparent and fair public service delivery. What solutions have been proffered in terms of both managerial capacity, management style and skill-set to be able to rise to this challenge?

2.2.3 Middle managers work and outcomes

Middle managers are defined as managers who are 'successful conduits for senior management strategic formulations' (Gatenby, *et al* 2015 p1126). They are presented in a number of ways; as 'reluctant and cautious to take the initiative or to champion change' (Scase and Goffee 1989). But also more optimistically as influential agents of entrepreneurial ideas, leveraging informal networks and coordinating tensions between continuity and change (Huy, 2001). However, as discussed in the previous

section, middle managers are also employees, who both enact control and are subject to control. They hold a pivotal position within organisations, in a structural position which connects both horizontally and vertically across organisations. Significantly they have the capacity to shape both the experience and outcomes of work for employees and the achievement of corporate goals for the senior executive or political cadre of the organisation.

Having considered both the context and theoretical underpinnings of the study, we now turn to the nature of managerial work. West (2012 p30) cites McGregor-Burns' moral description of transformational leadership as being about empowering people *not* controlling. In order to win 'hearts and minds' and to enable that power he suggests facilitating learning, seeking change and improvement, increasing trust and understanding. However, whilst the senior managerial cadre in the civil service slip between political and administrative roles, the middle manager remains very much the 'squeezed middle'.

*'What is the opposite of 'empowering'? It must be somewhere between 'castrating' and 'enmeshing'. Rationalise the middle, if it is stilted up, but for goodness sake, don't disempower it. You **need** it to bring about change' (Foy 1994 p97).*

Nancy Foy's exhortation that we need Middle managers to bring about change (amongst other things) legitimises their position and demonstrates both the need for power and control in order to achieve organisational goals but also alludes to the difficulties. Middle managers (MM's) hold an important and central position within organisations', in that they implement senior management/directorate plans by ensuring subordinates, including junior managers, fulfil their roles. Distinctions can be made between middle, senior and line management with clear differences in work orientation and level of responsibility;

'It is a normal expectation that senior managers work on strategy for the entire organisation and then turn to middle management to produce the tactics and budgets and to monitor worker performance for carrying out this superordinate strategy' (Raeling, 2012 p824).

Van Wart (2013) additionally differentiates between front line, middle and senior managers. He describes front line managers as direct leaders who first need technical competencies and basic interpersonal skills to perform their job. Middle managers are those who run programs and integrate operations as organisational leaders and senior managers and executives operate in systems in which conceptual skills expand as an understanding of changing markets, distant threats, innovations in other fields and political interventions take precedence. (Van Wart, 2013). As such levels of management are crucial in discerning where the real power lies and what skills enable

the role. Even within the middle management labour process, Teulings (in Knights and Wilmott, 1986 p154) identifies 4 distinct levels of management functions; the ownership function, which is concerned with the accumulation of capital and serves at an institutional management level; the administrative function, which is concerned with the allocation of investments and is strategic management level; the innovative function, which is concerned with product market development and serves at a structuring management level and finally the production function, which is concerned with the control of the direct labour process and serves at an operational management level. He argues that there is disproportionate pressure placed on managers at an Operational level *'which is first and foremost under pressure for control and/or change in the organisation'* [ibid] and significantly that this is where resistance to change is most likely developed. He states that;

*'The power of the individual manager as a participant in the division of labour of the management process is diminished...and the **powerlessness** of the manager is apparent when we consider the relations between and within each level of management that was separately identified'* (Teulings, 1986 p164).

Hierarchy has a key role to play in the efficacy of managers in the public sector as a lack of power, which impacts on decision making is crucial. As such divisions between layers of management should be identified.

Jackall describes the nature of the patron-client relationship as one in which *'details are pushed down and credit is pushed up'* (2010 p 20). What is suggested here is that top management want middle managers to deal with the complexities of managing

staff and workload– coping with complaints, absence, problem solving, personal grievance – so that they (top management) are a step removed from this process and left to deal with strategy. But at the same time middle management must have some control or leverage in the work process to be able to deal with subordinates (or other stakeholders such as customers) difficulties and resolve issues satisfactorily. If they do not have the agency and personal power to resolve difficulty, the job becomes stressful and complex. Top management lose sight of the details and leave middle managers unable to manage their work in a way that has acceptable outcomes leading to stress and pressure at mid and lower levels. Little wonder middle managers have been depicted as reluctant and cautious to take on initiative or to champion change. (Gatenby, *et al* 2015).

Despite research demonstrating that middle managers have been subject over recent decades to job loss through flattened job structures and decentralisation, they still retain a crucial role within organisational structures. The rhetoric surrounding the role of middle managers can be positive. They are variously described as ‘Expert problem solvers’ (Delmestri and Walenbach, 2005); Mediators whose knowledge enables them to function between the organisations strategy and day to day activities (Nonaka, 1994; Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000); Strategic implementers (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Huy 2002; Mantere., 2008); facilitators of emancipatory dialogue (Raelin, 2012) and effective people managers – capable of managing the emotional states of their employees (Currie and Proctor, 2005; Huy, 2002)

However, it is questionable as to whether middle managers really do perform work at this level and the identity of middle managers is still seen as somewhat ‘opaque’ (Thomas and Linstead, 2002) in that there are blurred lines between senior management and the line and levels of agency within the middle management context can vary. In asking the question ‘who are the middle managers?’ Harding confirms this opaqueness and suggests that the identity and role of MM’s is contradictory. Middle managers are both controlled and controllers, and are resisted and resisters (Harding, Lee and Ford, 2014).

Middle Managers are also referred to in quite derogatory terms (Bolton, 2003) and are subject to considerable constraint and lack of agency in their work context. In contrast

to Foy's hail for empowerment for middle managers, research points to feelings of 'powerlessness' within this cadre (Bolton and Houlihan, 2010). Mantere (2008) in critiquing agency constraints on middle managers highlights the risks involved in taking responsibility and making strategic decisions:

'When middle managers are expected to facilitate adaptability, to go out on a limb with new work practices, they need to be reassured that creativity will not be punished. My results concerning the condition of trust underline the importance of accepting failure. Middle managers expected to facilitate adaptability want an atmosphere where it is possible to report failures as well as successes' (Mantere 2008 p311).

This is a recurring trend in the literature, the recognition that managers will make mistakes, or take actions which do not meet the satisfaction of a diverse executive structure, and to an extent require the freedom to do so without excessive blame and with top management support. But in a climate of pressure on middle management, due to economic forces, de-layering, downsizing and constant external change that confidence and trust is difficult to obtain and the critical literature suggests that middle managers are in a position of perceived 'fragility' (Thomas and Linstead, 2002). To surmise, it is clear that middle managers, in a public sector organisation have unique challenges and tensions within their roles and that management 'as' work in itself is complex and subject to control. Outcomes for middle managers in the public sector therefor present challenges. It can be asserted that many factors limit the autonomy enjoyed by public sector middle managers and echoing Kanter's (1979) notion of power circuits, these factors divert attention away from leading and managing subordinates and push the focus onto; access to resources and lines of information and power. Moreover, as external actors use a range of conflicting performance criteria to assess the impact public service delivery (Meier and Bohte, 2007; Seidle *et al* 2016) it becomes very difficult for public sector managers to enact decisions which will satisfy all stakeholders

Bringing this first section of the literature review together, it can be concluded that LPT gives us a lens through which to view the position and role of the middle manager in the public sector and to posit answers to the research question. Workers at all levels, generally know how much they are going to be paid before they start a job, but what they

don't know is the exact quantity of labour effort – in terms of hours worked, complexity of task, changes to job function and workload anticipated required for the post. This is the indeterminacy of labour and it is at the heart of the middle managerial problem in the public sector. Changes in the wider political economy, the adoption of NPM policies, the aping of private sector practices and the desire to achieve social legitimacy through high quality public service provision all impact on the work of middle managers – workload, work pace, work intensity. By examining their labour process we can both document and critique these changes and the organisational remedy(ies) provided. The unobtrusive technique of offering training and enhanced career structures (Thompson, 2003) through leadership development is presented as a form of 'bargain' to overcome the difficulties of requiring more of the 'whole person' within the context of de-layering, pay freezes, pay-offs and changes to the terms and conditions of work. The mutual gains offered are revealed as parsimonious at best and lead to the conclusion that any empowering form of work, such as leadership development, which can offer genuine benefit, must also be connected to the realities of work for employees, including work volume, pace, complexity, relationships, resourcing and terms and conditions. This leads to the first proposition of this thesis.

Proposition 1:

The labour process of public sector middle managers [in Hong Kong] is increasingly changing and subject to work intensification and reduced power and control in the decision making/shaping process.

2.3 Leadership and Management Development of Middle Managers

2.3.1 The role of leadership and management development (LMD) for middle management

The presence of challenges and constraints in the public sector for middle managers, it is argued creates a paradox (Seidle, *et al* 2016). Whilst a premium is placed on LMD to prepare public managers to navigate the political, legal and organisational environment and manage their staff effectively, most of the constraints they encounter are inherent to the public sector context. This in turn diminishes the impact or counteracts the benefit of training and development. Consequently, it is suggested that training interventions are a necessary and prudent investment in the public sector, but it is important to assess their impact and improve design and delivery to meet the middle management challenge.

Leadership development as a broad term comprises the training, career and personal development of individuals identified as either acting leaders or with leadership potential within an organisation. The idea is to meet both organisational and individual goals for enhanced capabilities and behavioural change. However a clear distinction has been made in the literature between 'leader development' and 'leadership development' (Day, 2001). The former is traditionally conceptualised with individualised knowledge, skills and abilities. However, leadership development, it is argued, focuses more on building organisational capacity going beyond human capital to embed more relational aspects and enhance social capital. It is a process of development involving multiple individuals. As such the emphasis lies firmly on the importance of social networks, mutual obligation and reciprocated trust as part of the learning process. (Brower, Schoorman and Tan, 2000, Day, 2001; Day, 2014).

Whilst there is much debate about the differences between managers and leaders (Tyler, 2004), leadership and management development often overlap, as frequently participants of LMD programmes have a managerial as well as leadership role.

Management development generally differs from training in that it's learning objectives are often knowledge, skills and competencies for higher level positions within the

organisation. Furthermore, leadership development can be distinguished from management development in that the targeted competencies are generally of more complex and of a higher order, with less direct connection to individual jobs (Salas *et al*, 2012).

Middle managers in particular require a fine balance of leadership and management skills, due to the 'middle' nature of their role. Earlier research suggests that middle managers continue to play a significant role in organisations, particularly public sector organisations, despite a trend for delayering as part of the new public management ethos of the 1990's. (Livian, 1997; Vouzas *et al* 1997; Grugulis, 2007; McGurk, 2009). Additionally, training is described as providing proven approaches to solve known problems and is critiqued as too limiting and short-term to address the current challenges facing contemporary leaders (Day, 2014). A longer term approach to development is favoured.

As such the term leadership and management development (LMD) will be used throughout this thesis, but as a labour process lens is used for the analysis the terms up-skilling, re-skilling and de-skilling will also be used to acknowledge Braverman's original concept and to highlight the focus on the development (or otherwise) of 'knowledge, skills and abilities'.

Whilst globalisation, political and economic turmoil have created uncertainty in the public sector, those tasked with governance have sought to control the instability by creating a managerial cadre that is adaptable to change and able to achieve performance targets irrespective of external or internal turmoil. The literature would suggest that managers in the public sector are subject to the forces of privatisation and marketization (Katz, 1997; Martinez-Lucio and Mackenzie, 1999) and that this in turn has impacted on the skills set required. Grugulis and Vincent, (2009) argues that there is an emphasis on improving soft 'managerial' skills over and above technical skills and that this can disadvantage female and mid-low skilled workers. They identify several problems associated with developing soft skills to meet the new 'customer service' requirement of public service, most significantly to this thesis, that there is a prioritization of managerial virtues over professional ones, so that 'good employees display the 'right' skills in accepted and acceptable ways' (Brown and Hesketh, 2004).

Grugulis and Vincent,, (2009) suggest that where technical skills are valued, discretion and professional norms are likely to be retained, and cite the example of nurses amending and over-riding call centre decisions. To this end up-skilling via leadership and management development is commonly offered to managers coming from a technical background, but whether or not technical legitimacy can compete with new managerial concerns and demands are open to debate.

2.3.2 Approaches to LMD for middle managers.

Over the last century, researchers have begun focussing attention on the specific leadership skills that can be enhanced or acquired through the development process. The layering of management became important and differentiation between the strata has implications for development initiative. For example, technical training (in the US military) was found to be more strongly related to skill enhancement moving from junior to mid-level leadership positions, whereas more advanced professional training was more strongly related to increases in essential problem solving skills as participants moved from mid to senior level posts. (Mumford, Marks *et al* 2000; Day, 2014). Further research by Mumford (2007) supported the idea of management layering delineating differentiated skills sets and presented four leadership skill requirements (cognitive; interpersonal, business and strategic) as a 'strataplex' – layered strata across the organisation. They proposed that as managers are promoted to more senior roles, the acquisition of strategic business skills will be more important for effective performance than interpersonal or cognitive skills.

Competency Development

A current method of developing the abilities of managers, so that they can meet these demands is to identify and develop their management and leadership competencies. Boyatsis in 1982 defined competencies as an 'Underlying characteristic of an individual that is causally related to effective or superior performance in a job' (Pilbeam and Corebridge, 2006, p65). What is significant about Boyatsis model of competencies is the emphasis on behaviour and the transfer of skills into the workplace, to facilitate better 'managerial' performance, rather than merely skills and knowledge acquired but

not necessarily practiced? Competence development is critiqued as being individualistic in locus focusing on developing the leader, not necessarily leadership. The success of the tools, models and methods ascribed to management development, is one of the reasons practitioners assume similar methods for leadership development. Storey describes the key responsibilities of leadership as having that individual locus and of being similar in functionality to management.

'To take individual responsibility for ensuring that the organisation is capable of achieving its objectives – designing and directing organisational change in pursuit of organisational objectives' (Storey, 2004 p17).

This does not however take into account the conflict that arises between organisational goals and those of the individual employee, or in the case of the public sector, perhaps the goals of the public that is served.

There is also an overlap concerning definitions of skill and competency. Whilst skill is defined as 'task-centred' and best suited to routine or programmed tasks associated with stable organisational environments, competencies are associated with intelligent functioning, cognitive activities and the non-routines tasks of work in a turbulent environment (Garavan, *et al* 2009 p234). However, alternative definitions are offered and attitudes are widely accepted to be part of the evolving skill remit (Sawchuk, 2006).

Competency development is also critiqued as too prescriptive or homogenistic (Dalton, 2010), neglectful of managers 'real problems' (Carroll *et al*, 2008) an inhibitor to nascent talent (Patching, 2011), over simplified (Burgoyne, 1993) and a process which teaches leaders to follow rather than lead (Patching, 2011). Alternative solutions which can enable people and organisations to enhance their leadership and management capability are often couched in terms of practical experience, such as 'leadership-as-practice' or 'natural learning events' (Avolio, 2011) which occurs during experiential learning. This can be seen through the use of project assignments, secondments and actions learning sets which give the opportunity to reflect on problem solving. But this concept is hardly new and is not mutually exclusive to being combined with competency development as an HR tool, as seen in the Integrated model of LDP pioneered by Cacioppe in 1998.

It is argued that in line with developments of NPM in Australia, New Zealand and the UK, the competency requirements for Civil Servants in Hong Kong have required more managerialist orientations and training (Burns, *et al* 2012). Whilst there are multiple management and leadership competencies to choose from, research has revealed some common threads regarding public sector competencies, specifically relating social capital skills and networking. Due to the contextual challenges and different setting of the public sector, for example in terms of accountability and transparency, identifying context specific competencies could be helpful.

Competencies have long been categorised into three components, knowing how (technical skills), knowing why (career concepts such as motivation, confidence) and knowing whom (networks). (De Filipi and Arthur 1994). The 'knowing whom' component is made up of both human and social capital. Human capital relates to self-awareness, self-control, trustworthiness, motivation and personal responsibility. Social capital places the emphasis on building networked relationships, creating mutual respect and trust. It is also described as, or linked to, emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2005). In large organisations leadership efficacy, to some extent, depends on the quality of the social network and the context in which the leader is embedded (Galli and Muller-Stewens, 2012).

Social capital

Social capital has also been cited as 'collecting around certain individuals' (Balkundi and Kilduff 2006, p421) and is linked to how a leader may be perceived in terms of social ties and the ability to utilise networks both internally and externally to the organisation for organisational benefit. Managerial competency development as such would focus on helping people to understand how to relate to others, co-ordinate their efforts, build commitments and develop extended social networks by applying self-understanding and emotional intelligence. The competencies developed here would be; social awareness (empathy, political awareness) and social skills (building bonds, teams, conflict management, change catalyst). Skills associated with social capital are undervalued and under researched in comparison to skills associated with human

capital (McCallum and O'Connell, 2009, Galli and Muller-Stewens, 2012, Jackson and Parry, 2011). This may be because they are harder to measure.

UK research has specifically identified that negotiating, influence skills, conflict management and the ability to build coalitions are key to successful leadership in the public sector (Bichard, 2000, Hartley and Allison, 2000, Thac and Thompson, 2007, Pederson and Hartley 2008, Hartley and Allison 2010). This is echoed in Hong Kong where technical analysis is now considered insufficient in policy development and civil servants are now required '*...to adopt a more strategic approach in which advocacy, persuasion and negotiation skills are needed to serve a wide array of constituents*' (Vyas 2010, p160). As a practical example of CSTDI responding to this need, the HK civil service include media training with experienced journalists in the LDP package to assist in communication and gaining of public trust. But this technique, whilst potentially useful at one level, does not acknowledge the inherent tensions that managers experience with changing and increasing workloads.

From a practical perspective, that of designing skills development activities, there is conflicting research regarding the best tools to use. Some theorists/practitioners argue that collective learning activities such as action learning are best suited to developing 'leadership' (Day 2001, Day and Harrison, 2007, McGurk, 2009) , but more recent research suggests that these may not be superior to individual development practices, such as coaching, mentoring and 360 degree feedback in enhancing social capital development (Galli and Muller-Stewens, 2012). Mere exposure to participants from other business groups is not enough to enhance social capital, but the possibility of developing in this area can be enhanced by the strategic alignment of training outcomes with managerial opportunities to network (Garavan, 2007).

It is therefore argued competency development focussing on relationship building skills via predominantly collective learning activities are at the heart of up-skilling public sector managers. However, this HRM technique is subject to critique, not just in terms of the efficacy of the method, but in the equitable and transparent distribution of training opportunity and as an appropriate mechanism with which middle managers can regain agency and control over work organisation and outcomes.

2.3.2 Types and impact of Interventions

There are a variety of LDP interventions which are used in practice, most commonly: 360 degree feedback; mentoring and coaching; network development; job/stretch assignment and action learning (Pinnington, 2011). These approaches are used in conjunction with, or to compliment more traditional classroom based training. Research is varied regarding outcomes. Whilst there is a positive literature regarding the need for and outcomes of LMD (Burke and Day, 1986; Collins and Holton 2004; Mabey and Ramirez, 2005; Seibert *et al* 1995; Winterton and Winterton, 1997), particularly in the public sector, quantifiable outcomes are difficult to identify or indeed compare. Continued investment is described as 'an act of faith'. (Mabey and Ramirez, 2005, p1067).

There are acknowledged advantages and disadvantages to the different approaches. Three hundred and sixty degree feedback is critiqued as strong on assessment, but typically weak on challenge and support (Day, 2001), significantly for this thesis, cultural difference can impact acceptance of multi-rater feedback, as countries, such as China and Hong Kong which value 'face' (*mianzi*) will have a strong preference for not giving or receiving direct criticism (Warner, 2010). Whilst multi-source feedback does not appear to help all individuals equally, it is suggested that individuals with lower self-awareness appear more likely to improve (Atwater *et al* 2007; Seidl, 2016).

Coaching is critiqued on the positive as a personal, intensive and in-department approach to learning. Studies have shown that managers react positively to coaching and scholars generally perceive coaching and mentoring as helpful (Allen and Poteer, 1999; Ting and Hart, 2004). On the negative it is perceived as expensive to implement and with a perceived stigma of 'remedial help' attached (Day, 2001). Additionally mentoring creates a strong personal bond with the mentee and helps with broader understanding and career advancement but can lead to over dependence and peer jealousy (Day, 2001).

Networks are helpful at building organisational capacity (Day, 2001) and for strategic realisation to enable necessary cross-business collaboration (Galli and Muller Stewens, 2012; Martin and Eisenhardt, 2001; Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Pappas

and Wooldridge, 2007). Managers' informal networks bring them greater social power, an important differentiating factor between leaders and non-leaders (Chiu *et al* 2016). But a positive result is dependent on the quality of the network developed (Balkundi and Kilduff, 2006).

Networking and relationship building are vital at all levels of the middle managerial relationship. '*Good leaders can ill afford to have out-groups*' (Van Wart, 2013 p 557) and middle managers are tasked with maintaining as many high quality relationships as possible. This is described as high-exchange relationships which are typified as those in which followers receive ample attention and good assignments in return for high levels of productivity (effort bargain). The converse, is that poor leaders will allow or even encourage many low-exchange relationships, typified by little interaction between leaders and followers, which create patterns of distrust, unhappiness with aspects of their job and low levels of productivity.

Job assignments are critiqued as helpful in aiding managers learning about building teams; how to be better strategic thinkers, how to gain persuasion and influencing skills and how to overcome challenge or hardship. However they often lack intentionality in terms of implementation, there can be conflict between performance and development and a lack of structure for learning (Day, 2001). Action learning, which is more project based rather than a 'stretch assignment' is associated with teamwork, strategy implementation and problem solving however it is critiqued as time intensive, with vague leadership lessons and over-emphasis on results. (Day 2001). However due to the limitations of classroom learning, experience based learning and development (such as projects and stretch assignments) are increasing in interest and prevalence (Ohlott, 2004) and many have touted the importance of 'experience' for emerging leaders (Seidle, 2016).

2.3.3 Evidence and Good practice related to international public sector

Specifically, recent research which attempts to quantify practical implications for middle managers in the UK public sector suggests leadership development can be successful in terms of skills enhancement, but outcomes in terms of organisational

change can vary with middle management training resulting in staff 'compliance', leader development resulting in staff 'commitment' and leadership development the only initiative which had strategic implications (McGurk, 2010; 2009)

From a practitioner perspective, Seidle, Fernandez and Perry (2016) suggest that combined methods generate the best results. They suggested that in the public sector good practice would see a combination of; coaching, classroom instruction, feedback and experiential training and that this would have a significant impact on leader performance.

Van Wart (2013) suggests that with leaner, flatter organisations, in the public sector, employees lower in the organisation need competencies formerly considered managerial, because they have to deal with self-management, problem solving and customer/client relations on the front line. This has implications for middle managers, as staff need better qualifications upon entry, and have a higher need for worker/leader continuity, which flies in the face of organisational and demographic trends which discourage loyalty (such as outsourcing and contracting) and long-term relationships. MM's are also more likely to find accessing and recruiting from talent pools more challenging because the breadth of ability and technical skills now sought. This adds to the managerial burden and we see a constant uplift of the skills and competencies needed via LMD to maintain the effort bargain.

There have been debates about the differences between a focus on skill development and behaviour based competency development in the public sector. Whilst the UK Civil Service has based its leadership and management portfolio on the latest competency framework, accompanied by effective and ineffective behaviours, this has been critiqued as not sufficiently relating to the political context of the civil service. (Van Wart, 2015). While the virtues of honesty; integrity; impartiality and objectivity are maintained, it is now in a more commercial environment where the values of tradition, loyalty and long-term perspective are discouraged.

Inter-sectoral research, comparing public and private sector LDP initiatives in different countries, concluded that the biggest area of difference is in networking and social outcomes as the public sector requires connections with more and broader

stakeholders (Pinnington, 2011). Inter-cultural research which examines LDP from a competence development perspective found that leadership challenges and difficulties were more significant than cultural context (Gentry *et al* 2014). This has practical implications as knowing the challenges participants face and the competences participants believe are needed to succeed in their own organisations can be valuable to the design and delivery aspect of any intervention. Intercultural research on LDP from a middle managerial perspective in the public sector is scant. Van Wart and Hondeghem (2015) have conducted an excellent study of senior level LDP, comparing and contrasting the department and utilization rates of senior civil service training in 19 participating countries, which were predominantly European. This study did not include Hong Kong or China – with only South Korea representing Asian governance regimes. The findings suggest that larger countries are more able to sustain an ongoing programme and that frequently middle managers were ‘meshed’ in with the senior executive rather than integrating different levels of government. Clearly where resource levels are higher, training opportunities are more likely to be better. They suggest that whilst their research revealed some good quality of training provision, it also revealed extensive gaps; severe limitations in resources; holes in the development model and a general lack of coherence in current training models.

This theme of managerial ‘challenge’ is developed further by Day *et al* (2014) who suggest that ‘Practising leadership’ which is described as the practice managers put into using their skills and leadership abilities on a day to day basis is at the heart of leadership development. This is because it is the reality of managerial work which presents the leadership challenge and too often design is focused on idealised or prescriptive skills sets or behaviours, which fail to take sufficient account of context and the difficulties of real work problems. Overcoming these problems requires practice as well as LDP, or as Day puts it:

‘Rather than focusing on implementing better instructional design or putting together what we hope are more impactful developmental interventions, it might be more productive to take a step back and focus on what happens in the everyday lives of leaders as they practice and develop’ (Day *et al* 2014 p80).

The focus on the everyday lives of middle managers and the reality of their worked experience, challenges encountered and capacity to meet these challenges through enhanced skills and competencies is at the crux of this study and leads us to the second proposition.

Proposition 2:

Middle managers adopt the organisational strategy of up-skilling via LMD programmes and specifically enhance their social capital through networking in order to overcome contextual, political and structural challenges and improve the 'new' labour process of MM's.

This proposition suggests that in adopting an organisational strategy, middle managers are 'buying into' the idea of skill development as empowering and desirable. Clearly a discussion has been had throughout the literature review, questioning why middle managers buy-in to organisational strategy and considering the factors that may influence this decision. It is the view of the author that buy-in is often a cynical survival mechanism, offering protection against job insecurity or being overlooked on the promotion ladder rather than a true alignment with corporate values.

2.3.4 Critique of LMD availability – Up-skilling for all?

If LMD is viewed as one method of equipping managers to deal with the changing context of work and ensuing changes to the labour process, then one must examine the opportunity to up-skill. Trade unions have in recent years taken up the mantle of employability and career development by negotiating for skill development opportunities for workers (Warhurst *et al* 2004) but this is less prevalent for managerial level workers where union membership is lower and skill level is already perceived to be high. Research in Hong Kong suggests that HK employers are highly selective in job training provision (regardless of sector), favouring high ranking, better educated and longer serving employees (Huque and Vyas, 2008). This is representative of information provided by the HKCS where the majority of LMD is offered to Grades 0.34 or above (typically longer serving). Individuals who are eligible there for tend to be mid-way through their career, commonly having already worked in a professional

capacity before moving into a management role, level ranging from junior managers upwards. Leadership is set as a management competency and is expected at all levels within the civil service, but in general, level of experience and approval of performance and attitude by senior cadre (nominating managers) dictates who will be eligible and when. Once a candidate is deemed as eligible, nominations are made by the head of department.

Problems are created when the balance between individual desires for development and promotion do not match what is available from an organisational perspective. In the 1990's clear career paths in the West were replaced by development opportunities and there was a marked reduction in job security, promotional structure and upward movement in organisations. This trend can also be seen moving into China where soviet style collective notions of life time employment, echoed in the historical notion of the good public servant in the UK, is eroded and replaced by more individualistic HRM strategies. It is suggested that China now operates a 'hybrid Asian people management system' (Zhu *et al*, 2007) which is a half-way house managing strong foreign influence and a strong state influence. A younger generation of Chinese mainlanders are displaying more individualistic traits in a traditionally collective society (Warner, 2009) . As such individual expectation, motivation and the desire to seek out development opportunities are likely to increase in Hong Kong as a counterbalance to increasing job insecurity and the trend for precarity of work.

In a study examining training in the HK Civil Service conducted in 2008, it was concluded that *'trainees found it difficult to get nominated for training, as the demand supply equilibrium is not balanced'* (Huque and Vyas 2008 p202), which can lead to frustration due the individual notions of career ladders and chances for development and promotion. Out with the civil service Hong Kong employers tend to favour high ranking, better educated and longer serving employees for training (Tam and Chiu, 2010). Management development is often seen as career enhancing, or treated as a reward with kudos, especially expensive overseas courses. But conversely it can also be perceived as another control imperative, as cited previously by Carter and Stevenson (2012). Individuals need to be motivated to lead, by; identifying themselves as leaders, having goals that enhance learning and seeking experiences which will aid that development. A passive approach from the individual to a leadership or

managerial role where training and development activities are landed upon them is less likely to succeed (Day and Sin, 2011). Selection for MLD should be fair and transparent, but ultimately is rarely available to all due to expense and suitability. Organisations must be careful to choose individuals who have the right motivation to lead, but also to act fairly in the distribution of opportunity. There is a balance to be struck by avoiding crown prince/high flyer programmes which alienate the majority and having some form of distributed training where all staff are developed to the maximum potential.

UK based research on the civil service also concluded that self- development was not focused on organisational needs and brewed resentment when people didn't get what they wanted or didn't get to fully utilize the qualifications they had worked to gain (Hockey *et al* 2005). It wasn't enough just to use development as reward. Ultimately individuals want to use it in their jobs for greater job satisfaction, better management capability, leading to promotion and greater job security. It is revealed in the Hong Kong Civil Service (as in many organisations) that a divide exists between organisational and individual perspectives regarding the pragmatic use of training (Vyas, 2010). The organisation wants to see improved effectiveness of government, whilst employees expect training input to improve personal performance in their current job, which can in turn potentially enhance career prospects. Whilst common ground can be identified in improved performance, tensions relating to individual worker benefits such as career development and personal notions of achievement and efficacy can be identified).

Proposition 3:

There is inequity in the opportunity to up-skill and gain access to training and development for middle managers in the Hong Kong public sector.

To surmise this section, it can be determined that, in line with labour process thinking, there are distinct contradictions in both the role and identity of middle managers and the working practices they are subjected to. They are described as essential to the organisation, necessary to implement change, yet subject to job insecurity and commonly excessive work intensification. Organisations identify the skill set they are

seeking from the managerial cadre, but tensions exist regarding personal notions of career progression and the increasingly demotivated managerial workforce. Enhancing one's social capital is seen as one route to empowerment and access to authority, but inconsistent training provision and unappealing promoted positions, where middle managers are fodder for blame and pressure pushed down the line, act as a barrier to up-skilling and competency development. Organisational HRM strategy and personal notions ambition, job satisfaction and work efficacy of middle managers in the public sector are often at odds with one another.

2.4 The Hong Kong public service context and related sectoral factors.

2.4.1. The Reform Agenda

Whilst the main propositions for the thesis have been determined, it is important now to turn to the context of Hong Kong and consider how this may influence the findings. Hong Kong has undergone a period of significant change since the transfer to Chinese rule in 1997. This has resulted in significant administrative reform within the civil service itself. The table below charts some of the most significant reforms impacting managers within the organisation. The most significant changes occurred during the first two terms of office under Tung Chee-Wha, which also coincided with a period of economic austerity. What can be established is that civil servants were subject to significant change in terms of; firstly - the organisation and structure of their working departments, through amalgamation of bureaus, outsourcing and privatisation; secondly - changes to their terms and conditions of work through pay cuts-pay freezes initially followed by consideration of extensions to working years/retirement policy and thirdly changes to their patterns of work practice through the introduction of performance measurements and a target driven environment, with the emphasis on accountability and customer service delivery (Cheung, 2012).

Figure 1: Administrative reform in Hong Kong 1997-date

Period	Reform Measures
<p>1997-2002</p> <p>Tung Chee-wah Administration first term</p>	<p>Target-based Management Process (TMP 1997)</p> <p>Enhanced productivity programme (EPP) (1998)</p> <p>Civil Service Reform (1999)</p> <p>Step-by-step guide to Performance measurement</p>
<p>2002-2005</p> <p>Tung Chee-wah Administration second term</p>	<p>New executive accountability system for principle officials (or ministers) - POAS</p> <p>Amalgamation of some policy bureaus and subordinate departments</p> <p>Civil service pay reduction began by phases to 1997 level (2003)</p> <p>Review of civil service pay adjustment mechanism</p> <p>Voluntary retirement schemes for civil servants</p> <p>Target for reducing civil service establishment</p> <p>Use of non-civil service contracts</p> <p>Private sector involvement (PSI) – including outsourcing and public-private partnerships (PPP)</p> <p>Envelope budgeting</p> <p>‘3R’s + 1M’ (reprioritizing, reorganizing, reengineering, market-friendly) as the direction of public management reform</p> <p>Partial privatization of the mass Transit Railway corporation (MTR)</p>

	<p>Privatization of public housing estates retail and car-parking facilities – in the form of a public listing of a real estate investment trust (REIT) (2004-2005)</p> <p>Public consultation on partial privatisation of the Airport Authority (2005)</p>
<p>2005-2012</p> <p>Donald Tsang Administration</p>	<p>Merger of MTRC and KCRC (Kowloon-Canton Railway corporation) (2007)</p> <p>Extension of political appointment system to Undersecretary and Political Assistant levels.</p> <p>Civil service recruitment unfrozen as economy rebounds (2008)</p>
<p>2012- date</p> <p>C Y Leung Administration</p>	<p>'Umbrella Revolt' contained, albeit subject to global media coverage and mixed public sympathy, no major concessions to democracy granted (2014). Beijing will select candidates for nomination to political leadership.</p> <p>Legco (Legislative council) debate the possibility of extending Civil servants contracts beyond current retirement plans to counter an ageing workforce and skills shortage (current).</p> <p>June 2015 - HK lawmakers reject Government proposals for democratic reform.</p>

Source: Adapted from Cheung (2012) p270.

Many of the reforms described are consistent with Western approaches to political reform. But whilst Western Governments have grappled with both the tenets of new public management (NPM) and post-NPM (Hajnal and Rosta, 2015; Christensen, 2012; Dunleavy *et al* 2005) the Hong Kong government it is suggested operates a *'hybrid' form of public governance which comes with a 'pro-intervention paradigm'* (Cheung 2013 p432).

New Public management takes a very critical view on traditional public sector values and is defined by principles of: competition, results orientation; customer-driven focus, enterprise, anticipatory approach, decentralization and market-orientation (De Vries and Nemec, 2013). Essentially it is argued that private sector methods have been imposed on the public sector in order to create greater efficiencies. Trends such as downsizing, privatisation and economic liberalization have been seen globally (Gore, 2000; Brinkerhoff, 2008) and have to an extent been echoed in Hong Kong. However, in transferring to Chinese rule, the HK government has a more complicated task than mere stream lining and efficiency and NPM has been widely criticised as creating more problems than it solves. Specifically, the tendency to ape private sector practices, for example by outsourcing, has resulted in a lack of coherence and loss of control requiring reinforced central coordination as opposed to decentralisation (Norton, 2007).

Peters and Savoie (1996) also suggest that vis-à-vis the small Government, downsized NPM ethos, governments and the civil service are faced with a contradiction regarding de-centralisation. Whilst the prevailing wisdom based on private sector practices is to de-centralise and empower managers at a lower level, competing fiscal forces would demand a stronger capacity for central policy making and control. Examining these relationships further, ideas of empowerment, responsibility and accountability are at the heart of NPM reform initiatives. If ministerial responsibility is reduced and managerial power is increased (empowerment) as part of the de-centralisation remit, how is blame apportioned? Getting the balance right between those who hold the power and authority to make decisions and those who are accountable for the outcomes is crucial.

De Vries and Nemeč (2013) argue that NPM has two dimensions, firstly the minimization of the role of government and secondly the improvement of the internal performance of the public sector. But sometimes these aims are contradictory and uptake of NPM initiatives varies between countries.

‘One can see that NPM became the heading of two related but simultaneously rather different streams of reform: on the one hand aimed to improve the quality of the public service delivery on behalf of its customers and on the other hand with an emphasis on the need to downsize the public service, because in neo-liberal terms there is no way out for the public sector but to leave everything to the private sector’ (De Vries and Nemeč, 2013 p483)

What has been significant about government in Hong Kong is that public expectations regarding both service provision and protection of unique rights and liberties (in comparison to mainland policies) have increased. The government has struggled to maintain its non-interventionist ‘small government’ approach. The new political environment requires civil servants to pay more attention to service delivery and policy creation and implementation and significantly for middle managers, there has been a ‘bifurcation between political and managerial streams.’ (Cheung, 2013 p431). A hands off approach, which is dependent on the compliance of the public is no longer workable amidst rising expectation, increasing activism and demonstration of voice from the public. A recognition of the strength or otherwise of the civil servant is required. Cheung goes on to propose that:

‘Professionalism must be maintained under the ministerial system of political appointment and that whilst civil servants are in no position to turn around the political tide, they still have strong ownership over public policy development and implementation...and there is a need to develop a renewed sense of sensitivity and responsiveness to public moods and politics as well as social needs and demands’ (Cheung, 2013, p431).

Whilst it is increasingly apparent that the problems of Hong Kong’s public administration do not immediately lie in the efficacy of management (the instruments of government) but in the capacity of state and its governance, these changes do significantly impact on the work of management. It is suggested that civil servant

competencies change to reflect NPM-type initiatives requiring more managerial skills and reflecting a shift from 'sage' type bureaucratic advisory relationship to a 'deliverer' type of role encompassing more immediacy and creativity (Burns *et al* 2012). There is a greater focus on the management of conflict, communication and engagement with the public and delivery of results in order to demonstrate efficiency, effectiveness and strength. This is described as 'the post NPM' era for Hong Kong (Cheung, 2013 p432). Noordhoek and Saner (2006) refuse to put the blame for the negative outcomes of NPM at the foot of the managers tasked with accommodating increasing service delivery targets and tough performance indicators within a changing environment;

'Government leaders who propose implementation of NPM by arguing that state budgets need to be cut and performance of civil servants need to be improved while at the same time emphasising privatisation and elimination of social programmes run into difficulties of credibility...It is wrong and unethical to blame civil servants for being 'resistant' to change if the change means more work, lower salaries, less recognition and no more job security' (Noordhoek and Saner, 2005, p44).

Civil servants as managers can be subject to the same conditions and limitations of employment as those in other sectors, or at other levels of seniority in the strata of organisations. However, context plays an important role in the implementation of NPM initiatives. A distinction must be made between 'management within government' and 'governance'; between the managerial cadre and the political cadre comprising the civil service. Between those who have the real power to make decisions and those mainly tasked with implementing the decisions.

It is also suggested that NPM as a concept is not generalizable and cannot be easily transferred into other cultural contexts. Norton argues (2007) that the focus on decentralisation is not appropriate for those countries labouring under fiscal stress and budgetary deficits, such as Japan in the last decade, and that NPM has tended to be a Western reformist process which does not account for diversity in social values. This lends credence to the proposal made by Cheung (2013) for a 'hybrid' model of NPM with aspects of Chinese style governance and values taken into account in the context of Hong Kong.

Advocates of the post-NPM doctrine put; centralization, the creation of collaborative cultures, a reduction of fragmentation defined in terms of 'joined-up government', clearer job roles, a rejection of 'agencification', institutional autonomy and importantly for this thesis, giving managers the freedom to manage at the heart of developments in public governance (Zafra-Gomez *et al* 2012; Christensen and Laegreid 2011; Christensen 2012; Hajnal and Rosta, 2015). This doctrine has been described both as a reaction to the severity of NPM initiatives and influenced by other contextual factors unrelated to NPM, such as economic crisis and natural disaster.

Post-NPM measures, reflect the fact that political agents (civil servants) are often blamed when policy measures fail or go wrong, even though they have sought to disperse blame under NPM measures of de-centralisation or devolution. So taking back some of that power and re-asserting control is at the heart of the Post-NPM doctrine. In simple terms NPM represents a cost-cutting, efficiency driven ethos, with practices aped from the private sector and Post-NPM is presented as both a solution and as a reaction to this, acknowledging the unique contextual challenges of the public sector. Whilst most of the research is written from a Western perspective, many of the features of NPM can be identified in the literature on Hong Kong and increasingly a rationale is presented for the need for a new form of Governance. Cheung (2013) cites not only democratic transition as an influencing factor, but states that a post 1997 generation are more concerned with democracy than in the past. Issues relating to social mobility, such as the gap between the rich and poor, access to education and an 'anti-business' sentiment prevail. He argues that the inherited ethos of non-intervention and a 'hands-off' small government approach no longer works and has fuelled public mistrust of the government. But implementing post-NPM style measures have the potential to create their own problems.

It is proposed that the hybrid of new public management inspired policies and 'post NPM hands-on 'interventionist' approach favoured by Beijing have created a culture of work intensification for managers in the Hong Kong Civil Service and the need for a different and wider skill set. The creation of a collaborative culture and reduction of fragmentation requires greater team building, networking and political skills. Giving managers the ability to manage requires autonomy and control, the rejection of

'agencification' requires higher levels of responsibility and accountability which links to altered values and skills defined by attitudes.

The lived reality of working and managing within the public sector during a period of significant reform has implications for individual managers and their experience of work and implications for organisations attempting to prepare staff for these changes. Ultimately public service outcomes will be influenced by this adaptation process and the ability of managers to 'manage' within this changing context.

2.5 Cross Cultural Issues

2.5.1 Chinese management values

Issues of culture and identity are perceived as important in certain contexts, and a source of contestation with mainstream theory. One of the strengths of labour process theory is that it can draw on the indeterminacy of labour to show that control can never be complete and is always contestable (Thompson and O'Doherty, p 105). This is exposed in different ways as determined by both context and cultural values, but significantly it cannot be assumed that resistance to control is everywhere, interpreted subjectively in every action.

In order to understand the experience of managerial work and how managers are developed within the Hong Kong Civil Service and what outcomes this will effect, notions of what managerial values mean in a Chinese context will first be established.

The literature suggests that management style and behaviour varies dramatically between cultures. Cultural profiles have been developed to categorise these differences where possible (Hofstede, 1980, 2001; House *et al* 2004). Using House's criteria leaders in the UK are shown to have an individualistic value system, performance driven leadership style and a charismatic approach which does value not self- protection but openness and participation in decision making. In contrast the Chinese leadership style, termed 'Confucian Asia', by Hofstede (1980), due to philosophical roots, is seen as more collective in approach, caring about others but one which uses status and position to make decisions without participation from

followers. Although these profiles are a useful starting point, they are open to criticism, being narrow in scope and failing to take into account research which frames leadership in terms of what people actually do (Northouse, 2010).

2.5.2 Confucian Asian values

Research into Chinese management values has been fairly comprehensive (Warner 2010; Cheung and Chan, 2008; Lin, 2008; Chow, 2005; Gillespie, 2005; Hofstede and Bond, 1988, Chen and Lee, 2008, Gillespie, 2005; Lin and Ho, 2009). Malcolm Warner has created a hybrid model of HRM with Chinese characteristics, which details identifiable Chinese values and how these are interpreted through a Western HRM lens.

Figure 2: Confucian characteristics and HRM correlates

Confucian Values	HRM Correlates	Implications
Societal Order	Harmony at Work	+
Hierarchy	Vertical Linkages	+
Reciprocity and personalism	Guanxi	+/-
Control	Leadership	+
Insecurity	Work-ethic	+
Family-based collectivism	Group	+/-
Knowledge	Training	+

Figure 2 (adapted from Warner 2010, p2058) depicts Confucian values and its HRM correlate, these may have negative or positive implications in terms of functionality. For example, it is suggested that ‘Guanxi’ (interpersonal relationships) can have both a positive and negative correlate, in that, on one hand it is representative of a good form of networked communication or ‘benign communication’ and on the other hand a

negative form of communication such as a less benign form of corruption. It is suggested that Chinese managers, treasure values which are distinct from the western models of HRM and performance management. Confucian values include; a respect for societal order and harmony at work, which can also be described as the 'golden mean' or 'middle way'; hierarchy and paternalistic values – which also link to benevolence; reciprocity within the working relationship (*Guanxi*); Control or authoritarianism as a managerial imperative; insecurity linked to a diligent work ethic; family-based collectivism; and lastly a respect for knowledge which is linked to education and training. (Warner, 2010; Cheung and Chan, 2008; Lin, 2008; Chow, 2005; Gillespie, 2005; Hofstede and Bond, 1988).

Paternalistic style and respect for hierarchy (Chow, 2005, Chen and Lee, 2008, Gillespie, 2005) have been prevalent in Chinese culture in a way that contrasts with recent developments with flattened corporate structures and notions of meritocracy in the West. However, the more progressive socialist theories of Mao and Deng are more critical of Chinese authoritarianism.

There is also evidence of some form of early capitalism and entrepreneurship in the Confucian philosophy of benevolence, which includes the provision of livelihood to the common people (Chen and Lee, 2008) . Benevolent leadership is defined as a form of social responsibility and referring to personal and holistic concern for subordinates well-being and family life (Cheung and Chan, 2008, Chen and Lee, 2008, Zhang *et al* 2008, Chow, 2005) .

Confucian values of leadership describe taking the 'Golden Mean' and promoting harmony, which is taking the middle way, avoiding factions and minimizing risk (Cheung and Chan, 2008, Zhang *et al* 2008). These values are heavily linked in HKCS to the discernible structures of hierarchy - both internally through layers of authority and politics and externally through the stakeholder network and mechanisms for communication with the public.

Face saving (*manzi*) is a prevalent value in Chinese leadership culture (Lin and Ho, 2009), this is a mechanism which allows the manager or worker to retain respect whilst dealing with challenging issues. Face, like respect, is 'given' (not taken, or assumed)

and is strongly linked to the two way relational aspect of the worker – manager dynamic. Face can be linked to the discernible structures of accountability in the public sector.

Research also suggests a naturally more transactional approach is taken to leadership and management (Vilkinas *et al* 2009). Specifically, managers from mainland China are less concerned with contextual change and external factors and research suggests less innovative (Vilkinas, 2009).

2.5.3 Harmony

Since the introduction of the new labour legislation in the PRC (People's Republic of China) a greater emphasis on the 'harmonious society' has been utilised by the mainland government to rectify perceived inequalities in the Chinese economy and society (Warner, 2009 p778). This is echoed in Hong Kong under the 'one country-two systems formula' (Hong and Lee, 2010).

However positive Confucian concepts of HRM, such as the 'harmonious society' have been strongly critiqued, as examples of worker discontent and failed labour relations policy are rife in modern day China. The 2012 strikes throughout multiple Honda plants and management handling of employee suicides in Foxconn 2010/11 have been well documented (Chan 2012, 2013; Kai and Brown 2013; Chan and Hui 2012; Chan *et al* 2013; Friedman, 2012) and research points to the underlying possibility of *disharmony* and *conflict* in the Chinese economy (Danford and Zhao, 2012).

It has been established that in order to gain a greater understanding of Chinese concepts of managerial work, it is important to first outline the values that inform managerial practice. The literature suggests there are a variety of influencing factor that signify notions of 'Confucian HRM' and inform the realities of managerial practice in the public sector and beyond. Tensions clearly exist between the rhetoric of traditional values which inform management practice, such as the development of harmonious relations and the move towards the rhetoric of human resource management and a capitalist model of management practice. It is suggested that the Chinese communist party now co-sponsors a form of 'Confucian Capitalism' (Warner,

2010) which seeks to take the best from both the socialist and capitalist ideologies, keeping the winners in check and appeasing the losers in society. This desire to appease all stakeholders and create harmony, is keenly felt within the context of the Hong Kong Civil Service, where the work of managers has become considerably more 'customer' focused. Hierarchy directly affects decision making and it is suggested that notions of 'Face' may impact on how decisions are presented and who takes the blame or responsibility for the outcome of a decision made.

In order to combat some of these tensions, organisations (and their representatives in Human Resources) are tasked with training managers in handling more customer orientated work. Whilst in the past managers may have been specialists in a particular technical area (such as IT, accountancy, law or engineering) and people management (of subordinates) they are now tasked with becoming familiar with the public complaints system, debating in a public forum and defending policy implementation measures face to face in the District councils. As such the experience of managing both staff and workload is significantly changed and this has impacted on work intensification and the need for augmented skill sets for managers.

2.5.4 Context - Defining the Chinese Diaspora

Additionally in studies across Chinese communities (including Hong Kong, Malaysia, Taiwan and Singapore) Confucian values associated with 'Chineseness', whilst apparent, were also superseded by external contextual factors (Pearson and Entekin 2001) and that a younger generation of ethnically Chinese people identified less with Confucian ethics and traditional Chinese values (Graen, 2008, Lin and Ho, 2009).

Although Confucianism, collectivism and Chinese communism may historically have been the predominant value systems of Chinese culture, China has a long history of assimilating foreign cultures and this can be seen in the more capitalistic value system demonstrated in Hong Kong. Chinese managers are open to Western influence in their leadership practices (Lin, 2008 p317) and the more exposure they have had to western concepts of HRM through work and education, the more adaptable the individuals involved become (Warner, 2008) . It is argued that it is a mistake to label Westerner's as individualistic and young Chinese in coastal China (including Hong

Kong) as collectivistic in the twenty first century as culture is constantly evolving and subtle changes and contrasts have been identified. One of these contrasts is that values in coastal China and Hong Kong have become more pragmatic (Graen, 2008).

We can conclude that whilst Confucian values are significant in a Chinese context, exposure to Western working practices also influence managerial values. Management values influence the reality of managerial work and the labour process in terms of how control is enacted and resisted; how intensification of work is dealt with by the employee and the approach to skill valorisation and development undertaken. For example, respect for hierarchy may influence whether or not a manager is comfortable making an independent decision, or seeks authority/approval from above or accepts authority imposed from above. A value of Face may influence whether or not a worker feels comfortable admitting to stress or depression due to work overload and intensification and a value of reciprocity and relationship may impact on selection for training or access to networks which may enhance negotiating-coalition building skills.

The strong influence of Confucius teachings on the value system of workers and managers in China have lead some researchers to refer to the practice of HRM in China as Confucian HRM though it is debated whether this is a form of Chinese HRM or dynamic contextual model with Chinese characteristics (Warner, 2010).

Management values are important because they inform 'attitudes'. Attitudes have become one of the components of 'skill' in the new millennia (Grugulis, 2004), so one might consider 'cautious' or 'harmonious in the approach to working relationships' as not just a Chinese value but as a skill or competency to be developed and utilised. Brewer *et al* (2014) in their paper analysing values in the Hong Kong public servant, concluded that adherence to familiar Weberian bureaucratic principles affords civil servants some protection in an environment in which their performance is increasingly scrutinised by local politicians, the media and the Chinese Government. They argue that rules provide predictability and defensible justifications and that "the old, often disparaged defence of simply following orders may still have some utility." (Brewer *et al*/2012). As such we can initially surmise from the literature that in the context of Hong Kong, public servants have adopted a hybrid of public sector and Hong Kong Chinese

values to create a unique middle management identity. These values would initially be typified by; caution, risk aversion, harmony, face and reciprocity in relationship building.

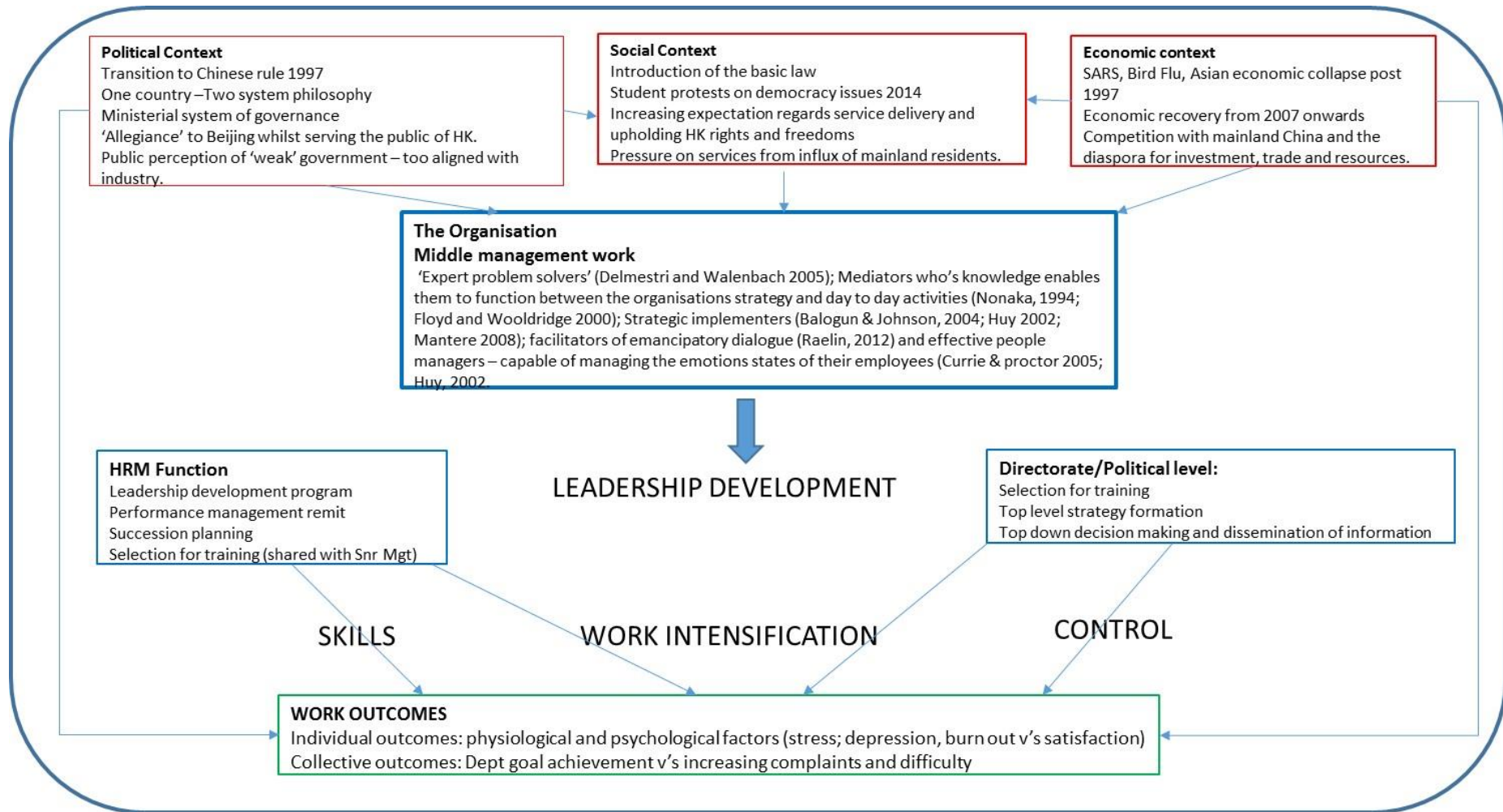
In conclusion we can surmise the following: public sector managers are subject to unique contextual factors, quite distinct from the private sector, relating to serving the public rather than shareholders. In HKCS we can observe a common trend towards implementation of a form of new public management ethos, which shares with Western counterparts, a move towards the adoption of private sector practices despite aforementioned differences between the nature of public and private sector governance. Whilst the Hong Kong government takes an interventionist approach towards governance, in contrast to the 'small government, big society' hands-off approach seen in the UK/USA, there are still parallels which can be drawn when considering the challenges of middle management.

As in the West, Hong Kong has been also subject to the restructuring, downsizing, de-layering features of globalisation and the reform agenda has witnessed the adoption of Hard HRM practices impacting pay and reward structures and performance management measures. Middle managers in the Western public sector are subject to increased workloads and higher complexity of work due to top managerial initiatives and the literature documents some evidence of the trend towards 'distributed leadership' (Gronn, 2008) of the parsimonious kind, where we see increased responsibility devolved through the ranks though not necessarily increased power or control, which opens a gap for study in the context of Hong Kong, which is viewed as a more hierarchical, paternalistic society.

Finally, we conclude that the values which underpin middle management in HKCS are likely to be a combination of public sector values, linked to transparency, accountability and responsibility and Chinese values of face, reciprocity in relationships (guanxi) and harmony. Significantly, Pederson and Hartley (2008) outlined that where employees fear exposure, they are likely to be more cautious and risk averse. In a culture which values both face and accountability, fear of making mistakes and the impact on one's career amidst a culture of change and restructuring is likely to add to the challenge of the middle management position.

A conceptual framework has been developed in order to present a visual construct of these elements, with an expanded table highlighting the key themes captured from the literature review, utilising labour process themes.

Figure 3: Conceptual framework taken from the literature



Conceptual Model Discussion

The model is depicted at three levels firstly, considering the organisational context including external factors and actors (the HK public; Beijing; the international community) implicitly impacting the experience of work for middle managers; secondly considering the key actors within the organisation - middle managers, HR and Senior managers (Upper Directorate level). Thirdly considering the labour process of middle managers as defined through terms of; work intensification, control and skill development leading to potential work outcomes, derived from the literature.

At the first level the model attempts to show the connection between the contextual elements of political; society and the economy, including both current and historical factors. These three areas significantly influence the organisational culture, depicted in the 'organisation' box. Within the organisation we consider the role of the middle manager and cite explanations given by the authors concerning the nature of that role. The model specifically highlights the importance of middle managers as; expert problem solvers (Delimestri and Waldenbach, 2005; knowledgeable mediators (Nonaka, 1994; Floyd and Woolridge, 2000; strategic implementers (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Huy, 2002; Mantere, 2008); facilitators of emancipatory dialogue (Raelin 2012) and effective people managers (Currie and Proctor 2005; Huy, 2002). What is clear is that the role of the middle manager is complex and varied. But if managers are to carry out these varied roles, a degree of autonomy and control in that process should be present.

At the secondary level the model then tries to link the differing roles that HRM and the senior/political or in this case 'directorate' level cadre have on facilitating the middle management role. Both HR and Directorate level staff are involved in the selection of candidates for training, however HR tend to be dependent on recommendations from Senior or Directorate level staff, driven through the performance management and succession planning processes. As such Directorate (Senior management) level staff hold the majority of the decision making power regarding selection. They are also represented as creators of strategy and top down decision making, as such holding the majority of the power in organisational. HR are represented as facilitating training,

enabling potential up-skilling and by providing the frames of reference through which Senior management make decisions about management development.

At the tertiary level of the model we see the reality of those process's developing as work intensification, control and skill development resulting in both individual and organisational work outcomes. It is suggested that work outcomes are contested terrain, which can be positive or negative.

At an individual level the physiological and psychological factors of stress, depression and burnout fuelled by increasing workloads, ineffectual skills development and powerlessness are balanced off between greater job satisfaction as a result of potential up-skilling and empowerment.

At an organisational level there is contestation between the achievement of collective goals driven by potential skills development and positive reaction to changing work process versus the difficulty of dealing with managerial realities which can act as barriers to performance and the achievement of organisational goals.

In contrast to functionalist research, conducted on the same study organisation, which critiques the efficacy of learning outcomes: 'Trainees feel that training generally keeps them informed about the latest developments but doesn't help them to adjust to the changing environment' (Vyas, 2010 p149).it This model depicts the facilitating of networking and knowledge sharing through the training programme as a potentially useful aspect of LMD and as a potential tool to overcome barriers of access to power and support, thereby aiding adjustment to the changing environment.

Similarly to Hassard *et al's* (2009) study of middle managers in UK, USA and Japan, it is difficult to make broad generalisations about the fate of middle manager's based on one organisation, but this study can contribute to the growing development of a 'new' labour process theory for middle managers in an international context. This model does not account for all aspects of work degradation as laid out in Braverman's original thesis, but does point to increasingly difficult conditions for middle managers as a trend in developed, capitalist, economies (of which we would include Hong Kong).

Table 2.1: Thematic table - Key themes from the literature review utilising LPT concepts

Skills development	Work Intensification	Control
<p>Point: NPM initiatives required changed skill capacity in the public sectors, specifically focusing on social capital of employees with authors variously advocating:</p> <p>Authors: Negotiating, persuading and relationship building (Bichard, 2000; Hartley and Allison, 2000; Thac and Thompson, 2007; Pederson and Hartley, 2008; Hartley and Allison, 2010; Vyas, 2010) and a move from advisory skills to delivery (Cheun,g 2013)</p>	<p>Point: NPM contributes to work intensification by aping private sector practices [reducing job security – doing ‘more with less’, imposition of targets/cost cutting and additional performance management]</p> <p>Authors: De Vries and Nemec 2013; Peter and Savioe, 1996; Gore, 2000; Brinkerhoff 2008; Norton 2007; Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe 2006)</p>	<p>Point: The two-way nature of control impacts the experience of work for middle managers.</p> <p>i.e. objects and subjects of control – objects and subjects of resistance.</p> <p>Authors: Armstrong, 1989; Thompson, 1989; Teulings 1986; Harding et al 2014.</p>
<p>Point: Definitions of skill have changed to encompass ‘attitudes and personality traits’</p> <p>Authors: Warhurst et al 2004; Thompson and Smith 2009)</p>	<p>Point: The contradictory premise of NPM echoes the contradictions in LPT, as improved quality of public service delivery has to be reconciled with an emphasis on downsized public services which has implications for WI.</p> <p>Authors: De Vries and Nemec 2013</p>	<p>Point: A lack of control, demonstrated by barriers to ‘power’ impacts the ability of front line managers to deliver customer service and overcome structural barriers.</p> <p>Author: Bolton and Houlihan, 2010; Kanter, 1979; Teulings, 1986... ‘Powerlessness’</p>
<p>Point: Middle managers require an altered skills set which includes: ‘political skills’ in order to grapple with control and resistance.</p>	<p>Large organisations are surviving on the ‘goodwill’ of white collar employees, a practice also described as ‘informal labour’.</p>	<p>Point: Distributed leadership – whilst touted as an ‘ideal’ in public service delivery in reality is a parsimonius definition which belies the undercurrent theme of giving additional responsibility without the additional authority or power to</p>

<p>Author: Thompson and McHugh (2002). Alternately this is described as 'resilience' (Bolton and Houlihan, 2010) and the skill of 'making out' (Sawchuk, 2006).</p>	<p>Authors: Hassard et al 2009; Ford and Collinsons 2011; Carter and Stevenson,, 2012; Bolton and Wibberly 2013).</p>	<p>influence outcomes and as such is often downgraded to weaker definitions such as: shared, hybrid or collaborative leadership.</p> <p>Authors: Sun et al 2012; Harris and Kuhnert, 2007; Hernez-Broome and Hughes, 2004); Hartley and Allison, 2000; Yuki 2006; Gronn, 2008)</p> <p>Additionally 'how' to enact decision making is the problematic of managerial agency.</p> <p>Author: Thompson, 2010.</p>
<p>Point: 'Old skill forms are displaced by new ones'. De-skilling and re-skilling are a two way process. Braverman's de-skilling thesis has been widely challenged and it is acknowledged that there is a prevalence of up-skilling in the high skill and professional cadre of employee.</p> <p>Authors: Littler, 1982; Thompson, 2007; Adler 2007; Grimshaw, 2002; Sewell, 2005, Sawchuk, 2006.</p> <p>Additionally this is linked to the term 'responsible autonomy' (Friedman 1977).</p>	<p>Point: Work intensification affects managerial health and well-being.</p> <p>Authors: (Hassard et al 2009; Ahmad and Broussine 2008;)</p>	<p>It is inherently unfair to blame civil servants (middle managers) for outcomes they cannot control.</p> <p>Authors: Noordhoek and Saner, 2005</p>

<p>Point: Even with greater skill acquisition, critiques question the genuine ability MM's have to influence decision-making; autonomy and job quality.</p> <p>Authors: Gale, 2012; Lloyd and Payne, 2014; Densin and Lincoln 2011</p>	<p>Point: Control of working hours contributes to work intensification – and unrealistic workloads go unchallenged.</p> <p>Authors: Kelliher and Anderson 2008; Ford and Collinsons 2012</p>	<p>Point: Post NPM doctrine prescribes: giving managers freedom to manage at the heart of government [greater control/autonomy and power].</p> <p>Author: Zafra-Gomez et al 2012; Christenson and Laegrid 2011; Christensen, 2012; Hajnal and Rosta 2015.</p>
<p>Point: Competency development as a modern method of up-skilling is critiqued as too prescriptive and homogenistic; neglectful of managers 'real problems'; an inhibitor of nascent talent and over simplified.</p> <p>Authors: Dalton, 2010; Carroll et al 2008; Patching, 2011; Burgoyne 1993</p>		<p>Point: Whilst complexity of work has increased over time this has not been accompanied by a corresponding rise in control</p> <p>Author: Felstead 2004.</p>
<p>Point: The best method of harnessing social capital and developing 'relational' skills is debated, with some authors advocating collective learning</p> <p>Authors: Day 2001; Day and Harrison, 2007; McGurk 2009; McGurk, 2010)</p> <p>Point: Others critique this claiming there is not enough empirical evidence that they are superior to individual learning techniques (Galli and Muller Stewens, 2012)</p>		<p>Point: Middle management resistance is more subtle and subversive than traditional forms i.e critical resistance</p> <p>Author: Bolton and Houlihan, 2010</p>

And that exposure to other business groups is not enough to enhance social Capital: Garavan, 2007		
Skills development	Work Intensification	Control

The conceptual model displayed opposite encapsulates the boundaries of the study with regards to the external and internal environment. The literature reveals that middle management work is impacted by both; political/social and economic external factors and within the organisation by Top management (including the political cadre leaders at 'AO' and Ministerial level) initiatives, policy and strategy. The model is created on the basis that leadership development alone gives an insufficient picture of the managerial quest to find balance and autonomy in working life and that building on Braverman's theory, work process's must be considered alongside management learning and development initiatives. Whilst other theorists have identified that separating the analysis of 'work' and the analysis of 'learning' is an obstacle to be overcome (Sawchuk, 2006) this model builds on the concept that the managerial labour process does not operate in a vacuum and that the variable of organisational context, both internal and external must be considered to complete the picture. Both an HRM perspective as represented by the HRM functional box and the Labour process perspective, as represented by the three dimensions of Control, Work Intensification and Skills are depicted. In support of McCann *et al's* study (2008) on the new labour process of middle management, I too suggest that structural-level changes, at an economic, political and social level, have direct and serious implications for managers.

Whilst at this stage the outcomes suggested are individual and collective outcomes, as described in the literature, there is merit in highlighting the contested outcome of re-skilling, up-skilling or de-skilling. The literature leads us to examine perceptions of skill development and how this impacts on the reality of work for managers coping with work intensification and limitations of control. Other papers on the labour process of middle managers have partially supported Braverman's analysis specifically on work intensification and job insecurity (McCann, 2008; Carlstrom, 2012; Gale, 2012; Hassard *et al* 2012), but also we see trends for increased pay, increased responsibility and skill levels (McCann, 2008; McGurk, 2009; Grant *et al* 2014).

The outcomes suggested in the literature and depicted in the model are invariably of conflict, stress and overload for the middle manager. Middle managers are left to balance the increasing demands of multiple stakeholders, including; policy imperatives, top down strategic goals; management of staff and employee concerns

and external customers/bodies/agencies. The organisational offering to assist them re-dress this balance is through management and leadership development programmes. The efficacy of this offering is at the crux of this study, does MLD (up-skilling) significantly assist managers with the external and internal difficulties they are facing?

2.6 Conclusion to the literature review

The labour process of managers in the literature is depicted as difficult, challenging and evolving. The global context within which public sector organisations operate is subject to turmoil and change. Economic collapse, viral outbreaks, environmental disasters and political turmoil are just some of the issues that the Chinese public servants have had to handle in a working day over the last 10 years. Drawing together the literatures on the labour process for both managers and public servants in a Western and an Asian context it is revealed that Managers are subject to 'powerlessness' within organisational hierarchies; work intensification fuelled by downsizing, delaying and recruitment freezes; performance management regimes inspired by industry fads (such as LEAN); restricted access to skills development and career ladders (which benefits some and not others); workforce and task remodelling and in some cases increased job insecurity. Whilst it would be incorrect to suggest that managers are subject to the same constraints as the un or low-skilled, precarious workforce, due to relatively higher rates of pay and generally more favourable working conditions, though not in all cases, there is still a debate to be had. The public sector has seen an increasing erosion of pay and benefits, such as through pensions and relative wage decreases in the 2008 recession (UK) and similarly in Hong Kong following the economic collapse of 1997 and property crash of 2000.

The literature suggests that managers are not immune to work intensification and are subject to increasing levels of control from above in the leadership hierarchy, particularly at junior and middle level and that this is applicable both in the public sector and potentially in a Chinese context.

Leadership development is suggested to be one method of combatting change, by aiding the transformation process. It is acknowledged that one of the main differences

between the skilled and un-skilled workforce, or knowledge economy, is the uptake of training to advance career opportunities for the individual and job performance. However, this is critiqued as a double edged sword for managers, as firstly training availability is discretionary and not universally available and secondly, where it is available, it can be perceived as another form of control and scrutiny.

The literature suggests there is room to broaden the scope of the public sector labour process debate, taking it beyond blue and white collar staff and professionals to multiple layers of management within the example of the Hong Kong civil service and as such this study will contribute to that debate, by seeking answers to the general research question;

To what extent does leadership development help managers to overcome the challenges associated with the managerial labour process in the public sector?

As such the key themes depicted in this review of the literature are:

Work Intensification

Hong Kong is both a unique and significant area for the study of public management. Hybrid forms of governance, comprising elements of both NPM and Post-NPM doctrine are emerging forms of practice. Middle managers within the public sector are subject to work intensification, lack of control and changes to skill requirements as part of their subjective experience of management 'as' work.

Skills

Leadership and management training and development (LMD) is a managerial tool used to remedy the challenges managers face due to changing job requirements, most specifically with relation to the need for greater collaboration internally between bureau and externally in engaging with the public. Skills identified are public sector specific and comprise a combination of attitudinal and competency based skills, prescribed and emergent skills.

Control

Organisations cannot assume a unitarist position regarding the success of LMD and must take into account employee perceptions regarding the legitimacy of LMD as an efficacious method for overcoming internal barriers and personal notions of conflict and stress resulting from imposed control in the employment bargain. Where up-skilling via LMD presents advantage in terms of career capital; improved performance and the ability to meet public service objectives, access to training should be equitable, but clearly, due to budgetary constraints is not.

The implications for this study are that where NPM initiatives have significantly impacted on the subjective experience of work and the labour process of the middle manager, effective management and delivery of public services will be compromised. The example of Hong Kong offers insight into the Asian context of public sector management. Efforts to move towards a new style of governance and to reduce the negative effects of NPM through up-skilling of the managerial cadre are under scrutiny in a number of public sector contexts, of which Hong Kong represents one. Learning and development of managers is a crucial aspect of the practical elements of transition from one governance regime to another. As hybrid models of NPM/Post-NPM doctrine begin to emerge, this review of the literature would suggest that skills development has the potential to be an enabler of the process, allowing the exploration of managerial attempts to recapture 'lost power' and deliver services to an increasingly vocal Chinese and Hong Kong public, but only when executed with consideration of the structural limitations an organisation will inevitably face.

Drawing together these three sets of literature: public management literature; labour process literature and HRD literature, leadership development of public managers can be explored from both an emancipatory and a critical perspective. The final conclusion which can be drawn from this literature review is that leadership development alone is unlikely to be enough to overcome the considerable challenges presented by new governance regimes. Relying on the extra discretionary effort of middle managers, however skilful, can only go part of the way to aiding the transition and organisations should give due consideration to the personal implications and experience of work for the individuals involved. This literature review supports the idea that there is a 'new'

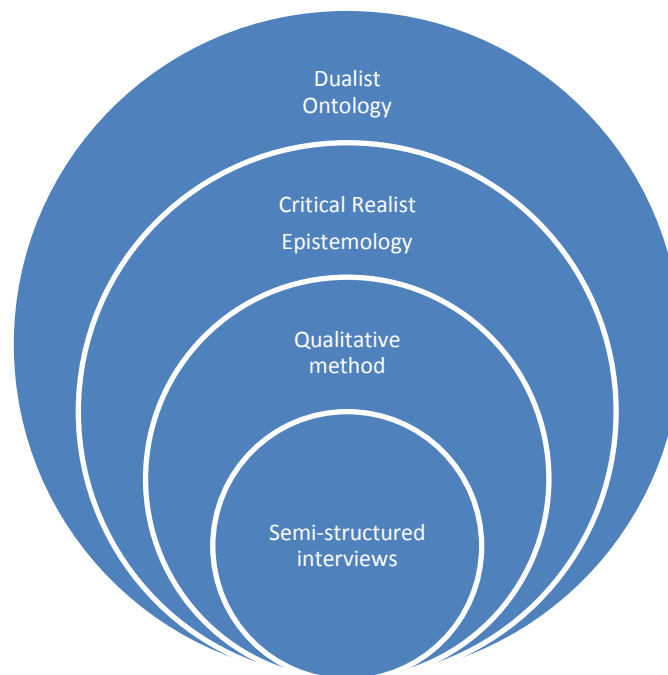
labour process for middle managers and that they are subject to the same principles of work intensification; streamlining, increased job complexity and imposed control as other occupations. Up-skilling and opportunities for training and development, are depicted in the critical literature as failing to compensate for this position, and LDP is the organisations attempt to get buy-in to an increasingly unfair effort bargain focused on performance improvement at the expense of MM's lived experience of work.

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain how the research question identified in the introduction would be met. As such detailed aims and objectives have been drawn up and an explanation of how these objectives would be achieved through data collection, analysis and presentation of results is given. The chapter is split into the following key areas: the research question; research philosophy; research methodology; design of analysis and presentation.

Figure 4: Research map



3.2 Research Philosophy

3.2.1 Ontological and Epistemological Considerations

Research philosophy can significantly impact a piece of research in terms of philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality, this is described as ontology. The general set of assumptions one might have about the best ways of enquiring into the nature of the world is described as epistemology. In order that the reader can fully

understand and contextualise the findings it is important to explain the philosophy underpinning the research.

In describing Ontology, Benton and Craib (2011) ask the question 'What kind of things are there in the world?' and make the distinction between; materialist, idealist, dualist and agnostic positions. Materialist argue that the world is entirely made up of discernible matter, whereas idealists argue that ultimate reality is mentally constructed and take into account the spiritual realm. A dualist ontology would acknowledge the existence of both the material world and the ability to construct mental models.

'Epistemology is an attempt to describe how we know what we know' (Crotty 1998, p18)

Most epistemological positions traditionally have veered between a 'positivist' stance and some form of 'interpretivism'. Positivism is linked to empirical science and stems from the conviction that scientific knowledge is both accurate and certain. It is linked to quantifiable methods used to count, prove and disprove facts or hypothesis. It takes the view that there is an objective world that exists independently of those who research it and is able to be known or proved through empirical research.

This position contrasts sharply with opinions, beliefs, feelings and assumptions which are considered the cornerstone of interpretive investigation. Interpretivism is less concerned with counting and proving causality and more concerned with explanation and understanding (Crotty, 1989 p69). Reality is viewed as being constructed through interpretation of events and discourse. Interpretive understanding is influenced by the work of Max Weber, who used the German word '*verstehen*' sometimes translated as 'empathy' but given to mean '*an understanding of what is going on in the actors' head*' (Benton and Craib, p80). It is that crucial difference between explanation and causality and gaining deeper understanding in to the reasons why a phenomenon occurs that separates the positivist approach and the interpretivist.

However, it is also considered entirely possible to accept the 'realist' stance of material and social structures, which exist independently of discourse and mental models whilst simultaneously accepting that deeper understanding is sometimes needed and

perceptions of reality can be dependent on interpretation. Critical realism offers such an alternative. Realists in the theory of knowledge are committed to the existence of the real, tangible, world which exists or acts independently of our knowledge and beliefs about it. (Benton and Craib, 2011), in other words independent reality exists but our knowledge of it is relative rather than absolute. The critical side holds that assumptions should not be made about how satisfactory or fair those realities (or knowledge) are and would tend to share the social realists' perspective of change and emancipation from oppressive or unacceptable realities.

'Critical inquiry keeps the spotlight on power relationships within society so as to expose the forces of hegemony and injustice' (Crotty 1998 p157)

Benton and Craib (2011) cite four key features of critical realism as an epistemology.

1. Critical realism does not assess whether the truth claims of any given science, at any given time, are true or not.
2. The approach is reflexive about the means of creating knowledge and accepts there are a variety of ways this can be achieved. [Including interpretivism].
3. Surface appearance is potentially misleading and deeper understanding is sought. As such critical realism requires a process which is more questioning and potentially in-department than positivist empirical research.
4. The critical realist insistence on the independent reality of the objects of our knowledge, and the necessity to investigate to overcome surface appearance, implies that presently held beliefs are open to challenge.

This definition places critical realism somewhere between the universal laws of positivism and accepted 'descriptions' of authentic lived experienced as acknowledged in the interpretivist tradition. An epistemology of critical realism informs the approach taken to answer the question and in doing so, both recognition of structure in the forms of institutions (the Hong Kong Civil Service; government; internal structure of hierarchy) is acknowledged alongside the need to understand the role managers themselves perceive they fulfil within the context of change.

3.3 Research Methodology

3.3.1 Research methodology debate – why qualitative?

An exploratory qualitative approach utilising in-department interviews in one organisation has been used to answer this research question as opposed to techniques associated with quantitative enquiry. Additionally, survey data is also included in the analysis, but this survey was designed to be more qualitative in nature and any statistics gathered were predominantly descriptive (see limitations). Qualitative methodology in this instance is deemed the best way to answer the research question for the following reasons:

Firstly, a defining characteristic of qualitative research is the focus on interpretation as opposed to quantification. At a simplistic level this research question does not require the collation of numbers or statistics, but is seeking to understand the deeper meaning employees place on their work context and how this has impacted on the reality of work, so phenomena are not being quantified, beyond limited descriptive statistics (such as numbers of interviewees).

Secondly the emphasis is on the subjective as opposed to the objective. Whilst propositions have been developed deriving from the literature review, this study is more concerned with emergent themes than proving specific hypothesis. The study allows participants to reveal their perceptions of events at work, their own views regarding change and adaptation to change in the workplace, accounts of their behaviour and understanding of the nature of work in the study context, as such a level of subjectivity must be accepted. Cassel and Symon (1994) argue in their defence of qualitative methods that;

‘Objectivity is to some extent misguided for it is the participant’s perspectives on and interpretations of the situation which are of value to understanding behaviour’ (Cassel and Symon 1994 p4).

Thirdly quantitative research offers a greater level of flexibility in the research design and process of conducting the research. This has been very important to the research

design of this study, for as the research progressed and new insights were gained, as a researcher I allowed myself to change the nature of the interventions deployed. For example, as it became clear that certain questions elicited rich responses and others minimal responses from participants, as such the weight and use of those questions was altered in the interview guide. Also quite significantly and as is discussed in the limitations to this research, for one study cohort (junior managers), due to time restrictions, the perceived 'sensitivity' of the research topic and potential difficulties in requesting time out from both a heavy workload and from senior/middle management there was a difficulty in obtaining interviews with this study group. Rather than eliminate them from the study, it was decided that the research question would be better addressed with some rather than no data from this cohort, so a qualitative survey was designed to collect this data.

Whilst it is acknowledged that this is a compromise and the level of data quality less rich, the issues of time constraints, work intensification and sensitivity to hierarchical relationships became 'emergent themes' in the study and deemed a valuable contribution to the results. As such I was able to change the nature of research design in accordance with the changing organisational context. Additionally, flexibility of approach allowed for an element of triangulation in the findings, in that as the study progressed, greater clarification of certain events and points were sought, through new and alternative sources. For example, the interviews revealed that many participants felt the general public perceived their employer as a 'weak government' and discussed this in conjunction with difficulties at work and increased public complaints and demonstrations. Verification of this was sought by additional interviews out-with the main corpus of data from Trade Union organisers who had facilitated the Dockers strike 2013 [the longest strike action taken in Hong Kong's history and which involved Government intervention] and pay negotiations with the (public sector) Life Guard Union – which in Hong Kong, an island, is a significant union. This aids the process of triangulation, as qualitative research is usually concerned with complex process's involving a number of actors or participants over a period of time.

Fourthly qualitative research has an orientation towards process rather than outcome, where the study cohort, or participants, have an influence on and play a shaping role in the events studied. Cassel and Symon (1994 p4) argue that "only qualitative

methods are sensitive enough to allow the detailed analysis of change”, as it is a dynamic situation, requiring rich, detailed data. Quantitative data may allow us to establish what change has occurred over time, but is more limited in ascertaining how, why or what participants felt about the changes? This is because the researcher must discover what processes are involved, what the circumstances surrounding the change or activity were and take an overview of the contextual factors. The research objectives for this thesis focus on not just identification of changes post 1997 as perceived by the study cohort, but also why these changes are of significance, whether skills development is perceived to influence the adaptation process and what factors have inhibited development, adaptation and the experienced reality of middle management work.

Finally, it is clear the qualitative research has a concern with context, where behaviour and situation are inextricably linked. This more intimate, naturalist technique is variously described as ‘the lived experience; the life-world; the reality of work’ (Silverman 2013; Bolton and Houlihan, 2003; Ashworth, 1993 in Cassel and Symons 1994; Giorgi, 1970) and focus’s very much on the experience of the participant within that living work environment allowing us to bridge the social distance. Quantitative research is frequently criticised for downplaying sociological issues such as social context (Silverman, 2013, p128).

In the tradition of the critical realist, layered interviews encompassing both an employee and organisational cohort have been selected. This is deemed the most appropriate methodology to gain both an understanding and interpretation of the participant’s point of view and also to analyse and understand the social and political context and constraints within which participants exist.

Labour process theory makes certain assumptions about the role of managers (previously discussed), both as agents of control and subject to control. Creating a case study which considers both perspectives and allows for understanding of the ‘managerialist perspective’ alongside the personal ‘employee’ perspective is crucial to painting a more complete picture and allowing managers to voice the negatives in their experience of work and the changing environment. Distinguishing between ‘corporate’ rhetoric of management and the views of the private man or woman as an employee

is the key role of the interviewer and as such is subjective in nature. Rather than constructing meaning, in the constructionist tradition, this study is designed to retain its 'naturalist' approach by using thematic analysis to make sense of the data.

3.4 The Organisational Context

The Hong Kong civil service employs just under 165,000 employees, representing approximately 4% of HK's population. HKCS is quite explicit about its remit to up-skill civil servants through (amongst other programmes) leadership development. A clear connection is made between training and development, performance imperatives and public service outcomes.

'The main objectives of training and development are to equip civil servants with updated knowledge and skills, and to develop their potential so that they can continue to improve their performance and provide quality service to the public. Training and development programmes are carefully designed to enhance performance and to support the core values and functions of the civil service.' (HKCS factsheet 2016)

Prior to the 1997 handover managers in HKCS described that they found it relatively easy to perform work and achieve organisational goals. Since the 1997 handover, managers have experienced increasing difficulty in performing work and achieving organisational goals. Public servants attribute this to; greater public opposition to public service projects; increased media exposure and politicisation of their own role, requiring defence of projects before LEGCO and/or the District council's and an organisational culture or bureaucratic structure which limits their ability to challenge decisions taken at a higher level. Control and autonomy of managers to make decisions and voice opinions relating to both their own working practices and regarding public sector policy implementation have been limited. Increased accountability and media exposure have added to the tensions of work and where bureaucracy and hierarchy impinge on the ability to work efficaciously. This is in stark contrast with models advocated in the UK, where evidence of devolved, shared, hybrid and collaborative 'managerial leadership' are either aspired to or practised within the public sector (Gron, 2008; Yukl, 2010; Currie 2011). It is argued that workers, and I suggest public service managers, utilise social networks and uniquely within a Chinese context

'gaunxi' to overcome problems and to give voice to their solutions and increase their social capital (Balkundi and Kilduff, 2006; Huang 2008; McCallum and O'Connell 2009; Gali and Muller-Stewens, 2012). This has also been described as 'lines of information and support' (Bolton and Houlihan, 2010) or 'circles of affiliation' (Jackall, 2010).

As the changing labour process of managers in this case is acknowledged, the politicization of their roles, the increased exposure to front facing public dispute resolution; the discreet change towards alignment with Beijing - the organisation has attempted to compensate for these changes through leadership development with an emphasis on 'up-skilling'.

The impact on the labour process for managers is thus a combination of both deskilling and loss of control in one area, but of creative empowerment and re-skilling in another. It is acknowledged that as the influence and power of China increases it is important for the global community to gain a greater understanding of Chinese management practices and governance (Rarick, 2009), particularly through the lens of Hong Kong, which already operates as in a capitalist free market economy. Whilst there is merit in examining the political, strategic or human resource implications of this change process, this thesis specifically aims to identify managers as employees, subject to the pressures of changing employment practices and to take a labour process perspective. This approach reveals that loss of control and weakened decision making have become prevalent.

Significantly Hong Kong has a unique governance and legal system, which is put into action by the civil service. It is now termed a special administrative region (SAR) of China and retains this separate identity. Specifically, it has moved from a colonial bureaucracy that was administrative in focus to a ministerial (political) system which allows for some of the principles of 'new public management' and greater accountability to local public opinion. The governmental reforms implemented since 1997 have weakened civil service power and autonomy and shifted policy making power from the hands of the elite civil service to politicians. In post-handover Hong Kong, the high degree of institutionalisation was found to be at odds with the new political institutions headed by the Beijing appointed Chief Executive – a political

appointee. Within the confines of the basic law the power and authority of the Chief Executive is strengthened (Chan, 2003).

However, the public show increasing concern over the lack of democratic process's in the appointment of the Chief Executive, this lead to half a million Hong Kong citizens in July 2003 protesting against new security laws and prompted a reinvigorated campaign for a directly elected Chief Executive (Painter 2005). These protests were echoed in 2012 and when C Y Leung was appointed and again in 2013. In 2014 the protests escalated, resulting in the so called 'umbrella-protest', which pitted students against police and involved the blockading or barricading of key roads throughout Hong Kong and specifically it prevented civil servants from going to work. Whilst the protest has only partial support from the greater Hong Kong public, the Government response was reported world-wide as the world waits to see the whether or not China will honour the basic law regarding civic rights and universal suffrage and how the Hong Kong government will broker the situation and uphold peace.

'Beijing controls Hong Kong under the principle of 'one country, two systems", granting the region a range of civil liberties and independent institutions that do not exist on the mainland. Yet many residents feel that as Beijing's economic and political clout grows, their independence has begun to wane' (Kaiman J, 2014).

The fundamental problem with the political executive is that the Chief Executive is not elected, has no political base, does not lead a political party, has received no votes and his ministers are not part of a unified team. What they do have in common is that they have all been selected by and owe that appointment to the Chief Executive. This presents a problem for the public servants tasked with implementing policies for a political leadership perceived by the public as undemocratic and selected by Mainland China. Public servants have to balance allegiance to the political leadership with service to the public of Hong Kong, and counter attacks from opposing parties who are acting independently but are also potentially politically self-serving. This significantly impacts on managers and leaders experience of work.

This has resulted in a very clear distinction being drawn up between political and administrative personnel and has set conditions for political control of bureaucracy.

But as with any political elite facing a permanent bureaucracy, its ability to control depends in no small way on the leadership, management and political skill of its members and in the manner in which decision making is supported and organised (Painter, 2005).

In contrast the legal systems and judiciary in Hong Kong are perceived to be retaining their strength and independence to date. This is demonstrated by the 2013 strikes enacted by Hong Kong dock workers (Vine, 2013a and 2013b). Whilst employers looked for ways to inhibit the strike action and sought to put pressure on the government to quell the protest, the judiciary upheld the public right to demonstrate. What is described by managers in this case is a growing reliance on the law to not only up-hold decisions but to inform decisions and to be used as a form of accountability which negates the need for leaders to make decisions themselves.

Being perceived as a weak government, in the 'pockets' of the landlords, industry (and arguably Beijing) is a very challenging situation for managers in HKCS, who demonstrate great empathy with public concerns. One of the most significant external changes impacting the civil service is the move from taking a 'voluntarist' route in resolution of private sector disputes to a policy norm of involvement and mediation. This is due to the inherent desire to ensure harmony for the economy and public order. It is also in line with Hong Kong's prescribed dictum of 'prosperity and stability' as enshrined in the capitalist one country – two systems formula. Given the enhanced visibility of the state and the labour history of HK workers dependency on the state for protection and improvements in employment and service provision, the role of the HKCS manager becomes increasingly public facing and complex. There is greater involvement in negotiations with the trade unions to try and broker harmony with the private sector employers, most notably the less militant Federation of Trade Unions, FTU, (Hong and Lee, 2010 p521; Chan and Snape, 2000). Public perceptions of the government and expectations of service and levels of communication and engagement have changed, which results in the need to improve managers' skills at dealing, face to face, with the public.

Organisational attempts by the Hong Kong Civil Service to support and resolve these issues through LMD have produced ambiguous results. Managers, whilst accepting the necessity for change have struggled to cope with it.

In HKCS higher level management and leadership development programmes (ALEP, LIA, and IMP) are offered to management level staff. In 2010-2011 CSB (Civil Service Bureau) budgeted HK\$46 million for the provision of leadership and management training for over 39000 civil servants. Of those only 215 attended the higher level leadership development programmes, although a further 2,500 attended management workshops and seminars (LC Paper No.CB(1)1001/10-11(04)). These figures demonstrate how difficult it is to get onto an LMD programme, but without the training, the opportunity to up-skill and adapt to the changing environment of government is a big challenge for the individual. Hong Kong's history of democracy and capitalism are in stark contrast with mainland China. Significantly the implementation of the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of The People's Republic of China in 1990 ensured that there would be no change in the capitalist system prevalent in Hong Kong for the next 50 years. Research in a Western context has suggested that reforms in the public sector during a period of significant socio/economic change have led to a "harder working, less autonomous, cheaper workforce" (Gale 2012 p835). Some of these reform features are echoed in Hong Kong, where the Government has taken the decision to continue rationalising costs, through pay and benefits reduction for both established and new staff, a process which started in 2000. The fringe benefits described in this quote include pension reform.

"Proactive steps have been taken over the years to modernise the provision of fringe benefits to civil servants. The payment of many fringe benefit type of allowances has been either ceased or adjusted for new recruits offered appointment on or after June 1, 2000 to reflect the latest circumstances. Following a comprehensive review, the Government has implemented measures to further rationalise the provision of fringe benefit type of allowances since September 2006." HKCS factsheet 2016

The study produces evidence of both some improved coping mechanism facilitated by leadership development, but also resigned acceptance and underlying resistance to work degradation.

Purposive sampling has been used to select the Hong Kong Civil Service as an appropriate organisation for study. Hong Kong, because it is part of China and has been operating under the premise of capitalism for considerable time. Many of the facets of NPM imposed on public service managers in a Western context are evidenced in Hong Kong (see quote above) and add to the relevance of HK as part of the labour process debate. The civil service, as a large employer, gives the researcher access to multiple bureau and department. Due to the opportunity for access to multiple cohorts, the fact that the civil service encompasses other public sector organisations in Hong Kong and the need to balance time limitations, quantity of data and budgetary constraints, a single organisation was deemed appropriate for this study. It was felt that a single organisation, with multiple study cohort would yield answers to the research question posed. Additionally, the opportunity for access was more easily available to the researcher due to established connections, however other organisations (with varying degree of access opportunity) had been considered and discarded at the early stages of the research design, as comparative research would inevitably answer different research questions. It is noted at this point and discussed in more detail in future chapters, that HK also has distinctive contextual, political features which need to be taken into account when considering the generalisability of the study.

3.5 Research Methods

3.5.1 Data collection instrument – Interview and survey

Both primary and secondary data have been collected, the predominant research method chosen for this study is the semi-structured interview. In total 17 face to face primary interviews have been collected, including the pilot interview and one outlier interview with a political candidate. Additionally, where interviews could not be granted due to organisational constraints, 34 on-line surveys, designed to reflect the qualitative nature of the interview have also been collected.

It is argued that qualitative interviews are most appropriate where firstly the study focus is on the meaning of a particular phenomenon to the participants, which in this organisation includes employee's adaptation to the contextual change process post the 1997 transition to Chinese authority. Secondly it is appropriate where individual '*perceptions*' of process's within a social-unit, such as work environment, are to be studied prospectively, using a series of interviews (King 1994, p16). Thirdly where historical accounts are required to build a complete picture on how a particular phenomenon occurred or is being dealt with. Fourthly, where exploratory research is required initially, before a more quantitative study is deemed appropriate and carried out. Of course this also works in reverse. Quantitative data has already been gathered, by Huque and Vyas (2008) determining that the opportunity to receive training is offered selectively not universally within the civil service and that it is seen as beneficial to civil servant's careers, but this only serves to offer up more questions. For example: what are the benefits of up-skilling within this changing context? In what way do managers utilise what is on offer? What are the organisations goals in offering up-skilling? Is it up-skilling, de-skilling or re-skilling that is actually taking place? Does the LandD initiative counteract structural failings or difficulties within the organisation and aid managers with the 'realities of work'? These are some of the questions that statistics can throw up and demonstrate the sometimes complementary nature of qualitative and quantitative research. As such qualitative interviews can also clarify and illustrate the meaning of findings from quantitative research.

3.5.2 Semi – Structured Interviews

The semi structured method was chosen so that key themes could be incorporated in the questioning, whilst also allowing the participant to speak personally and at length about the areas they perceived as relevant and important. As such the flow of conversation differed in each interview allowing the formation of emergent themes. Other methods for this study were considered and discounted. Survey data alone would have limited the capacity to ask 'probing' questions which sought to gather explanations and examples of work scenarios. Also similar quantitative survey data had previously been collected (Huque and Vyas, 2008) which lead to some of the questions addressed in this piece of research, specifically with regard to selection for up-skilling. Observations were felt to be too invasive and impractical in terms of time

constraints. The confidential nature of an interview was deemed extremely important in this study and allowed participants to talk with greater freedom of expression. It was the need for candid expression that informed the decision not to select focus groups. Although it would have been very interesting to facilitate a discussion on skills development, group discussion may have restricted the critical element of the project. Surface level discussion is always relevant, but probing deeper and seeking personal reflection it was finally decided could be best met in an interview. Part of the process of interviewing, involved not just listening to the question answers but paying attention to the body language of the participant to discern when more privately held views were being offered. This was very important, as the research is designed to be collected throughout the managerial or leadership hierarchy to quite a high level and as David Silverman points out;

'When you interview 'up', you may find elite members unhappy about 'opening-up' about themselves' (Silverman 2013, p206).

All of the participants started working in the Hong Kong Civil Service before the 1997 handover and are well placed as witnesses to the change process. The majority have over 20 years work experience with the organisation, with 1 individual starting just before the handover. All are in a position to recount their view on how the work process has changed. The organisation employs very large numbers of predominantly white collar workers who have been through tertiary education and speak both Chinese (Mandarin or Cantonese) and English.

The decision to conduct interviews in English was primarily driven by the need for consistency and universal language proficiency of both the researcher and the interviewees. Research has suggested that although interviewing in the mother tongue (Chinese dialect) is advantageous to expression, Chinese participants, who have a job requirement to have a high level of English, can give greater personal divulgence of information in English (Cortazzi, Pilcher and Lixian, 2011). This may be due to connotations of colonial history and perception of English having greater authority in a business context.

Maintaining the quality in qualitative interviews is methodologically important and care was taken to account for Kvale's 'best practices', he suggested 6 criteria for judging the quality of interviews:

- The extent of spontaneous, rich, specific and relevant answers from the interviewee.
- The shorter the questions asked and longer the responses given.
- The degree to which the interviewer follows up and clarifies the meanings of relevant aspects of the answer.
- The ideal interview is to a large extent interpreted throughout the interview.
- The interviewer attempts to verify his or her interpretations of the subject's answers in the course of the interview.
- The interview is 'self-communicating' – it is a story contained in itself that hardly requires much extra descriptions and explanations (Kvale, 1996, p145).

Clarification was frequently required throughout the interview process, for the dual purposes of overcoming language difficulties and to check a point had been correctly understood. The methods and strategies used are consistent with the theoretical underpinnings of the study. However, there are numerous critiques of interviews as a method, which mainly rest on the ability to gain accurate data in response to the interviewer's questions. Accuracy can be circumvented by misinformation, lies, evasion and fronts. Even where agreement has been reached about 'reality' as a concept, interviewees may not have the information or knowledge asked of them. Walford contends that

'At best interviewees will only give what they are prepared to reveal about their subjective perceptions of events and opinions. These perceptions and opinions will change over time, and according to circumstance' (Walford, 2007 p147).

Reality itself is subjective and individuals view events through their own eyes. But in order to gain deeper understanding of and apply meaning to events, perceptual data must be assigned some validity. By utilising measures of quality (as documented above by Kvale) the qualitative interviewer can overcome some of the difficulties. Supplementing interview data with other forms of data, such as documentary, can also aid triangulation.

Roulston argues that critiques have not dampened the enthusiasm of qualitative researchers across the disciplines for alternative ways of doing and presenting research. *'Data analysis methods draw on a variety of theoretical perspectives, including, critical, post-structural and postmodern theories in order to represent multiple and fragmented selves, deconstructive readings and non-linear narratives. Representations may be partial and fragmented, and reject the notion of the unified self'* (Roulston 2010, p220).

So rather than achieving a comprehensive, version of the ultimate truth, illuminating the 'real self' exploratory research opens up space for new ways of thinking, doing and being. Whilst qualitative interviews as a technique may be open to some criticism (as most methods are), by acknowledging the limitations, crafting interviews to take into account quality issues, we can also allow for the benefits and the opportunity to understand data from a different perspective.

3.6 Fieldwork

3.6.1 The Study Sample (within case)

In order to meet these aims and objectives and to answer the over-arching research question a sample was identified. The study sample was split initially into two distinct groupings; the employee cohort and the organisational cohort. Whilst it is acknowledged that all but one of the seventeen participants interviewed as part of the main data corpus would be defined as 'managers' within the organisation, they were split into two groups depending on the level of their exposure to management skills development. The one outlier was a senior manager and member of the political cadre heading up a department, in an 'AO' (Administrative Officer) position. The decision to

include this interview in the main data corpus was taken in order to provide additional insight, but clearly is recorded as part of the political cadre.

3.6.2 The employee cohort

This cohort consists of data collected from managers within HKCS who have attended management and leadership development training. At the time of data collection there were 3 programmes offered, namely ALEP (Advanced leadership Education Programme); LIA (Leadership in Action) and IMP (Improving Managers Programme). As the titles of the programmes suggest they are offered to managers of varying levels of experience respectively. Permission to contact managers was granted via the Human resources department and invitations to participate went out to the 2011 training cohort. From that group eight managers responded positively and agreed to be interviewed.

The eight in-department interviews were conducted in July 2012 with middle managers from two offered courses (see table 1). These interviews were semi-structured, lasting between 1-2 hours and questions were designed from the themes identified in the literature review. (See appendix A). The three main themes of the interview questions were:

1. Identifying contextual issues (internal and external) and changes which were perceived to impact on the job of managers.
2. Understanding their views on managerial skills development and the outcomes of the training received.
3. Gaining insight into the constraints and difficulties they experienced in adapting to an evolving work environment, specifically in relation to decision making, hierarchy and accountability.

Additionally, interviews were sought from more recently promoted middle managers, who had attended the IMP programme. Although permission was granted by the organisation to conduct interviews on participants willing to proceed with the project,

no candidates came forward. This became an interesting theme within the process of the research. The reasons cited by Human Resources for no-one coming forward to participate were; too much work and a lack of time to be able to participate. As such the methodology was adapted slightly and potential participants were given the option to complete an on-line survey, based on the interview questions, which they could do out-with working hours if that was preferable. This received a more positive response and 34 out of a potential 310 candidates completed, making the response rate just above 10%. Although 10% falls within the norms expected of an on-line survey, it is still low considering that it was corporately endorsed. This finding will be discussed in the analysis chapter.

The survey itself was still designed to be qualitative in nature and to follow the design of the interview questions. As such a number of free text responses were included in the questioning allowing for rich descriptive answers. (See Appendix 4).

3.6.3 The Organisational Cohort

Whilst senior managers in the civil service have slid between political and administrative roles, via the new ministerial system (Burns, Wei and Peters 2013), middle managers have tolerated the changes in structure of the senior management level. Initially the top level political appointees (Ministers) came from out-with the civil service in the 2002 reforms, i.e. from the finance, education and medical sectors and then latterly were appointed from within the civil service to combat areas of conflict and a perception of externally appointed political staff as self-seeking and lacking administrative competence.

Traditionally Hong Kong's civil service is divided in to two categories of staff: Firstly, generalist grades, of which the 'AO' heads up, Administrative Officer, and secondly the 'specialist or departmental grades. AO's staff practically all top positions (permanent secretary, deputy secretary and principle assistant secretary). Middle management are comprised of the ranks below this.

The original organisational cohort was selected to in order to give balance and achieve an understanding of the organisations perspective on; changes to managerial work,

problem resolution through up-skilling and the potential challenges and difficulties faced by managers.

In the first instance interview data was collected from Human Resource Managers and this was designed to complement the interviews collected from the employee cohort, whilst acknowledging that HR Managers themselves are 'middle managers'. The interviews were conducted in July 2012, again lasted again between 1-2 hours (see table 2). The themes were matched to the themes cited above (See appendix 2 for questions). Four interviews were initially given, including the pilot interview taken in 2011 at the exploratory stage. The HR Managers selected had had significant input into the design and implementation of the training programmes listed above.

Latterly as the thesis progressed, it became apparent that there was a key group of individuals who were involved in the training process at a critical point, but had not previously been identified as important from an organisational perspective. These were the nominating managers, those senior line managers who selected individuals for LMD and other job specific training programmes. These managers fell between HR and the employee receiving training. This particular group of managers did not come forward in the initial interview stage and it was decided that 'snowball sampling' method would be used to overcome 'access' obstacles.

Snowball sampling is described as a method with '*good estimability for studying hard-to-reach populations*' (Heckathorn, 2011 p355) and specifically where group networks are difficult for outsiders to penetrate. Whilst permission to conduct 60 interviews had initially been granted by the study organisation's HR department, getting middle managers consent and participation was a significant obstacle to progressing the research. The decision to network personal contacts and work through the 'snowball' referral system was taken to circumvent the hesitation of managers, who seemed reluctant to participate through formal channels. This approach was successful and 4 middle management (nominating) participants were identified, plus 1 political candidate who wished to take part and would be viewed as an outlier in the results.

As such 5 additional individuals participated in interviews who had nominating and managerial responsibilities. The interviews were designed to match those above but

with some changes, which related to gaining insight into why certain individuals were selected for training, what the selection process involved and again, what perceptions they had regarding outcomes of skills development and difficulties faced by management. The data collected by the early cohorts helped to shape the interview questions asked in this round. See Appendix 3. These interviews were taken latterly (July 2013) as a theme of 'hierarchy' and access to skills development had been identified at the early coding stages conducted on the first few employee interviews. The adapted interview themes were:

- Leadership and management – Definition and values
- Contextual Challenges
- Drivers for Skills development
- Development Outcomes
- Selection Process's
- Public sector issues/ Structure and Accountability

In each of the subgroups comprising the interview cohorts, although a long list of questions was prepared by the researcher, these were designed almost as a safety net, to prompt the interviewer if the interviewee was having difficulty communicating. The main focus was to make sure the discussion was covering each theme and that the interviewee was allowed to talk freely about areas of interest and importance. As such the questions asked in each interview were not worded exactly the same, but did cover the same themes, described above. This follows guidance set out in the literature to 'have guided conversations rather than structured queries' (Yin 2009 p106) and acknowledges that the development of the interview guide does not end at the start of the first interview, but may be modified to include emergent themes (King 1994). A detailed breakdown of all the interview questions are available in the appendices (Appendices 1-4).

3.6.4 Supplementary Primary Data

Whilst the data collected from the employee and organisational cohorts form the basis of this thesis, from the outset it was apparent that contextual factors played a significant role in perceptions of change for managers in HKCS. The early interview data revealed that increasing public protest about rights and public service provision had a significant impact on perceptions of the job and workload for managers. As such the decision was taken to collect some supplementary contextual data to both confirm events as described by participants and add to the overall picture of public protest in Hong Kong. The Confederation for Trade Unions was approached and two interviews were granted, one with a public sector union and one with a private sector union, both of which had evoked public protest and strike action. Whilst this is not directly addressing the research questions, these two interviews are included as they build on the contextual picture and gives the researcher an alternative interpretation of events. This is designed to add weight to the reliability of the interview data. These interviews were less structured and evolved around describing dispute events and perceptions of the role of government in handling public dispute and grievance.

This thesis therefor analyses the changing managerial labour process through skills development for civil servants in Hong Kong and in doing so acknowledges the reality and impact of political and cultural context.

Table 3.1: Sample Structure: Cohort 1 Employee Cohort (Attended Training in 2011)

Level	No	Collection instrument	Criteria	Sample	Date: data collection	Role Remit
Snr level Middle Manager	4	Interview	Attended skills development training (ALEP)	Purposive	July 2012	Departmental (Dpt) Policy influencing Operational management of department and large teams.
Mid-level - Middle manager	4	Interview	Attended skills development training (LIA)	Purposive	July 2012	Dpt Policy implementing Operational management of med size teams
Junior level Middle manager	34	Survey (Qualitative design)	Attended skills development training (IMP)	Purposive	May 2012	Dpt Policy implementing Operational management of smaller teams.

Table 3.2: Sample structure Cohort 2 - Organisational cohort (Designed or selected candidates for Training 2011)

Level	No	Collection Instrument	Selection Criteria	Sample	Date: data Collection	Role remit
HR Managers	4	Interview (including pilot)	Design, management and implementation of skills development.	Purposive	July 2012	Operational line management role. Remit extended to HR policy.
Nominating Managers (MM's)	3	Interview	Middle managers who have selected staff for managerial up-skilling.*	Snowball	July 2013	Operational line management role Dpt Policy influencing
Nominating Manager (Snr level)	2	Interview	1 x Managerial Head of Department 1 x Outlier – AO – political candidate and Head of Department.	Snowball	July 2013	Active Government Policy shaping role

The hierarchical structure within the Civil Service is large and complex, particularly at middle manager level. Whilst the organisation is split into 'operational' and 'policy making' divisions, distinctions must be made between the different ranks of staff within (see appendix Organisation Chart). Policy making staff generally work in the 'bureau's and are headed up by a political Secretary. Beneath this level operational departments exists run by a head of Department who can be either a political (Administrative Officer grade) or technical (Executive Officer grade) senior member of staff. These individuals comprise what I choose to term as 'Senior management' as they have the power and authority in a managerial capacity and this is represented in their being D3 level and above on the Directorate level pay-scale.

Below this the middle management stratum exists and the majority of the interviews and survey participants are selected from within this group. The most senior level of middle manager is likely to be a Unit head with considerable responsibility and may have reached the Directorate level pay scale at D1 or even D2 level, but will still report into a head of department at a more senior level. They are attending the 'ALEP' training course as they are potential future candidates for a Head of department posting. Mid and junior level middle managers will still be on the master level pay scale (a lower scale) and will be progressing through the managerial ranks.

The operational managers in the sample come from a variety of backgrounds and departments and comprise; engineers, lawyers, scientists; architects; IT experts, HR and a variety of other technical professions. Only one individual in the sample, the AO outlier, would be considered a career civil servant and politician. As such the nature of the roles they are performing predominantly involve the hands on management of people and resources. All of the individuals profiled in Cohort 1 have started with the civil service in a technical role and then, been promoted into a managerial position – then undertaking various levels of leadership training courses.

All of the individuals in Cohort 2 (with the exception of the outlier) have started in a technical role then been promoted to a managerial post, though the level of training they have received varies, with nominating managers generally having attended older versions of the leadership programmes currently offered. All individuals profiled will have responsibility for hands-on policy implementation, but some of the more senior

posts and specifically the AO outlier post, will have policy influencing and shaping role.

The layering of the sample allows for greater depth of understanding and a more complete picture. As the survey was conducted first, the researcher was then able to probe the interviewees on management issues which were revealed to be pertinent to the research question. Although there is no strongly defined uniform stance on the implications of their [critical realists] philosophical stance for social research interviewing, (Smith and Elger, 2012) it is acknowledged that interviews can give researchers access to discourses and accounts otherwise unavailable, yet crucial to understanding the problem identified.

3.6.5 Access and Ethics

Access was gained to the organisation through a long process, which started with an initial meeting with the Head of Training and Development in May 2010, followed by written permission to conduct (up to 60) interviews in July 2012 and 2013. Obtaining actual interviews was a difficult process even though organisational consent had been granted, this was attributed to long working hours culture by HR, however determining the reasons in all their complexity would require further research out-with the remit of this project. Participants were informed of the nature of the study beforehand, in writing, offered the opportunity to withdraw at any stage of the process and that identities would be anonymised. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed with permission.

3.6.6 Secondary Data

As well as a comprehensive literature review, a number of documents provided by the Hong Kong Civil Service and taken from their website were utilised as secondary data, the most relevant being the training manual and guide, which included a hierarchical breakdown informing the level of seniority of managers and the potential training courses available to them. Secular press and media publications, such as those cited for the Guardian and South China Morning Post have also been utilised to create the contextual picture.

3.6.7 Conducting the Interview

Interviews with all members of the organisational cohort and 4 of the employee cohort (ALEP attendees) were conducted during office hours, at the employee's office. Privacy was offered and aspects of social etiquette observed, for example the offering of tea, initial greetings from the participant's secretary.

For subsequent interviews there was less opportunity for privacy and to meet within working hours. Of the 4 middle managers attending LIA training programme, one met me outside of working hours (in the evening) in a restaurant over dinner, the other 3 met me on their office at the most suitable time.

Junior managers were not able to meet for face to face contact at all and has been previously documented and opted to complete an on-line survey out-with working hours. The online survey comprised of a selection of multiple choice/Likert scale type questions and free text box questions – which corresponded to those in the interview - in order to keep the data as qualitative as possible.

The interviews began with a discussion regarding the nature of the research, permission to record the interview, the exchange of business cards and general pleasantries. The interview formally began with the first question, which was fairly general relating to their views on leadership and what traits or values make a good leader and then the conversation was allowed to flow depending on what topics were important to the participant. When the interview veered off onto a tangent, interviewees were brought back to the core themes, but were given some lee-way to introduce topics which they felt were important to get across. During the course of the interview observational notes were also taken, to document changes in tone or behaviour that was considered relevant to the questions involved. For example, at one point an interviewee leaned in, lowered his voice and shared a fairly personal piece of information about stress at work. In another example, the interview started and then part way through the interviewee got up and decided he would close the door for greater privacy, another interviewee made the point that the door would remain open as she always had an open-door policy with staff. The interviews continued, lasting up

to 2 hours maximum, but more generally around 1 hour and were then transcribed and securely stored at the University.

The final interview question asked what further training and development the interviewee felt they needed. The top down approach of skills development, of effectively telling employees what skills they need in order to perform, is the opposite of empowerment, and this question was included to invite the criticality of the interviewee. Advocates of critical pedagogy argue that top-down standards and the potential for de-skilling in certain professions, such as teaching, suggest that there is an alternative employee lead agenda to be considered (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011 p166).

3.7 Data Analysis and Presentation

3.7.1 Coding

The data was analysed using a form of “thematic coding,” acknowledging the different phases on analysis and coding as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006).

‘Thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data...the researcher needs to perform initial and axial coding in order to deconstruct data, put them into codes and find links between them’ (Liamputtong, 2010).

After transcription and familiarisation with the data, initial codes were generated from each data item (interview), 46 were generated and organised into meaningful groups. The coding in this first instance was data driven and conducted manually, allowing the researcher to be immersed in the data. The decision to code manually, rather than using technology, such as NVIVO, was taken as a data set of 17-19 interviews was judged to be relatively manageable, but also because the researcher sought familiarity with the data and to avoid initially having to use rigid coding structures. The advantages cited for using software are usually; speed at handling large volumes of data; improvement of rigour and facilitation of team research (Seale, 2013, cited in Silverman). This criterion was not completely applicable to this piece of research as the volume of data was perceived to be manageable, it is an individual piece of

research and rigour can be developed in multiple ways. It has also been documented that assumptions should not be made that software usage will speed up the analysis process, as uploading NVIVO is a time consuming process in itself determined by the experience of the user and compatibility of formatting and the potential for IT glitches. Use of software has to be weighed up against the potential to save time if wading through vast amounts of data after the coding process.

In the second phase of coding (axial), the meaningful groups were then categorised into general themes (7) by interpreting the meaning behind each code and finding connections or contradictions to other codes. For example; there was a disconnect between notions of the private citizen and the public servant which together formed the theme of leader identity. Leader identity was not used directly as a theme from which to analyse the labour process of managers, but related to control and the tensions managers felt when implementing policy as a public servant that they as a 'private citizen' felt uncomfortable with.

'A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set.' (Braun and Clarke, 2006 p10)

From the thematic map generated, it was clear that: power, hierarchy and control; leadership and public sector skills and work intensification linked (by participants) to stress, were dominant and relevant to labour process theory. The decision to apply labour process theory was informed by the results of the first round of coding and is inductive in nature. The thesis was critical in nature from the beginning of the research design but moved towards labour process theory as the changes in work practice and the dualist role of 'management' as both employee and employer became dominant. Caution has been taken to avoid selectively picking quotes which support a pre-determined theme and this has allowed the relevance of labour process theory to be revealed. The other themes identified at this stage, are of contextual interest to the data corpus but more loosely linked to the application of labour process theory. As such in the final refinement to the coding process, the themes of control, skill and work intensification remained dominant.

3.7.2 Creating the Coding Framework

In the third phase of coding a clear framework was developed which linked the conceptual framework developed in the literature review and the final codes which would be used for the analysis. The key codes which were identified in the literature and formed the basis of the literature review chapter's three key codes were identified, these are firstly: The External Context codes, which are broken into 'secondary codes' of political change; social change and economic change.

Secondly the Internal context codes, which are broken down into; middle management values and identity; organisational culture change; management as 'work' and training activity.

Thirdly once the internal and external factors affecting the case organisation had been considered the theoretical underpinnings of the study allowed for the creation of the third 'key code' of Labour process theory codes, which are broken down into the 'secondary codes' of; skills control and work intensification.

Table 3.3: Coding framework (adapted from Figure 2 Conceptual Framework combined with first sweep of the data)

External Context Codes		Internal Context Codes		Labour Process Theory Codes	
Political Change	Ministerial System Image of Government Trust Legislation Collaboration v's Interference	Middle Values Management	Public sector values Chinese/HK values Organisational values	Skills	Perceptions and examples of up-skilling Challenges of up-skilling De-skilling
Social Change	Public voice/demonstration Legislative Impact	Management 'as' work	Work challenges Problem resolution Friendship and reciprocity Coalition building Efficiency Adaptation to change Career development Recruitments processes Views on promotion	Control	Decision making Access to authority and power Managing relationships Accountability Control of systems and process's Control over career development
Economic Change	Financial markets Trade with China/West Government finances and Budget – impacting on public service	Management Training and Development	Access to training Training perceived as benefit Problems with training Training outcomes	Work Intensification	Squeezed resources Increased complexity of work Stress Long hours culture and WLB Staff resistance to intensification Deployment of staff/contractors

Having created key and secondary codes, this can be broken down further to create the boundaries around the codes and keep the descriptions tight. Although the process has in effect begun with the basic themes, we come back to them now in light of the organising process and define the explicit boundaries or definitions which give them meaning.

'The codes in the coding framework should have explicit boundaries (definitions), so that they are not interchangeable or redundant; and they should also be limited in scope and focus explicitly on the object of analysis, in order to avoid coding every single sentence in the original text' (Attride-Stirling 2001 p 391).

3.7.3 Description and Exploration of coding framework.

The description of the external context codes is fairly straightforward as they relate to participant's views on the changes to the external environment impacting managerial work at HKCS. The literature has revealed significant change to external environment and the interview/survey instruments have been designed to probe participants for their views on these changes and how they may have impacted on their experience of work. As such these codes are constrained by political, social and economic factors specifically relating to Hong Kong but also extending to views participants may potentially have on the influence or impact of mainland Chinese or Western government policies. The breadth of data that comes in this section is very dependent on how candid the interviewees/survey participants are.

The second key code; Internal context codes are more complex. The four secondary codes identified are the result of much reduction of the text. Middle management values and identity relate to both notions of 'Chinese management' and 'public sector leadership' and combine these two areas which have been under-researched in the labour process literature. The potential for values to be identified in the data is limitless, so specific values which were picked up in the literature as relevant to both Chinese and public sector organisations are the focus.

Organisational culture change seeks to code for themes of resistance or acceptance plus perceptions relating to the pace of change and whether or not this aided or hindered the process (either transformational or incremental).

Management 'as' work is key to the research objectives and is defined not only by what managers 'do' but by how their careers have changed and are developed; what they perceive as the recruitment process's and potential career ladders; what challenges they are faced with at work and their approaches to problem resolution. Significantly included in this definition are notions of 'coalition building', friendship and reciprocity of [help/assistance within] relationships, as this ties into both the public sector literature and Chinese values of 'guanxi' and collective orientation (Warner, 2009, 2010). This can be encapsulated further through the term social capital. Efficiency of management work is also linked to both public sector rhetoric and capitalist notions of management expediency and is the driving force of many change initiatives.

The final secondary code within the internal context code is considering 'Training activity'. Whilst it is identified that this links in strongly to the labour process theme of 'skills'; training from an HRM remit is very different from notions of up-skilling/de-skilling as depicted by Braverman and as such issues of access to training (such as selection criteria or transparency of the process), training as 'reward' and potential problems of training and development are considered separately in this section.

The third key code is the labour process theory codes. 'Skills' is considered from the LPT perspective as opposed to HRM and is defined by critical descriptions of up-skilling and de-skilling and the challenges there-in. The main difference identified between an HRM rhetoric of skills development and a labour process one, is that the former takes a more positive, organisational perspective, defined by achieving organisational outcomes and goals which may simultaneously enrich the individual, but that is not the primary focus. The latter takes a more critical view considering the impact both positive and negative (in the case of de-skilling) and the potentially conflicting desires and motivations of the individual.

The second code 'Control' relates to decision making and access to power and authority within the organisations hierarchy. The management of relationships both upwards and downwards for middle managers is important and issues of accountability for the outcomes of decisions. Control over systems and process's is a definitive theme through-out the labour process literature as is control (or lack of it) of career development. This may also link into resistance to either change or work intensification, or opportunities to voice dissatisfaction if that is what exists in this organisations culture.

Work Intensification is the last secondary code and can be defined via the squeeze on resources and increased complexity and stress of work. It links into work/life/balance, the numbers of staff deployed and use of contractors or those on eroded employment contracts who offer numerical and functional flexibility. Included in the coding structure is the potential for resistance to change and intensification of work, either in terms of formal resistance or informal expressions of dissatisfaction through a 'voice' mechanism.

The coding framework will aid the research by allowing the data to be organised and interpreted creating a thematic network analysis. The data itself is presented in the form of thematic tables or standalone quotes, separating the employee and organisational cohorts to allow the reader a clear understanding of what is being presented. Distinction is made between the layers of management and quotes from the free text responses from the junior management group is also included for comparative purposes. The coding framework was subject to scrutiny and verification internally by University staff.

3.8 Limitations to the research methodology

The first limitation which can be identified is the method used to collect junior level middle management data – survey method was an adaptation to the original method. Access was very difficult and conducting interviews would have been more consistent. However, a pragmatic approach has been taken by the researcher and the decision was made that this cohort represents a significant voice and as such data would be collected albeit through alternative methods. A survey does represent a compromise,

but steps have been taken to meet the research objectives and keep the question style qualitative in nature. The critical analysis of the data accounts for the stated limitation on time available to meet the researcher. This brings up questions relating to work intensification, perceptions of employee voice and the opportunity to talk freely to an independent researcher, which are not conclusively answerable. Although permission was granted initially by the organisation for access with up to 60 interviews, individual participant consent was more difficult to obtain. In the end '51' units of data were collected, coming close to the original target, but a form of mixed methodology had to be employed to overcome the limitations, which resulted in the end, with 17 interviews and 34 surveys comprising the data corpus.

Secondly, when designing research, the boundaries of investigation must be taken into account, and within the boundaries of this organisation, the employee sample chosen had to meet the selection criteria of having attended one of the three stated management training courses within the 2011-12 timeframe. Likewise, the organisational cohort selected had to have been involved in either the training design or selection of staff for training within the stated time-zone. There were opportunities to interview other 'managerial' participants, namely managers who had retired or left the organisation and felt able to speak freely, but it was felt they could not meet the sample selection criteria which aided the skills development debate as they were not part of the current experience and were having to re-call experiences with too much of a gap. Thus the boundaries of the sample were maintained in order to strengthen the validity of the results.

Thirdly, the selection of Hong Kong as a study location, does put some constraints on the generalisability of the study. Whilst it is established that similarities with other capitalist economies and governance regimes make it relevant to the debate, unique political differences ensure that it is not directly comparable to, for example, UK, USA or Japanese case studies. However, there is a documented gap in the Asian literature, making it a useful area of study and any researcher or practitioner considering the findings would want to be aware of the unique contextual situation.

For example, in the results chapter, one of the first issues documented relates to a lack of hospital and school places in HK due to immigration from the mainland – this

in turn impacting the work of middle managers tasked with resolving public dissatisfaction. These same issues are echoed in the UK and throughout Europe as EU legislation and immigration policy to a certain extent determine numbers of people coming into the country. Whilst the UK can and has taken the decision to come out of the EU, Hong Kong does not have that option with China. Never the less both countries have been subject to similar pressures [of immigration and service provision] and the decision to come out of the EU is controversial for the UK and as yet to be enacted [at the time of publication]. Political and contextual differences between countries will always be present, but the issues often remain the same within capitalist society and this is the crux of the generalisability debate.

3.9 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has outlined the philosophical and methodological approach taken for this study at the Hong Kong Civil Service and provided a reasoned argument for its adoption. The discussion began with the philosophical position of the researcher, moved into the epistemological assumptions relating to critical realism with the underpinnings of labour process theory. Specifically, the methodology allows the researcher to build on the widening application of labour process theory in both a Chinese context and a public sector context. Whilst this is not a 'Labour Process Thesis' this is a piece of research examining the skills development of managers through a critical - labour process lens. It has been argued that case study research is an appropriate way to examine this topic, but the researcher also acknowledges that there is no best way to conduct research and that all options will have some limitations. Given the access restraints and the limited data available on the Chinese public sector it is asserted that this approach was suitable in realising the research aims and objectives.

4.0 Results

In this chapter the data is presented firstly by a critical commentary of the data provided, utilising excerpts and quotes from the interview transcripts and secondly in a series of coding tables, combining both the interview and survey data to form a complete picture of the responses given. The coding tables give a visual map of the themes generated and allow the reader to get a feel for the department and volume of data generated.

In the discussion chapter a levels-of-analysis perspective will be presented, as recommended by Garavan (2004) and Clark and Higgs (2014) where both the organisational and employee cohorts responses will be compared and contrasted taking into account the sub-cohorts within the management strata.

The first level of results presented, in line with the conceptual framework is the external context. Three primary codes were identified as part of the literature review; Economic; Social and Political contextual issues. The second level of results consider the internal context and this is divided into 3 sections: Management values; Management 'as' work and Training Activity and Outcomes. The final level of results is presented through a labour process lens and have been coded again in three sections: work intensification, control and skill.

4.1 The External Context

4.1.1 Political Tension

The data reveals that civil servants perceive a number of tensions linked to the economic, social and political backdrop. Whilst many of the tensions could be considered common to any government, such as the economic effects of globalisation and economic responses to recession, significantly for Hong Kong and in line with the literature it is the transition to Beijing rule that underpins many of the issues, which in turn impact managerial work.

The first basic theme highlights the economic divide between rich and poor in Hong Kong society and the pressure on public resources as a result from an influx migration over the border of Chinese mainlanders. The provision of housing, medical, education as well as other key services, has been a significant issue for the civil service as the population increases and, echoing the UK domestic economy, the property market becomes less affordable. External issues like this are perceived to have a direct impact on the realities of managerial work, for example, in the provision school places for children, which links to building/funding/resourcing of schools; handling the volume of calls from parents and administrative paperwork associated with this and creating law and policy to govern provision and fair access. For example the following quote sums up the pressure on the health and education system:

“there are cases in which mainland mother is trying to come to Hong Kong to give birth in Hong Kong which is really causing problems in our hospitals, for our social security system and this problem is still with us, so we have to resolve this problem in due course, but there are so many of these children now in HK that the school system is now disrupted, so we are hearing at the start of the school term, parents are complaining that their children could not get a place in school that they desire, because they have competition from mainland children who are born in Hong Kong who are entitled to HK right of abode. So this is still with us, imagine 30/40,000 mainlanders coming to Hong Kong to give birth each year, so these are external issues that are still with us, that we can’t control” (Snr level MM).

However, resourcing change linked to immigration and increased populations is notoriously difficult as the second and third illustrative quotes in table 3 highlights. Middle managers perceive both an increase in demand from the public relating to provision of services and benefits and pressure from business to influence policy making and the ensuing economic outcomes. Getting the balance between meeting the needs of the public and business is very difficult. Pressure from the public is described by the interviewee as ‘*socialist demand*’ which is viewed (by the interviewee) as dangerous and threatening to Hong Kong’s economic competitiveness. Whilst pressure from business is described as a move from ‘*enforcing law to servicing business.*’ The personal views of managers show a deep concern for the stability and

progress of Hong Kong and an apprehension of perceived loss of governmental power.

4.1.2 Expectation

The perception of the Government as 'losing power' reflects the shift in public demand and expectation. The social issues in Hong Kong are well documented, with riots and protests culminating in the 'umbrella revolt' of 2014. The social issues highlight a number of themes. Firstly, that there are increased expectation regarding public services and that the public are most able and willing to be mobilised and exercise their right to protest and complain.

"we have one incident where , there is an express rail link, linking Ghanzou to Hong Kong, the budget was tabled to LEGCO but then after a few years because the cost was different, the project was delayed for about 2 years, they have to recalculate the cost, it was two fold, the media reported on it, it was the post 80's [generation], which to our surprise was very discontented about GCT spending unnecessary money, 'if you had started the project earlier, it wouldn't have cost twice the amount', so they lobbied people on the streets , during the LEGCO meeting , it was a Wednesday in Central, there were thousands of people rioting in the streets."

The increased volume in complaints is one of the most significant changes to both the nature of work and the workload of the middle manager and has informed the need for training in to objection handling and development of internal networks. Technology has facilitated voice agenda, with social media and the mainstream media being utilised to organise gatherings and publicise them to a global audience. Interviewees recognise that a 'new generation' of activists can lobby and exert pressure on the government and that the public has moved from apathetic in its political stance to politicised and activist.

4.1.3 Political Transition

The political transition to the ministerial system, as highlighted in the literature review, has been fraught with difficulty as the public fear loss of liberty and protection under

the new regime and seek to strengthen their position by protesting for universal suffrage – a fully democratically elected government, not one partially selected from Beijing. As the Hong Kong government works towards this, the participants of this study are uncertain if the public will accept the end result. Participants have highlighted the difficulties of getting legislation through LEGCO due to the lack of political support and allegiance with the legislators. They have highlighted the need to balance the interests of the people of Hong Kong with that of central government (Beijing) and countering public fear of ‘interference from China’. The clash between policy initiatives coming from HKCS and the agenda of the legislators was a recurrent theme, with civil servants perceiving legislators as ‘*self-serving...with their own agenda to push.*’ They have acknowledged that implementation of policy is stymied at LEGCO, wasting hours of management work in seeking public opinion and acceptance in the run up to presentation of policy. This transition to the ministerial system has therefor intensified work and changed the nature of its enactment fuelling the need for both training in new skills and a new approach to handling policy for middle managers.

“You have a class of people who know nothing , they know nothing about how government works, and they don’t have the same ethics as civil servants, we are all ingrained into thinking a certain way, which is good in some respects as regard ethical issues its very good, as regards not thinking outside the box its bad, so what these people do I believe, or what they should be doing is thinking outside the box, but what I do find is that what they are doing is promoting their own interests rather than the communities. So that affects the level of civil service just below them and it affects the work that this department does” (Nom Mgr).

It is questionable as to whether the tension that exists between the political cadre and managerial cadre can be resolved through any form of training as it is the political structure in place that creates the tension. The next quote highlights the difficulty civil servants have in getting legislation passed and making the current system work. As their support predominantly comes from business, there can be conflict of interest. It could be argued that this divide reinforces managerial ‘powerlessness’ (Bolton and Houlihan, 2010) and that the onus is on middle managers to be creative in finding ways to work around the system in order to achieve the results they seek.

“Because the current GOVERNMENT is so unpopular, that whatever they have decided to do, there was suspicion and distrust and the ultimate motive of the GOVERNMENT and we don’t have a ruling party in LEGCO, so it’s very difficult for the government to manage the situation in legco, even those we consider political allies, they still have their own agenda to push and they have to get re-elected by their constituency next time, in this case, GOVERNMENT supporters usually come from the commercial and business sectors and they are elected from functional constituency system which is different from universal suffrage election, they are elected by companies. Directors etc. and these people have their own agenda’s to serve, so when we want to introduce a law for example on competition, you can imagine how difficult it is, to get their support” (Mid-level MM).

However, it is acknowledged that a limitation of this research is that managerial perceptions of the ‘self-seeking’ nature of those on the legislative council is not tested against public opinion to establish whether or not they [*the political cadre*] are truly representing constituents needs at LEGCO.

4.1.4 Public Acceptance

A frequently cited goal of the civil service is to attain public acceptance and gain public buy-in of policy initiatives. They are citing greater ‘transparency and communication’ with the public as the key and a slow, longer term approach characterised by incremental change. This has the potential to be at odds with political goals of achieving changes within specific timeframes. Greater transparency and higher volumes of communication with the public are acknowledge to require an altered skill set. Many of the managers within the civil service have come from professional backgrounds, such as law; architecture; engineering and must be assisted in gaining the requisite skill-set. This skill-set comprises a more front-facing as opposed to back office approach and encapsulated by communication, diplomacy and negotiating skills, to meet these new goals. Greater levels of consultation and engagement with the public are required.

“The change of image of the Government to the public, before you want something from Government, the industry wouldn’t say a word would just comply, but for the past

5-8 years, people start realising their rights – there is nothing wrong with that, they start asking why we have to comply with that. Before you don't need to consult, now every regulation, big or small, you have to consult and that makes the process a bit longer” (Snr level MM).

However, it is also clear that the delineation of the civil service remit, to advise and implement, is at odds with the political remit. Reconciling political and public goals is the micro challenge of the middle manager at HKCS, whilst the macro-challenge remains reconciling local and central government strategy, at the heart of it, as previously stated by McMillan and Massey (2004), is 'allegiance'. As the participant commented - it will be interesting to see how this can be managed “*without causing the central government [Beijing] to be totally turned off by developments in Hong Kong.*” (Table 4 – Theme: Political transition, Quote no 4). It can be concluded that participants perceive external factors to significantly impact the reality of managerial work in the civil service and this is determined by: the political tensions that exists; the expectations of the public; the political transition process and finally the goal of acceptance by the public.

Table 4.1: Coding table: External Context Codes

Codes 1 (From Lit Review)	Basic Theme (Expanded from data)	Sample Excerpt Illustrative Quotes	Broader theme
HK Economic issues	Gap between rich and poor	“You saw a lot in last few months about HK leaders, and previous leaders, I think we need to have certain basic integrity, you must get involved more with the people , the public, know what they need, and irrespective if you can solve their problems, you just can’t stay away from them as that is not the way to do it. As long as you understand the problem, ultimately there is a way maybe not to resolve but at least to mitigate the problem, it’s difficult, especially now a days a lot of policy is not good, we are suffering now , I give you an example: open the border to the Chinese people, puts pressure on our housing system, our medical, very expensive for the land, now nobody can afford to buy a house, that is the wrong policy, now people have no place to stay, they are angry, the difference between the rich and poor widens. ”	Political tension
	Public sector spend – housing; medical; infrastructure .	“This socialist demand are well received by our people in HK especially the lower class , they want free education, housing, benefits, I think we are moving towards dangers of communism, socialism , but may not afford it, we lose our competitiveness and lose the progress of our developments”.	
	Allegiance with business	“Global environment is changing. Business and Financial sectors are leading the government decision. As most of the business and financial personnel would like to take risk (cut the corner) for gaining more profit for themselves, the government is losing the governance power. The government is changing from enforcement of law to servicing business.”	

HK Social Issues	Activists/Protests	Why are HK people so unhappy, so I think it's the trust Issue about mainland China? On the 1 st July you probably know we had 400,000 people on the streets ...its very unusual.	Expectation
	Media	"Because they are the opposition, it is their job to say no to most things, it is disgusting, even though they agree , and they will pose you some difficult questions to answer. I have been to LEGCO several times, even though I have prepared pages (hundreds) of answers to questions, there is always something you haven't thought of. Which is totally outside what I'm going to present to ask me some other thing.They just want to show off from the media , when the camera man is shooting they will say anything, when the camera is out, they will sit down in peace and quiet. It's very political."	
	Public voice (from apathetic to politicised public)	" the new generation they have a kind of sentiment and they can easily mobilise people, unlike in the past because the media can be quite a restricted domain , so if you write the editorial the editor will choose or to select which piece of write up goes to the paper, even with the radio phone in, not everyone gets selected to speak, but nowadays with the social media, twitter , Facebook they can easily mobilise a lot of people to get together their voice, more importantly they become very visual and they are lobbying and they are exerting pressure on the government. "	
	Increased complaints and demands	"HKCS is basically to provide services, people now a days are asking for social welfare , education, to what extend the leader can serve the community is decided by what the community demands, it seems the community now a days, is demanding quite a lot, more than the government would have done so 10-20 years ago"	

	Pressure on public services	“And then there are cases in which mainland mother is trying to come to Hong Kong to give birth in Hong Kong which is really causing problems in our hospitals , for our social security system and this problem is still with us, so we have to resolve this problem in due course, but there are so many of these children now in HK that the school system is now disrupted , so we are hearing at the start of the school term, parents are complaining that their children could not get a place in school that they desire, because they have competition from mainland children who are born in Hong Kong who are entitled to HK right of abode. So this is still with us, imagine 30/40,000 mainlanders coming to Hong Kong to give birth each year, so these are external issues that are still with us, that we can’t control.”	
HK Political issues	Ministerial system	“the Chief Executive can’t be a member of a party according to our law, so we don’t have any party member in our legislature, so that makes the work very difficult, every time we have to actually lobby for votes, even the so called friendly parties (laughing) can oppose us”	Political transition
	Political neutrality	“Of course we [AO’s] are so called politically neutral, which means we don’t have our own political agenda, but once we are part of the government then we do have to go to LEGCO and defend our policies, its good training though for your career development”	
	Transition	“I would say that we are here in Hong Kong at very exciting times because we are transiting from, a system which people say is not democratic, needs to be re-worked, there are promises in the basic law, promises by the central Government in Beijing that this is going to be changed but in what way and whether this is going to be acceptable to people in Hong Kong is something we have to see”.	
	Allegiance - one country: two systems. The influence of Beijing.	“I think something totally unprecedented in the world, that a government has no members in a legislature, but still we have to make sure that we get the necessary law passed by LEGCO, quite a job, until at least 2020, when we should have universal suffrage, a LEGCO elected by universal suffrage by then, so the next 7 years now, we have to deal with all sorts of issues arising from the transition to a full democracy . It is interesting to see how we manage this, at the same time, do not cause the central government [Beijing] to be totally turned off by developments in Hong Kong. ”	

Public mistrust/fear		<p>"I think the main thing is they worry about the 23 – you know what I'm talking about – legislation 23 – one country two system, which is under the (used Chinese words grasping for the English)...the BASIC LAW 23 – which is what we are afraid of – interference from China. To be honest there is bound to be some change, even though me as a HK citizen and a civil servant, you expect some change, freedom of speech, I am seeing that it is no change from before, I don't feel the change – in the past we have (pre 1997) we have never had 400,.000 people on the street"</p>	
Image of GOVERNMENT (weak; unpopular)		<p>"Because the current GOVERNMENT is so unpopular, that whatever they have decided to do, there was suspicion and distrust and the ultimate motive of the GOVERNMENT".</p>	
Self-serving politicians (Legco)		<p>"Even those we consider political allies, they still have their own agenda to push and they have to get re-elected by their constituency next time, in this case, GOVERNMENT supporters usually come from the commercial and business sectors and they are elected from functional constituency system which is different from universal suffrage election, they are elected by companies. Directors etc. and these people have their own agenda's to serve".</p>	
Acceptability (Of policy)		<p>I think in the coming 5 years the government have to explain more before we push our policies, to make sure more transparency and explanation is required before pushing it forward, we try to do it too hastily then the time taken will be longer than what we thought, if we do it stable, step by step, what I see is Mr Leung is quite – he wants to do it very quickly to increase his popularity</p>	Public acceptance

4.2 The Internal Context

Due to the expansive nature of themes identified within the internal context, the coding table (4) has been broken up into sections, identified in the contextual framework, these are: Management values; Management 'as' work; Training activity and Management Development.

4.2.1 Management Values

'One of the most fundamental changes that has taken place in the last two decades has been the growing tendency to label what in earlier times would have been seen by most as personal characteristics, attitudes, character traits or predispositions as skills. Examples include leadership, motivation, positive attitudes towards change and authority, politeness, compromise and respect' (Grugulis, et al 2004 p7).

The first section focuses on what I choose to describe as management values, but which can also be constructed as attitudes, predispositions and character traits as described above. The literature makes clear the distinction between public sector and private sector values and also between Western and Chinese values. In trying to identify managerial values specific to the Hong Kong Civil Service we can observe a mixture of the two. Values underpin the way individuals and groups conduct their work and link directly to the realities of work for managers. It is argued that skill is a socially constructed phenomenon and the developments in the last twenty plus years have, moving beyond 'hard' technical skills and manual dexterity tended to promote a wider concept including 'attitudes'. This makes the concept of skill less quantifiable and 'more fuzzy' round the edges' (Grugulis *et al* 2004 p12), and adds to the difficulties found in evaluating skills development. However, exploring and discerning management values helps to build a picture of the internal context and the skills set displayed and potentially developed within the managerial cadre.

4.2.2 Public Servant and Chinese value Clusters

The data revealed that public servants strongly identify with values which are consistent with public sector values highlighted in the literature, such; the need for

integrity; transparency; accountability; diplomacy and fairness. What we can observe from the data is that managers seek to maintain both their integrity and credibility with the public through communication, consultation and negotiation and take responsibility for their own work remit. However, maintaining accountability is a challenge and a collective style of decision making is utilised, not only to seek out the most informed decision but to spread the responsibility for the outcomes of decision making. This is not the same as distributed power, it is only distributed accountability. Managers choose to distribute responsibility in order to avoid blame for mistakes (discussed in table 5) and to avoid embarrassment and conflict. This is encapsulated in the Chinese values of face and harmony.

“Since handing over in 1997, I think that it is dominated by the political legislator, even though our top civil service guy, the perm secretaries, they don’t have the...we call them a weak government, even though we are doing this very nicely for the HK people, they will challenge you, you will face a lot of challenges. If you are a strong government, you don’t have to be afraid, but now we are writing some press release, report for presenting, you have to be very careful to avoid subsequent questions, you don’t get challenged” (Snr level MM).

4.2.3 Collective Decision makers

A collective ethos sits comfortably with Chinese values and the data reveals that managers ‘*don’t want to confront our colleagues*’ but seek to maintain the relationship and work collaboratively. Protecting harmony at work and avoiding direct dispute, especially with those at a more senior grade, is cited as desirable. This data supports statements made in the literature review that Chinese managers treasure values which are distinct from Western models of HRM and performance management (Warner 2010) and this helps to create a notion of the organisational culture and values that are distinct in the Hong Kong Civil Service. Most notably the basic theme of harmony or ‘golden mean’ that is, being able to compromise and find middle ground was cited as a preferred management strategy certainly when looking upwards in the hierarchy, but also when looking downwards to lower level staff and towards external stakeholders such as the public. However, whilst the rhetoric of compromise and harmony is often cited in the data, we can also observe tensions in how this is achieved

and contrasting views depending on the problem being approached. The quote selected in the table (basic theme 2) suggests that flexibility in problem solving is ideal in order to save embarrassment and achieve a result for both a public 'customer' and senior management. However, interview data relating to lower level staff paints a different picture:

"I worked here in 1997, and pre-handover. I would say at that time, may I use this, unkind word, they [subordinate employees] were lazier, they are less subject to proper scrutiny, it's easy to be a leader at that time. Because if the leader wished to do one thing, they would not say no, it was easier to implement plan at that time, now a leader have to deal with more challenging issues and less staff. So more job, less staff that require much better leadership" (Mid-level MM).

Whilst the middle manager concerned has identified that work has intensified, he does it within the context that staff were lazier and less likely to resist decisions made, however under the post 1997 regime, the role of leadership in the managerial context is more challenging and staff have to be made to work harder, reducing harmony and implying a willingness of staff to say 'no' and resist managerial decisions now. This is echoed in another interview transcript, where the participant is describing trying to reduce the number of contractors employed, but experiencing resistance:

"It's got to be top down. If you ask them, no never, never want to change, you can never cut down our number of staff, so I would think, it very depends what kind of issue that you want to implement" (Snr level MM).

Although collaborative decision making is cited as preferred when dealing with issues pertaining to external issues, internally, when considering manpower-headcount, issues which directly affect the working lives of those in the department, middle managers prefer support for decision making to come from above. The capacity to resist change both internally and externally and to directly confront issues rather than conform or compromise was a recurrent theme throughout the data. Middle management values may align with non-confrontation, but the job role has changed requiring them to deal with more problematic issues and diverse views and needs. Achieving balance has become harder. Accountability could perhaps be described as

a developmental value, a shift in values pertaining to responsibility and service orientation is sought in order to achieve accountability.

“because accountability of the Hong Kong Government is not that good, people just don’t trust the government, it’s quite different from when it’s before 1997, HK people were not that much into politics and had been described as quite ‘apathetic’, but now there is TV broadcasts, there are more than 20 newspapers in HK, when you go on the internet there are news headlines, news report 24 hrs per day, so people are more participative than ever” (Mid-level MM).

4.2.4 Organisational Value Change

The third broader theme in table 5 is described as ‘Organisational value change’ as managers recognise the shift to service orientation. Traditionally civil servants describe viewing public provision as benevolent in nature, there was little recognition of the public as a taxpayer and therefore paying customer. The move to a customer orientation, where public spending is highly transparent and accounted for is described as a stark change.

“we are advocating serving the community, for example in the past I worked in the housing department, and my colleagues described providing public housing as a kind of benevolence, it’s more like a goodness, the official and citizen relationship, there is a hierarchy, ‘we are doing you a favour’. Nowadays, the view is ‘we are a service’ serving the public interest. They’ve got a raised awareness of their rights and entitlement, ‘well we’re paying tax’, and we are supposed to serve, so it’s swinging like a pendulum” (Mid-level MM).

In this quote we can observe a shift from traditional Chinese values of benevolence and respect for hierarchy to one which acknowledges the more transactional value of customer service. This is a far cry from Radner and Osbourne’s (2012) advocated approach of ‘co-creation’. Co-creation is less reactionary and more proactive, acknowledging the two-way nature of the customer-provider relationship, so that public servants attempt to work with the public to set expectations rather than react to them. In liaising with the District councils and community forum’s and placing more emphasis on early consultation, HKCS may be working towards co-creation but middle

managers are still struggling with the workload surrounding public expectation and the altered values and perspectives which embrace this ethos.

Managers identify themselves as professionals and technocrats, or specialists in a technical field, but they do not identify themselves as part of the political cadre or elite. Their value system is linked towards provision of expert advice. There is a clear divide between the two functions and evidence of both mistrust and collaborative working. This is significant due to the increasing politicisation of the managerial role which is discussed in the following section on management 'as' work.

What can be concluded from the data on managerial values in the Hong Kong Civil Service is that whilst values are acknowledged to be varied, some commonality can be discerned. A combination of both public sector and Chinese values can be identified in the data. A tension exists between espoused values on one hand of accountability and on the other conflict avoiding 'harmony' or 'golden mean'. This tension has the capacity to impact on methods of decision making, with civil servants preferring collective decision making, to both enhance the quality of the decision (by considering more views) and to disperse responsibility for the outcomes. Amidst a backdrop of increasing public awareness and politicisation as identified in the External context this acts as a defensive mechanism against what could be perceived as a blame and complaints culture but can also be perceived as citizens protecting their lawful rights. The shift to a value of service orientation goes some way to alleviate the problem of public dissatisfaction, but this is culture change in progress. The data suggests that the work of middle managers is significantly changed by both changes to the external environment and internal organisational culture change focused on service orientated management values.

Table 4.2: Internal Context Codes - Management Value's

Basic Theme (Expanded from data)	Sample Excerpt Illustrative Quotes	Broader Theme
Integrity; Transparency; Sincerity; credibility; hard-working; accountable; diplomatic and fair.	<p>“I think we need to have certain basic integrity, you must get involved more with the people, the public, know what they need.”</p> <p>“And also need to see that you are also responsible for everything you plan, all you do, you can’t shrink back sometimes you need to stand up – some villagers they complain the inspection, about their benefits, they can complain about a lot of things, you have to stand up and fairly deal with the matters. Don’t patronise issues.”</p> <p>“I think sincerity and credibility are two main things that we have to push forward, if we can’t do it, then we have to frankly speak, then if we have too many empty commitments then it becomes difficult for us at a later stage”.</p> <p>“Some departments. are very proactive in dealing with the public, they would proactively organise open forums with the public, so the leader is perceived as very transparent, but some leaders are not as proactive, they are still very reactive which is the traditional style”.</p> <p>“So these may be the special features of the Hong Kong Civil Servant. They are responsible, they work very hard and very efficient. And for the leaders, it’s the ability to communicate well with different stakeholders, because there are so many parties</p>	Public servant value cluster

	<p>coming to the government asking for resources, and something and the ability to negotiate and communicate is a very important trait that the leaders of HKCS must have nowadays.”</p>	
<p>Golden mean; Harmony; balance; face; benevolence; collective relationships.</p>	<p>“I think it depends how you want to become a leader in HK, if you are really into looking after the lower level people, you may anger the landlords, there is a need to strike a balance, there are tensions there.”</p> <p>“My boss said that to me ‘Oh I was at Uni with the post master general, and he’s asked me to look at it again, could you look at it again?’ and I said ‘Yes yes I’ll definitely look at it again.’ But I’ll tell you now that I took such a lot of care with it, that it won’t change and he said ‘look just will you have a look’ so he could say to his classmate, so I gave him face to say to his classmate ‘they are going to look at it again’. So I looked at it again.”</p> <p>“it happened a few times very embarrassing, we insist on regulations being followed [ship building regulations], then the next half an hour the boss will receive a phone call saying – can you consider this – so before my boss gets a phone call – we see what we can do. I want to stress for us to make a policy very easy, strict 100%_compliance – but there is always leeway – see if you can give them more time and see how you can help them [<i>influential public member/industry</i>]. And so we arrive at a win: win situation. It’s no good my boss receiving the phone calls, he will say ‘you are causing problems’, we try to avoid that, saying no and my boss getting a phone call, so if its avoidable we try to help out – rigid flexibility.”</p> <p>“We are influenced by the Western culture. It is important to be fair and have a good system, to protect the society. But at the same time we are Chinese, so we also consider that relationship is important, we um, many of our colleagues, we don’t want to confront</p>	<p>Chinese value cluster</p>

	<p>our colleagues, even if our subordinates, the performance is not so good, we will use lots of tactful or indirect way to let them know to give them some direct feedback, so maybe that would be some of the influence from the Chinese culture.”</p>	
<p>Changing value from benevolence to service</p>	<p>to members of the public a lot of the government services, they don't care who handles it they just want it to be done, so say there is a classic case someone was hanging out their clothes on a public railing then one member of the public complain to the government department; ' it's not hygienic – its laundry', a) department said it's not area of responsibility and refer them to b) who said no that not us it's the highways department, and the highways department said ; 'we are for repairing the road it's not us, talk to the transport department', and so it got transferred so many diff departments. Hong Kong Government is always having the criticism that we are not having enough department collaboration.</p> <p>I think nowadays it's no good at work not knowing what's happening outside. The world is changing, policy is changing, people's expectations are changing, (on the high side), GOVERNMENT is SHRUNK – we have limited resource, how we can manage to deliver the same or even better performance or outcome is very important.</p> <p>People are more and more demanding, because the information you can get easily from the computer, so the people have more knowledge, so they have higher requirements and more demanding. If they have more demands we need to provide better services, that's the challenge for us.</p>	<p>Organisational value change (service).</p>

	<p>I think the changes is mainly from the customer, how to serve the customer better, customer management is more and more important now idea, including internal and external customer, because my job I work in a supporting role, my main duty is to support our internal customer, so if I make them happy they can serve the external customer better. So customer relationship is a big issue.</p>	
<p>As technocrat not politician</p>	<p>“sometimes it’s quite difficult, because they are not the professionals, we are the professionals, sometimes you wonder if they know anything about ships, they are the AO’s, administrative officers, once into legislation they ask questions and questions, which we think are very basic, you just have to live with it.”</p> <p>“maybe I would say that she is not a technocrat, she is simply an administrative officer, with her target objectives to drive certain policies, and we the technocrat will have to persuade her to slow down a bit so get <i>all</i> the preparation done, before putting up the policy but as an administrator she wouldn’t bother she would run run run. “</p>	<p>Civil servant value</p>
<p>Consensus; contribution; collaboration; blame/responsibility dispersal; problem solvers.</p>	<p>“we come to a consensus for what is the best answer/solution for that problem, then we will put forward our ideas to our management, and I think it has worked quite well for a number of projects, and also my team members they also feel confidence in collective ideas, it’s not just pinpointing one person and saying she/he is responsible for that, if you say something is collective ideas, if you free to discuss, that’s also good.”</p> <p>“The second I can feel from that course, was reaffirm my belief about the theory of fair process, allowing people to contribute, to having ownership of a project or particular advice they are giving, what else are they doing in the team”.</p>	<p>Collective decision makers</p>

	<p>“In this division, we have different ways of doing things, for example every piece of advice given has to go through a chain, to sometimes more important ones go through me, in this particular position, if the advice proves to be wrong, then the blame lies with me, at the top of the chain, we have looked at it, advised by the lawyers, we have come to our collective view, so whenever something is wrong, I think the blame would be the very person who sits at the top level.”</p> <p>“My style is I like to have meetings, whenever a difficult issue crops up, before they put pen to paper I would like to see them here to discuss the issue, so a lot of discussion goes on before we decide one way or another, and I think it’s very collective in my approach”.</p>	
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4.2.5 Values and Organisational Culture

Organisational values underpin the way work is conducted in the civil service, but these too have been subject to change since 1997. It can be identified that middle managers share certain groupings of both public sector and Hong Kong Chinese values and the findings from the literature review are representative of accounts given in the data. What is unique about the Hong Kong setting are values relating to blame and accountability. Respondents described the ‘cover your ass’ principle and this supported the literature documenting the political preference to take responsibility only for policy decisions not outcomes (Brewer, *et al* 2014). The Chinese values of face, leading to non-confrontation and a preference for consensual decision making as a way of spreading responsibility as well as gaining insight, feeds into the culture which prefers Weberian rule following and advice over creative problem solving, or as one author described it ‘sage’ qualities over ‘deliverer’ (Burns, *et al* 2012).

It could be argued that the civil service preference for being givers of advice and holding ‘sage’ qualities, is at odds with an agenda for change where the public are demanding delivery of results. This is being tackled at a political and senior management level by pushing delivery down the line to middle management, who in turn are blocked by structural, hierarchical and cultural barriers to achieving performance oriented goals. Middle managers have expressed their disdain for political appointee’s unrealistic expectations for what they can achieve amidst a backdrop of significant external and internal barriers to change.

“These are the Chief Executives supporters, put in positions of authority in areas they know nothing about, the best policy officials are the former civil servants so they understand how government works, what can and cannot be done within legal boundaries, whereas the others are just loose cannons” (Nom Mgr).

Equally they have expressed their frustration with attempts to meet public demands and to manage diverse interests. Civil servants acknowledge the perception of increased strength of the public, through more civic action, but were generally silent regarding what Beijing’s response may be to continued protests. Getting the balance

between performance results and shoring up the popularity of the government has been a conflicting goal for the middle manager.

“I think in the coming 5 years the government have to explain more before we push our policies, to make sure more transparency and explanation is required before pushing it forward, we try to do it too hastily then the time taken will be longer than what we thought, if we do it stable, step by step, what I see is Mr Leung is quite – he wants to do it very quickly to increase his popularity” (Mid-Level MM).

4.3 Management ‘as’ Work

The second section to be considered is the concept of management ‘as’ work. Middle managers have experienced numerous challenges and changes to their experience and practice of work since the 1997 transition to Beijing rule. Some of the challenges are documented as inherent and some are new.

4.3.1 Structural challenges

The data reveals that the first of the inherent challenges is that of organisational structure. In this instance we define structure in terms of the hierarchy, legal and compliance requirements within the organisation. There is much frustration within the managerial cadre at the difficulty of recruiting and removing underperforming members of staff within the organisation. Whilst we have acknowledged in the literature review that Braverman’s original thesis considered the exploitation and degradation of the workforce, we are also acknowledging the ‘two-way nature of control’ (Armstrong 1989) in that managers will hire, fire, promote and set performance targets, but they will also be subject to those same terms and conditions. The data reveals conflicting views regarding the exercise of that power. Most of the interview data suggests that managers are inherently concerned with pay and reward as a motivational tool and are dissatisfied with an organisational culture which inhibits its effective use. The inability to control performance in this way is cited as ‘a heavy burden for the middle manager’. Making work more streamlined and easier to perform within the context of the rules and laws of Hong Kong is an overriding concern. However it would seem the law is being used as a way to mitigate against mistakes and to avoid making decisions:

“There is no right or wrong way only legal or illegal ways. You must follow the rules, finish the job within the boundary of the rules, but just finish it, but there is no right or wrong way” (Snr level MM).

It is common practice to be compliance aware in any organisation and as transparency of processes has been so frequently cited in the data, this is not surprising. The data does also suggest that middle managers seek creative ways to get around the rules (though not to break the law), which are often open to interpretation:

“We have 4 core values – caring, customer focus, creative and committed. Why creative – if you are stuck with the government rules, you get frustrated when there is a problem and you don’t get what you want. Instead you know there are lots of grey areas and if you can make use of the grey areas then you can achieve easily and hit the target” (Snr level MM).

And echoing the theme of the two-way nature of management control (Armstrong 1989), the following quote highlights the difficulty of trying to follow the rules and meet the expectations of the senior management cadre.

“We insist on regulations being followed, then the next half an hour the boss will receive a phone call saying – can you consider this – so before my boss gets a phone call – we see what we can do. I want to stress for us to make a policy very easy, strict 100% compliance –_but there is always leeway – see if you can give them more time and see how you can help them. And so we arrive at a win: win situation. It’s no good my boss receiving the phone calls, he will say ‘you are causing problems’, we try to avoid that, saying no and my boss getting a phone call, so if its_avoidable we try to help out – rigid flexibility” (Snr level MM).

Ambiguous lines of authority can add to managerial confusion, basic theme 3 identified in the table suggests that decision making is perceived to be ‘fragmented’ with not enough ‘deliberation’ or direction coming from either central government or HKCS, so departments and individual bureau are left to defend their own decision making rationale. It is clear that this sits uncomfortably within the civil service work ethos as the management values identified show a clear preference for collective decision making and distribution of responsibility (if not power). This echoes the point made in

the literature review that if public servants feel exposed or immersed in a blame culture, there is the potential to shy away from taking difficult decisions. (Pederson and Hartley 2008). This adds to internal conflict but clearly the capacity to circumvent structural challenges are to some extent available, given the previous reference to grey areas of creativity in problem solving.

4.3.2 The changing nature of work and skills

It is clear from the data that the nature of work has changed significantly for managers, shifting from values placed on technical skills, such as legal knowledge and competence or hard IT skills to an emphasis on the value of softer 'managerial' skills specifically focused on service delivery and motivation of subordinate staff to provide this service delivery. This is in line with public sector literature situated in Western contexts, which suggest that changing the way employees work is one of the principle justifications for marketization and the aping of private sector practices. (Katz 1997, Grugulis and Vincent 2009). Skills change has been identified variously in the data as requiring better soft skills in order to; solve public problems; deal directly with complaints from members of the public; defend policy in a public arena such as Legco and front facing to the media; motivating staff to accept a service orientated approach and greater competence in managing relationships both upwards and downwards. However, this change in the nature of work and the new skills set required, poses difficulties for managers adding to the level of complication associated with new ways of working and resistance from staff to meet the new working regime.

“it’s becoming more complicated for us, in the past few years the changes have made us to bring in earlier consultation, public engagements, what we call it, it’s a 2 edge sword, it’s very good, everybody give out what they want you to, and they expect Government to react, but you raise their expectation to such a high level” (Mid-level MM).

“Even though we are a leader we don’t like to change, we like a more stable system, although we are trying to break the boundary which is not easy, starting from 1997, a bit earlier, 1992, when our Chief Secretary Ansun Chan, when he make some public sector reform, which is very similar to UK, it is a lot of pressure, a lot of resistance from

the staff, cultural change, the main challenge for the leadership is change, cultural change, political change, organisational change” (Snr level MM).

In seeking to find direct answers about the nature of managerial work and how it had changed, participants repeatedly came up the same response. Workload had increased due to the rising number of complaints coming into the department, causing de-motivation in their teams and potentially not enough staff to handle the volume. Additionally, staff were concerned with how they would be perceived if either; too many complaints about their department were received or were not satisfactorily handled. A higher level of public consultation, whilst offering greater voice opportunities for the public and a chance to express concerns early in policy process, was not reducing the numbers of individual complaints, if anything it increased it as expectations from the public increased with the consultation process. The interview data reveals that the onus is on middle managers to anticipate that their department could be subject to complaint and legal challenge and they have to problem solve and figure out the best way to implement policy, placate diverse sections of the public and ultimately achieve policy goals.

Only one voice needed

“People can easily put up some kind of judicial review to squash a government decision, so for example, have you heard about the [Generically named] bridge? This is a multi-million dollar project, there is a complaint, from the neighbourhood connecting areas, she file, a 60 yrs old lady, she file a judicial review, to stop government building the bridge, saying it does not adhere to environmental assessment protection, so just one citizen can file an action against a multimillion dollar project and we have to look at it.....these training are not part of their professional training at the outset, so when they [middle manager’s] move up to that level, they have to be worthy, they might be subject to challenge.....they have to be accountable and explainable to the general public’ (Cohort 2 HR Mgr).

This highlights the difficulty that middle managers encounter as they move up from a predominantly professional and technical role into a managerial role with associated responsibility. However, the root of the problem cannot be said to be connected with

MM's inability to engage with the public and is identified as predominantly political, where the Hong Kong government struggles to have a sufficient mandate to get policy implemented and this in turn impacts on the workload and work efficacy of middle managers. However, it could also be argued there is also a resourcing issue, with too much work (and complaint handling) distributed to too few people, increasing the pressure on those in post.

4.3.3 Work Efficacy and Resourcing Challenges

The data at this stage is very in line with the HRM remit of performance management and organisational goals and individual goals appear on the surface to be aligned, albeit whilst acknowledging implementation difficulties, such as control of contractors.

But the underlying theme, when considering management 'as' work is to consider the increasing complexity and volume of work and seek to discover how employees are coping with this. The coding tables document the increases. The new work efficacy challenges include the previously debated challenge of communicating with the public, which as well as potentially requiring new skills, increases the length of time to complete a work project. Work efficacy has the potential to be stymied by volume and complexity of work and Resourcing Challenges can add to that, by not having enough staff, or having the wrong staff in your department to meet the organisational objectives. The data responses suggest that historical recruitment freeze now contributes to labour shortages and a better employment climate for contractors makes it more challenging to retain them as a key resource. In an effort to solve this problem more contract staff are being offered permanent contracts, but on 'new' employment terms.

The data reveals segmentation within the workplace of those staff on 'old' terms (with enhanced pension entitlement) and those on the new terms (reduced pension entitlement) working alongside contractors (no pensions entitlement) ...*'which in theory you can fire them if they are not up to it'*. Whilst it is true that this offers some flexibility in terms of managing a department and meeting organisational goals, it does not offer a sympathetic view of labour rights or relations. Employees and managers in

the organisation are expected to work within a climate of squeezed resources, doing more with less, and work intensification, the data suggests that underperformance is a source of frustration and the inability to motivate staff, using monetary or promotion based reward to achieve performance presents the key internal managerial challenge.

Resourcing appears to be a contested area. There appears to be a traditional view that obtaining promotion is a complex and lengthy process in the civil service and that promotion as a motivational tool is challenging to utilize due to the internal structures and bureaucratic systems. However, some participants had an awareness of change on this front and cited that movement between departments was increasing. This in turn creates its own problems, with perceptions of disruption to the status quo and stretched resources leading to erratic movement of staff.

Contrasting views of middle managers:

“Is a difficult thing, cannot motivate by money...For civil servant it takes a lot of years to get up the scale” (Snr-level MM).

“In the old days you have to wait 5-10 years for promotion, now 2-3 years, so we have people jumping around” (Mid-level MM).

Whilst it could be argued that the removal of traditional bureaucracy enabling faster promotion is a good thing, the data suggests it is not perceived that way. Faster promotion is driven by squeezed resources and work intensification, with the increased workload seen as off putting by members of staff.

“But these days people don’t want to be promoted, because they witness what a promoted colleague has to offer and many of them and many of them want to be ‘happy troupers’ we call them, you know ‘leave me alone I’ll do my work, efficiently, productively but leave me alone with all your chores” (Nom Mgr).

It could be argued that resourcing is also affected by role ambiguity. Included in the data set is one outlier, an interview with an AO, political candidate, to gain a broader perspective. Although this data is separate to the main corpus, it offers some insight into a potential cause of tension. The interview data reveals that that the political cadre see themselves as either defenders of policy and lobbying on behalf of the

government, but seem to view middle managers as technocrats who implement but don't have a front facing role and are not expected to appear in front of LEGCO. Whilst this may be true for some middle managers it is inconsistent with the testimony of others and contradictory to the focus of the training managers have been receiving. Whilst it is acknowledged that this is an area for further investigation, this exploratory data already suggests that ambiguity in role definition, is leading the senior cadre to be less aware than it could be of the complexity of middle managers 'real' work. Middle managers seem to be expressing a view that those at the 'top' – the political cadre- do not understand the work that they do and there is a divide, if not contempt, between those in positions of authority who appear ignorant of the traditional role of the civil servant. This divide is affecting 'polarisation' of the middle manager.

“These are the Chief executive’s supporters, put in positions of authority in areas they know nothing about, the best policy officials are the former civil servants so they understand how government works, what can and cannot be done within legal boundaries, whereas the other are just loose cannons...” (Nom Mgr).

4.3.4 Social Capital

What is clear is that middle managers are seeking creative ways to find solutions to the problems that work creates, solutions found within the 'grey area'. Expanding this idea of what the 'grey area' of creativity can be, it is clear that managers are using networked relationships to overcome obstacles and stymie polarisation. Coalition building (Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe 2006) and access to channels of power to overcome inequalities of hierarchy are long acknowledged to be useful in the public sector especially. The literature review is clear that in both the public sector and Chinese culture relationships are of high importance. The data suggests that middle managers in the civil service are building relationships internally, within departments and across bureau and externally, via business and educational routes. Themes of networking, access to power, reciprocity, friendship and coalition building to create voice channels are identified as aiding work efficacy and assisting managers achieve performance objectives.

“If you have good connection you can solve the problem very quickly you know how to contact the right person to help you solve the problem, or if not you are just going round and round can’t solve the problem” (Mid-level MM).

But more than just contacting the right person, it’s also hierarchical, having access to authority, access to decision makers who can influence outcomes, this aligns with proposition 5 of the conceptual framework that states: Middle managers adopt a strategy of harnessing the collective power of the managerial strata to address the challenges of their role. This is done through building networks and allegiances.

*“After the course we will meet the others, and establish our network, and when you need to ask question of other department, just give them a phone call. when you come across some difficult issue, you think of someone who can help you, give them a phone call its far better than looking at the website, **he may have the authority to give you what you need, that’s my style**” (Snr level MM).*

It can be concluded that there are significant challenges for managers in HKCS and that management ‘as’ work has intensified in terms of complexity and workload since the 1997 transition and that a combination of inherent hierarchical structures and developed resourcing and work efficacy issues have impeded the capacity to meet performance objectives. Some redress has been found through networked relationships opening up both access to power and providing reciprocated solutions.

Table 4.3: Internal Context Codes - Management 'as' Work

Basic Theme (expanded from data)	Sample Excerpt from illustrative quotes	Broader Theme
The challenge of overcoming internal structures (to hire/fire and promote)	<p>“we are gradually changing the nature of contract staff into permanent staff, so if you want to fire somebody you need to you know go through steps, tedious steps, reporting adverse comments, do everything right in order to get the right result, you can't just have the flexibility of private sector, you are not performing – out you go – you can't. So these all add to the heavy burden of middle managers and I consider myself middle managers.”</p>	Structural challenge: hierarchy; process's; legality.
The challenge of motivating staff	<p>“In the civil service, I think it's motivating people, to be devoted to the work, to really help you in accomplishing all you want to accomplish, I say this because in the civil service you have people who may not want to advance any further, or may not have the chance to advance any further and in those cases you have to motivate them into contributing and making their contribution to the team, its rather difficult and also because the inherent, the structures, things that you cannot get rid of people who are not producing, there is a way you can do it, but usually it takes a lot of effort to get rid of people that you know are not producing, completely lost their desire to continue working.”</p> <p>“ if you are going to do a really god job in motivating people, you need the tool at your disposal, to allow if you have the ability to give that person another increment in pay this year if they perform really well, that may be one instrument we can use, but in the civil service, not really available.”</p>	

Control and direction of work flow (limited control)	<p>The biggest managerial challenge is.....“To pay more attention to the needs of others and try to motivate them as far as possible. To think more with a view to streamlining work procedures and hence improving efficiency.”</p> <p>“In the old days, in 1997, I think its centralised, but then the Government give some room for freely express our views, different levels say our views more freely and they will see whether this is something they need to take more seriously or take account of the rules, is becoming a decision by the Government as a whole, and everyone will abide by it and provide support where necessary, but now is becoming possibly a bureau that policy bureau responsible for that policy will be fighting for himself, for other side effect for things generated it’s not support, it’s not fully deliberated, so it’s not a sort of centralised or decentralised, its more fragmented”</p>	
The law as a ‘safety net’	<p>“There is no right or wrong way only legal or illegal ways. You must follow the rules, finish the job within the boundary of the rules, but just finish it, but there is no right or wrong way.”</p> <p>“Whenever they pass a case, they would have to think, am I going by all the rules, did I do all the compliance, they would also have to think a step further will I be subject to judicial review?”</p>	
The challenge of communicating with public	<p>“When we implement change now, we are very cautious, and involve all stakeholders, are consulted, be transparent to them, that’s why the time for preparation and consultation work is much longer.”</p>	Work efficacy challenge
Increased complaints – performance targets	<p>“Public high expectation on efficient; transparency and quality services from the Government but from time to time through political and pressing channels to achieve it such as abusive on Government complaint hot-line or seeking assistance from Legislative members.”</p>	

	<p>“people are more aware of their own interests, they want to fight more, possibly in the old days people only complained when they are not fairly treated, now is different, complain when they are not fairly treated and when they want to have something from the Government they will try to use their muscles, so it’s becoming very challenging for us to push forward the projects”.</p>	
<p>Introduction of new measures/policies</p>	<p>“Once we have some complaints from the district councillors, they have agree to our projects, while we are still organising so many public forums, public engagements, thing like that, it’s becoming difficult, they think they are representing the people, elected representatives by the people, so when we consult them on the old days, they will be more comfortable to exercise their judgement, but now they will challenge not the main constituents of the election, but from some other smaller groups, more aggressive groups, and they are facing already problem position, but as far as Government concerned although it’s good to have district counsellor endorsed, we have to make sure every stakeholder come up and let us know what they think before everything finalise, and then somebody jump up out of the group.”</p>	
<p>Cutting headcount – do more with less</p>	<p>“Changes in external and surrounding political and economic environments have resulted in (i) frequent changes of the responsible senior officers in the central government, (ii) introduction of new measures and policies, and (iii) cutting headcounts.”</p>	<p>Resourcing challenge</p>
<p>Internal movement/promotion (frequent</p>	<p>“It is quite a challenge now, contractors they will move their resources to more profitable areas, then our site staff, site staff are employed by our consultants but by government terms, in the old days you have to wait 5-10 years for promotion, now 2-3 years, so we have people jumping around. We have to try to make some less senior management, but it’s difficult. That’s the problem if the Government push too many projects, it’s mainly to make up the delays in the past 5-10 years, but time lost is time lost, it’s very difficult to get it back within a short period. Labour resources are stretched and that is a challenge we face in the coming years.”</p>	

Changes to contract	“we now have 2 types of employees, one is permanent establishment, pensioners [meaning with pension entitlement] and the other one new terms, I think we also regard them as pensioners, even though they are not receiving the same terms, and then the other type is contract staff which in theory you can fire them if they are not up to it... I don't know why because it's a big organisation, not only the DoJ but Civil service as a whole, we are gradually changing the nature of contract staff into permanent staff”.	
Ambiguity of role definition (AO's)	“I guess in reality often we have AO's goes to legislature to do that kind of work, then the professionals provide mainly to support, so we tend to have more AO's than department so they can handle the political elements of the job, then the engineers, like in this department the lawyers would not be so involved in matters defending the policies in LEGCO, the secretary for the Justice who is a political appointee would be the one go to LEGCO, and I would help out in the lobbying work.”	
Disdain for political appointee's – unrealistic expectations of managers.	“These are the Chief executive's supporters, put in positions of authority in areas they know nothing about, the best policy officials are the former civil servants so they understand how government works, what can and cannot be done within legal boundaries, whereas the other are just loose cannons...”	Internal conflict
Networking and building relationships	“I will need to buy in support from colleagues in the estate management, I have to pick good friends who have similar thinking to me and present the paper at a suitable venue”.	Social capital and networks facilitating 'realities' of work.

Access to power	“After the course we will meet the others, and establish our network , and when you need to ask question of other department, just give them a phone call. when you come across some difficult issue, you think of someone who can help you, give them a phone call its far better that looking at the website, he may have the authority to give you what you need, that’s my style”	
Reciprocity and friendship facilitating work outcomes	“Of course it’s the reason to go, its networking , I actually get help form one of my classmates, I have a case that we have some chemicals/residue to be analysed by the government chemists, after 3 months nothing happened, reminder after reminder – so I contacted a government chemist through networking from the course, I got it sorted in 2 weeks..... its very useful, sometimes you get sometimes you give. ”	
Coalition building to create voice channels.	“you have to know the people before you can do things more smoothly, it’s always a matter of communication and trust if you know one another you can speak more frankly, know the bottom line more easily and strike a compromise more easily, it’s very helpful to have a very good communication, or networking with different colleagues”.	

4.4 Management Training and Development

The overarching goal of the organisation is to up-skill to managerial cadre so that they can meet the challenges and changes coming from the external and internal environment. Having established the managerial values which underpin the way managers approach their work and the realities of management 'as' work we can now consider how the organisation helps managers to achieve work efficacy. Secondary documentary data (Anon, CSB 2011) reveals the content of the training courses offered

Table 4.4: Leadership and management training for the Civil Service adapted from CSB (2011)

Title	ALEP Advanced leadership Enhancement Programme	LIA Leadership in Action Programme	IMP Innovative Managers programme
Training Level	ALEP Advanced – most senior level MM's (reached directorate level pay scale)	LIA Mid-level – Middle managers classed as senior professionals but on the Master level pay-scale (Pt 45-49)	IMP Mid-level – Middle managers at the Master level pay scale (Pt 38-44).
Number	40 participants p/yr	70 participants p/yr	105 participants p/yr
Job Role	Non political managerial post Policy influencing	Non political managerial post Policy implementing	Non political managerial role Policy implementing
Scope	To transform professionals (technical officers) into leaders To gain broader exposure and a global perspective Enhance networks	To more actively engage with the public. Broaden perspectives in the challenges facing the public sector. Develop leadership skill base and enhance networks.	To give technical officers management skills. To develop identified competencies.
Course content (complementing)	Public sector leadership knowledge	Formulation and implementation of public policy	Fundamentals of Public policy

competency development).	<p>Accountability</p> <p>Crisis management</p> <p>Public Engagement</p> <p>People Management</p>	<p>Media and Communication Skills</p> <p>Management Theories</p> <p>Leadership theory</p> <p>Leading change</p> <p>Negotiation</p> <p>Stress/health Management</p> <p>Leadership</p> <p>Change Management</p>	<p>Human Resource Management</p> <p>Team leadership</p> <p>Interpersonal Skills</p> <p>Broken down into 7 generic core competencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communication • leadership • staff management; • resource management • information management; • personal effectiveness • professionalism.
Form	<p>2 modules lasting 4 days each, 1 of which is residential.</p> <p>Case studies; Panel discussion; guest talks; group projects and simulations named 'short experience learning'.</p>	<p>15.5 day programme.</p> <p>Part 1 – 12 days, 4 modules.</p> <p>Part 2 – 3 day residential.</p> <p>Classroom based teaching; discussion sessions; complemented with 360 degree feedback and PDP review.</p> <p>Also included is a Crisis simulation and team project utilising external adjudicators.</p>	<p>2 week course – part residential.</p> <p>Classroom based teaching; discussion sessions; group projects and guest speakers.</p> <p>Peer feedback/'secret pocket.'</p> <p>Notably residential component: team building outdoor activity – 'climb 14ft wall'.</p>
Training partner	Canadian and American Universities*	Canadian and American University	Canadian and American University.

	*As of 2015 This changed to a British provider.		
Outcome level	Individual *Team *Organisational	Individual *Team *Organisational	Individual *Team *Organisational

However, the HR team have broken down the goals of the LMD remit for managers further, during interviews they have identified these as:

- To promote understanding and awareness but not solutions
- To open international experience and exposure to participants.
- To promote culture change
- To help managers 'manage' and handle the new stress of the job.
- To aid communication skills to win the support of the community (service remit).
- To provide internal networks

In conjunction with the training initiatives detailed above, entry level management development programmes have been developed and trialled for 2015, plus a series of workshops and seminars on topical subjects such as: judicial review; executive health and environmental leadership are made available. Leadership development is then augmented by combining performance management tools, such as 360 degree feedback and departmental secondments which aid the development process. The HR goals make it clear that the organisation has an awareness and sympathy for the problems that managers are facing, including the difficulties managers have in making and reconciling decisions. The organisation actively promote networking as a way of overcoming structural challenges and creating 'joined-up' government, whilst acknowledging that they cannot provide direct solutions to the managerial problems encountered, they can equip staff with the skills and networks to independently reach efficacious solutions.

The type of leadership development offered in Hong Kong is reflective of the holistic integrated approach pioneered by Cacioppe (1998) combining both formal classroom learning with experiential and informal interactions. Specifically and in support of the literature the focus on coalition building and networking is prevalent (Bichard, 2000; Hartley and Allison 2000, Thac and Thompson, 2007, Garavan, 2007; Hartley and Allison, 2010), which complements the public engagement agenda, putting

communication and negotiation skills at the heart of all three programmes. However there is limited evidence that HKCS have actively differentiated between 'leader' and 'leadership' skills (Day, 2001; 2014; McGurk, 2009). What can be determined is that as outcomes are evaluated, the perceived benefit is documented, most frequently at an individual level, in terms of performance, attitudes, motivation and empowerment (Aguinis and Kraiger 2009), though there was some subtle reference to perceived team and organisational benefit. This is counterbalanced by perceptions regarding the limitations of the training.

4.4.1 Soft Skills Enhancement

Participants report varied learning outcomes from the training process and 3 main perceptions are observed: Firstly, a perceived enhancement of soft 'management' skills and areas of competence are cited by participants. These skills include; confidence building; learning not to fear or catastrophize; greater self-awareness; enhanced delegation skills and significantly communication skills. The ability to face LEGCO and reduce fears of panicking and poor public performance was a recurrent theme in the interview transcripts. Preparing employees by bringing in experienced political speakers and was felt to be both interesting and helpful as was the opportunity to share fears in a group format. Whilst there is some confusion about the level of responsibility middle managers have, the AO political candidate (outlier) stating that facing LEGCO would be out with the 'management' remit, clearly this responsibility has been pushed down the line and this is reflected in the training material.

The technique of combining formal and informal training techniques has also lead to perceived positive outcomes, 360 degree feedback was cited as allowing participants to reflect and improve their communication skills internally. The quotes highlight the difficulty or ease participants have with delegation and cite this as a trust issue, again linked to performance at Legco.

"We discuss our own 360 degree assessment, people tend to know each other more, so you get to hear people comment on your problem and the challenge you face and I think I'm helped by the comments I heard on how important it was to delegate. In my

position I can delegate, some people can't do it because they cannot trust what their subordinate might say, they might say wrongly in Legco, I feel much more comfortable" (Mid-level MM).

Significantly participants have cited the training as positively impacting communication skills, firstly with the public in terms of complaint handling but secondly in terms of the media and how to communicate your point in a way that will be reported as intended by the press.

"Yes, the IMP course helped me a lot, in particular the skill in communications and how to handle complaints. Through the case study and the group project, it effectively widens the scope of my analytical power" (Jnr-level MM).

4.4.2 Networked Skills Enhancement

Whilst examples of having empathy for the public and the myriad of problems faced by them were given in detail in the interview accounts, this tended to come from work experience examples not content covered on the course. What was frequently commented upon was that participants felt that knowing who the right persona was to either get advice from or refer a member of the public to, was the most valuable aspect of enhancing communication skills. The second broader theme identified is perceived enhanced networked skills, as defined in terms of; enhanced social capital; access to power and decision makers; increased problem solving capacity and more informed decision making due to the breadth of contacts and advices given. This 'knowing whom' capacity echoes the literature cited earlier (De Filip and Arthur 1994) on skills associated with social capital and the need for development in this area within large public sector organisations.

Connecting with colleagues in other departments and learning more about how decisions in one department impact decisions made in another department is part of the HRD goal of seeing the bigger picture and gaining what many participants referred to as 'broader exposure'. The interview data revealed divisions and factions between

bureau and individuals showing collective loyalty to their own department is prevalent, despite a more joined up approach within the training.

“I think what we learned from our predecessor, the CYA principle (cover your ass), but I think this is long gone... you just have to give your best shot at whatever you’re doing, if don’t believe it you don’t go outside the department” (Snr level MM).

However, all of the interviewees, bar none, expressed that networking was a positive aspect of the training due to increased channels of communication and access to colleagues who could ‘help’.

A difference identified between the senior level MM’s and the middle level regarded the nature of access to power. Whilst the survey data suggested that networking is a motivating factor for junior level MM’s for participating in training, it’s not the most important. Skills development and career development are ranked higher. Whilst these statistics are quite general, they were then asked about difficulties and barriers in the job and whether they perceived the training as helpful in overcoming these problems. Participants cited a number of examples, but frequently they cited shared experiences which help with problem solving as relevant.

“All of the above mentioned problems are being countered by other IMP participants in different degree. I can share their experiences especially in dealing with staff and the public” (Jnr level MM).

A text box had been provided for this answer as opposed to pre-selected criteria. Not one participant cited an example of getting practical help to solve a problem from a colleague, they only cited discussing problems together on the course. This is incredibly useful learning, but does not provide evidence of access to power, but of socially constructed peer learning. Using Bolton and Houlihan’s (2010) typology this could be described as ‘access to lines of information’.

This contrasted the accounts given by the middle and senior level managerial cadre who gave multiple examples of the networking allowing them access to channels of power, either a colleague who could directly give them a solution or access to someone of significance. Senior managers went on to describe networking a ‘the’

reason to go to training and development events and were more likely to dispute the practical relevance of the [hard] skills development, preferring to focus on relationships and the reciprocal 'favours'.

"If you have good connection you can solve the problem very quickly you know how to contact the right person to help you solve the problem, or if not you are just going round and round can't solve the problem" (Mid level MM).

*"Of course it's the reason to go, **its networking**, I actually get help from one of my classmates, I have a case that we have some chemicals/residue to be analysed by the government chemists, after 3 months nothing happened, reminder after reminder – so I contacted a government chemist through networking from the course, I got it sorted in 2 weeks..... its very useful, **sometimes you get sometimes you give**. Even the first management course I attend, networking is always happening. Always advantages to know somebody"* (Snr level MM).

Middle and senior level managers also gave examples of utilising their social capital and extracting help from external networks, such as university contacts or their contractor network, to solve problem's internally or to build up a 'coalition' to present a credible idea to the senior executive.

"I am struggling with how I should start to get approval at the first stage, If it was just me putting in a document to the housing management colleagues and boss to look they will say it is rubbish we will not bother, but by drawing up support from the Chinese University, because green roofing is already in place, I am going one step further so the residents can also eat, I will need to buy in support from colleagues in the estate management , I have to pick good friends who have similar thinking to me and present the paper at a suitable venue" (Snr level MM).

The data suggest that the value of networking increases as managers progress in their careers and that the training courses provide a platform to that process, though clearly managers are developing their personal networks at an early point in their careers. Networking is helping managers to overcome some of the obstacles they face internally, though this exploratory data would suggest that 'access to power' comes at a more senior level and less so at a mid-junior level of management. The onus is on

the individual to build their network, but the organisation co-operates by offering access through training. As re-structuring has led to more frequent moves internally, middle managers cannot afford to become complacent and rely on their old contacts. An attitude or skill for 'networking' [sociability; helpfulness; reciprocity] is an important part of the job.

*"I have been in highways only 2.5 years, before that motor supplies department. for about 30 years. So I do not know everybody, it's not as easy as where I work previously, **have to build more connections** through the engineers I know previously" (Mid-level MM).*

What this comparative data reveals is a slightly nuanced approach to networking, with the importance of networking increasing as a manager climbs the career ladder. The shared problem solving experiences described by the junior MM cohort facilitating access to information. The stated examples of reciprocal help facilitating access to power within the managerial rank (mid-level MM's) and specifically the building of coalitions of external support cited by senior managers giving further access to power as they build the ability to bridge the gap with the political cadre. No specific examples were given regarding access to resources, though the coalition building example cited [green roofing project], alluded to a blueprint for new housing allocation.

Table 4.5: Jnr MM Survey Question - Training motivation

Leadership Development

What is your main motivation for participating in the IMP course?						
Answer Options	1 (not motivating)	2	3	4	5 (highly motivating)	Response Count
Career enhancement	0	0	3	18	15	36
Leadership skills development	0	0	0	22	14	36
A necessary requirement of the job (to meet organisational objectives)	1	1	6	18	9	35
Build a greater network of supportive colleagues	0	0	6	18	12	36
Time out of office to focus on personal development	4	3	12	12	4	35
Other (please specify)						1
					<i>answered question</i>	36
					<i>skipped question</i>	0

4.4.3 Perceived Outcome limitations of LMD

Where perceptions of the training fell down and this is the third broader theme; perceived outcome limitations, were in relation to knowledge transfer. Whilst the networking came out well, the data revealed that participants had difficulty making or understanding the need for any behavioural changes, impacting for example, their management style.

“I think I already have my leadership style, but I attend the course and I can reflect what I can do better, what I can stress, a good way to look at leadership skills from a theoretical way. But actual style not changed” (Mid-level MM).

Both course participants and nominating managers had difficulty identifying changed behaviours and attitudes once they (or a colleague) had attended the course. There was an acknowledgement that it can be difficult to attribute learning outcomes and

changed behaviour to a training course alone as other factors may have contributed to the management approach of the individual concerned.

“Hard to say that is because of the training, you see people maturing, but perhaps that’s due to experience rather than the training, certainly we put them into training courses, whether that’s a direct result I don’t know, but certainly when I speak to people they are training to lead, for example in adopting a more democratic style of management, hearing more about what their subordinate want to say about things, I do believe that they are somehow influenced, though they may not know themselves, but we can see the ,maturity and how they handle situations, as I say it might be due to experience, they are able to adapt to the situation, or it may be due to the training” (Nom Mgr).

But this doesn’t contradict the literature on training interventions, where a holistic approach to HRD is generally advocated. Whilst the 3 training courses offered internally at HKCS may suffer in comparison to overseas courses, this is because the overseas courses were perceived as both a reward benefit and prestigious due to expense. The time limitations and difficulties managers had in both being released from work for training and releasing staff to attend was a significant issue and leads into the next section, career development and competing organisational and individual goals.

4.4.4 Career Development and Participation

Participation on training programmes is revealed to be selective with unequal distribution of access. It can be seen that HR and nominating managers have a more positive view of the availability of training than middle managers, who cite difficulty of access if you are in a small department without a prominent employee champion.

*“From where I work in Motor supplies department, is a small department, so the training opportunities are less than highways, so **we have to fight or ask to get it**, in Highways our colleagues they have a lot of training opportunities” (Mid-level Mgr).*

This view supports previous quantitative research conducted by Huque and Vyas (2008) on HKCS that training opportunity is selective and not equally available. Other

cited barriers to participation include family commitments and motivation to develop. Whilst training alone is not identified as a pre-requisite to promotion, candidates can see that it forms part of the process and where the motivation to progress exists, it is perceived to be a benefit.

“Attending this course didn’t guarantee a promotion – but honestly think about it – if senior management didn’t think I had the potential would they waste money sending me on courses. It’s a benefit” (Snr level MM).

Pulling together the themes identified in this section it is clear that training can only offer a partial solution to the problems of managerial work in the civil service. To some extent this meets HR and organisational goals. Opinions offered by both the organisational and employee cohort show similarities of perception. Both cohorts allude to mixed results from the training. Whilst less critique of the programmes came from the junior level managers, both mid/senior level MM’s and the Nominating managers were able to discuss the difficulty with practical application of learning. There is a level of acknowledgement coming from both cohorts about the limitations of training as well as the benefits and HR are quite clear in stating that they are not providing direct solutions to problems, but tools. The element of confidence and familiarity with new process’s/challenges, such as coping with the media/Legco questions, is universally acknowledged by all cohorts. All cohorts were aware of the benefit of and need for networking as an efficacious way of problem solving and delivering services. The organisational cohort have built this in to the training remit and the employee cohort have accepted and utilised the ladder offered. No data was provided suggesting a dislike/disdain for or difficulty with networking and relationship building, where the opportunity to do so was provided. This research would suggest that relationship building is part of the organisational culture at all levels.

Table 4.6: Internal Context Codes - Management Training and Development

Basic Theme (Expanded from Data)	Sample excerpt from Illustrative Quotes	Broader Theme
Prestigious speakers inspiring confidence	<p>“What I like about this course is that they get interesting leaders/speakers – Cathay Pacific talked about the ash clouds from Iceland – how they coped with the emergency/situation – crisis management. So is good, I think it helps, the speakers from experience – panicking alone doesn’t help. When you go to LEGCO to answer questions – how you go about doing it. I still remember what they said.”</p> <p>“What impressed me is that they invite some very prominent people to come and give us a talk. Do you know the Chief Secretary now, Carrie Lam, she also came to give us a talk for one hour one evening. Even then two years ago, she is already an ‘iron lady’. Also C K Chow the CEO of MTR (HK Underground system*JO) and other prominent people came to give us a talk”.</p>	Soft skills enhancement
Able to face Legco	<p>“So in the department in terms of giving training to our managers to get them ready to face up to the legal challenges and the political challenges in terms of LEGCO...this division has actually, is the policy bureau for legal matters, for change in our legal system, so in some sense we have to manage politically how we are going to bring forward those changes and explain them in Legco.”</p> <p>“I think, by attending this course, at that time, when I was just about to be promoted to this position, I had a very distinct fear about the pressure I am going to face at LEGCO, and I think this helped, because they have asked us to identify the challenge that you are going to face, then we can talk to it in a group situation.”</p>	
Secondments and 360 degree feedback as part	<p>“Actually I remember the CSTD have done a questionnaire, they call 3D questionnaire, they would do a survey with my subordinate and my colleague same rank and my supervisor. It’s a good way I know what they think of me [JO: It sounds like 360 degree feedback].....Actually my colleagues they are shocked that their subordinates had a poor assessment of him,</p>	

of the training highly valued.	'aaahhhh I'm so bad!! They think I'm not good enough'. For me I also my peers, my subordinates have a good assessment, but my peers only a fair assessment, so maybe I need to reflect and communicate with my peers , maybe there is something threatening, or maybe been too aggressive, so I need to communicate better with them create a good atmosphere with them. I actually have a reflection on how to communicate with peers of the same rank. Different angles, layers, it a good way of looking at it."	
Communication Skills development	<p>"The IMP course helped me a lot, in particular the skill in communications and how to handle complaints. Through the case study and the group project, it effectively widens the scope of my analytical power."</p> <p>"They tried to set me up, because they knew I know him, he's put me on the course. I got the report, they said I handled the initial question very well, but I lost it...what they would have shown on TV was them asking the question and me laughing. So I was asked to think how that would be perceived, so that got me thinking."</p>	
Work life balance issues addressed	"The other thing, I remember, this is useful, when they talk about the executive health, at that time, being taught by a psychiatrist, Psychologist, I think it's very useful, trying to tell us how to manage stress, and also the major element of stress how to deal with it, the psychological mind how it work, I remember at the time, an eye opener, signs of stress, I remember he point finger at one colleague, he said your lung is pounding, that is a sign you are under stress".	
Networking (increasing power base and influence)	<p>"The networking is so important I give them a call, after attending a course for a few weeks we could actually become friends."</p> <p>"The benefit of ALEP is not on the content it is on the networking, you meet some people or some speakers that you need for the future, just like when I get your name card when you come to HK, then I can ask you questions."</p> <p>"One of the course objectives must be to be able to know colleagues from other departments, and this helps our work as well, so it's good to build up this networking".</p>	Networked skills enhancement

Aiding decision making through joined up networks	<p>“but what I’m impressed most, I have a chance to learn this kind of thing with other, all the colleagues on the ALEP course are senior, and you have a chance to share what other colleagues are doing, in other departments. at your level...also the other classmates are senior VP’s form other org’s like Toyota, so you learn what they are doing”.</p>	
Exposure – bigger picture perspectives	<p>For the networking, it’s helpful, because all my colleagues are from different departments, when I need help I just ring up and they help. For the content I know why the Government need to do this and then I make a decision, I know I have to think about the cross implication, what’s the impact not just of this one, but I have to think more...wider</p>	
Limited transfer of knowledge into practice (academic; theoretical)	<p>“Yes good programme, we have a lot of topics covered, public policy, organisational performance, media communication, executive health, public speaking, image building a team project , this about it..... I think these are theoretical, but when I come back to the real world, I think this is a good thing to learn how public policy is made, how to deal with media, it’s a structured course and deals with the most important issues that we deal with, but when you come back to the real world you have to deal with things in practical way.”</p>	<p>Perceived outcome limitations LMD</p>
Cases too commercial - Lack HKCS focus.	<p>“This course is good, but very compact, very intense a lot of reading material for the evening, so if they can trim down the reading material that would be better. If the case study can be Hong King based that will be more interesting. A lot of the Case study talks about Canadian, or American stuff, a lot of the jargon we don’t understand.”</p>	
Time limitations	<p>“I guess the biggest challenge we have is really, whether we can spare the officers for T and D in other words we will have to compete with the operational need.”</p>	
Suffers in comparison –	<p>“Because of my time at Kellok, the ALEP course itself is not so impressive, but the time you share with colleagues is more rewarding.”</p>	

not as good as overseas courses.		
Perception of 'fuzzy' outcomes	"I wouldn't say there was any direct impact whether over time is something that would assist you, I'm not so sure, but I wouldn't say that there was a direct impact or that I could make use of those skills right away".	
Participation criteria selective	So I think overall the training for the government is quite good, to cater for the training for the job overall, the personal development of the staff and you do get ample opportunity to be nominated (Nom Mgr) It's because the department itself has its own limitations, the department itself might not provide you with the most appropriate officers to attend the programme. (HR)	Participation
Barriers to participation	The right timing too – we have another colleague, we think she needs to be groomed, she is suitable for grooming, but because she's got young kids, that requires her full attention, she doesn't want to take on too much, or say overseas training at least not now, so we leave her alone for the time being, but keep her in mind in due course, when she is free-er. I think there are ones that you know for sure would not participate, there are some obvious ones, it makes there point clear, they will do their job but in terms of taking further responsibilities at higher rank, you would leave them alone basically.	
Training enabling career development	So in my case I have written in some people appraisals report that because of that particular reason they should attend some management training so they can have a better understanding of how leaders should perform. So when we see who we identify to be good lawyer, we want to promote him/her, but he is deficient in one area we will make this recommendation. The boss look at me when you come back from a course – you have changed. It's just a few day course – it's not like you attend a course for several months, but obviously it is a prerequisite for climbing the ladder	Career Development

4.5 Labour Process Theory Application

4.5.1 Work Intensification

Throughout this thesis, claims have been made for trends in work intensification seen throughout organisations globally and pertinently in the public sector. The data from HKCS confirms that trend and is discussed in terms of inputs; individual outcomes (the middle manager as an employee) and organisational outcomes.

Inputs

Resources in HKCS have been squeezed and staff both observe it and feel the effects of that squeeze. Managers at every level of the organisation, across all sample cohorts, discussed this. External events are attributed on the whole for the squeeze, such as the Asian economic downturn and global trends for efficiency, accountability and downsizing in the public sector. The data also correlates with accounts taken from the literature and supplementary interviews that the new service orientation expected of civil servants and changes to the nature of the job impact on work intensification. The increased complexity and volume of work, has to a certain extent already been documented in the section on management 'as' work and evidence is cited of; greater public demand, a complaints culture and self-interest of politicians as contributing to these challenges. The power balance between the HK government and the public has altered and interviewees described the public as 'using their muscles', painting a picture of a weakened government and a strengthened or emboldened public. Working hours have increased and middle managers report both the strain of coping with these increased hours and sympathy for those working beneath them who have to make the managerial targets.

"[training] ...you start to prepare him or her to take up higher responsibilities, but because there is so much work to do, we feel sorry for those guys. I'm not sure whether it is a reward as such" (HR Mgr).

This sympathy extends to career development, with career progression perceived as simply more work rather than a reward or goal to aspire to. Where aspiration does

exist, the individual may be stymied in their attempts to progress through lack of time to attend training or difficulty in gaining approval from the more senior management cadre to be released from organisational duties. A theme identified in this dissertation has been the difficulty middle managers had in creating space to engage with this (organisationally approved) project. Whilst managers had permission from HR to attend interviews, gaining permission from Senior management to attend interviews was considered one of the barriers to involvement.

“I understand from [Hazel] that none of the IMP participants have responded?...I tried to send out 2 rounds of the reminder, and also at the reunions, I told them I have an independent researcher, but for middle managers, but finding an hour to meet you and get senior approval, is difficult, and there may be practical difficulties” (HR Mgr).

Whilst accepting their will have been numerous reasons behind non-participation, time pressure and workload was cited as the most identifiable. Of the interviews that were conducted, two female participants took the opportunity to be creative with time, meeting after working hours (8pm) or over lunch, whilst all other participants were able to take time out of their working days and meet in their offices.

In line with the literature, technology is cited as facilitating work intensification, as workers at this level are to be available in the evenings and at weekends as required and contactable either by mobile phone or email. These results are not unusual and confirm the trend for long working-hours culture that prevails in industry and increasingly the public sector as they ape private sector practices.

“I guess the first thing to do is work longer hours, they work hard, they stay in the office till maybe 7,8or 9 o’clock, even the holidays do some of the work, and of course with the IT advancement they work a lot at home, so often you find that maybe after dinner time [late in HK] you send some e-mails and you get a response from your colleagues (laughing) so uh, inevitably, people tend to work longer and longer hours now” (HR Mgr).

Van Wart et al (2015) have argued that since the 1990’s the UK Government has emphasised three new modest tendencies based on collaboration: The emphasis on ‘commercial’ outcomes; the emphasis on ‘change’ and the emphasis on ‘pace’. The

latter of these tendencies is certainly expressed in the Hong Kong leadership development data and the organisation design the LDP to facilitate 'easier' and also intensified work performance.

"I hope that by building a good network, then later in their career, when they handle a case they will be able to pass it on to the right person, and not just by the rules, if you have a network then its quicker and easier to get things done." (HR Mgr)

Van Wart et al (2013) go on to suggest that as collaborative concerns grow more prevalent and connected to competency development, legal and bureaucratic elements are being squeezed. This fits with the [UK Government's] position on removing controls and increasing flexibility. In contrast, whilst HKCS seeks flexibility, both culturally and bureaucratically legal advice provides face, legitimacy and a fall back to decision making.

The position of the middle manager – both meeting top down performance objectives whilst motivating staff at lower levels to reach targets can be very challenging and the pressure of these demands; squeezed resources; increased complexity and intensity of work, coupled with a long hours culture to help meet demand has resulted in a number of outcomes.

Individual Outcomes

Firstly, managers document feeling stress which impacts their physical health, through high blood pressure and psychologically resulting in depression and feelings of 'weariness'. Managers feel they cannot let staff see them getting worn out and employ impression management techniques to put on a front of control. These individual outcomes are very challenging for the middle manager. Specifically documented was the difficulty in enacting decisions which require compromise of personal or professional values.

"That is the time when your boss make a decision it's against my belief, against regulation, twist the thing to try to finish the job, I feel very upset" (Snr level MM).

Also impacted was the ability to achieve work life balance, though some interviewees made a point of stating that there were certain life events which they would not make a compromise for and were certainly willing to forgo training at the very least.

“It’s just a few day course – it’s not like you attend a course for several months, but obviously it is a prerequisite for climbing the ladder. I was asked to go to Harvard for a prosecution course – but I didn’t go – it clashed with my daughter’s graduation. I prefer to go with my family. So I may loss the promotion prospect. I am a family man” (Snr level MM).

4.5.1.3 Organisational outcomes

Organisational outcomes of work intensification may result in resistance. Although most civil servants are trade union members, the TU has lost its impetus since the transition to Chinese rule in 1997, as the previous focus was fighting inequality with Ex-patriate pay packages. Resistance as documented internally to change seems to be fairly limited, with managers, at this stage silently complying with the pressures imposed. But silent compliance is at odds with the difficulties shared in the interviews and surveys. Middle managers cited de-motivated staff, who resisted by simply not meeting higher performance targets and not producing the extra work. Managers are caught in the middle, where they don’t have the tools, such as pay or promotion discretion, to persuade staff to work harder but do have the targets set from above. The limitations they experience to manage and control their own work flow form the basis of the argument surrounding control.

“I think they have their way of dealing with it, I would say few have actually resisted..changes, I mean whether or not they will actually go along with it the way you want them to is another thing. I think it’s easy for them just to ..um..they don’t actually have to resist – they just do nothing basically” (Nom Mgr).

Whilst managers perceive their staff as having the capacity to resist work intensification to some extent, aided by the (bureaucratic) difficulty in dismissing underperformers, they themselves find it very difficult to resist. Themes of resigned

co-operation pervade the interview data echoing Teulings (1986) theme of the 'powerlessness' of management.

“where previously perhaps you can revert to client within 2 weeks, reasonable but now with the technology email fax and everything is now, real time almost so well you just have to cooperate, you can't resist” (Nom Mgr)

Table 4.7: Labour Process codes: Work Intensification

Basic Theme (Expanded from data)	Sample Excerpt from Illustrative Quotes	Broader Theme
Squeezed resources	<p>Recruitment of civil servants is tedious and takes a long time, but we need to cope with it, we are building now, but no new recruits (In Rosa’s section), so we need to squeeze the resource and one year later the new recruit will come?</p> <p>Due to the Asian economic downturn and the political culture in HK, people are more and more demanding towards the government. Workload increases while the staff headcount remains unchanged. The colleagues are facing much stress than before.</p> <p>I think one thing with government servants are there is a Chinese saying ‘whether you do it or not, you get the same pay packet at the end of the day, so why bother the extra work or responsibilities’. I think it’s the...that is what is missing</p> <p>It’s easy to say you should motivate people to work towards the organisations goal but in practice it’s really not that simple and if you come by one or two colleagues who are willing to step out of their comfort zone you always keep giving extra administrative duties to them until they are drowned. This not healthy we know, but until you can, there are more helpers there’s not much you can do.</p>	<p>Inputs</p> <p>Barriers to lines of resource (Kanter 1979; Bolton and Houlihan 2010)</p>
Increased complexity and volume of work	<p>Before you don’t need to consult, now every regulation, big or small, you have to consult – and that makes the process a bit longer. I see there is good point about consultation but also bad.</p> <p>people are more aware of their own interests, they want to fight more, possibly in the old days people only complained when they are not fairly treated, now is different, complain when they are not fairly treated and when they want to have something from the Government they will try to use their muscles, so it’s becoming very challenging for us to push forward the projects.</p>	

	<p>[challenge is]...To accomplish the difficult tasks (mostly done in short notice) handed to me on time and maintaining the team spirit.</p> <p>More emphasis shall be put to motivate the staff for an ever increasing workload, public demand and complaint culture.</p>	
Long Hours culture	<p>I enjoy the course which give us a chance to get away from work. Civil servant 24 hours work, we carry mobile phone every day – its 24 hours, in the middle you probably get phone call telling you have a gas incident that you have to respond to, then the media in the morning will ask you.”</p> <p>People will have to react very quickly to it, and come in at the weekend and give advice all possible options, it involves us coordinating different experts in different departments</p> <p>Generally there is no lack of training opportunity for most officers, the question is whether they can afford time.</p>	
Physiological Stress (high blood pressure etc.)	<p>Many colleagues in 40's and 50's feel the same, I need good health because I need to deal with problems stress every day. I could tell many colleagues were under immense stress, high blood pressure to the extent that it may affect their leadership</p>	Individual Outcomes
Psychological stress (depression, anxiety etc.).	<p>“I think occasionally, there are things that I don't like very much and make me feel very depressed.”</p> <p>“In general, the IMP course helped me to discharge certain useful techniques applicable to the managerial duties such as motivating staff and stress due to workload.”</p>	
Work/life balance disrupted	<p>in the feedback forms we got and evaluation some of them say this was the most important part of the course, even though we expected them to say public policy, or org performance, but what concerned them most was that being a leader is getting busier and busier and how to work in Work life balance</p>	

<p>Staff resistance – conformist at present.</p>	<p>starting from 1997, a bit earlier, 1992, when our Chief Secretary Ansun Chan, when he make some public sector reform, which is very similar to UK, it is a lot of pressure, a lot of resistance from the staff, cultural change, the main challenge for the leadership is change, cultural change, political change, organisational change...</p> <p>“the direction was the staff was very very upset – the reorganisation structure the staff didn’t like it, another approach is slow down a bit, a few at a bit, so with that and more cooperation with the staff associations.....they demand more post open, better work, better control of the consultants to make sure they deliver and also we build in a better control mechanism (outsourcing).”</p> <p>“Civil service trade union – most of them [are members]. It’s not too vocal. In the old days expatriates have better rates than the locals so the main purpose of the trade union is to fight for same treatment same package. And then through the last 20 years not too many controversial subjects. The main issue is to provide comments to Government policies affecting civil servants.”</p>	<p>Organisational outcome</p>
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4.5.2 Control

In line with Armstrong's argument that control is a two-way concept and that middle managers experience both being controlled and exercising control, the data reveals perceptions of this duality. Four themes have been captured from the data, these are; compromised autonomy; accountability; relationship management issues; and expanded remit for control responsibility. Whilst all of these themes are interlinked and suggest that control is a contested area within this organisational context, the separate nuances of each theme can be teased out.

Compromised Autonomy

Collaborative working and the distribution of power have been identified as useful and a trend in public sector management and there is certainly evidence of collaboration and consensual decision making. Where autonomy is challenged and the decision making process eroded is in the instances where pressure is applied to make a decision which contradicts professional judgement. Evidence of this type of pressure coming from the upper levels of the bureaucratic hierarchy to reverse a decision previously made were identified. Whilst decisions are made and changed frequently in business once new information is made available, the examples cited depicting what I have termed 'compromised autonomy' demonstrate a clash of values and opinions and a reluctance of the part of the MM to comply with decisions that they perceive to be flawed and experienced discomfort with.

"Yes, but he got something, he got, you see, looking at it in a bad way, he got pressure put on me to change an advice he didn't like and he hoped to do that by relying on his network. So I don't like that" (Nom Mgr).

Examples of the senior executive experiencing pressure from external forces, such as business, political or personal networks and placing the onus on Middle management to give 'face' by offering solutions was explicitly cited in 2 interviews and was frequently cited throughout the data corpus implicitly in the description of the Government as weak and subject to external pressure. Whilst the data offered contrasting opinions relating to managerial style and forms of decision making, it was clear that the

hierarchy is clearly defined and decision making, whilst collaborative in style, aligns with a top down approach.

Control of work content, work flow and process's is the core function of a middle manager and it can be seen from the conceptual model (Figure 2) that MM's are variously described as; expert problem solvers (Delemestri and Walenbach, 2005; Mediator's enabling strategy (Nonaka, 1994); Strategic implementers (Balogun and Johnson, 2004); facilitators of emancipatory dialogue (Raelin, 2002 and effective people managers (Currie and Proctor, 2005). But autonomy and control of time/workflow, job content and working hours were documented as controversial. This was most prevalent with the IMP cohort, the most 'junior' level of middle manager who could not take time out of their working day to attend interviews. But at every level of the middle managerial strata problems of this nature were identified, most notably relating to changing targets and workloads.

"Housing demand in HK is very high, even in the past 20 years, higher and higher, our challenge is meeting that demand, for example 20 years ago our production is 35,000 flat per year, then at some point it jump to 100,000 per year, now after the Beijing issue it has dropped to 15,000 The challenge is for the whole department, we need to adjust our production to suit that difference, the difference will not come from our department, it will be a financial decision, the challenge is how to adjust our work to suit that always changing things, one year they say we want this then suddenly they want this now, but the civil service is not the private sector, where you can employ someone immediately, we have procedures, my biggest problem is how to manage my workforce to cope with these changes. This year, no repairs, next year, yes all repairs, I need to do something immediately to cope with it, these kind of changes happen all the years" (Snr level MM).

"when I first joined the department I didn't like changes, changes really upset me, things that I worked, turned out to be rubbish, dump into the bin, the boss wanted instead of 2,000 flats: 'I want a few thousand more', but as time goes by I see that change is inevitable" (Snr Level MM).

What can be observed from the above corresponding quotes examining changes to housing production is that firstly, autonomy and control of workflow is impacted by

external factors informing the need for greater/lesser housing demand and secondly that control is stymied by internal processes, such as recruitment strategy (slow in comparison to the private sector) and relationships with the senior executive (pressure communicated through target imposition and preferred outcomes). Whilst the view is divulged that change is inevitable, middle managers express greater acceptance of external change drivers and greater frustration with internal process's impeding the ability to predict and react to changes in work flow.

4.5.2.2 Accountability

The data from all three sub-groups in the employee cohort paints an interesting picture regarding blame and responsibility. The survey data on junior level MM's suggests that they see responsibility as generally dispersed across the managerial strata, but with some notable exceptions. Whilst we cannot infer too much from this statistical data it does show there is a clear perception that junior level managers believe those who hold the authority and power are not the same as those who take responsibility for outcomes. Bureau Secretaries, political cadre, held the most authority, whilst Heads of Department, managerial cadre, took most responsibility for policy outcomes. This disconnect between authority and responsibility may be fuelling the tension between political and managerial (technocrat) cadre within the organisation. The interview data allows us to explore this idea more deeply.

Table 4.8: Junior MM Survey question - Authority

Who has the authority to implement policy decisions?						
Answer Options	1 (least authority)	2	3	4	5 (most authority)	Response Count
Head of Department	0	1	2	18	11	32
Bureau Secretary	1	0	4	5	22	32
Administrative Officers	0	1	7	16	8	32
Civil Servants (technocrats)	6	9	9	8	0	32
Whole of department	4	6	12	9	0	31
Other (please specify)						0
answered question						32
skipped question						4

Table 4.9: Junior MM Survey question: Responsibility

Who is held responsible for the outcomes of policy implementation?						
Answer Options	1 (least responsible)	2	3	4	5 (most responsible)	Response Count
Head of Department	0	0	3	9	19	31
Bureau Secretary	2	3	4	7	16	32
Administrative Officers	2	3	9	14	3	31
Civil Servants (technocrats)	4	2	13	7	5	31
Whole of department	2	2	7	11	9	31
Other (please specify)						1
answered question						32
skipped question						4

Senior level MM's, clearly identify with levels of responsibility and state that they are willing to take personal responsibility for mistakes or outcomes which are considered flawed. As the following quotes suggest from two different MM's suggest; firstly taking blame or responsibility is an uneasy burden, requiring courage and self-sacrifice, but senior level managers are willing to take at least a portion of it where they have made a mistake.

“Always the top guy responsible – maybe the whole team, depending on what is the mistake. It is part of your staff, part of your system, as a leader here, you set up your system and expect them to follow, but if something goes wrong, it may not be the brain, it may be the leadership. If something goes wrong you have to have the staffs respect, you have to have the guts to take the burden, maybe not the whole burden, but part of it, yes” (Snr level MM).

But in the second instance, where they are acknowledging it may not actually be their fault, but the perception is the blame will fall to the middle manager, whether it is a leadership issue, a dictat from above ‘*the big boss*’ or the ‘*top guy*’ and potentially the whole team may be required to share the blame. It is acknowledged that this is perceived as unfair, but part of the organisational culture.

“I think within the Government if something goes wrong the big boss should take the blame, but is not the case within the Government – they put the blame at the middle level – which is unfair” (Snr Level MM).

The senior level middle manager in this quote seems to be aligning himself with the middle tier and this quote is linked to the dis-connect between political cadre at the top of the civil service and the management cadre below them.

Mid-level MM's were more concerned with strategies to circumvent a blame scenario and to avoid making mistakes or decisions which could have personal repercussions in the first place. They adopt a consensual approach to decision making and devolve responsibility through numbers. This is a good way of making an informed decision but it is also a method of resisting a lack of control concerning blame culture. Putting forward collective ideas to senior management dilutes the possibility of ‘*pinpointing one person*’. Thus they also give away the opportunity to take credit in an attempt to

avoid blame. It could be argued that collective decision making style is a facet of the Hong Kong public sector manager as this would conform to notions of collective Chinese values.

“we tend to discuss amongst ourselves at the project team level and we come to a consensus for what is the best answer/solution for that problem, then we will put forward our ideas to our management, and I think it has worked quite well for a number of projects, and also my team members they also feel confidence in collective ideas, it’s not just pinpointing one person and saying she/he is responsible for that, if you say something is collective ideas, if you free to discuss, that’s also good..... usually for building projects we need to consult a lot of people (Mid-Level MM).

Comparing across the strata, mid-level MM’s cite less examples of taking personal responsibility for policy implementation outcomes and prefer devolved responsibility, senior level MM’s cite more examples of taking, or partially taking, responsibility but perceive this in some instances as unjust.

“In the old days, in 1997, I think its centralised, but then the Government give some room for freely express our views, different levels say our views more freely and they will see whether this is something they need to take more seriously or take account of the rules, is becoming a decision by the Government as a whole, and everyone will abide by it and provide support where necessary, but now is becoming possibly a bureau that policy bureau responsible for that policy will be fighting for himself, for other side effect for things generated it’s not support, it’s not fully deliberated, so it’s not a sort of centralised or decentralised, its more fragmented, we still need very strong leadership from the top, so that everybody has got something and if things go wrong it’s not the policy bureau that face the blame, at least he’s not the one to deal with the problem, you’ve got a whole team of Government bureau to support him and help” (Mid-Level MM).

This mid-level MM is demonstrating the allegiance shown within departments and the desire to avoid ‘your department or bureau’ getting blamed. The quote has been typed exactly as it was said and as such reads in a slightly disjointed manner, but the general message is that departments are not taking into account the impact of their decisions/actions on other departments, the outcomes are not ‘fully deliberated’ and

that is when tensions arise with departments '*fighting for themselves.*' It is suggested that this turmoil is a new facet of the post 1997 government and that decision making has become more fragmented. This type of internal tension and lack of control over work processes and outcomes can add to the burden of the role. Returning to the literature briefly, Hassard *et al* (2008 p252) suggest that in countering this new labour process of middle managers - senior managers need to relieve the pressure on middle managers, by removing internal competition and re-building. It is unclear if this is a strategy of senior management, but HR are attempting to alleviate the pressure but creating mixed departmental groups on the training programme.

What can be deduced from the comparison of compromised autonomy between the three sub-groups is that firstly, senior level Middle Managers are willing to take the greatest level of responsibility, but perceive the top tier (looking at the political level above themselves) as unfairly blame avoidant and likely to point the finger at the middle level. Secondly mid-level MM's seek to devolve responsibility and avoid individuals at their level receiving blame, but accept the sharing of collective responsibility. Thirdly statistics gathered from the junior level MM's highlight the perception that those who make the decisions and have the authority to implement policy are not the same people as those who are responsible for the outcomes. This highlights the tension between the political, authority holding cadre and the managerial, compromised authority cadre.

Consultative decision making overall is viewed as the preferred method of working and part of the organisational culture and is informed by managerial values. Interviewees clearly feel the benefit of drawing widely on expert advice before formulating decisions and cite confidence in collective ideas. This is information gathering and an aid to formulating decisions which have not already been made, which is quite distinct from drawing on coalitions of power to enable the acceptance and delivery of a decision which has already been made. However consultative decision making also appears to mask accountability by spreading the responsibility so that you "*cannot just pinpoint one person.*" Taking this point further the data also reveals a fear of the repercussions of making the wrong decision. Accounts given in the interviews show mixed views regarding taking blame for mistakes, whilst some interviewees were at pains to accept blame for a mistake, others observed an

avoidance of responsibility taking amongst colleagues, but most consistently there was an acceptance that no one person should be blamed or scape-goated.

“So where there is something wrong there is an unwillingness to take responsibility for it, get somebody else to take the responsibility for it, which is an anathema to me, I mean if I’ve written it it’s my fault, full stop” (Nom Mgr).

Whilst consultative decision making, within the department, is preferred, the public sector preference for ‘joined-up’ government, presents more of a challenge. Divisions between policy bureaus are observed, resulting in tensions between departments and the perception of decision making as fragmented and lacking coherence with an overarching organisational strategy.

Relationship Management and the extended remit for control responsibility

Control of relationships is at the forefront of the middle managerial challenge, with managers at all levels citing difficulties managing aspects of the relationship with their superiors, such as expectation management and with their subordinates, most commonly motivational issues. The tabled quotes show a weariness in the effects of workload intensification and frustration, that as a middle manager *‘you cannot resist it’* but at the same time, subordinates are perceived to be resisting WI by simply not doing the work.

Managers have in the past sought to regain control by outsourcing projects to contractors, thus bypassing some of the internal recruitment and motivation issues relating to fluctuations in service demand. However, in Hong Kong, this practice has in reality diluted control of outcomes and resulted in scandals linked to quality and ethics. As such contractor relationships are now carefully monitored with middle managers seeking to take back control of quality and service to the public. In doing so a compromise has been reached about handling work intensification through numerical flexibility and the use of contractors for recruitment and motivating internal staff sufficiently to meet the performance objectives.

“And that was ‘Fan Long’, it is still a little bit tilted...that lead to the resignation of our chairman...[Sinead Chan], and later our director was disgraced, so Alma (current boss) she drive in 50 quality initiatives, going at one time, safety , quality, system change, many many many...and the direction was the staff was very very upset – the reorganisation structure the staff didn’t like it, another approach is slow down a bit, a few at a bit, so with that and more cooperation with the staff associations.....they demand more post open, better work, better control of the consultants [contractors] to make sure they deliver and also we build in a better control mechanism” (Snr level MM).

The above quote shows the middle position of even a senior manager as she manages the expectations and implementation of change passed down from her superior, whilst simultaneously working with the staff associations to manage the relationship and grievance coming from subordinate staff subject to change. The same manager goes on later in the interview transcript to describe her own feelings and experience of the process, citing that *“we can easily get frustrated – as head of my section I cannot be seen by my colleagues that I am getting worn down, I have to be boosting up them”*. As head of a section this individual has a fairly senior role, but still identifies with her ‘colleagues’ frustrations and feels the need to present an image of being in control.

And this is linked into the final basic theme, which is control of the image of the government and the department. Managers also cite a strong identification with their employer and their department. The image of the government was not directly mentioned in the interview or survey questions, but became an emergent theme due to frequency of the topic initiated by the interviewee. Participants cited avoiding being challenged in Legco, avoiding difficult questions from the media, avoiding public embarrassment and maintaining standards as elements of image presentation which were perceived to be within their control, part of the work remit and a large part of the training agenda.

Table 4.10: Labour Process Codes: Control

Basic theme (Expanded from the data)	Sample Excerpt from Illustrative Quotes	Broader theme
Complacent/conformist or inhibited decision making	<p>“nowadays it seems that the policy is pushed by one policy bureau, then other bureau’s affected are not consulted more thoroughly, so we have some difficulties at the end of the day.”</p> <p>“Especially for on going projects you become run into a very difficult engineering condition, the easy parts are done and then becoming the contract entering into a more difficult phase, you have to lead the project teams to push the consultants contractors and to address all the difficulties we encounter. I think the problem now is too many projects on the back lines and then the workers, sub-contractors, dropping, but our jobs are more demanding now, its very difficult.”</p>	<p>Compromised autonomy</p> <p>Barriers to Lines of support (Kanter 1979; Bolton and Houlihan 2010)</p>
Top down hierarchy (decisions made by boss)	<p>“Actually I think it is top down and that this is easier than bottom up. So when we do something change we always ask our big boss, what is your direction, after we have direction then we will ask colleagues of different grades”.</p>	
Autonomy – control of time/job content/working hours.	<p>“I tried to send out 2 rounds of the reminder, and also at the reunions, I told them I have an independent researcher, but for middle managers, but finding an hour to meet you and get senior approval, is difficult, and there may be practical difficulties”</p>	

	<p>“If we have business groups growing too large they will have their hands in every pot. I don’t know how we could deal with that it’s becoming difficult”</p> <p>“In the old days. It’s very easy for us to just pause in the middle of the project, then we have some final plans at quite a premature stage we are consulting the District council and the project will go through, now we have to start the process earlier. It’s very difficult for and the consultants, who spend a lot of time and effort and difficult for us to assess the time and effort required.”</p> <p>“Because the higher you get in the Government, the more sense of helplessness you have, you can’t do everything yourself, you have to rely on other people to do it for you, to help you do it.”</p>	
<p>Consultative decision making</p>	<p>we tend to discuss amongst ourselves at the project team level and we come to a consensus for what is the best answer/solution for that problem, then we will put forward our ideas to our management, and I think it has worked quite well for a number of projects, and also my team members they also feel confidence in collective ideas, it’s not just pinpointing one person and saying she/he is responsible for that, if you say something is collective ideas, if you free to discuss, that’s also good..... usually for building projects we need to consult a lot of people</p>	
<p>Fragmented decision making (not joined up Government)</p>	<p>In the old days, in 1997, I think its centralised, but then the Government give some room for freely express our views, different levels say our views more freely and they will see whether this is something they need to take more seriously or take account of the rules, is becoming a decision by the Government as a whole, and everyone will abide by it and provide support where necessary, but now is becoming possibly a bureau that policy bureau responsible for that policy will be fighting for himself, for other side effect for things generated it’s not support, it’s not fully deliberated, so it’s not a sort of centralised or decentralised, its more fragmented</p>	

<p>Managing relationship with boss</p>	<p>I think they will think I am a kind leader but not a tough leader, I may understand why they can't produce the result, so to a certain extent I know I should be a more tough leader, unfortunately I am just a middle manager, I have some difficulties from the senior director, it's how to strike a balance and manage both</p>	<p>Relationship management and resistance.</p> <p>Barriers to Lines of support (Kanter 1979; Bolton and Houlihan, 2010)</p>
<p>Managing relationship with subordinates</p>	<p>"I think they have their way of dealing with it, I would say few have actually resisted..changes, I mean wither or not they will actually go along with it the way you want them to is another thing. I think it's easy for them just to ..um..they don't actually have to resist – they just do nothing basically.</p> <p>Or can we say the change is not drastic, its gradually, it's getting more and more urgent, where previously perhaps you can revert to client within 2 weeks, reasonable but now with the technology email fax and everything is now, real time almost so well you just have to cope, you can't resist."</p>	
<p>Blame – for mistakes/policy outcomes</p>	<p>"I think within the Government if something goes wrong the big boss should take the blame but is not the case within the Government – they put the blame at the middle level – which is unfair – if my branch, my boys don't do something – I know well in advance and I will take the full responsibility or the blame, I won't excuse the policy or decision"</p>	<p>Accountability</p>
<p>Responsibility for decision making</p>	<p>"As a professional officers, we will bring the management attention to the risk, pros and cons for the issue. We will provide them suggested solutions. We will enforce the policy once decided by the management and update them the situation."</p>	

Control of work flow using contractors/outsourcing	“we build in a better control mechanism , in the past we will outsource to a consultant who can handle the project right from the early stage through to completion, but now we can only outsource the consultant from building committee approval right to tender, the supervision will be ours, so that’s a change. ”	Expanded remit for ‘control’ responsibility.
Control of image of GOVERNMENT/department.	“Since handing over in 1997, I think that it is dominated by the political legislator, even though our top civil service guy, the perm secretaries, they don’t have the....we call them a weak government, even though we are doing this very nicely for the HK people, they will challenge you, you will face a lot of challenges. If you are a strong Government, you don’t have to be afraid, but now we are writing some press release, report for presenting, you have to be very careful to avoid subsequent questions, you don’t get challenged ”	

Barrier to Lines of Resource

By taking a critical realist position, this data needs to be presented and analysed in a way which delves beneath the surface appearance and challenges the assumptions and HR rhetoric surrounding the benefits of training and up-skilling. The theme of control presents many tensions and areas of conflict. These areas of internal conflict align with the literature on power, specifically Kanter's (1979) notions of power failure in management circuits as described by Bolton and Houlihan (2010). There is clear evidence of barriers to lines of resource as managers acknowledge the inherent difficulty in being able to motivate staff through financial or promotional rewards in a timescale that is appropriate for the goals being set. This is described by both the employee and organisational cohorts and is reluctantly accepted as part of the organisational culture.

Whilst steps have been taken to improve this impediment to progress, the nature of the public sector organisation makes this particular private sector practice difficult to ape. Circumventing staff shortages and reward difficulties via the use of contractors, brings its own problems, namely a lack of control over managerial process's and disparity in the nature of the employment contract. Whilst contractors grapple with the issue of job security, permanent staff are hard pressed in different ways. One interviewee, who had a large amount of responsibility for managing contractors spoke specifically about the difficulties of managing 'foreign' contractors [non-Chinese] and their preference for adhering to contractual obligations regarding working time.

"Some people they are, for some occasions we have to work late to complete the work, I don't want them to work late every night, they may have to stay till 9pm to do so, they will give you a smile 'Oh it's all right', I know they are suffering of course they are, they will be hungry and want to go home, and me as well, but I always remember the occasions that they are willing to stay back. But there are some, if they haven't done the work by 6pm, they will have this mind set, they will try to give you what they've got, by 6pm they will insist they have to go. So that's really the difference. What I should say they sometimes they will just give you the assurances, 'I have to go at 6pm, but call me any time if it's not very clear' so that's better, some better willing to stay till

completion of job, so that's the different degree, like to foreign contactor, they are right they follow the book, but if they could just do a little bit more" (Mid-level MM).

Whilst cultural differences did not emerge as a significant theme and was not the focus of the study, management attitudes towards commitment and motivation was. Contractual difficulties with outsourced work is commonplace globally throughout public sector organisations and there are many examples globally of civic projects gone wrong fuelling public dissatisfaction, rather than improving the efficiency and performance of the organisation in question.

Additionally, direct blockages to resource were cited as problematic for middle managers. Whilst they are tasked with project completion and managing both permanent staff and contractors, senior management have different goals and agenda's. In the next example the manager spoke of his frustration in managing projects where valuable members of staff would be moved before project completion onto other work, or contractors released, creating stress and difficulty in the final stages. This highlights the problem of senior management overriding middle management objectives and the MM being left to juggle the consequences. Interestingly the final section of the quote highlights the problem of communicating with the 'boss' and having to report success amidst the pressure of reduced manpower and resource.

"we have to push for our projects and also seek the management support for resources, and have to speak and let the management know the also the difficulty we face, also the how to do it in a more smooth way to complete the jobs for a successful completion for our management, is difficult to..... The problem is once you've got the project moving then your boss will think everything is under control and so then your boss will try to move your colleagues, resources and team, and you have report your position" (Mid-level MM).

Having a numerically and/or functionally flexible workforce and strategically moving people from one project to another is one way of dealing with a lack of resourcing power, but it doesn't give middle managers the power they say they need to motivate

their 'permanent' core staff. Even where staffing budgets have been relaxed, the longevity and rigour of the recruitment process itself is a barrier to expedient recruitment in response to fluctuations of demand for work output. Altered hiring practices are viewed as in opposition to other civil service goals, but there is the potential for a reward overhaul.

Squeezed resources and frustration with reward allocation was selected as a theme from the data as it was frequently cited as a barrier to motivation, however one interviewee from the Organisational cohort and the most senior manager interviewed did point out that different bureau have different levels of discretion regarding reward allocation, with some departments having greater autonomy and capacity to act as a 'business'. The example of the Post Office was cited. As the changing context of the Hong Kong civil service progress's the research would suggest that middle managers are more open to adapted reward practices and that further research is required by the organisation to determine the potential benefits and drawbacks of this NPM style initiative.

"I know some department in HK they have implemented a bonus scheme, I don't know how they are doing, but in the DOJ, we thought about this this 10-15 years ago, they asked us whether we wanted to participate in that scheme and we decided not to do it, for management reasons, so there are actually departments in Hong Kong that are giving bonus's, if they perform well, these departments are what we call trading funds in Hong Kong, so they have a regular income that they can maintain, even generating profit for the business, post office, the electrical and mechanical services department, in a sense they operate more like a business" (Nom Mgr).

Any change to resource allocation in the public sector is rightly subject to scrutiny and there must be a balance between fiscal responsibility and the responsibility to employ people under fair terms and conditions. Bonus's act as a 'sticking plaster' within a culture of work intensification. Whilst it is fair to pay people for the extra effort or discretionary work that they do, or that the organisation would like to incentivise them to do, long hour's culture has its own result. This has been documented in the data as contributing (amongst other factors) towards; 'stress, weariness, depression, high blood pressure'. A picture emerges of middle managers who work very long hours and

who push their staff to work long hours. The long-hours culture in the organisation acts as a barrier to well-being and adds to the pressure experienced, this is further evidence of managers being both controlled and controllers. Whilst the middle management remit is frustrated by barriers to lines of resource by both structure and organisational culture, there are other axis of power to consider.

Barriers to Lines of Support

Kanter's (1979) second dimension of 'Lines of support' which is defined as "*the freedom to act with discretion and exercise judgement and assurance of support from above for their actions*" (Bolton and Houlihan, 2010 p384) also acts as a barrier to middle management autonomy and power. Two examples have been selected which highlight a lack of support from senior management. In the contrasting quotes below interviewees both alluded to and gave direct examples of instances where decisions they had made, which were both legally sound and compatible with policy, were questioned by senior management and pressure was applied to influence them to change the decision. In both instances of explicit examples being cited, the reasoning behind it was to protect 'face' and avoid conflict or difficulty. Where these examples differ is in the reaction of the middle manager. The first reluctantly complied with the senior management and looked for flexibility in the regulations to make changes. The second resisted the proposed change and shored up her position with careful preparation. These examples contribute to the debate surrounding the image of the government as weak and in the pockets of business and highlight the difficulties of pressure being pushed down to the middle management level. Clearly external networks and contacts of those in senior management are capable of exerting influence.

Example 1a: Avoiding Embarrassment

" if a certain reg comes into force, I can easily inform the operations section, some owners of the ship has been built already and are not able to comply with the regulation, they want to register in HK, they are the ones to think about the

consequences they may be facing, recently, it happened a few times very embarrassing, we insist on regulations being followed [ship building regulations], then the next half an hour the boss will receive a phone call saying – can you consider this – so before my boss gets a phone call – we see what we can do. I want to stress for us to make a policy very easy, strict 100% compliance – but there is always leeway – see if you can give them more time and see how you can help them. And so we arrive at a win: win situation. It's no good my boss receiving the phone calls, he will say 'you are causing problems', we try to avoid that, saying no and my boss getting a phone call, so if its avoidable we try to help out – rigid flexibility" (Senior level MM).

Example 1b: The boss is always right

"Yes and the boss is always right, sometimes because the boss wants me to do this, something against my belief, I hate it – I think ok, if you want to do this – ok I put everything in writing, I will do email according to your phone call 5 mins ago, I am given to understand you want to pursue this way and put it in a file – what can you do?" (Senior level MM).

Example 2: He got pressure put on me

"I'll give you a classic example of that hierarchy, I had done an advice for the [large department] and I knew they wouldn't like it, because I knew they wouldn't like it, I'd taken a lot of care with it and I was very happy with it, so I issued it. It had no sooner arrived than my boss came to see me, 'Oh I see you've done the advice for the [department]'....'What they don't like it?' Why would he be coming in my office – well he was at university with the [Head of department], so he [head of department] picks up the phone to him and says 'we've got this advice and it causes a lot of difficulty' and my boss said that to me 'Oh I was at Uni with [him], and he's asked me to look at it again, could you look at it again?' and I said 'Yes yes I'll definitely look at it again.' But I'll tell you now that I took such a lot of care with it, that it won't change and he said 'look just will you have a look' so he could say to his classmate, so I gave him face to say to his classmate 'they are going to look at it again'. So I looked at it again... Yes, but he got something, he got, you see, looking at it in a bad way, he got pressure put on me to change an advice he didn't like and he hoped to do that by relying on his network. So I don't like that" (Nom Mgr).

Whilst middle managers will always be subject to top level strategy and decision making, the above quotes highlight the tensions that exist in the relationship and the pressure that senior management can impose to override the judgements of the professionals concerned. This is a clear limitation of the freedom to act with discretion and a barrier to middle management decision making. Placing these quotes together we start to see a pattern of senior management authority, overriding those who have a considerable amount of responsibility in a bid to be agreeable and avoid conflict with external sources. This also echoes Scott's (2010) assertion that middle managers can no longer be politically neutral and are instead required to be 'obedient to the dictates of political appointees'. A lack of neutrality is at odds with an ethos of public service and I draw a parallel between this and Bolton and Houlihan's paper (2010) suggesting that front line managers act as a mediator of the divergent interests of employees, senior management and customers – or in this case the public. Middle managers do not appear to have sufficient power to resolve public dilemmas or problems, due to the complexity of allegiance (McMillan and Massey, 2004) and the divergent interests of; the voting public; the political elite and the influential HK business community.

Accountability and Blame

It has been established in the results chapter that middle managers have a strong preference for collective decision making as one of the barriers (obj 2) to the efficacious work and labour process of middle managers is fear of blame or embarrassment. The data has revealed that there are mixed views regarding who is responsible for the outcomes of policy enactment, with the majority of participants perceiving blame apportioned at the operational middle level, not the political senior level. The literature is very clear on the consequences of a blame culture (scape-goating and job insecurity) and that managers will seek to protect themselves from it (Brewer, 2014), as do political appointees, who do so by pushing it down the operational (middle management) line (Burns *et al* 2012).

The pressure then lies on the middle manager to adopt an identity which acknowledges being subject to control, but is also a subject and object of resistance. From the quotes cited above, Example 1a and 1b demonstrate what Harding (2014)

would describe as a critical/managerialist identity, as the manager involved did not like what was being asked of him, but complied never the less. In contrast Example 2 demonstrates a middle manager who could be described as having a 'critical/resistant' identity. This manager anticipated a problem and prepared in advance so she would not have to acquiesce to a senior management demand. As such there is some evidence of resistance from middle management, but in a very subtle and indirect way.

What we see within this case are muted lines of support. Middle managers cannot always rely upon the assurance of support from above and in the majority of accounts given, seek to overcome this by

In gaining support from within their own ranks through devolved decision making and responsibility. Or covering up to at least make sure they are presenting the right image. Example three highlights the pressure middle managers are under to be seen to be responsible and accountable. Whilst this dilutes the amount of autonomy and discretion managers exert over their jobs (Felstead *et al* 2004) it is a trade-off for conflict avoidance (harmony) and job security. Example four highlights the cost of mistakes and blame culture filtering its way down to the performance appraisal. In this example the interviewee is quite candid in revealing the cost of a mistake is to be held back in your career. However, example 5 highlights the way managers do at times try to evade responsibility for complaint resolution. This has been attributed in the wider data, to the overwhelming and increased number of complaints. Middle managers just want to get them off their desk as quickly as possible. This highlights the difference between being seen to take responsibility and being able to offer a resolved outcome.

What can be concluded from this section of the thesis is that Middle managers' roles have been subject to significant change since 1997 and a variety of barriers exist which impact on the efficacy of middle managerial work. Delivery of public services is made harder by an organisational culture which is fearful of exposure and blame and lacks the support of top management. The practice of passing things on to other departments and in effect avoiding responsibility for problems which are too complex to solve are symptomatic of a blame culture.

Example 3: Image of responsibility

*“I think they need to understand people well, civil servants are very different from those working in the private sector, less money motivated, so they need to be treated fairly. And also need to see that you are also responsible for everything you plan, all you do, you can’t shrink back sometimes you need to stand up – some villagers they complain about the inspection, about their benefits, they can complain about a lot of things, you have to stand up and fairly deal with the matters. Don’t patronise issues, you need to be seen to be responsible to be doing something about it. **It’s like an image about responsibility**” (Mid-level MM)*

Example 4: The cost of mistakes

*“No no, it’s reflected in their appraisal reports, so you could have been marked ticked, fit for promotion, **you make a mistake and you are no longer fit for promotion. It’s as bad as that**” (Nom Mgr).*

Example 5: Taking responsibility for increased complaints

“So I had this man on the phone, it’s quite a sad story, so I said Oh, he said to me, I know from your tone of voice, you’re not going to help me are you – you’re going to put me onto somebody else, I said, well, no - no, he said, don’t tell me that, you’re the 4th person I’ve spoken to. So I said I’m really sorry I’m not going to be able to help you now but I promise I’m not going to put you onto somebody else, I will find somebody who will phone you. So I said I promise I will. Anyway I had to chase round the civil service bureau and they did phone him and this man phoned me back and thanked me. But this is what happens, people get the run around, ‘no no not my department’ so instead of me saying no it’s not my department let me check with that department and I’ll get back to you, not giving someone another name and another number because it’s so frustrating” (Nom Mgr).

The last three examples (No’s 3,4,and 5) which focus on ‘looking good and avoiding mistakes over practical outcomes’ confirm Pederson and Hartley’s (2008) research - which outlined that where employees fear exposure, they are likely to be more cautious and risk averse and perhaps links to the cultural preference to maintain face and avoid conflict.

Drawing together these discussion points, the previously documented reform measures (see ch 1) and attempting to meet the first objective of the study, it can be identified that the specific changes to middle managerial work since 1997 and the barriers to work efficacy as perceived by the study cohort are as follows:

Figure 5: Changes and barriers to middle management work since 1997

Changes to Middle managerial Work since 1997 (HKCS)	Barriers to work efficacy have been identified as:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Intensification: • Higher volume of complaints from the public • Longer project completion timescales due to the need for more consultation • More work volume due to contractor difficulties and staffing fluctuation. • More time devoted to public engagement and buy-in to policy initiative. • Greater Work complexity: • More problem solving responsibility with the need for inter-departmental co-operation and contacts. • A more politicised front facing role requiring defence relating to policy implementation and outcomes before Legco, the media, the DC's and lobbying groups. • Change in organisational culture to a more public service orientated culture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divergent goals between political elite; voting public; business community and 'the organisation' impacting on MM strategy. • Bi-urification challenge: Lack of support and understanding of middle management difficulties from the senior political cadre. • Public hostility to the government • Structural barriers relating to staff loss during restructuring and consequent slow, bureaucratic recruitment process's hampering work flow management. • Public sector HRM process's relating to reward autonomy. • Blame culture and Limited managerial autonomy in the decision making process. • Long hours culture

The changes to middle managerial work clearly point to the need for a new skill set which can meet the scope of the job as it exists now. However, it is clear from the analysis of the barriers preventing work efficacy that both the external and internal context present considerable challenges to middle managers. This analysis would support the first proposition put forward in the thesis that:

Proposition 1:

The labour process of middle managers is increasingly changing and subject to work intensification and reduced power in the decision making/shaping process.

4.5.3 Skills

Whilst table 4c has already highlighted the perceived training outcomes linked to skills an expanded version re-framing the broader themes in LPT terms is presented here. Considering skills from a labour process perspective sheds light, less on organisational outcomes and more on individual outcomes. Clearly there are mixed results for skills development and when considered in relation to both work intensification and control the data presents an interesting picture.

Soft skills development has been re-framed as up-skilling as this is a development of the existing managerial leadership competency set. However, skills relating to media handling, complaint handling and engagement with the public via district councils has been framed as re-skilling as this represents changes to the job content for civil servants and moving away from classic managerial competencies to more public service orientated competencies – which may differ from the original technical skill set they started with prior to promotion onto the managerial ladder. For example, a lawyer or IT professional may already have had good generic problem solving skills, but this is being re-framed into objection handling capacity specific to current contextual circumstances.

Enhancing Social Capital, via access to Lines of Information and Support

It has been identified in the data collection that there is evidence of middle managers gaining access to 'lines of information' (Bolton and Houlihan, 2010, citing Kanter 1979) through collaborative working, this was identified at all levels. 'Shared experiences' and 'aiding decision making through joined up networks' was identified as a theme from the data at all levels, but specifically prominent for junior-level middle managers. As managers become more experienced and progress through the stages of the training remit, there was also evidence cited of and more emphasis placed on, mid and senior level middle managers gaining access to 'Lines of support'. At a mid-level this was expressed through knowing colleagues in other departments who could and would help to solve a particular problem, thus aiding MM's autonomy and ability to exercise judgement. At a senior level we identified that MM's are able to take this

externally and gain support from contacts out-with the organisation in order to build a coalition and give credence to an idea/work solution presented.

From one perspective it can be argued that the training is facilitating the expansion of social networks which are aiding performance at work and helping middle managers to overcome work intensification and complexity by drawing on support from others. However, it can also be seen that this does not fully align with the basic principle and definition given for 'Lines of Support' which Bolton and Houlihan described not only as 'the freedom to act with discretion and exercise judgement' but also as having 'assurance and support from above'. Participants were not specifically describing help from colleagues at a more senior level, they were describing help from colleagues in different departments, they were tackling the issue of cross departmental collaboration or fragmentation, not challenging hierarchy.

The testimony given of going externally and utilising pre-established professional networks, such as the university network, in order to build coalitions and gain support for ideas, demonstrates the difficulty in presenting ideas to or challenging the senior management hierarchy. The abbreviated quote below (see results chapter for full quotation) shows the extent of the challenge faced by middle managers, the creative usage of personal networks and the requirement to go beyond internal hierarchy and structure to gain personal agency.

"If it was just me putting in a document to the housing management colleagues and the boss to look at they will say it is rubbish we will not bother...but by drawing support from the Chinese University...I am going one step further" (Snr level MM).

I have suggested that an attitude or skill for networking [sociability; helpfulness; reciprocity; relationship] is now a pre-requisite and essential component of the job and it runs in parallel with the ability to manage both up-wards and downwards. Relationship management has been identified as one of the key themes in both the literature, for example, when considering the two-way nature of control (Armstrong 1989) and in the data collection (see table 12: Labour process codes – control). However, if we consider the effectiveness of the training and go back to the original goals of the HR department, weak linkages are made with the challenge of managing

upwards. References are made to communication with the public, handling stress and access to internal networks, but the specific goal of greater collaboration with senior management and political cadre officers is absent.

Table 4.11: Labour Process Codes: Skills

Basic Theme (Expanded from data)	Sample Excerpt Illustrative Quotes	Broader theme
Cross-functional skills (functional flexibility)	IMP course provides more positive perspectives of motivating and tapping the positive input of colleagues. After all, even we, middle managers from different departments/bureaux, are all different because of different professional or work background.	Up-skilling
Confidence increase	I had a very distinct fear about the pressure I am going to face at LEGCO, and I think this helped	
Managerial skills (motivational)	when I speak to people they are training to lead, for example in adopting a more democratic style of management, hearing more about what their subordinate want to say about things, I do believe that they are somehow influenced, though they may not know themselves, but we can see the ,maturity and how they handle situations	
Informed decision making (via networking)	For the networking, it's helpful, because all my colleagues are from different departments, when I need help I just ring up and they help	Access to: Lines of Information and Support (Bolton and Houlihan 2010; Kanter 1979)
Media handling skills	When I handled verbal complaints/discussions from NGOs/complainants, I used the skills learnt in the course, particularly those for dealing with the media	Re-skilling
Communication skills – linked to engaging public	during the course they talk a lot about public engagement, and there are ways to do it, like district consultation, how do we behave, how can we get our message through at these type of difficult meetings, so I think I've learned	

	a lot and after that I have attended quite a few district meetings, so I try to remember the technique that they provided at the course, it went ok,.	
Objection (Complaint) handling skill.	<p>Yes, the IMP course helped me a lot, in particular the skill in communications and how to handle complaints. Through the case study and the group project, it effectively widens the scope of my analytical power.</p> <p>Another one for the course is how to deal with media, because I think we often receive enquiries, it might be pure enquiry, friendly, sometimes it can be a complaint, so the case studies and the actual interview organised at the course, and for me it was not unpleasant but uncomfortable. So now whenever I receive the telephone calls, I get myself prepared, I think that was useful.</p> <p>When I handled verbal complaints/discussions from NGOs/complainants, I used the skills learnt in the course, particularly those for dealing with the media.</p>	
Theoretical advantage only	<p>Maybe not really help address or overcome the problems directly, but do provide some food for thought and lead me to think more strategically</p> <p>I will not say it's not useful, it will equip me theoretically what to do, I think so it prepare you to be a leader, its good in terms of preparation, but it cannot help you to deal with practical issues.</p>	Barriers to up-skilling
Irrelevant training	I am not required to deal with the Media and Legco and District Council in my present post. After attending the IMP course, I tend to pay more attention to the needs of other interested parties and try to motivate them as far as possible.	

Discord with managerial reality	And it's hard to come by I think people with insight or foresight, it's not something that you can actually develop or learn, well you can in some cases, but in most cases it comes with the person I think. Either you are the type with foresight or you're not	
Experiential learning perceived as superior (secondments)	<p>We achieve it through training posting outside the division to let our junior staff or our counsellor at a more junior stage in their career exposure for a period of time, so they get to know more about the job, cause it's a big department, there a huge range of duties</p> <p>Hard to say that is because of the training, you see people maturing, but perhaps that's due to experience rather than the training</p>	
Lack of motivation and opportunity	Family, a lot of these courses now involve being away from home, and particularly if it's in the mainland, you have to push people to go	

Opportunity to up-skill

In the literature review I argued that irrespective of the goals of the organisation, individuals are trying to compensate for work complexity and degradation through the accumulation and use of networks and the exchange or sharing of power and authority. It is suggested that an element of firstly discretion in how managers choose to utilise their skills is available and secondly a framework of opportunity to up-skill must be present. The organisation, HKCS, has both provided and endorsed this opportunity, but clearly there is inequity in opportunity. Not all managers can be nominated. Whilst one of the barriers to training cited was lack of motivation – in that training itself can be unappealing as the benefit is perceived as limited when weighed up against personal goals and family commitments of the individual concerned. Where work intensification is a problem, finding candidates who are both suitable in terms of skill, ability and motivation can be a challenge for the organisational representatives (nominating managers). Conversely being allowed to take time off for training if an individual is in a busy operational role can also be a problem and this was acknowledged by HR. The remit of work intensification is working against the organisational goal of preparing individuals to manage change.

Where it is acknowledged that training is a benefit, both in terms of aiding work efficacy, improving personal performance and meeting individual goals for progression within the organisation, the opportunity to up-skill is of importance.

The following quotes (1 and 2) sums up the requirement of the individual middle manager to assume and conform to a corporate identity and even the tensions between the HR department and Nominating managers in choosing 'appropriate' candidates. The organisational cohort demonstrates an understanding of the unwillingness of some middle managers to participate in the training and conform to the precepts of work intensification.

Organisational Cohort:

Example (1) Limitations of the department – selecting the right people

*“One of the challenges is – we can’t do this alone, we have to partner with the departments., to make the programme more effective, what I mean is the programme design and particular objectives is to groom this individual as a leader, to be the head of the department, so what we need the departments. to do is collaborate with us, and provide us with these potential officers, and they have a good succession management plan, **the officer himself should have a good idea that he is to be groomed. He have to work hard to see his potential, and he have to make an effort to overcome his weakness.** If we can collaborate like this, the programme would be more effectiveness, meanwhile we have to work harder to close the communication gap. It’s because the department itself has its own limitations, **the department itself might not provide you with the most appropriate officers to attend the programme”** (HR Manager).*

Example (2) Overworked staff

“I think there are ones that you know for sure would not participate, there are some obvious ones, it makes there point clear, they will do their job but in terms of taking further responsibilities at higher rank, you would leave them alone basically” (Nom Manager).

The next quotes (3 and 4) also show the difference in levels of confidence and autonomy of middle managers to reject or accept the training and the diversity of views regarding the benefit. The senior level middle manager(3) has the authority to reject an expensive training place citing family responsibilities and work life balance, the mid-level manager (4) is ‘too busy’ to take up HR’s suggestion of doing a PhD (necessary for the job?) but is honoured to be selected for the career enhancing LMD programme and feels she must ‘reward’ her employer for their investment via performance.

Employee Cohort:

Example (3) The cost of WLB

“But probably the boss look at me when you come back from a course – you have changed. It’s just a few day course – it’s not like you attend a course for several months, but obviously it is a prerequisite for climbing the ladder. I was asked to go to

Harvard for a prosecution course – but I didn't go – it clashed with my daughter's graduation. I prefer to go with my family. So I may lose the promotion prospect. I am a family man" (Senior level Middle Manager).

Example (4) Honoured but busy

"Actually I have 3 Master's degree and I would like to have a PhD – one of the programme directors would like me to do the PhD but I'm too busy to do it..... [the course LIA] It is something I am happy to learn...it is my honour to be nominated for the course, it's about a few weeks, so the government has a lot of investment in us and we try our best to learn and do our job good, as a reward to the government" (Mid-level manager).

Whilst all of the quotes above present some positive comments relating to up-skilling and investment in training, these are set against the themes of expectations of commitment and hard work; tensions relating to work life balance choices; long-hours culture and time pressure; pressure to 'climb the ladder' and incur additional workload/responsibility and discretion for selection onto the programme.

4.3.4 Contradictions and connections in LPT

Specifically, we can group these tensions, or as theory suggests, 'contradictions' at the heart of labour process theory, to demonstrate the difficulty middle managers have in extracting use value, or getting the full benefit or leadership development, either from a personal or organisational perspective. The contradictions are related to aspects of control; skills and work intensification.

Table 4.12: Contradictions underpinning labour process theory

LPT Theme	Author	Sample excerpt illustrative quote	Broader theme
'Contradiction'	*Developed from McGovern 2014.		
1.Two-way nature of middle managerial control – control versus consent.	Armstrong 1989 Thompson 1989	<p>"I listen to the people here, to make any changes there is bound to be a lot of barriers from LEGCO, the parties here are bound to object whatever you do, you have devote months of time trying to answer LEGCO questions, so unless it is very important and won't affect the safety of HK we try not to change it."</p> <p>"I believe everyone has to play a part – but you have to try your best to deliver – at the end of the day if the district council object and cannot let go of the project – then it is not to be blamed – I alert my senior to the problem – sometimes they say Oh you alert me too late, you should have call me earlier – however I still need them to support me"</p>	<p>Control</p> <p>(Much responsibility but limited control or support from above.</p> <p>Blocked – by authority and positional power.)</p>
2.Empowering forms of work contradicted by cost reduction regime.	McCann et al 2010; Bolton and Boyd 2003 Knights and McCabe 1999; 2000	<p>"But these days people don't want to be promoted, because they witness what a promoted colleague has to offer and many of them and many of them want to be 'happy troupers' we call them, you know 'leave me alone I'll do my work, efficiently, productively but leave me alone with all your chores, we don't want to be a part of it"</p>	<p>Skills + work intensification</p> <p>(Blocked via perception of WI)</p>

<p>3.Public/customer service orientation stymied – demand contradicted by ability to deliver quality outcome</p>	<p>Bolton and Houlihan 2010; Taylor and Bain (2005)</p> <p>Darr 2011</p> <p>Korczynski et al 2000</p>	<p>‘even if I do all the steps that I’m taught in the classroom, still at a certain point if there are political issues, I did all the consultation, but if there is a political party that does not follow the government, there is no trust of the government, it is bound to fail. There are real cases where consultation has been done, results are good, the government is confident about launching a policy, but for whatever reason, maybe it’s near political election time, everything became very political you have to shelve the policy, we are constantly facing the issue of academic, we know the knowledge, the process, we know the models, but implementation is a difficulty, the social issues are getting more and more complicated.’</p>	<p>Control</p> <p>(Blocked via process and structure)</p>
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These excerpts are analysed further in the discussion chapter but they highlight the difficulties. The first contradictory excerpt depicts the difficulty in gaining middle management autonomy in decision making as the senior manager tries to override decisions made. Blocked via power. The second excerpt demonstrates that despite the investment in skills development middle managers, talent management is blocked by the unappealing nature of promoted positions. The perception of promotion is blighted by work intensification and skills are under-utilised. The third excerpt depicts the contradiction between the desire to achieve public sector goals and the ability to actually do so, in this example, the benefit of skills development is blocked by process and structure (political/operational divide).

To re-cap the data reveals that middle managers perceive both negative and positive factors influencing their experience of work. Breaking down these factors through a labour process lens, the data is classified in terms of: work intensification; control and skills. Figure 5 visually demonstrates where the key perceptual areas of negative and positive impact are. The external context is perceived to impact mainly in a negative way, with political, social and economic factors contributing to increased workload, greater complexity of work and difficulties in controlling both work flow and work processes. The internal context is seen to contribute both negatively and positively to the individual managers' experience of work. Managerial values such as 'face', respect for hierarchy and a public sector service ethos contribute to resigned compliance to work intensification. Internal structures and tensions between; departments and political and managerial staff and a culture of top down directives contribute to perceptions of limited control.

Skills development is also perceived to be negatively impeded by both organisational restrictions to access, where departments are small and the selective criteria used to identify talent, but also by individual motivations such as lack of ambition, fear of promotion emanating from work intensification and personal factors such as family limitations.

Conversely the data also reveals that skills development is perceived to have a positive impact, where soft skills such as confidence building and communication skills are developed to complement the managerial role. Where complaint handling

becomes significant proportionally in workload, it can be argued that this represents re-skilling.

Table 4.13 Thematic table expanded to include analytic points		
Skills development	Work Intensification	Control
<p>Point: NPM initiatives required changed skill capacity in the public sectors, specifically focussing on social capital of employees with authors variously advocating:</p> <p>Authors: Negotiating, persuading and relationship building (Bichard, 2000; Hartley and Allison, 2000; Thac and Thompson, 2007; Pederson and Hartley, 2008; Hartley and Allison, 2010; Vyas, 2010) and a move from advisory skills to delivery (Cheung, 2013)</p> <p>Analysis: Evidence of networked and relational skills capacity is cited in the data as both crucial and a motivating factor in both the design and uptake of LMD.</p>	<p>Point: NPM contributes to work intensification by aping private sector practices [reducing job security – doing ‘more with less’, imposition of targets/cost cutting and additional performance management]</p> <p>Authors: De Vries and Nemec, 2013; Peter and Savioe, 1996; Gore, 2000; Brinkerhoff, 2008; Norton, 2007; Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe, 2006)</p> <p>Analysis: There is evidence of participants struggling with the ‘doing more with less ethos’ but also of them wishing they could implement more private sector practices, such as; monetary reward incentives to improve motivation and easier termination process’s. As such middle management appear to have ‘bought into’ the</p>	<p>Point: The two-way nature of control impacts the experience of work for middle managers.</p> <p>i.e. objects and subjects of control – objects and subjects of resistance.</p> <p>Authors: Armstrong, 1989; Thompson, 1989; Teulings, 1986; Harding et al 2014.</p> <p>Analysis: The data presents evidence of a managerial strata caught in the middle, who experience resistance not through formal third party channels but through more direct means, e.g staff not seeking promotion, not completing tasks requested etc and in turn the forms of resistance employed at their level (by MM’s) are subtle, designed to avoid saying ‘no’. Where stress and tension arises is where ‘no’ is not deemed possible and employee voice is limited.</p>

	NPM ethos despite the difficulties. They would like to exert more managerial control.	This is the point where Thompson's 'political' skills become important.
<p>Point: Definitions of skill have changed to encompass 'attitudes and personality traits'</p> <p>Authors: Warhurst et al 2004; Thompson and Smith, 2009)</p> <p>Analysis: There is scope to consider the attitude of 'harmonious relationships' or the trait of 'good relational skills' as a Chinese management value, but it is difficult to make distinctions between this and Western values of networking. This skill can be identified as of relevance to and prevalent in the public sector as 'political' skill – the ability to influence relationships where there are power differentials.</p>	<p>Point: The contradictory premise of NPM echoes the contradictions in LPT, as improved quality of public service delivery has to be reconciled with an emphasis on downsized public services which has implications for WI.</p> <p>Authors: De Vries and Nemeč, 2013</p> <p>Analysis: This contradiction was not lost on staff, who struggled with 'target management' and cited many examples (e.g. housing targets/control of contractors/ quality issues).</p>	<p>Point: A lack of control, demonstrated by barriers to 'power' impacts the ability of front line managers to deliver customer service and overcome structural barriers.</p> <p>Author: Bolton and Houlihan, 2010; Kanter, 1979; Teulings, 1986... 'Powerlessness'</p> <p>Analysis: The data reveals whilst MM's are trying to meet public service delivery criteria, volume of complaints and political opposition are making problem resolution challenging. I would agree with this point.</p>
<p>Point: Middle managers require an altered skills set which includes: 'political skills' in order to grapple with control and resistance.</p> <p>Author: Thompson and McHugh, (2002). Alternately this is described as 'resilience' (Bolton and Houlihan, 2010) and the skill of 'making out' (Sawchuk, 2006).</p>	<p>Large organisations are surviving on the 'goodwill' of white collar employees, a practice also described as 'informal labour'.</p> <p>Authors: Hassard et al 2009; Ford and Collinsons, 2011; Carter and Stevenson, 2012; Bolton and Wibberly, 2013).</p>	<p>Point: Distributed leadership – whilst touted as an 'ideal' in public service delivery in reality is a parsimonious definition which belies the undercurrent theme of giving additional responsibility without the additional authority or power to influence outcomes and as such is often downgraded to weaker definitions such as: shared, hybrid or collaborative leadership.</p>

<p>Analysis: The need for access to and support from 'power' builds the case in the data for the development of political skills. Evidence of this skill in use was mainly cited in contacts with colleagues at the same level or externally. Barriers to power exist creating problems of biurification internally. This has implications for work efficacy and public service delivery.</p>	<p>Analysis: Goodwill came through the data subtly in terms of hours worked – many interviews were conducted late evening after the working day and references to 24/7 contactability were made.</p>	<p>Authors: Sun et al 2012; Harris and Kuhnert, 2007; Hernez-Broome and Hughes, 2004); Hartley and Allison, 2000; Yukl, 2006; Gronn, 2008)</p> <p>Additionally 'how' to enact decision making is the problematic of managerial agency.</p> <p>Author: Thompson, 2010.</p> <p>Analysis: Participants were generally confused by the idea of distributed leadership and gave mixed responses. The data clearly showed evidence of blame dispersal through shared ownership of decision making.</p>
<p>Point: 'Old skill forms are displaced by new ones'. De-skilling and re-skilling are a two-way process. Braverman's de-skilling thesis has been widely challenged and it is acknowledge that there is a prevalence of up-skilling in the high skill and professional cadre of employee.</p> <p>Authors: Littler, 1982; Thompson, 2007; Adler, 2007; Grimshaw 2002; Sewell 2005, Sawchuk</p>	<p>Point: Work intensification affects managerial health and well-being.</p> <p>Authors: (Hassard et al 2009; Ahmad and Broussine 2008)</p> <p>Analysis: Evidence of stress; pressure' depression and putting on a 'font' or 'face' was given, suggesting that participants perceive the</p>	<p>Point: It is inherently unfair to blame civil servants (middle managers) for outcomes they cannot control.</p> <p>Authors: Noordhoek and Saner, 2005</p> <p>Analysis: Middle managers recognised this unfairness and lack of control and sought solutions by locating blame throughout the 'whole' team – avoiding 'pointing the finger'.</p>

<p>2006. Additionally, this is linked to the term 'responsible autonomy' (Friedman 1977).</p> <p>Analysis: There is evidence of up-skilling and an altered skill set, which supports Littler's perspective that old skill forms are replaced by new ones.</p>	<p>changes (of WI and NPM measures) have impacted on well-being.</p>	
<p>Point: Even with greater skill acquisition, critiques question the genuine ability MM's have to influence decision making; autonomy and job quality.</p> <p>Authors: Gale 2012; Lloyd and Payne, 2014; Densin and Lincoln, 2011</p> <p>Analysis: In line with other LPT authors it is clear that the ability to genuinely influence decision making is still limited.</p>	<p>Point: Control of working hours contributes to work intensification – and unrealistic workloads go unchallenged.</p> <p>Authors: Kelliher and Anderson, 2008; Ford and Collinsons, 2012</p> <p>Analysis: There is very little opposition to long hours culture, the union is cited as not active presently. MM's appear to comply albeit reluctantly. This connects to the LPT (Marxist) premise that exploitation must lead to social change – it is inconclusive if MM's will challenge this aspect of working lives, as although WI is unpopular, participants are not 'organising' or 'exiting' the organisation.</p>	<p>Point: Post NPM doctrine prescribes: giving managers freedom to manage at the heart of government [greater control/autonomy and power].</p> <p>Author: Zafra-Gomez et al 2012; Christenson and Laegrid, 2011; Christensen, 2012; Hajnal and Rosta, 2015.</p> <p>Analysis: There is only limited evidence of managerial autonomy, as such Cheung's assertion (2013) that HKCS represents a hybrid form of NPM is more accurate.</p>

<p>Point: Competency development as a modern method of up-skilling is critiqued as too prescriptive and homogenous; neglectful of managers 'real problems'; an inhibitor of nascent talent and over simplified.</p> <p>Authors: Dalton, 2010; Carroll et al 2008; Patching 2011; Burgoyne, 1993</p> <p>Analysis: As participants gave mixed evidence regarding the usefulness of training and learning transfer, it can be concluded the critique cited above stands.</p>		<p>Point: Whilst complexity of work has increased over time this has not been accompanied by a corresponding rise in control</p> <p>Author: Felstead, 2004.</p> <p>Analysis: The data suggests that the organisation has attempted to both give managers 'control' by empowering them through leadership development, and also to exert control by making LMD the prescribed route to managerial success in performance terms. The thesis debates the efficacy of this empowerment tool and the results are mixed.</p>
<p>Point: The best method of harnessing social capital and developing 'relational' skills is debated, with some authors advocating collective learning</p> <p>Authors: Day 2001; Day and Harrison 2007; McGurk 2009; McGurk 2010)</p> <p>Point: Others critique this claiming there is not enough empirical evidence that they are superior to individual learning techniques (Galli and Muller Stewens, 2012)</p>		<p>Point: Middle management resistance is more subtle and subversive than traditional forms i.e. critical resistance</p> <p>Author: Bolton and Houlihan, 2010</p> <p>Analysis: Only one direct example was given of subversive or subtle resistance to an example of senior level control impacting the work of an MM, suggesting that there is more compliance than resistance at this stage in HKCS's history.</p>

<p>And that exposure to other business groups is not enough to enhance social Capital: Garavan, 2007</p> <p>Analysis: Participants cited that the networking was useful and relationships were utilised for problem resolution, but no examples were given of increased social capital through relations with political cadre.</p>		
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The analytic table presented above depicts not only the themes taken from the literature but the connections made during analysis of the interview and survey data. Work intensification, control and skills development were identified as the key themes and these have been broken down to produce multiple points, which are now debated in the discussion chapter.

5.0 Discussion

5.1 Changing work and labour process of middle managers

This thesis seeks to answer the general research question: To what extent does leadership development help managers to overcome the challenges associated with the managerial labour process in the public sector? The findings are as follows:

5.1.1 Finding One: Power differentials

Power differentials create the need to develop 'political' skills and act as a significant barrier to work efficacy. As such the skills currently being developed, whilst essential to the role, are under-utilised due to insufficient social capital and access to power. The development of competencies which have the potential to enable these factors have been labelled 'political skill.'

Firstly, by examining leadership and management development through a labour process lens, it is possible to define training and development not only in terms of skills enhancement but in terms of power differentials. Functionalist writers have focused on the elements of HRD which aim to enhance both organisational and individual performance through concepts like the learning organisation (Pedler, Burgoyne and Boydell 1991) and 'leadership development' as distinct from 'leader development' (Day 2001). The critical writers have acknowledged the role of context and the difficulties presented via the external and internal environment (Garavan, 2009; Hotho and Dowling, 2010), but all do so with the over-arching view that training and development represents a solution to difficulties of managerial work and that having the right skill set is an enabling facet of work. But the implications can be that if workers are 'enabled' then they should be able to perform their job to the organisations satisfaction and this is where the labour process analysis comes in.

I argue, that in support of Kanters (1979) and Bolton and Houlihan's (2010) research, power differentials act as a significant barrier to work efficacy. Limitations of control as described in terms of access to; lines of resource; lines of information and access to power (i.e. influencing and gaining support from decision makers) significantly stymies

both the corporate and personal goals of middle managers. Managers can be trained to 'objection handle' or give media response to objections, but if they don't have the authority, resource capacity or senior level support to solve the objection problem, where is the efficacy in this process? What the data reveals in the first instance is that structural impediments, of hierarchy, in this example depicted in the bifurcation of the political and managerial staff, continue to act as a barrier to middle managerial control, autonomy and efficacy. The view that training and development can compensate or ameliorate for difficulties in the practice of management as work is significantly challenged. LMD is ultimately designed to meet organisational objectives, but correspond in only a limited way to the acknowledged difficulties and challenges faced by middle managers in the workplace, which shall be termed the realities of management as work.

Proposition 1 developed in the literature review presents a critical view of the managerial labour process. It is supportive of authors who suggest that middle and front line managers are subject to control and degradation via new working practices and contexts, such as Lean management, Taylorisation and New Public Management (Taylor, 2007; Armstrong, 1989; McCann *et al* 2010; Hassard *et al* 2009; Cheung, 2013; Bolton and Houlihan, 2010). However, Adler argues that 'enabling forms of organisation either partially displace or coexist with coercive forms [of management control]' (Adler, 2007 p1325). In exploring new forms of managerial labour process, attempts to regain lost autonomy and re-capture work efficacy have been explored, both from an organisational and individual perspective.

This data reveals that if an expanded definition of skill is adopted which includes traits; attitudes and characteristics (Thompson and Smith, 2009; Felstead, 2004; Warhurst *et al* 2004) the organisation both enables and restricts up-skilling. We will firstly consider enablement.

The data reveals that leadership and management development programmes in the Hong Kong Civil Service have been politicised to an extent that as well as meeting a remit of competency development for defined 'hard' and 'soft' managerial skills which enhance participants' human capital value, they also afford the opportunity to develop

networking skills which enhance participants' social capital value. This is endorsed organisationally and is presented as a specific goal within the Training remit.

Whilst participant views are mixed regarding the value and usage of skills in the human capital grouping, with some questioning the practical application, taken as a whole, that is combined with their practical experience and stretch projects, a picture of overall benefit emerges. Named areas of development including; media handling skills; confidence with defence and presentation of policy outcomes in a public setting and people management skills are perceived to relate directly to changes to the middle management job. These changes are the increased 'work complexity' challenge and the skill set developed is, up to a point, aligned to help middle managers cope with the changed remit.

However, the challenges related to organisational structures; resources and work intensification require a different skill set. It would be too simplistic to argue that the organisation needs to hire more staff in order to counter work intensification, though clearly it does. Public sector budgets and cost transparency to a certain extent limit this freedom as do recruitment systems which have to consider availability of talent, attraction to the job and rigour in the recruitment process. Nor can it be said (without further research) that monetary reward will compensate individuals for increasing workloads and motivate them to work harder - as the data clearly reveals that work life balance values have impacted on the desire for promotion to some extent, in short, work intensification and complexity are putting people off.

As such the organisation appears to want to help middle managers to work 'smarter', to be able to do more with less and are facilitating this via access to lines of support and lines of information (Bolton and Houlihan, 2010) and a proportion of managers are willing to adopt this approach in order to gain access to career ladders, improve their experience of work

Clearly one of the difficulties and challenges faced by middle managers is gaining access to training and development. For if we are to argue and accept that there is benefit to be had from gaining some limited access to power via the LMD, being selected in the first place is the challenge. Whilst all of the managers who participated

had either been selected for LMD or been part of the nominating process, this was part of the research design, it became clear that this opportunity was for a selected group and varying accounts were given regarding length of time to gain promotion and motivations for wanting (or not) to move up the career ladder. If LMD is to be utilised as a mechanism to overcome internal barriers, that poses real questions over the capacity of the middle management strata as a whole to be empowered and enabled to work efficaciously and deliver public services.

Whilst staff were able to describe some positive examples of skills development improving their experience of work, the overall picture presented was more complex and fraught with difficulties. The labour process analysis which focus's not only on up or de-skilling, but also on aspects of work intensification, increased complexity, limitations of control and underlying resistance to working practices and corporate objectives presents a more balanced picture of the impact training and development can have. Middle managers resist power differentials by taking the opportunity to enhance their social capital and access to power through networking. Although the organisation endorses this approach and to an extent facilitates it through the training, success in this capacity can be down to individual factors. Problem solving through networking was most frequently cited at an equal collegiate level, with middle managers drawing on the expertise of new contacts at the same level, but in different departments. Whilst this is incredibly useful and I would not challenge the common sense appeal of this approach, access to decision makers and those in the political cadre was less frequently cited. Middle managers gave more examples of reliance on external contacts and networks than internal networks of a more senior level. This finding supports Cheung's assertion that bifurcation of the political and managerial streams within government is problematic for the efficacy of the Hong Kong Civil Service. As such I argue that power differentials and access to power at a middle management level overshadows the type of skill development cited in the study.

However, it has been acknowledged in the literature that middle managers have a need for political skills, or in other words, the skill of gaining access to power. Thompson and McHugh (2002, p120) present middle managers as political survivors who 'compete and co-operate with others in order to pursue his own end'. One could argue that access to power should be granted where not to presents a barrier to work

efficacy. However as stated, the data reveals evidence of individuals bypassing organisational barriers where possible to develop this skill and of limited organisational attempts to facilitate it.

Sawchuck (2006 p 611) in his 'use value thesis' has suggested that that up-skilling and de-skilling are considered from opposing theoretical perspectives. Up-skilling is focused on both the intended and unintended learning outcomes of employees, whereas de-skilling 'can be considered on a conceptually different plane, a process revolving around autonomy and control and not skill per se'. He goes on to conclude that political economy, the labour process and the learning process can be understood within the same unit of analysis and develops this further by suggesting that this is about more than building upon how skills develop, but in the acknowledgement of the contradictions and 'sticking points' of the labour/learning process. I argue that both up-skilling and de-skilling are connected to notions of power differentials and specifically within the context of the public sector Thompson and McHugh's 'political skills', the ability to gain access to power, whether to meet personal (career or survival) goals or organisational goals, linked to performance management and problem resolution, has become the new area for skill development. However, it must be acknowledged that not all middle managers, will have the personality traits and attitudes or potential opportunity to achieve this and here-in lies one of the contradictions.

5.1.2 Finding Two: Segmentation of political and managerial cadre

Segmentation of the political and managerial cadre has created tensions which impact on managerial performance. Leadership development impact is limited as middle managers cannot fully utilise their skills or exercise autonomy in decision making to deliver public services without opposition at a political level.

The second finding really highlights where this tension is located in the study organisation and how the contextual factor of the public sector setting exacerbates the problem of limited access to power. Starting with the external environment, political transition to a one-country two systems regime, which encompasses a new ministerial system and 'hybrid' form of [Chinese capitalist] democracy has presented significant changes and challenges for the middle manager. The data specifically has revealed a

growing fragmentation and discord between the political cadre and the managerial cadre, with quotes revealing feelings and perceptions from managers that range from quiet acceptance of the differences in approach to outright contempt at a 'class of people who know nothing.' The political elite are variously described a self-serving, unpopular and focused on their own agenda and whilst it is acknowledged that some attempts have been made to bring a proportion experienced civil servants to the political level, the divide remains. The effects are documented as two-fold.

Firstly, the Government is viewed as very unpopular and 'weak' by the public it serves. The public do not seem to be persuaded that the government is acting in their best interests as the 2014 'umbrella revolt' focused on voting rights revealed. The public view the government as being in the pockets of industry and pro-Beijing. This is a problem at a number of levels, but for middle managers it means that the public's expectations regarding service delivery are aggravated. Middle managers find it challenging and time consuming to persuade an aggravated public that policy initiatives and implementation is being done in a fair and efficacious way, with full consultation and consideration of outcomes. They concede that a vocal public in Hong Kong is not a bad thing as citizens seek to protect their unique Hong Kong identity and rights, but the outcome is pressure being applied at a variety of levels, one of those levels being to middle management.

The first significant change to the work of middle managers is the increased pressure in the job due to these combined political factors. The data reveals post consultation difficulties with implementation of policy due to diversity and forcefulness of public opinion and a weak mandate for implementation due to lack of support at LEGCO. This constitutes increased complexity of work content. The data reveals that these increases are being attributed to the change in political system and the frustration felt by middle managers is directed at both the political cadre who are not helpful in supporting practical implementation of policy and at the public, whom, it is felt have unrealistic expectations. Whilst middle managers have a great deal of sympathy with the public and have expressed personal views which empathise with their concerns, there is little sympathy offered to the political elite. As such a clear divide is presented. This is significant, in that if Hong Kong is to successfully manage its relationship with

China and mainland politics whilst retaining its independence and providing public service, it is suggested that greater unity may aid the process (Cheung 2013).

Managers need to have confidence in the senior elite that they are fully aware of and understand both the outcomes and implications of any policy initiative which managers are tasked with implementing, particularly as management are more likely to be blamed for failed outcomes that are perceived as 'operational' rather than 'political'. We can surmise that the first change to managerial work has been a disconnect with the decision makers at the top [political cadre]. We observe that this creates difficulty in implementation of policy and adds to the 'fear of blame' culture.

The external context in this study presents the 'globalisation' issue in terms of Hong Kong's alignment with China and the 'limitations to the structure' as seen in terms of; the segmentation between the political and managerial cadre and the potential segmentation between the senior and middle management level.

"The present political configuration of governance in Hong Kong had largely thrived on the pre-1997 colonial logic of administrative state and government by bureaucracy. Such a system has now become hard to sustain due to rising political distrust and cynicism caused partly by the democratic deficit and the absence of the politics of responsibility. Hong Kong was a pioneer of public sector reforms in the 1980s and 1990s, but such reforms – grounded in the NPM (new public management) logic of management efficiency – no longer suffice to cope with the growing crisis of governability. It is argued that rebuilding trust and governability should be put at the forefront of the governance reform agenda." (Cheung 2013 p421)

In an attempt to rebuild trust and governability and echoing Cheung's assertions, it is clear that segmentation within the workforce is not workable and that better communication and understanding of the realities of work between the political and managerial level is important. But more than the usual forms of managerial effectiveness, espoused commonly in the NPM (New public management) literature and typified by performance management ideology, effective governance and an improved political system, which would allow the public to trust the government is a goal sought after by both the public and to an extent, the civil servants. Both the reality

and perception of self-serving political mandates have been eroding the efficacy of the government and directly impacting on both middle management work and outcomes of public service delivery (such as project completion time).

Despite the need for new and more integrated, collegiate relationships, as called for in the literature (Cheung 2013; Burns *et al* 2012) the data suggests that this integration has only taken place to a limited extent, that divisions exist and are not being addressed. Whilst participants may have had some exposure to prestigious speakers, political activists and public representatives via training, including for example senior politicians such as Carrie Lam, Hong Kong's current No 2, not enough has been done to integrate the managerial strata with the AO's, Politicians and Secretaries. As HKCS continues to focus on the external political issues, namely of universal suffrage and voting rights granted/vetoed by Beijing, it is missing the opportunity to strengthen and shore up from within. It can be concluded from the study on the external context, that in order to grapple with the challenge of 'allegiance' more must be done, either through MLD or other mechanisms to integrate the political and managerial cadre, or the political executive and the bureaucracy, so that greater unity and harmony can be built.

Whilst the training and development initiatives instigated for managers and leaders have started this process of bringing diverse groups and individuals together in a learning environment and have identified a goal of enhancing 'broader perspectives', this now needs to be fast-tracked in an effort to create a stronger, more coherent civil service. This data challenges the idea, described by Koike 2013, that Asian governance models tend to overlook post-NPM networked governance styles in approach of more market orientated reforms, at the expense of social issues. The Hong Kong Civil Service has attempted to engage with its public, but a tension exists between the genuine capacity of middle managers to both consult and deliver to the public in a way that matches public expectation.

The data supports the notion that Hong Kong represents a 'hybrid' model of NPM, with some facets of the NPM agenda (cost-cutting, work intensification; use of contractors) and other more Chinese style management agenda's adopted, for example limitation's put on job insecurity –permanent staff continue to enjoy relative job security reflective of a culture respectful of seniority and 'face'. Attempts have also been made to reduce

some aspects of fragmentation through the networking L&D programme and this is reflective of a culture that does value the 'relationship' and notions of reciprocity in working relationships. However, job roles are not clear and managers do not have the freedom to manage at the heart of developments in public governance (Zafra-Gomez *et al* 2012; Christenson and Laegreid, 2011; Christenson, 2012; Hajnal and Rosta 2015). Cheung (2013) has argued that the 'hands-off' small government approach no longer works and has fuelled public mistrust in the Government and the data clearly reflects this, with multiple accounts of middle managers' unhappiness and weariness in the face of rising complaints; complex consultation process's and defeat in LEGCO due to a lack of political mandate and collaboration. The organisation has put the onus on middle managers to up-skill in order to meet these 'leadership' challenges, but the analysis would suggest that working together with the political cadre and re-building trust from within may be a more fruitful way to alleviate the tensions.

Whilst we observe in finding one, that access to power is problematic, that the requirement to develop 'political skills' becomes more pressing, this puts the pressure on the middle manager to alleviate the problem of power differentials and biurification of the strata. Recognition of this weakness needs to come from both the political cadre and those facilitating training and development.

5.1.3 Finding Three: A new labour process for middle managers

This thesis supports the notion of a new labour process for middle managers and has presented a unified analysis of the political economy, labour and learning and development process. As such work intensification, lack of autonomy and increased pressure denoted by re-structuring, fragmentation and contracting out of services has limited the effectiveness of LMD. Managers are to a certain extent; put off the learning and development process (promotion loses its appeal) and are hard pressed to take the time off to participate even when willing and work within an environment where the contradiction of devolved responsibility and blame avoidance creates relational tensions and exacerbates divisions.

The third finding relates to the theoretical contribution of this thesis, which supports the notion of a new labour process for middle managers as described by McCann,

Morris and Hassard (2008; 2010), albeit with some subtle differences in a Chinese context and also develops the idea of an interlinked labour and learning and development process.

In contrast to the concept of distributed leadership as a model of public sector management (Sun *et al* 2012; Harris and Kuhnert 2007; Hernez-broom and Hughes 2004; Hartley and Allison 2000) Hassard has been very critical of devolvement of responsibility, describing it as 'loading extra work onto the shoulders of staff' and a method of justifying work intensification. Without the corresponding power to enact decision making, I and other authors argue, that it is wrong and unethical to blame civil servants for being resistant to change and de-motivated in the change process, if change means 'more work; lower salaries; less recognition and no more job security' (Noordhoek and Saner 2005). Whilst HKCS has managed to limit the impact of job insecurity (but mainly through recruitment freezes during difficult economic cycles) more work and less recognition are certainly documented facts of the labour process, representing similarities to public sector organisations in Western contexts. Hassard *et al* (2009 p33) were able to apply their research into the public sector, spanning the locations of the UK, USA and Japan, despite what they term as '*the limited connections to financialisation and globalisation*' associated with the sector. They have argued that morale in the public sector is even more important than in the private sector due to the constraints over financial reward in the public sector and that as such, restructuring in the public sector may have different roots, but similar outcomes.

Whilst Braverman's original research on labour process theory (1974) has some well documented limitations the emphasis on class struggle and de-skilling (Littler 1982) and the limited discussion surrounding the managerial labour process (Teulings 1986) which was expanded by Armstrong (1989), I am also drawn to the labour process critique on the plight of middle managers and the principles of capitalism which result in a more difficult, stressful, intensified, experience of work, even for (or perhaps especially for) those of a professional or managerial background. Senior managers and those in the public sector who have political responsibility do have choices about the way in which public sector organisations are run and despite the limitations of the public budget, and external political constraints, can choose how organisational change is implemented and what mechanisms will aid the process.

This critique of leadership and management development in the Hong Kong Public Sector has revealed that the choices adopted in this organisation have had mixed results and that the labour process of managerial staff must also be taken into account when devising HRM strategy and initiatives designed to help both the organisation and the individual through the transition process. Hassard *et al* (2009) would locate this debate within the context of contemporary capitalism and I would suggest that it also links in strongly with the debates surrounding NPM and post NPM ideology. As such Hong Kong presents a unique study, but one which is connected to the growing body of work being conducted in the public sectors across the world, examining the tools and practices which influence the labour process of managers and the governance context that they work within, as process and context should be considered in tandem (Norton, 2007; McCann *et al* 2008; Hassard *et al* 2009; McCann *et al* 2010; Quah, 2013; Koike 2013; Cheung, 2013; De Vries and Nemec 2013).

Sawchuk (2006 p612) called for a unified analysis that combined research on up-skilling and de-skilling to “demonstrate how political economy, the labour process and the learning process can be understood within the same unit of analysis.” I have developed this idea specifically to capture the learning and development process of middle managers in the public sector. Labour process theory offers a unique and critical perspective on the commodification of skills in an era where globalisation and economic fluctuations have radically impacted on the pace of change in the workplace. Hong Kong is one example of a capitalist economy experiencing rapid change, but it is by no means alone in its experience. Throughout Europe, Asia and much of the developed world, governments face problems of increasing similarity. Can budgets stretch to cope with the problems of: Migration, political instability, economic pressure and fluctuations, unemployment, business demand versus social and environmental justice, acceptable service provision, and political legitimacy? Whilst the context of Hong Kong has some unique features and as such does not offer optimal generalisability, there are substantial areas congruence which give this research meaning. Leadership and management development programmes have rapidly gained popularity as a tool for improved performance of key staff, but evaluation of their effectiveness is patchy and is rarely considered within the framework of the managerial labour process.

Where sociologists have critiqued labour process theorists for neglecting to identify dualist or contradictory concepts within the interview data (McGovern 2014), the subjects in this study gave voice to these dualisms, naming their difficulties. For example - in both adhering to procedure and meeting the 'bosses' demands; feeling obliged to do something that they did not want to do; acknowledging the disconnect between what they were capable of achieving in practical terms and what they were limited to achieving by political level opposition; the difficulty in reconciling organisational training and workload requirements and family obligations; the tension between LMD as a reward and career enabler and the lack of motivation to attend LMD due to work intensification, the difficulty in meeting the volume of demand from the public whilst acknowledging the imperative to meet public service outcomes. LMD through a labour process lens reveals that training and development of middle managers is a part of the contradictory process described by Armstrong (1989) involving the two-way nature of control and is revealed in the analysis through the themes of 'compromised autonomy', which contrasts with Friedman's (1977) 'responsible autonomy'. Although Hyman argues, in his critique of the fruitless search for management answers and panaceas, there is 'no one best way of managing these contradictions, only different routes to partial failure' (Hyman 1987, p30) this bleak outlook fails to take into account the acknowledged reliance organisations have between employer and employee and the mutual vested interest in the success of the organisation as seen through outcomes such as public service delivery and the capacity and desire to help Hong Kong as a Special Administrative Region thrive.

The following table depicts examples of where training and development impacts on the labour process of middle managers and presents the contradictions described in the literature on LPT.

Table 5.1: Examples of L&D Contradictions

LPT Theme 'Contradiction'	Author *Developed from McGovern 2014.	Analysis - Example from data
1. Two-way nature of middle managerial control – control versus consent.	Armstrong 1989; Thompson 1989	Control: MM who was asked by their boss to change an advice given to [head of large Department] due to the recipient's positional power and networked connections. This was despite the MM being a well- qualified individual providing expert technical advice.
2. Empowering forms of work contradicted by cost reduction regime.	McCann et al 2010; Bolton and Boyd 2003; Knights and McCabe 1999; 2000	Skills development and work intensification: LMD offered and rejected as unappealing by MM who is off-put by workload and poor perception of a promoted post.
3. Public/customer service orientation stymied – demand contradicted by ability to deliver quality outcome	Bolton and Houlihan, 2010; Taylor and Bain (2005); Darr 2011; Korczynski et al 2000	Control: Direct consultation with the public is not enough – LEGCO (political cadre) will block policy implementation which ultimately affects public service delivery outcomes. Bifurcation of political and management cadre blocking progress. Skills development: MM's complain that 'classroom training' is not enough – you can know how to engage with public; how to consult; how to enact proper and fair process and implement this - but the process will still be blocked.

The first example correctly locates the two-way nature of control and the disparity between the senior executive exerting control over a middle manager – coercing the individual into revisiting a piece of [legal] advice already submitted to an external body in order to consent to give ‘face’ to her senior. The contradiction is shown as it goes against the individual’s legal training and expertise and there is evidence of subtle subversion and resistance as the individual concerned had already prepared for this request, by taking great care with document, and ultimately not changing to advice but acquiescing to the request to revisit it.

The second example highlights how an empowering form of work, in the shape of LMD with associated skills development and promotion prospects is rejected by a middle manager due to perceptions of work intensification and the lack of ‘reward’ in the promoted post. The third example highlights the futility of ‘classroom’ exercises training individuals on matters of public engagement and consultation, where the political economy over-rides such endeavours. In the example cited, the interviewee complains of the political motivations of the LEGCO representatives who may block policy implementation, even though the consultation process with the public has been positive and there is public support for such a project. Clearly the consultation process would have to be open to scrutiny for this quote to have additional validity, but it highlights the perceptions middle managers hold and is consistent with Cheung’s (2013) research depicting internal divisions advancing mis-trust in the government. This demonstrates the lack of control managers have in influencing outcomes to meet public service goals and the ineffectiveness of skills development due to political barriers.

Training and development is one aspect of work, frequently an aspect of work that is out-with the realms of control for the individual employee. Sawchuk (2006 p599) describes the organisational motive of HR and Senior executive professionals seeking to extrapolate competencies and key skills as that of ‘*one social group seeking to control and appropriate the efforts of others*’. He has theoretically introduced the labour/learning debate with the point of contact between the structure of capitalism and the actual processes of mental and behavioural change in the workplace. I have attempted to empirically capture the accounts of middle managers as they describe

the learning process and their perceptions of learning transfer and mental/behavioural change post-training in HKCS, whilst acknowledging the difficulties and challenges of the labour process. What this research shows is that training and development can have a positive impact on the middle managerial experience of management as work, but this must be caveated with an understanding of the structures and power hierarchies which impede personal development and ultimately organisational performance. It is a critical and integrated analysis of the LMD process which reviews the subjective experience of work as understood by labour process themes of skills, control and work intensification and captures the tensions between the espoused goals of LMD and the lived reality of management 'as' work. As such we can conclude that the research supports proposition 1.

Proposition 1: The labour process of public sector middle managers in Hong Kong is increasingly changing and subject to work intensification and reduced power and control in the decision making/shaping process.

5.2 The contested terrain of skills development

The research has revealed a number of barriers to the work efficacy of middle managers which the training has not tackled. Whilst recognition has been given to 'new' areas of work and indeed the 'new labour process' of managers, including the work intensification and complexity, the onus is placed on the individual to seek solutions at their level – as seen through networking solutions and coalition building. Hierarchical differences and the challenge of managing 'upwards' and across the political divide has not been fully addressed. Blame culture or blame avoidance is symptomatic of a middle management who do not have access to 'lines of support'. Whilst 'knowing whom' (DeFilipi and Arthur, 1994) is crucial to developing social capital, and the opportunity to network has been granted via the politicised training remit, gaining actual support for decision making is the challenge of middle management.

The divisions described appear too entrenched and linked to the external 'political factors' to be overcome. Post structuralists like Adler (2007) may argue that capitalist development drives long term skill up-grading via progressive socialisation, but this

thesis supports the Labour process argument that skills development and formation are contested terrain in the workplace (Thompson, 2007). The managers in this study, may to some extent be indicative of the hourglass economy, where we see polarisation between those involved in knowledge-intensive work and those involved in routine service work. They have been the recipients of a training programme which allows for some element of up-skilling. But this comes at a price, as they are expected to work in conditions of; work intensification; bifurcation of task and occupation (operational and political element), outsourcing of services and increase in contractor use-age simultaneously.

The total picture built up is not one of a solely enabling, non-coercive form of work organisation but one in which worker voice, though relatively quiet, is critical of the challenges of middle management, where agency and autonomy in the current organisational climate are compromised and this one form of up-skilling presents a limited opportunity, for those chosen to participate, to re-dress the balance. The data clearly reveals that not all middle managers are motivated or able to take up the training opportunity even where selected.

As such the research only partially supports proposition two. Some middle managers are adopting the strategy of up-skilling via LMD programmes in order to improve their experience of work and enhance their social capital, but it is more likely that this will enhance their career prospects and partially aid work efficacy than truly combat the challenges identified in the work context. Additionally, a segment of the MM workforce are put off practices which will aid career progression due to workload.

Proposition 2:

Middle managers adopt the organisational strategy of up-skilling via LMD programmes and specifically enhance their social capital through networking in order to overcome contextual, political and structural challenges and improve the 'new' labour process of MM's.

Importantly if an LMD programme has been politicised to the extent that the networking provided becomes crucial to the problem solving element of the job, then the

organisation must consider the extent to which training opportunity is offered. The research has identified that more collaborative work, greater interdepartmental co-operation and a better connection between the political and operational cadre could aid work processes. From a practical perspective, mechanisms for networking and facilitating more 'joined-up' government are needed, because Managerial training and development at this level is not universally available or sought. Whilst it is acknowledged that HKCS spend a large budget on training and development, if the skills of 'making out' (Sawchuk, 2006) or 'political skills' (Thompson 2010) have become so fundamental to the work process for middle managers, alternative routes to provide the internal networking required should be created. It is clear from the data, that due to: the highly selective nature of middle managerial training; the unattractiveness of promoted posts stymying ambition (due to work volume and complexity); the difficulties associated with time out from an operational role for training and development and finally the personal limitations of individual choice (such as family/well-being circumstances) there is inequity in the opportunity to up-skill. These factors support proposition 3.

Proposition 3:

There is inequity in the opportunity to up-skill and gain access to training and development for middle managers in the Hong Kong public sector.

To conclude the analysis suggests that propositions one and three are fully supported but proposition two is only partially supported. Whilst much of the literature would allude to a 'them and us' perspective regarding worker and management, this and other studies reveal that management work is extremely complex and within management there are layers of worker, who are also subject to the two-way nature of control. This analysis would both support McCann, Hassard and Morris's claim that there is a new labour process for middle managers subject to the principles of globalisation and capitalist ideology. Additionally, in line with Bolton and Houlihan's (2010) sympathetic critique of front line managers, this analysis runs in parallel with the concept that middle managers do not have sufficient power to resolve customer [public] expectations or address structural failings. The orthodox HRM remedy of leadership and management training plays some part in re-skilling managers, enabling

them to cope with some facets of change, but falls short of true empowerment, in a context where political values are fluid and subject to devolution of authority to central government.

The implications from a practical perspective this research would suggest that middle managers perceive themselves as unlikely to be able to deliver and meet public expectations amidst the current political climate in Hong Kong. However, widening access to training and development and fostering greater collaboration between decision makers and decision implementer's (managerial and political cadre) has the potential to stymie segmentation and increase collaborative efforts. Efforts should be made to re-build political trust throughout the system and as Cheung has advocated 'create a more pragmatic public governance reform agenda, fostering social cohesion and a common sense of identity' (Cheung 2013 p433).

6.0 Conclusion

The contradictions which underpin the labour process of middle managers, I would conclude are impacting the usefulness of leadership development. Leadership development is a potentially empowering form of work, but this is stymied firstly; by facets of globalisation, such as cost reductions and work intensification and secondly by power differentials between the middle managerial layer and senior executive/political cadre. Significantly for the public sector, I conclude that due to those two underpinning factors, demand for public services is impaired by the ability to deliver quality outcomes and this represents a contradiction. Empowering forms of work, such as training and development are designed to up-skill the managerial cadre but ultimately the desired outcome is the facilitation of the public service delivery process.

As new forms of capitalism emerge and economic shifts take place globally, the conditions and experience of employment continues to be of importance. The exploitation of workers and degradation of the conditions of work are witnessed in a variety of circumstances and the segmentation of the workforce, between the 'have's' and 'have nots' is prevalent. But the so called hour glass economy presents some surprises and, as argued by several leading authors, the erosion of working conditions seeps into areas of work, previously firmly placed in the 'have's' category, such as educated, skilled professional workers and managers (Gale, 2012; Bolton and Houlihan, 2010; Thompson, 2010; Carter and Stevenson, 2013; Armstrong, 1989). This thesis has sought to examine leadership development of middle managers through a labour process lens and explore the themes prevalent in labour process theory concerning the trends for work intensification, a lack of control and potential de-skilling. In doing so, this thesis has considered the organisational and HRM remedies to challenges in the work context, through examining the tools to up-skill workers, namely training and development programmes. Due to the pivotal role China now plays in the global economy and the lack of research focused on public sector managers, who face unique public service orientated challenges, the research has been expanded into the Chinese public sector and the implications of the research and findings are now presented.

6.1 Theoretical implications of the findings

Leadership development is utilised as a useful tool to empower and equip managerial staff to perform their job well and meet public service delivery goals. What this research has predominantly shown is that LMD on its own is insufficient to overcome the challenges of public sector management.

Implications for the public sector.

The findings reveal that firstly; that power differentials as opposed to lack of skill, is at the heart of the middle management challenge. The implications of this are that where possible, divisions need to be overcome so that decision makers at all levels are genuinely working together. But also the implication is that those with 'political skills' or those capable of developing what is termed as political skills will have advantage in the work environment. Political skills have been identified as a competency for building relationships with those who have power and authority and is closely tied to the development of social capital. It is acknowledged that giving MM's access to decision makers, or putting people together in a networking situation, does not automatically mean relationships will build up or that power will be distributed. Both political cadre and senior management/executive cadre must be identified as groups which can do more work with middle and front line managers. The challenge of facilitating relationships in large public sector organisations cannot be underestimated, but clearly the opportunity exists to build on the training and development already funded.

Relational skills were revealed to be very important to the managers interviewed and the analysis suggested that in a Chinese context relationship building is a prevalent cultural trait. Leadership development in a Chinese public sector context already exhibits a distinct relational component, which echoes Warner's concept of a hybrid model of HRM with a Chinese twist (Warner 2008;2010). The implications for the public sector are that a greater emphasis on social capital and networked skills are likely to prevail as organisations attempt to capture and maximise on the political skills capacity within the middle management cadre.

Cross cultural implications

In exploring the challenges and remedies presented for middle managers; work intensification, control and skills development are presented as inter-related concepts. In Hong Kong there are some unique, and interesting, contextual challenges linked the political situation of being a form of devolved government and this paves the way for further research within and out-with the Chinese diaspora and other transitioning nations. Whilst sweeping generalisations cannot be made, this exploration would point towards a consistent trend of difficulty and degradation for middle management work in capitalist economies. This study has revealed that despite a culture of relative job security and good pay, Hong Kong middle managers, in line with the middle managers studied in Japan (Hassard, Morris and McCann, 2009) are also subject to the same Bravermanian factors of managerial exploitation. These are namely work intensification and complexity; long hour's culture; lack of control and autonomy over work execution and decision making and a pressing requirement to up-skill or lose footing on career ladders.

The difficulties are clear and identifiable and closely linked to their middle position and the two-way nature of control (Armstrong, 1989; Thompson, 2010). The data has revealed that managers experience the challenges as stressful with outcomes impacting on both their emotional and physical well-being. But where Koike (2013) would argue that the Asian public sector implements NPM style initiatives at the expense of public delivery outcomes, I would argue that it is more nuanced than that. The civil service in Hong Kong has carefully selected which NPM initiatives to adopt and whilst there is acknowledged evidence of internal staff movement and some difficulties with recruitment, motivation and manpower, the underlying problem is the perception of segmentation within hierarchy, the 'separateness' between the middle management cadre and the AO's tasked with the political role. This research supports a general trend towards to the intensification of middle management work and a form of 'new' labour process but also identifies cultural idiosyncrasies.

Additionally the model of leadership development adopted echoes that developed in other countries, notably Western ones. This is highlighted further as HKCS have selected providers from variously Australia, Canada and the USA to develop and

supplement the course content. As such, the leadership development MM's receive cannot be said to be wholly reflective of Hong Kong or Chinese culture, but by design has an international or 'anglophone' (Halligan, 2015 p26) focus. This is reflective of the homogenised problems connected to new public management trends facing civil servants (in capitalist economies) globally. However, given the additional context specific problems civil servants in HK continue to face, tailoring the development and implementing a more nuanced model to suit those needs may be prudent. See practical implications.

Implications for the middle manager

As this thesis generally supports McCann's (2008) concept of the new labour process for middle managers, globally, the experience of work for MM's is unlikely to get easier or less pressurised. Whilst in an ideal world the onus to collaborate could and should be led from the top, the reality is the pressure will be on MM's to take part in networking opportunities and develop those skills. Labour process theory supports the idea of emancipation from work intensification and degradation. But it is clear that the evidence of a new labour process for MM's is only partial in the Hong Kong context. MM's are still well paid, there is relative job security and these factors tend to ameliorate for the subjective feelings of work degradation. In other words, the point of resistance has not yet been reached. But as Hong Kong becomes more vocal in terms of public reaction to government policy it will be interesting to see if this rolls out to the management cadre.

Leadership development is presented as a double edged sword. On one hand it is a reward, an investment in a valued member of staff and provides an opportunity to up-skill and progress career goals. On the other hand, due to work intensification, it can also be viewed as an unappealing chore, which leads to an unattractive career ladder where the promoted appointees are tasked with impossible objectives which will be blocked by those with more political power. The contradictions that the middle manager is faced with is at the heart of this thesis. Leadership development is a potentially empowering form of work which is contradicted by the acknowledged challenges of the labour process – namely, the contradiction of control over consent; of empowered work amidst the difficulty of cost reductions and other NPM type practices and finally the contradicted ability to deliver public service goals and enact a public service orientation [competency] when political factions and factors prohibit this.

These challenges must be acknowledged, at an organisational level, if MM's are to have any redress and prospect of work which is both productive (in terms of the capacity to meet those public service outcomes) and enjoyable (in terms of reduced stress and conflict). In turn leadership development can only be as effective as the work environment and barriers to efficacy allow for. Skills development cannot counter structural impediments, but certain skills, namely networked and political skills, can,

and are, to an extent being developed which offer some limited re-dress to the problems.

The unique contribution that this thesis makes is in bringing together leadership development with labour process theory. The concepts of control and power in the employment relationship have long been debated by labour process theorists and whilst trends in published literature veer towards exploring the themes of exploitation and resistance to harsh working regimes, there has also been a wave of literature documenting these difficulties as they seep into the professional and managerial sector. Up-skilling and de-skilling are at the heart of the 'control' debate and the literature presented a gap in considering to what extent leadership development was a genuinely empowering managerial tool. Learning alone is not enough, having the skills is not enough, being able to use them to full capacity is the key.

6.2 Practical Implications of Findings

There are clear practical implications specific to the organisation derived from this study. Firstly, in-line with other researchers (Cheung 2013), it is suggested that the greater collaboration between political and managerial cadre would help to close the gap between decision makers and implementers allowing for greater unity and ideally more autonomy to act with professionalism and discretion for the middle management cadre. Secondly, the blame culture needs to be eradicated by the senior directorate and allow middle managers to be supported in the decision making process. Thirdly, the training remit should be extended to all middle managers, or where costs are prohibitive, alternative mechanisms created to allow for greater networking and access to decision makers could be provided, such as via a mentoring network. Fourthly, at a micro-level new content should be designed within the LDP programmes offered to reflect some of the difficulties highlighted in the data. For example specific modules on; 'Effective complaint resolution' and 'managing both upwards and downwards' should be introduced.

Whilst some good work has been initiated on connecting middle managers to those in other parts of the organisation who can help with problem resolution, more focus should go into actual outcomes, rather than knowing who to pass the issue onto. This

should be complemented by higher staffing levels to deal with enquiries from the public, specialists trained to resolve and take responsibility for specific cases.

At a macro level the implications are that middle managers will continue to be subject to challenge, intensification and complexity until there is greater corporate recognition of the value of the middle role and of the manager.

Most models of HRD will suggest that any training and development initiative is required to be positioned within complementary bundles of HRM activities and this is the case in HKCS. Strategically positioning LDP so that it is supported by, not only performance management policies, but reward and resourcing policies which help managers to cope with the reality of managerial work would be beneficial.

Where 'pace' becomes an issue, and consultation slows down the process of policy implementation, support from above (Directorate) in either accepting slower timescales or resourcing in a way that more can be achieved with more staff would reduce the pressure that staff are currently under. Similarly, where senior management believe that roles can be intensified, jobs need to also be enriched or enhanced in a way so as to make them attractive and enjoyable to staff. This does not necessarily mean paying staff more, but potentially by lightening the load and creating a more relaxed, positive working culture, where higher directorate level and political staff understand the pressures middle managers are under. All of the practical implications and areas for resolution discussed have resource implications.

However, the critical nature of this thesis inherently suggests that whilst leadership development can be seen as an enabling tool, it does not compensate for the effects of work intensification, increased effort bargain on the part of the worker and the resulting stress and pressure which follow. As such practical recommendations have significant limitations. Workers and organisations ultimately want different things and there are limits to what organisations and indeed capital are prepared to do. Capitalism is unlikely to be reformed to become more humane, as a concept it will always be driven by an ethos of profit, value for money and exerting pressure to gain maximum effort from workers at the minimum cost outlay. Therefore, what organisations can do is involve workers, in this thesis, middle managers, more in the discussion about

working conditions, enhance employee voice and allow for mutual involvement in the decision making process. Access should be given, as previously suggested, to lines of power; information and resource.

The limitations inherent for any form of human resource development is the political economy, in that the employer pays for (funds) HRD. The agency that middle managers have is always conditioned by the structures in place. Given the structural features that have been highlighted throughout this thesis, it is appropriate to acknowledge that there are limitations to what can be achieved. HRD is not a benign force that looks after people and helps them out, it is a corporate strategy designed to enhance performance and it is at the point when performance is compromised that organisations consider the human impact of working conditions and policies.

The context of Hong Kong has presented some specific challenges, most notably due to the unique ministerial system and the difficulty in gaining a political mandate for any policy initiative. Whilst other governments (and civil service) can find gaining public support for controversial projects challenging, it is acknowledged that Hong Kong is in a unique position and this impacts on some of the pressure staff feel. Despite this difference, the other features of similarity with public sector organisations in capitalist societies world-wide make the findings to some extent generalizable. These similarities cluster around the ethos of new public management, the financialisation of the public sector and the new labour process identified as a trend for middle managers.

This research contributes to debates about the workplace which have reported that the quality of jobs is being reduced and senior managers/directors are taking greater control over work in order to maximise their interests at the expense of those employed. New areas of work, which might previously have been considered in the 'elite' end of the hourglass economy such as managers, doctors, teachers, are also subject to degradation and difficulty. Whilst it is acknowledged that middle managers and other 'professional' workers enjoy better terms of employment than the low paid/low skilled precariat workforce, there is a creeping trend to expand the valorisation of labour effort in all sectors, at increasingly higher levels. The organisational bargain of offering training as a mechanism to appease and aid a progressively stressed-out and overworked workforce is losing its appeal. The

employability up-skilling rhetoric, whilst garnering some commitment from staff, is increasingly meaningless to workers who cannot and do not want to cope with an unsustainable pace of corporate change.

6.3 Opportunities for Further Research

This exploratory research has taken a dual perspective on the labour process of middle managers by exploring employee and organisational perspectives. But there is scope to include a third voice in a public sector context, that of the voting public. This study has raised further questions relating to the delivery of public service outcomes and whilst it has been established that internal and external factors create barriers to work efficacy as perceived from both an employee and employer perspective, public perceptions on the efficacy of service delivery and whether they feel the changes implemented, such as in this case earlier consultation with the District Councils, are effective. This would add a third dimension.

A clear limitation of this study is the narrow scope of organisational focus, this has opened the door for further comparative research in multiple public sector organisations globally. More generally there is scope for a wider exploration of the labour process of managers and other highly skilled and educated workers in the public sector, examining the trends for degradation of work seeping into new areas and organisations frantic attempts to provide remedies with minimal impact on profit or public expenditure.

Longitudinal research which tracks the experience of middle managers over a longer time period than was possible within in this thesis, would allow for further insight in to the subtle, ongoing nature of change and how this influences or effects the organisation and experience of work. As would be developing the qualitative mixed methods approach further, which allowed for a multi-stakeholder view, to capture LDP in other study organisations.

This research could also be easily extended to include those sections of the HK public sector not covered by this thesis, such as, the Police service, Prison Service and Fire Service. In doing so a richer, fuller, picture of public sector change within Hong Kong could be established. The value of such comparative research would allow us to identify any bureau specific factors which influence the findings.

Additionally, considering post Braverman interests in resistance, there would be mileage in assessing the extent to which Western derived concepts of resistance translate to different cultural contexts.

Finally, it is reasonable to assume that these findings will be of interest to those studying middle managerial labour process globally and there is scope to test the findings in other capitalist economies.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Guideline Questions – Middle Management cohort HKCS

Open: Tell me a little about your job, how long have you been in post? Or with HKCS?

Theme 1: Contextual issues (public sector and cultural)

1. What **characteristics** would you associate with the Hong Kong leader?
(Prompt: You might want to think about the superior that you most admire, what is it about them?)
2. How do you think your colleagues would describe your leadership style?
3. What **difficulties or barriers** relating to leadership do you feel affect your job?
(Prompt: one country-two systems; bureaucracy; the media?)
4. What **external or internal factors** have especially influenced your management or leadership style? (Education, upbringing, politics, training?)
5. As a leader – what has been your greatest challenge, particularly in light of the **changes** HK has been through in the last 20 years? (How did you handle it?)
6. What impact does the ‘**one country-two systems**’ approach have on your role? (Prompt: is the balance struck or are there tensions?)

Theme 2: MLDP effectiveness – Activity and outcome

1. What did you think of the **skills development** programme you attended – was there an impact on your day to day work?
2. Can you give me examples of **any changes you made**, or something you did differently as a result of going on the course?
3. What aspects of the content did you find **most interesting/relevant to your job**?
4. Do you think the training was suitable for Hong Kong Civil service leaders specifically – addressing **Hong Kong specific issues**?
5. How did you find the process of getting **selected** for leadership development?
(Was it what you wanted? Easy/difficult process?)

6. What other types of leadership training or development do you think would be of most benefit to you and the organisation?

Theme 3: Relationships and Power

1. During the LDP course were you given the opportunity to work on projects/activities with other 'leaders', if yes describe?
2. Can you identify any benefits you got from learning with others?
3. Is relationship building and/or **networking** important to you in terms of leadership ability, career and organisational success?
4. How is **power distributed** within the HKCS? Prompt: Who makes the **decisions** and takes **responsibility**?
5. Would you describe HKCS as a **distributed/shared leadership** or a top down **more autocratic** style – or other?
6. Is there anything else you would like to add about leadership development in HKCS? Thank you.

Appendix 2: Interview Guideline Questions – Organisational Cohort HKCS – HR managers

Open: Tell me a little about your job, how long have you been in post? Or with HKCS?

Theme 1: Contextual issues (public sector and cultural)

1. What characteristics would you associate with the Hong Kong leader? (Prompt: You might want to think about the superior that you most admire, what is it about them?)
2. How do you think your colleagues would describe your management or leadership style?
3. What difficulties or barriers relating to leadership do you feel affect your job? (Prompt: one country-two systems; bureaucracy; the media?)
4. What external or internal factors do you think influence participants management/leadership style? (Education, upbringing, politics, training?)
5. What impact does the 'one country-two systems' approach have on the role of managers? (Prompt: is the balance struck or are there tensions?)

Theme 2: LDP effectiveness – Activity and outcome

6. As an organisation what do HKCS hope to gain from the programmes (ALEP, IMP and LIA) offered?
7. What are the main competencies/skills you are trying to develop?
8. What do you feel participants gained from the leadership development course you organised?
9. What challenges/difficulties or opportunities have you encountered with the training?
10. Do you feel they address Hong Kong civil service specific issues? Can you give me an example? (Are you happy with the cultural fit?)
11. Have you attended any of the programmes yourself – and if yes, what was your impression on the impact?

Theme 3: Relationships and Power

12. Do you think the course provides networking opportunities – is this important?

13. How is power distributed within the HKCS?

14. Who makes the decisions and takes responsibility [for managerial initiatives/implementing policy]? Prompt: Do difficult decisions get passed upwards?

15. Would you describe HKCS as a distributed/shared leadership or a top down more autocratic style – or other?

Is there anything else you would like to add about leader skills development in HKCS?

Thank you.

Appendix 3: Organisational Cohort – Interview Guideline Questions – Nominating Managers

Leadership and Management - Definitions and values

1. Intro: Length of service/career path to date?
2. What do you feel constitutes a leader? [Prompt: who are the leaders? All management? Politicians?]
3. As a leader – what has been your biggest leadership/management challenge – and what did you do?
4. What qualities are important for a leader in HKCS?

Contextual challenges

5. What do you see as the main difficulties/barriers for leaders and managers in the Hong Kong Civil Service?
6. How is leadership within HKCS looking to overcome the difficulties?
7. How do you feel staff have coped with change over the past 15 years?

Drivers for Skills Development

1. What external factors drive the need for leadership development? [Prompt: such as politics, one country/two systems; global economics-migration, cultural mix of workforce – less ex-pats/more Chinese etc.)]
2. What internal, organisational factors drive the need for leadership development? (Prompt: succession planning; aging workforce; increased workload; need for 'joined-up' government).
3. What role do individual leaders (such as yourself) play in driving LDP?

Skills Development Outcomes

4. What is your view of the training offered to leaders/managers in your department? [Effective?]

5. Can you give practical examples of observed changes in behaviour/performance after receiving development?

Selection Process's

6. What steps do you take to ensure **career succession and development of your staff**?
7. What criteria do you assess when selecting someone for leadership training?
8. What would be a facilitator or barrier to participating in leadership development?
[Prompt: time constraints/desire for promotion?]

Public Sector Issues: Structure/Accountability

9. How would you describe the hierarchy within the civil service – top down, distributed leadership, some evidence of shared leadership?
10. How would you say power is distributed within HKCS – Who makes the decisions and who takes the responsibility?
11. How difficult/easy is it to put forward ideas and objections to work related issues and what channels are used [i.e. direct conversations with boss/coalitions of support]?

Future Development

12. What other types of leadership training and development would be helpful in your department?
13. Anything else I have not covered?

Appendix 4 : Sample Survey

Sample survey completed in Word format. The on-line format was prepared using an Edinburgh Napier approved on-line survey tool.

Examining perceptions of leadership development via the LIA (Leadership in Action) Programme.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey, it should take no longer than 10 minutes. Jennifer O'Neil is an independent researcher who is analysing leadership development in an Asian (Hong Kong) Government context. As an attendee of the LIA programme your thoughts and reflections would be very useful, no names are required, the data is confidential.

Survey

1. How would you rate the LIA programme, in terms of meeting your development needs, on a scale of 1 – 5, 5 being excellent, 1 being poor? 4
2. What aspects of the content did you find most interesting/relevant to your job? Please indicate with an 'x' on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being extremely relevant and 1 being not relevant.

Scale	1	2	3	4	5
Expert speaker					X
Project work/cases				X	
Networking				X	
Practical skills					X
Other (please state)					

3. What is your main motivation for participating in the LIA programme? Please indicate with an 'x' on a scale of 1-5, 5 being highly motivating, 1 being not motivating.

Scale	1	2	3	4	5
Career enhancing					X
Leadership skills development					X
A necessary requirement of the job (to meet organisational objectives)				X	
Build a greater network of supportive colleagues				X	
Time out of office to focus on personal development			X		
Other (please state)					

4. Can you give me an example of any changes you made at work, or something you did differently as a result of attending the course? Describe:

I used the media skills when handling verbal complaints from NGOs and other complainants

5. What difficulties or barriers to leadership do you feel most affect your job? Please rate the following with an 'x' on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being most important, 1 being not important.

Scale	1	2	3	4	5
Public engagement					X
Dealing with the media					X
Dealing with Legco and the District Council's				X	
Work/life/balance					X
A complaints culture					X
Internal politics			X		
Motivating staff					X
Stress due to workload					X
Mainland politics			X		
Other					

6. Do you feel the LIA programme helped you to lead your team and address or overcome the difficulties you face? Please describe.[see previous question]

It has provided me with more effective strategies in dealing with the LegCo, DC, media and public.

7. Who has the authority to implement policy decisions? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 marking with an 'x', 5 being most authority, 1 being least authority.

Scale	1	2	3	4	5
Head of Department					X
Bureau Secretary					X
Administrative Officers				X	
Civil Servants (technocrats)				X	
Whole of department				X	
Other (please state)					

8. Who is held responsible for the outcomes of policy implementation? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 marking with an 'x', 5 being most responsible, 1 being least responsible.

Scale	1	2	3	4	5
Head of Department				X	
Bureau Secretary				X	
Administrative Officers				X	
Civil Servants (technocrats)					X
Whole of department					X
Other (please state)					

9a. To date what has been your greatest leadership challenge, particularly considering the changes HK has faced in the last 20 years (1997 Handover, SARS – Bird Flu, Asian economic downturn)?

Subordinates refused to change in response to new work environment or considerations.

9b. How did you deal with it? (see qu 9a.)

<p>Making them feel that we were in the same boat and prioritising the implementation of the changes</p>
--

10. What leadership characteristics do you most associate with leaders in the Hong Kong civil service? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 marking with an 'x' 5 being most associated and 1 being least associated.

Scale	1	2	3	4	5
Integrity				X	
Diplomatic					X
Caring towards employees				X	
Efficient			X		
Authoritarian			X		
Intelligent			X		
Charismatic			X		
Skilled negotiator			X		
Good communicator			X		
Other (please state)					

11. How do you think your colleagues would describe your leadership style?

Persistent but willing to compromise

12. What factors have most affected your leadership style? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5, marking with an 'x', 5 being most influential and 1 being least influential.

Scale	1	2	3	4	5
Education				X	
Training				X	
Upbringing – family influence					X
Politics			X		
Inspiring leaders			X		
Economic change/crisis			X		
Work experience					X
Other (please state)					

13. What do you perceive as the main benefit of learning with others on group projects/activities? Mark with an 'x'.

Enhanced professional network	X
Dynamic approach to problem solving	X
A chance to demonstrate your abilities to others	
More opportunity to reflect and gain a broader perspective	
Stress reduction, support from others	
No benefit	
Other (please state)	

14. How do you perceive power distribution and hierarchy within HKCS? Mark with an 'x'

Traditional top down hierarchy	
Distributed leadership	X
Some evidence of shared leadership	
Other (please state)	

15. What other types of leadership training and development would most be of benefit to you?

persuasion skill

16. How many years work experience do you have with the Hong Kong Civil Service?

15

17. What is your gender? Male/Female

Male

18. What is your age bracket? Please mark with an 'x'

Under 25	
25-34	
35-44	
45-54	X
55-65	

Please email the completed survey to Jennifer O'Neil, Edinburgh Napier University at j.o'neil@napier.ac.uk

Alternatively you can post the survey to:

Jennifer O'Neil
Edinburgh Napier University, Rm 1/22
The Business School, Craiglockhart Campus
Edinburgh, Scotland, UK, EH14 1DJ

Thank you

Appendix 5: Sample Interview Transcript Excerpt

Theme: Exploring the difficulties/challenges of the role.

JR: Once the government get the votes, mandate from the people you can through all these and see how it goes, if it's not working then the Government change some ministers or swap in the next election, it's becoming, many policies you have to go through the difficult process now, even not controversial issues.

JO: And are you finding this is affecting your job at all, as an engineer and manager?

JR: Yes, because although in the old days there are quite a lot of support for Government especially for infrastructure works, which everyone knows will support society as a whole, some years ago we have some small people objecting to very large projects and delay the whole process. Actually the public consultations, the legislative council, they all give the green light. (11.39).to the projects but still they are stuck, is becoming very difficult, is affecting us, because people are more, on one hand the set up itself, and people are more aware of their own interests, they want to fight more, possibly in the old days people only complained when they are not fairly treated, now is different, complain when they are not fairly treated and when they want to have something from the Government they will try to use their muscles, so it's becoming very challenging for us to push forward the projects. It's possibly similar to when we have the cold war with our two bosses, our bosses agree things behind the scene, we all follow, and it's not necessary for the small brothers, guys to fight, now it's different, HK not exactly the same, similar. Once we have some complaints from the district counsellors, they have agree to our projects, while we are still organising so many public forums, public engagements, thing like that, it's becoming difficult, they think they are representing the people, elected representatives by the people, so when we consult them on the old days, they will be more comfortable to exercise their judgement, but now they will challenge not the main constituents of the election, but from some other smaller groups, more aggressive groups, and they are facing already problem position, but as far as Government concerned although it's good to have

district councillor endorsed, we have to make sure every stakeholder come up and let us know what they think before everything finalise, and then somebody jump up out of the group.

JO: So the District Counsellor aren't necessarily representing the views of the public?

JR: They will represent most of the people, if they do their jobs good , they consult their voters, they have officers within the areas, we seen some very good district counsellors, but it's always like that you have a wide spectrum of people, different backgrounds, it's becoming more complicated for us, in the past few years the changes have made us to bring in earlier consultation, public engagements, what we call it, it's a 2 edge sword, it's very good, everybody give out what they want you to, and they expect Government to react, but you raise their expectation to such a high level.

JO: And they may not get what they want?

JR: You have to be careful, it's quite tricky, and different projects and policy have to do it carefully, you don't have a medicine for every case, so and also depends on your relationship with the district counsellors. Normally the democratic, DAB, and the Tsio Tong*, representative from the business sector and the functional constituency professionals they are mainly the Government supporters, on the main policies but then on the district level it might be different, they have to be accountable to the interests of the local areas, but if we try to engage the people earlier and we have an opportunity to draw everybody together, if possible we make sure everybody will be part of the ideas, although we have no cure of their expectations, to a reasonable level, make sure everybody becoming part of the final product. We have some success in this aspects, once I attended the working group of the district councils, we invited all the members they only have a few reps here to attend the meeting then the local residents, those local residents were different interest groups, from what we saw from the groups, the public engagement if we do it skilfully it helps very much. I don't have to give my answer, someone jumps up and speaks!

JR: I think sincerity and credibility are two main things that we have to push forward, if we can't do it, then we have to frankly speak, then if we have too many empty commitments then it becomes difficult for us at a later stage. So the whole process is very different. In the old days. It's very easy for us to just pause in the middle of the project, then we have some final plans at quite a premature stage we are consulting the District council and the project will go through, now we have to start the process earlier. It's very difficult for and the consultants, who spend a lot of time and effort and difficult for us to assess the time and effort required.

JO: What is your greatest leadership challenge?

JR: ...big pause.....we have to push for our projects and also seek the management support for resources, and have to speak and let the management know the also the difficulty we face, also the how to do it in a more smooth way to complete the jobs for a successful completion for our management, is difficult to.....

JO: Managing your manager sometimes?

JR: YES. The problem is once you've got the project moving then your boss will think everything is under control and so then your boss will try to move your colleagues, resources and team, and you have report your position. Especially for on-going projects you become run into a very difficult engineering condition, the easy parts are done and then becoming the contract entering into a more difficult phase, you have to lead the project teams to push the consultant's contractors and to address all the difficulties we encounter. I think the problem now is too many projects on the back lines and then the workers, sub-contractors, dropping, but our jobs are more demanding now, it's very difficult.

JO: So it's managing that pipeline of work?

JR: You can... carrot and stick we use, we still have to use it – more persuasion and try to help the contractors and consultants deliver the project now we can't sit back and wait for results, we have to take a more positive role to lead the job forward. The difficult thing is you can't do it for them, but you have to make sure they deliver our

required services, especially in this environment you have a lot of good people, who can be moved to other larger projects in their company or in other companies with promotion or higher salary, so we have difficulty in keeping experienced and good staff on site.

