

**The London School of Economics and
Political Science**

**The contingent role of
management and leadership
development for middle
managers**

**Cases of organisational change from
the public services**

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the contribution of management and leadership development (MLD) for middle managers. Its central hypothesis is that MLD plays an important role in enabling strategic change through middle managers, but that greater contextualisation is required to understand the precise nature of its effects and its limitations. The thesis builds on organisational contingency theory (Mintzberg 1979) to develop and test a model of changes to middle management roles and associated outcomes of MLD.

The thesis differentiates between the MLD options of management development, leader development and leadership development (Day 2001) and hypothesises a range of MLD outcomes across organisational types. For its empirical base, the thesis focuses on public service organisations (PSOs), in which substantial investments in MLD have been made at all levels of management in recent years. Three case studies show how, as PSOs seek greater flexibility, the devolution of a broader range of responsibilities to middle managers creates various development needs according to different directions of organisational change.

The thesis finds that: i) when the machine bureaucracy divisionalises, investment in line management training makes a significant contribution to organisational stability, while leader development is most effective in the customer-facing divisions of the business; ii) when the safety bureaucracy professionalises, investment in competence-based management development and leader development can successfully promote more participatory forms of management, but that the potential for political obstacles to MLD is accentuated; and iii) when the professional bureaucracy adhocratises, investment in MLD makes a significant contribution to balancing ongoing organisational effectiveness with the building of adaptive capacity for the future.

The thesis adds to academic knowledge of MLD options and their expected outcomes. The thesis also develops the academic literature by contextualising changes to middle management roles and explaining the contingent role of MLD in organisational change.

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Glossary

ASLEF	Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen
CSCI	Commission for Social Care Inspection
FBU	Fire Brigades Union
HR	human resources
HRD	human resource development
HRM	human resource management
IPDS	Integrated Personal Development System
IRMP	Integrated Risk Management Plan
KASS	Kent Adult Social Services
KCC	Kent County Council
LD	leader development
LFEPA	London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority
LFB	London Fire Brigade
LSD	leadership development
MBA	Masters in Business Administration
MLD	management and leadership development
NHS	National Health Service
NPM	the New Public Management
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
OMC	operational managerial competence
OMD	operational management development
PJMC	project management competence
PJMD	project management development
PMC	professional managerial competence
PMD	professional management development
PSO	public service organisation
RMT	Rail, Maritime and Transport workers union
SMC	strategic managerial competence
SMD	strategic management development
SWT	South West Trains
TSSA	Transport Salaried Staffs' Association

Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

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I warrant that this authorisation does not, to the best of my belief, infringe the rights of any third party.

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It remains only to say that any errors or omissions are entirely my own.

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Chapter 1. Middle management roles and skills

It would...be very nice if someone would do a bit more research on the basic question of what sort of differences management can make, and when. (Pollitt 2003: 171 - emphasis in original)

This thesis investigates management and leadership development (MLD) for middle managers. Its central hypothesis is that MLD for middle managers makes an important contribution to strategic organisational change, but that greater contextualisation is required to understand the precise nature of its effects and its limitations.

Middle managers represent an important group in organisations, performing a critical function between strategic and front-line management (Floyd and Wooldridge 1992, 1994, 1997, Currie and Procter 2001, Huy 2002, Balogun 2003). As organisations seek greater flexibility, they tend to devolve broader sets of responsibilities down to middle and front-line managers (Dopson and Stewart 1990, Cunningham and Hyman 1999, Hales 2006/7). Learning and development priorities arise from such devolution (Currie and Procter 2005, Hales 2006/7), leading organisations to make investments in MLD activities, particularly for those managers below the senior management level (Storey 2004b: 6-7).

MLD is not a simple instrument of organisational change. It exhibits a variety of aims and methods (Day 2001, Mabey and Finch-Lees 2008), and its effectiveness is influenced by a range of contextual factors (Mole 2000, Thomson et al. 2001). Although the importance of a conducive organisational climate for achieving effectiveness in MLD is well understood (Kirkpatrick 1994, Van Velsor and McCauley 2004), there has been little research into the effect of organisational type. This is surprising in view of the supposed relationship between MLD and the pursuit of strategic organisational goals. The question of the extent to which MLD's contribution is influenced by organisational contingencies represents a key gap in the literature.

The aim of this thesis is to identify the precise role of MLD for middle managers in enabling strategic changes across key organisational types. It develops a theoretical model with four main elements: i) middle management roles and skill-sets according to different types of organisation, namely the machine bureaucracy (and its variant, the safety bureaucracy), the divisionalised form, the professional bureaucracy and

the adhocracy (Mintzberg 1979); ii) expected changes to these middle management roles, as organisations seek greater flexibility through strategies of divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation (c.f. Hales 2001: 128-59); iii) the MLD options associated with these organisational change strategies, including management development, leader development and leadership development (Day 2001); and iv) the expected multi-levelled outcomes (Kirkpatrick 1958, 1994, Martineau 2004, Tyler 2004) of the different combinations of MLD intervention.

The model is tested through three organisational case studies of MLD for middle managers. The empirical focus is the public services, where substantial investments in MLD have been made at all levels of management in recent years, and in which different types of bureaucratic work organisations and their directions of change are clearly identifiable. The case organisations – a train operating company, a fire brigade, and a social services department - are selected to represent divisionalisation in the machine bureaucracy, professionalisation in the safety bureaucracy, and adhocratisation in the professional bureaucracy respectively.

The case studies show that: i) when the machine bureaucracy divisionalises, investment in line management training makes a significant contribution to organisational stability, while leader development is at its most effective in the customer-facing divisions of the business; ii) when the safety bureaucracy professionalises, investment in competence-based management development and leader development can successfully promote more participatory forms of management, but that political obstacles to MLD are accentuated in this type of organisational change; and iii) when the professional bureaucracy adhocratises, investment in the full range of MLD options makes a significant contribution to balancing ongoing organisational effectiveness with the building of adaptive capacity for the future.

This first chapter sets out the initial theoretical conditions underpinning the enquiry into the contribution of MLD for middle managers. In its first section, the current state of knowledge of middle management is reviewed, and it is argued that the tendency in the academic literature to build a universal model of the middle management function should be inverted, instead taking a theory of organisational differences as the point of departure. To this end, the second section analyses the 'middle line' within Mintzberg's organisational typology and discusses the value of his contingency theory for understanding changes to middle management. The third section then develops its own typology of contingent middle management roles and

skill-sets. The fourth section analyses the expected effects of organisational change on middle management roles and skill requirements. Organisational change is understood in terms of movement between the Mintzbergian organisational types through strategies of divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation. The accompanying changes to middle management roles and skills are then modelled according to these three directions of organisational change. The final section explains the remaining structure of the thesis and how its key arguments are constructed.

1.1 Middle management and the limits of a universal model

Who are the middle managers? What do they do, and how has this changed? Such questions, in the search for a universal model, have characterised most academic enquiry into the middle management function. However, as Grugulis observes, managerial work is “remarkably wide-ranging and resistant to definition” (2007:133) and when seeking to develop managers it is perhaps more fruitful to “focus on the differences between managers rather than seeking to emphasise what they share” (p.154). In a similar vein, Hales (2006/7: 36-37) argues that, as organisations change and alter their management roles, it is pertinent not only to ask ‘what is happening to middle and front-line managers’ jobs’, but also ‘what they are for’. This section reviews the academic literature, which is shown to provide important insights into how middle managers link the strategic and operational activities of organisations, but which is also shown to be limited by a lack of context-specific models.

Middle managers are worthy of study as a group. Since the emergence of large industrial and service organisations with several hierarchical tiers, they have continued to be significant in a quantitative sense, despite the enthusiasm for the ‘delayering’ of organisational hierarchies in the 1980s and early 1990s (Livian 1997, Vouzas et al. 1997). However, precise measurement of the number of managers in this specific group is difficult to achieve. In the UK, the 2004 Workplace Employment Relations Survey reports the Standard Occupational Classification of ‘Managers and senior officials’ as accounting for 11 per cent of the workforce in the 90 per cent of organisations that employed managers (Kersley et al. 2006: 24). But international statistical comparisons of managers are problematic (Bournois and Livian 1997, Elias and McKnight 2001). For example, the 2002 European Labour Force Survey

reported only 3.5 per cent of German workers describing themselves as managers or officials (TUC 2005).

The difficulty in measuring the number of middle managers is underlined by deeper definitional problems. The most logical way of defining middle managers is to identify the group between senior and front-line managers in the organisational hierarchy. In this sense, middle managers are necessarily managers of other, more junior managers. However, as Livian (1997) points out, 'middleness' can have several dimensions:

middle of a command hierarchy; middle in terms of time-scale and scope of decision between strategic and routine supervision; middle in terms of organizational impact, between fundamental and inconsequential. (Livian 1997: 4)

Within this wider perspective, middle managers can include two broad groups of personnel: i) those with some responsibility for the work of others and some hierarchical authority in the 'middle stretch' of organisational hierarchies; and ii) professionals who exercise a degree of control over their own work, and therefore indirect control over the work of others (Livian 1997: 5). The middle management group is broadened considerably by the inclusion of professionals, such as accountants and engineers (c.f. Grugulis 2007: 136), who in the UK comprise a further 12 per cent of organisations' workforces, with 46 per cent of professionals holding responsibility for supervising other staff (Kersley *et al.* 2006: 24).

Greater definitional precision can be achieved by identifying what middle managers are conventionally responsible for in organisations, and what they actually do. A comprehensive outline is provided by Hales (2006/7), who points out that, while there are both different levels and types of middle managers (p.32), their defining characteristic is their responsibility for "either the operational effectiveness of a meso-level unit and/or its performance as a cost/profit centre" (p.33). The tasks associated with this responsibility are:

- Direction, co-ordination and control of the operation of the unit.
- Deployment of resources within the unit.
- External relations with others inside the organisation and external parties.
- Reporting and accounting for smoothness of operations and/or level of business performance that ensued.

(Hales 2006/7: 33)

These lead to the following activities:

- Linking strategy and operations by transmitting and implementing policy and regulations, planning and co-ordinating a number of units, briefing and directing subordinate managers, allocating work and reporting on operational, financial and/or market performance.
- Deploying human, financial and physical resources through recruitment and selection, training and development, appraisal and motivation of managers reporting to them; negotiating and managing budgets and controlling expenditure; and managing inbound and outbound logistics.
- Liaising with other units within the organisation, to maintain workflow, co-ordinate activities, trade and provide services and information and liaising with external parties such as suppliers, distributors/agents and customers/clients.

(ibid.)

This outline is helpful in demonstrating the variety of activities involved in managing in the middle of the organisational hierarchy, including both specialist and generalist tasks, upward and downward communication and internal and external liaison. It illustrates why middle managers have traditionally been seen as the organisational 'linking pins' (Likert 1961), a view which is echoed in more recent research on managerial work by Mintzberg (2009: 138), who finds that middle management is the place in which the organisation best integrates its activities.

In the late-twentieth century, however, the contribution of middle management became closely scrutinised, with middle managers becoming popular targets for redundancy in the 1980s and early 1990s (Currie and Procter 2005: 1328). The delayering of organisations through the removal of middle managers was an important element of the search to find more flexible alternatives to tall, centralised bureaucratic structures in response to perceived changes in the business environment. The specific concerns were – and still are - that: i) increasingly well-educated employees demand less supervision and more autonomy at work; ii) more turbulent and uncertain operating environments require greater organisational agility and responsiveness; iii) reductions in managerial overheads are enabled by ever more sophisticated information technology; and iv) such reductions are required in the face of continually increasing international competitive pressures (Livan 1997, Hales 2001: 151).

The underlying criticism of middle managers, especially in the popular management literature, has been that they represent a blockage between the organisation's

strategy and operations, rather an efficient linking function. Scarbrough and Burrell (1996) caricature this negative perception of middle managers as follows:

[Middle managers] are costly, resistant to change, a block to communication both upwards and downwards. They consistently underperform; they spend their time openly politicking rather than in constructive problem solving. They are reactionary, under-trained and regularly fail to act as entrepreneurs (1996, cited in Balogun 2003: 70).

Yet, as Fenton O'Creevy (2001) has pointed out, it would be unsurprising if middle managers did not resist organisational change at times, as they may find themselves both the target and the agent of change (cited by Balogun 2003: 70). Moreover, the apparent durability of the middle management group, despite the pressures of the late-twentieth and early-twenty first century business environment, suggests that they continue to play an important role in organisations and exercise significant influence.

Performing the key linking role of middle management is plainly not a straightforward functional matter. It is a complex process of negotiation and exchange (Watson 1994), in which the different hierarchical groups of managers have bounded cognitive capacity. As Boxall and Purcell (2008) explain line managers' sometimes less than enthusiastic adoption of new human resource management (HRM) policies:

Line managers are not necessarily trying to be perverse. They are often trying to make the organisation function effectively....[A]t times, line managers help to keep a sinking ship afloat. At other times, they may be letting a policy die that they think is unworkable or against their interests (Boxall and Purcell 2008: 219).

Clearly, there are a number of roles that middle managers have to play according to changing circumstances. The question is which middle managerial roles are the most important, and whether these have altered in recent years.

The main academic debate centres on middle managers' contribution to strategic change (Currie and Procter 2001, 2005). Some accounts have concentrated on middle managers' role in initiating change and innovation, emphasising their crucial mid-way position for the effective processing of new information and ideas (c.f. Kanter 1985, Nonaka 1988). Other, more recent research has shed light on how middle managers contribute simultaneously to organisational stability and change.

Huy (2002) demonstrated through a three-year qualitative study how middle managers in a large deregulated information technology company played an important 'emotional balancing' role in their teams. The middle managers' pursuit of change-projects at the same time as attending to the emotions of their team members enabled them to make an important contribution to organisational adaptation (2002: 31). Balogun (2003), using a similar methodology in a deregulated utilities company, reached comparable conclusions, identifying middle managers as 'change intermediaries'. In this study, middle managers played the dual role of interpreting and 'making sense' of organisational change, both for themselves and their teams, and balancing the pressures of managing continuity of service with the implementation of change.

As well as highlighting the balancing role played by middle managers in organisational stability and strategic change, the accounts of Huy and Balogun are notable for their description of how middle managers navigate between the use of formal managerial control and informal influencing strategies. The authors do not make it explicit, but there is a strong resonance here with theories of leadership, and how this differs from management (Kotter 1990, Zaleznik 1992). Fundamentally, leadership is "the process in which an individual influences other group members towards the attainment of group or organizational goals" (Shackleton 1995: 2). This is to be distinguished from coordination activities that rely upon formalised control processes, which have more to do with management (or 'transactional leadership' (Bass 1985)). The leadership literature has become huge and complex (Storey 2004a), but Shackleton's basic and widely-cited version of leadership as an influencing process serves as a useful working definition for the purposes of modelling middle management roles. It does this by differentiating, on the one hand, the people-focussed, motivational and change-orientated dimensions of managing through informal influencing, from, on the other hand, the task-focussed, compliance- and continuity-orientated dimensions of managing through formal control.

The balance that managers have to strike between management and leadership is seen by many to have shifted towards the latter in recent decades. This shift is associated with the rise of flatter, decentralised and 'post-bureaucratic' organisational forms, designed to be more flexible and responsive to ensure survival in the new, more competitive business environment (Drucker 1988, Kanter 1989, Handy 1990). As these organisational forms utilise fewer hierarchical tiers and standardised processes, there is less demand for "*day-to-day management*, in the

form of the direction, control and monitoring of work performance”, and more demand for “*leadership*, in the form of consultative coordination, support, advice, coaching, development and inspiration” (Hales 2002: 55).

The evidence that centralised, rule-bound bureaucracies have been replaced to a significant extent by decentralised and less formalised organisations has, however, been called into question (Heckscher 1994, Hales 2002, Mintzberg 2009: 50). Nonetheless it is reasonable to conclude that any model of middle management should comprise of a balance between formal management activities concerned with coordination and control, and informal leadership activities concerned with influencing. These combine to serve the simultaneous pursuit of organisational stability and change. The balance that middle managers strike between management and leadership can then be expected to vary according to organisational circumstances.

With regard to middle managers’ contribution to strategic change, a widely-cited model is that of Floyd and Wooldridge (1992, see also Currie and Procter 2001, 2005). Taking Mintzberg and Waters’ (1985) view of strategy as a set of deliberate and emergent processes, the authors identify four middle management roles across two dimensions, as Figure 1.1 illustrates.

	<i>Upward</i>	<i>Downward</i>
<i>Divergent</i>	Championing alternatives	Facilitating adaptability
<i>Integrative</i>	Synthesising information	Implementing deliberate strategy

Figure 1.1 Typology of middle manager influence
(Floyd and Wooldridge 1992)

The model summarises how middle managers exercise downward influence by ‘implementing deliberate strategy’ through the translation of objectives from senior management into effective operational plans, as well as by ‘facilitating adaptability’, in which they stimulate local changes that fall outside of the planned strategy. The model also shows how middle managers exercise upward influence by ‘synthesising information’ for senior management, thus filtering important strategic feedback upwards, as well as by ‘championing alternatives’ to the organisation’s planned strategy. Middle managers are therefore seen as undertakers of both ‘integrative’ and ‘divergent’ activities, by supporting the deliberate processes of planned strategic

change on the one hand, and by engaging in the more *ad hoc* processes of emergent strategic change on the other.

Despite their bias towards the idea that middle managers contribute significantly to strategic change, Floyd and Wooldridge highlight a necessary degree of continuity and uniformity amongst middle managers in the 'implementing deliberate strategy' role. This role is crucial for achieving consistency and performance across the organisation, without which "coordination breaks down among the various elements of strategic change...[which] is likely... to hamper the overall realization of strategy" (Floyd and Wooldridge 1997: 472, cited in Currie and Procter 2005: 1327-28). In effect, therefore, the roles performed by middle managers, as conceptualised by Floyd and Wooldridge, may be understood as serving both organisational stability and change.

The above model provides a useful basis for exploring how middle managers balance their key roles, and the circumstances under which this balance might change. In their 1994 study, Floyd and Wooldridge observe that implementing deliberate strategy was the most prevalent of the four roles, but they identify two key conditions under which middle managers can exert greater influence over strategic change. Firstly, middle managers have to 'span boundaries', in the sense of acting outside their normal functional delineations, and secondly, middle managers have to be given a degree of freedom by senior management to experiment and adapt strategic plans (Floyd and Wooldridge 1994, cited in Currie and Procter 2001: 57). The authors recognise that these conditions necessarily vary according to environmental and market context, and they argue that future research should concentrate on this area (*ibid.*).

In acknowledging the likely effects of contingencies on the balance of roles played by middle managers, Floyd and Wooldridge highlight the limits of a universal model. Concerns about over-generalisation have also led others, notably Dopson and Stewart (1990), to call for more contextualised research:

There is no attempt to differentiate between the future of middle management in different contexts. It may well be that the work and situation of the middle manager in the public sector is very different from that of the middle manager working in a traditional industry or a fast-growing computer company. These differences are important, and if researched, may will [sic] provide a less homogenous picture... (Dopson and Stewart 1990: 9)

Despite such calls, there have been few attempts to examine the influence of context on middle managers' roles. A rare exception is Currie and Procter (2005). Recognising that most of the evidence of middle managers' strategic contributions derives from technology-intensive and highly decentralised organisational environments, Currie and Procter build on Floyd and Wooldridge's model to investigate middle managers' contributions within the more centralised and regulated organisational setting of the 'professional bureaucracy', as conceptualised by Mintzberg (1979). Through case studies they explore the effects of a number of contingencies, including the two conditions of 'boundary-spanning' and managerial discretion. Among other findings, they demonstrate how organisational structures and professional norms limit middle managers' strategic contributions and how these effects may vary between organisations.

The research by Currie and Procter opens up an important line of enquiry into the influence of organisational type over middle management roles. To pursue this line of enquiry more fully, and thus to advance academic understanding of the middle management function, it is necessary to return to basic theories of organisation. Rather than attempt to build inductively a universal theory of middle management, even one that is sensitive to context, it is more meaningful to invert the question, and deduce a variety of middle management roles from a theory of organisational differences.

1.2 Contingent middle management

The most comprehensive treatment of organisational differences and their influence on management roles is to be found in Mintzberg (1979). The author also pays considerable attention to theorising the function of the 'middle line' in an organisation's hierarchy. This provides a useful starting point from which to conceptualise differences between various middle management roles. Mintzberg's model of the middle line across various organisational types may be usefully incorporated with more recent theory on leadership to develop a concept of contingent middle management.

Mintzberg's middle line refers to those mid-hierarchy managers with direct responsibility for the work of front-line managers and teams. It is one of five organisational parts. The other four are: the strategic apex (senior management and

directors); the operating core; the technostructure (technical specialists who standardise work systems, such as engineers and programmers); and the support staff (responsible for providing services such as administration, catering and maintenance for the operating core). Middle managers may therefore include both the members of middle line and mid-hierarchy staff managers. In addition, different types of middle line occur across four main organisational types: the ‘machine bureaucracy’ (an important variant of which in the public services is the ‘safety bureaucracy’ (1979: 332)); the ‘professional bureaucracy’; the ‘divisionalised form’; and the ‘adhocracy’¹.

Mintzberg’s central proposition is that organisations have a strong, natural tendency to be structured in keeping with their internal and external environments through their search for efficiency-maximisation. The organisational structure that results is shaped by the key coordination mechanism, namely the way in which the organisation’s main work tasks are allocated and organised. As organisations grow, or as the operating environment becomes more complex, the key coordination mechanism necessarily changes, so responsibility for decision-making becomes decentralised away from senior management. Mintzberg makes an important distinction between vertical and horizontal decentralisation, in which the former relates to the devolution of management responsibilities down the hierarchy to less senior staff, and the latter relates to the hiving off of responsibility for decisions over work to non-managers. Figure 1.2 summarises the main dimensions of the four main types of organisation, and how the function of the middle line varies across them.

¹ Mintzberg’s fifth organisational type, the ‘simple structure’ (1979) or ‘entrepreneurial organisation’ (2009) has no significant middle management function, and is not considered in this thesis. It is also notable that, in his later work (2007, 2009), Mintzberg abandons the terminology of the machine bureaucracy and the professional bureaucracy in favour of ‘the machine organisation’ and ‘the professional organisation’. This suggests that the author may have come to observe de-bureaucratisation as an important feature of the recent business environment. However, this thesis retains the terminology of bureaucracy for three reasons: i) the thesis has an empirical focus on the public services, in which the concept and practice of bureaucracy remains strongly relevant (c.f. also Mintzberg 1996); ii) the conceptualisation of machine and professional organisations remains fundamentally unaltered in Mintzberg’s later work, thus providing no specific theoretical reason for adopting the new terminology; and iii) the ‘safety bureaucracy’ is employed as a theoretical construct in this thesis alongside two other types of bureaucracy, and has no equivalent in Mintzberg’s revised terminology. As an addendum to this last point, Mintzberg uses the term ‘contingency bureaucracy’ interchangeably with ‘safety bureaucracy’ to describe emergency services organisations such as fire departments (1979: 332). However, the ‘contingency bureaucracy’ has, for this thesis at least, unhelpful connotations with ‘contingency’ theories of HRM, which are taken up later in the discussion and which are therefore usefully differentiated from specific conceptual models of organisation.

	Machine bureaucracy	Professional bureaucracy	Divisionalised form	Adhocracy
<i>Key coordination mechanism</i>	Standardisation of work processes	Standardisation of skills	Standardisation of outputs	Mutual adjustment
<i>Key part of organisation</i>	Technostructure	Operating core	Middle line	Support staff
<i>Type of decentralisation</i>	Limited horizontal decentralisation	Horizontal and vertical decentralisation	Limited vertical decentralisation	Selective decentralisation
<i>Function of the 'middle line'</i>	Elaborated and differentiated; conflict resolution; staff liaison; vertical communications	Controlled by professionals; much mutual adjustment	Formulation of local strategy; operations management	Extensive but blurred with staff function; project work

Figure 1.2 Dimensions of organisational structures

(Adapted from Mintzberg 1979: 466-67)

Mintzberg argues that a machine bureaucracy arises in large and mature organisations in which there are predominantly routine and predictable work tasks. Work is therefore most efficiently coordinated through the formal standardisation of work processes. A large technostructure is the key part of the organisation, as it has a strong influence in designing the work processes of the operating core to achieve machine-like efficiency. This means that the machine bureaucracy is vertically centralised through its chain of command, though with some horizontal decentralisation as the organisation devolves much responsibility to the technostructure. While middle managers in such an organisation may work in the technical and support parts of the organisation, the managers in the middle line above the operating core are chiefly responsible for overseeing routine workflow and 'disturbance-handling' when the organisational 'machine' fails to function properly. Additional middle management functions include conflict resolution and communications between the operating core and senior management. The role for middle managers is therefore relatively limited, as the actual planning and co-ordination of their teams' work is largely determined by the technostructure.

The machine bureaucracy has a number of variants (as do Mintzberg's other organisational types, see 1979: 470-71). Due to the focus of this thesis on the public services, it is pertinent to dwell briefly on Mintzberg's 'public machine bureaucracies' (p.331), which arise in organisations that are subject to strong external control and regulation by governments. As the author puts it, "the more an organization is controlled externally, the more its structure is centralized and formalized, [which are] the two prime design parameters of the Machine Bureaucracy" (Mintzberg 1979: 331). Thus public machine bureaucracies arise in government agencies, such as licensing or tax collection departments, in which workflow processes and personnel

procedures have to be regulated by government for the purposes of accountability, transparency and fairness. The first main variant of this is the 'control bureaucracy', seen in organisations such as custodial prisons and police forces, in which discipline and hierarchical control are necessary conditions of operation. The second main variant is the 'safety bureaucracy' in which organisations such as airlines and fire departments develop highly formalised and practised procedures in order to minimise risk and to respond efficiently in non-routine and emergency situations. As Mintzberg illustrates:

[A] fire crew cannot arrive at a burning house and then turn to the chief for orders or decide among its members who will connect the hose and who will go up the ladder. The environments of these organizations may seem dynamic, but in fact most their contingencies are predictable – they have seen them many times before – and so procedures for handling them have been formalized. (Mintzberg 1979: 332)

In control and safety bureaucracies, due to the relatively uniform nature of their core operations, the middle line can be expected to be less elaborated and differentiated than in a classic machine bureaucracy, such as in a factory with multiple production lines. This means that conflict resolution, staff liaison and vertical communication activities are likely to take on greater relative significance than disturbance-handling in the control and safety bureaucracies. In the specific case of the safety bureaucracy, the practising of emergency routines, and the introduction of new routines as additional contingencies are anticipated, become the main workflow of the organisation.

The professional bureaucracy arises when the organisation's primary work tasks are sufficiently unpredictable to require professional discretion and cannot be easily standardised by technical experts. Therefore, in order to achieve consistency and efficiency, work is primarily coordinated through the standardisation of skills. This is accomplished through 'training and indoctrination', or the qualification and socialisation of the operating core workers into a professional group. The operating core is therefore the key part of the professional bureaucracy, and authority to make decisions on work tasks is horizontally decentralised to a large extent.

Departmentalisation of different types of work also ensures a degree of vertical decentralisation. Middle line managers in the professional bureaucracy are usually of the professional group themselves, or are at least controlled closely by them, due to the professional discretion required in making decisions about the work of the operating core. They have little formal influence or power to standardise work and

therefore have to rely on 'mutual adjustment', namely informal communication, collaboration and negotiation to achieve their goals and the changes required by the strategic apex.

The divisionalised form arises when the work of the organisation becomes sufficiently diversified, for example as it begins to service several different markets. It then has to decentralise authority to a number of different business units, or divisions. In order to retain control over this diverse range of work processes, however, vertical centralisation remains at the strategic apex and the top of the middle line, where the outputs of the different business divisions are standardised. Within each business division, authority may be highly centralised, but across divisions there may also be considerable decentralisation of work processes. Middle managers therefore have a high degree of influence in the divisionalised form of organisation. They are typically responsible for entire business units and thus for strategies for the medium-term future, and how work is planned and organised at unit level. However, the centralised performance control system is the main regulating and coordinating force in the organisation, and middle managers have to work within its constraints.

Mintzberg's final organisational type is the adhocracy. This is more common in fast-changing and complex markets. The adhocracy or 'project organisation' (Mintzberg 2007, 2009) is strongly associated with the flat, post-bureaucratic form both observed and advocated by those who consider the new business environment to require a high degree of organisational flexibility. Work tasks in the adhocracy are concerned with innovation and chiefly organised through time-limited projects. Because it is less predictable and able to be standardised, either by process, skills or outputs, work has to be coordinated through mutual adjustment between the different parts of the organisation. The support function is therefore the most important part of the adhocracy, as decisions around the management of projects and administration are integral to the core operation. This is a 'selectively decentralised' structure, in which professionals, managers and support staff intermesh through project teams and informal networks, in addition to their functional groupings.

Mintzberg develops two variants of the adhocracy, the operating adhocracy and the administrative adhocracy. The former is the main type described above. In the latter, the operating core, rather than intermeshing with the support function, is truncated or even contracted out, so that middle management and support staff form the core

of the organisation. Management and staff experts join together to oversee projects and the administration of the work of the operating core, which can be organised in a separate bureaucratic structure. Middle managers in the adhocracy are therefore a diverse group, not readily identified, as the distinction between staff and line is blurred and project matrix structures throw up multiple management positions that change with time.

Mintzberg's typology has been influential but not uncontested. The main challenge has come from Doty *et al* (1993, cited in Pollitt 2005: 384) who reject both Mintzberg's typology and his underlying contingency theory. They perform an empirical test of Mintzberg's two central assertions that: i) organisations conform to a limited number of ideal structural configurations; and that ii) organisations are more effective when they approximate one of the ideal types and thus achieve a high degree of 'fit' between their structure and environment. The researchers surveyed more than one hundred US organisations over a period of approximately one year to measure both their conformity to Mintzberg's ideal organisational types and their effectiveness in relation to their conformity to these types. Their data provide little empirical support for either Mintzberg's typology or his theory. The authors nevertheless concede that:

Mintzberg's theory may be valid in some sectors of the economy and not in others, or only among mature organizations, or only among truly autonomous firms rather than among semiautonomous strategic business units.... research [in this area] might show that Mintzberg's theory is a powerful predictor of organizational effectiveness when it is interpreted as a middle range theory ... rather than a grand theory. (Doty *et al.* 1993: 1242)

It is the middle-range theoretical ground in which Mintzberg's organisational types are employed in this thesis. The intention here is not to make a grand test of Mintzberg. Rather his organisational typology provides a useful basis on which to conceptualise the diversity of middle management roles that may occur across mature, bureaucratic work organisations. A similar approach is used by Pichault and Nizet (2000) and Pichault and Schoenaers (2003) in their typology of human resource (HR) models, which are based on Mintzberg's organisational configurations, and by Boxall and Purcell (2008) in their typology of HR systems across different types of organisation, including 'classical', 'participatory' and 'flexible' bureaucracies (pp. 211-12).

The other advantage of using Mintzberg's typology is that it provides a basis for conceptualising *changes* to managerial roles. This is enabled by the flexibility of the typology and the possibility for partial or full-scale structural transitions between organisational types. As Mintzberg argues, "some real structures fall into position close to ...one of the pure structures...while others fall between two or more, as hybrids, perhaps in transition from one pure from to another" (1979: 469). A continuum of structural organisational change, with progressively greater flexibility, may therefore be conceptualised to include: i) piecemeal movements from one organisational type in the direction of another, for example when a machine bureaucracy adopts elements of the divisionalised form; ii) partial transitions resulting in hybrids, for example between the professional bureaucracy and the adhocracy; and iii) full transitions from one organisational type to another, for example from the machine bureaucracy to a professional bureaucracy (see pp.470-71). This continuum creates an organisational map, on which a diversity of managerial roles can be located, and on which changes to managerial roles may be traced. (Structural transitions between organisational types and their implications for changing middle management roles are returned to in the next section).

The main limitation of Mintzberg's typology is its age. More recent theories have conceptualised new forms of project-, network- and knowledge-based organisation, particularly the Japanese 'J-form' (Lam 2000) and variants of the adhocracy (c.f. Hales 2001, Grugulis 2007: 175). However, Mintzberg's adhocracy continues to offer a basic working model that captures the key characteristic of project- and network-based approaches to coordination and how this affects managerial roles. Moreover, the professional bureaucracy has provided a durable theoretical construct which researchers continue to use (c.f. Broadbent and Laughlin 2002: 95, Currie and Procter 2005). Finally, organisational environments with standardised and relatively low-skill work tasks, that resemble the machine bureaucracy, continue to be of interest to researchers (c.f. Boxall et al. 2011). Mintzberg's typology therefore enables the full range of organisational environments to be encompassed within a single, coherent theoretical framework. Crucially, it includes the most detailed consideration of differences in managerial roles across organisations, especially evident in its treatment of the middle line.

Beyond specific criticisms of Mintzberg's theory, general challenges to contingency theory also need to be considered. As Hales points out (2001: 152), the ability of some organisations to shape their own environments, rather than be shaped by them, suggests a less deterministic, one-way relationship between the organisation

and its environment than is implied in contingency theory, asserting that new management practices could be driven by forces other than competitive pressures.

A challenge to contingency theory that is particularly relevant to the study of PSOs comes from neo-institutional theory, which questions the assertion that an organisation's design is motivated by efficiency-seeking. Instead of the fit between the organisation's structure and its environment, neo-institutionalists emphasise 'isomorphism', namely the adoption of 'best practices' and organisational designs that follow prevailing political and professional norms (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, Abrahamson 1991, Paauwe and Boselie 2005, Ashworth et al. 2009, cited in Entwistle 2011). Because PSOs face less competitive pressure to be efficiency-seeking than private sector organisations, the preferences of contemporaneous professional and policy-making circles are likely to be influential in shaping organisational structures and the adoption of new management practices (c.f. Pollitt 2005: 390-91, 393). PSOs may also be expected to imitate changes introduced by other PSOs that are perceived by elites to be high-performing and demonstrative of best practice (Entwistle 2011).

In short, neo-institutionalist theory suggests that structural changes in PSOs may follow the 'logic of appropriateness' rather than the contingency 'logic of consequences' (March and Olsen 1996, cited in Ashworth and Entwistle 2011). Yet a number of commentators suggest that the logic of appropriateness and the logic of consequences should cohabit and be reconciled, rather than be seen as mutually exclusive (Entwistle 2011: 665). For example, Entwistle investigated radical organisational change in fifteen English local authorities and found that:

Although largely insulated from the disciplining effect of competitive markets... the change decisions ... were to a very significant degree still determined by the logic of consequences. While there was evidence that senior and middle managers sought to adopt fashionable or appropriate reform ideas, they were constrained by the many veto points within their organizations from doing so without good consequential reasons (Entwistle 2011: 676).

Entwistle further finds that, despite the lack of competitive threats to local authorities' long-term survival, concerns about organisational performance differences motivated just over half of the changes observed. As he puts it, "Just because an organization adopts an idea for reasons of legitimacy does not mean that it is a bad idea in terms of efficiency and effectiveness" (2011: 678).

This evidence suggests that, when investigating changes to management in PSOs through the lens of structural organisational change, isomorphic pressures should be understood as integral with a search for greater efficiency. One way of understanding the interrelationship between isomorphic and efficiency pressures is offered by Sherer and Leblebici (2001). In seeking to explain variety and change in strategic HRM, the authors distinguish between strong and weak institutional forces on one continuum and strong and weak competitive forces on the other. They use combinations of these forces to predict the degree of isomorphism across four main groups of organisations, as illustrated in Figure 1.3.

		<i>Institutional forces</i>	
		<i>Weak</i>	<i>Strong</i>
<i>Competitive forces</i>	<i>Weak</i>	Cell 1 Random and idiosyncratic variation in HRM practices	Cell 2 Selection of stable best practices in HRM
	<i>Strong</i>	Cell 3 Competitive variation through selection	Cell 4 Variation through collective adaptation

Figure 1.3 Variety and change in HRM practices
(Sherer and Leblebici 2001: 217)

In Sherer and Leblebici's Cell 1 are organisations that are subject to both weak institutional and competitive forces, which lead to 'random and idiosyncratic variation in HRM practices'; such conditions are seen as rare. In Cell 2 are organisations that are subject to strong institutional forces but weak competitive forces, which lead to a high degree of isomorphism through the adoption of 'stable best practices in HRM'. In Cell 3 are organisations that are subject to weak institutional but strong competitive forces, which lead to 'competitive variation through selection' in which some organisations survive and others fail. In Cell 4 are organisations that are subject to both strong institutional and competitive forces, which lead to variation in HRM practices as part of a process of 'collective adaptation', in which groups of organisations gradually abandon dominant best practices, start to experiment with

new HRM practices and then with time adopt them as the new best practices (Sherer and Leblebici 2001: 216-220).

With reference to Sherer and Leblebici's model, it can be argued that the international trends of privatisation and market-type reforms to public services in recent decades (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004) have shifted the environmental conditions for PSOs from Cell 2 towards Cell 4 (more on this in Chapter 3). While institutional pressures remain strong, competitive pressures have also strengthened. As the authors describe Cell 4:

Such a scenario typically indicates that the competitive environment has changed dramatically and/or that there has been a dramatic shift in the views or ideology of key actors in an industry or organizational field (Sherer and Leblebici 2001: 220).

Recent changes in management practices in PSOs may be usefully examined in terms of this theoretical shift, from the isomorphic adoption of stable best practices in the sector towards a process of adaptation to find a more effective fit with the changing environment. The main question is how strong the competitive forces actually are: whether they are sufficiently strong to induce structural change and variety in management practice in PSOs; or whether they simply produce some limited diversity that is naturally found in groups of isomorphic organisations, as a by-product of the process of diffusion of stable best practices (c.f. Sherer and Leblebici 2001: 218).

This thesis will proceed on theoretical basis that large, mature, bureaucratic work organisations can be broadly categorised according to Mintzberg's four main types, and that changes to organisational structure and management are primarily efficiency-seeking in their motivation. Within this approach, it is recognised that Mintzberg's four main structural configurations are ideal types, so the typology is used as a theoretical device to provide rough locations and directions of change on a conceptual organisation map. It is also recognised that PSOs are subject to strong institutional forces, so organisational change is understood as part of a process of collective adaptation to the changing operating environment.

1.3 Four middle management roles and skill-sets

Returning to the original Mintzbergian typology and the middle line, four contingent middle management roles may now be conceptualised, including a differentiation of the skills that are required in each role. The four key middle management roles may be termed: 'machine middle line management' (Role A); 'business division management' (Role B); iii) 'professional middle line management' (Role C); and iv) 'middle leadership' (Role D).

Before outlining the four roles, it is first necessary to clarify the use of the term 'skill'. Skill is used in this thesis as a generic term for what one is required to know and be able to do in order to perform one's role in an organisation. It therefore encompasses a range of required knowledge, abilities and behaviours, sometimes termed 'competences' (or 'competencies' in the US, c.f. Boyatzis 1982, Burgoyne et al. 2004: 14). Such a generic definition of skill is pragmatic shorthand and not unproblematic. Grugulis (2007: 16) shows how the concept of skill is actually part of a 'complex social system' and itself socially constructed. The author draws on Cockburn's (1983) definition, in which the term skill can be simultaneously used to describe: i) individuals' knowledge, experience and 'human capital'; ii) the expertise and discretion required by specific jobs in organisations; and iii) the social status of particular positions of responsibility. In line with the organisational orientation of this research, it is Cockburn's second element – skill in the job as part of organisational requirements – that is selected here as a working definition, whilst appreciating the complexities of examining skills-development in practice.

It is necessary to distinguish between different types of managerial skills. Of the many available categorisations of managerial skills and competences (which are ultimately quite similar (Hill 2003: 239)), particularly influential has been that of Katz (1974), who proposes that all managers require a mixture of three basic sets of skills: technical; human; and conceptual. Technical skills refer to the possession of specialist knowledge and the abilities to analyse problems within one's specialism and to use its tools and techniques. Human skills, increasingly rebranded as 'soft skills' in contrast to 'harder' specialist skills (c.f. Grugulis 2007: 76-79), refer to the ability to communicate, to work effectively in teams, and to lead teams. This also involves an awareness of how one perceives others and is perceived by others in the workplace. Conceptual skills refer to the ability to comprehend the relationships between different organisational functions and processes. This may include an

appreciation of the interrelationships between the different parts of the organisation, the individual and the external environment (Hill 2003: 376). Using Katz's threefold categorisation of management skills, the four key middle management roles A-D are summarised in Figure 1.4.

Role A. Machine middle line management

Key roles: ensuring workflow, conflict management, liaison and communications

Technical skills: relevant business and technical knowledge.

Human skills: soft skills for communication and interaction.

Conceptual skills: ability to implement organisational policies e.g. people management, health and safety.

Role B. Business division management

Key roles: strategic and operations management.

Technical skills: tools and techniques of resource management and performance monitoring.

Human skills: soft skills for communication and interaction.

Conceptual skills: understanding of systems of output-standardisation and business strategy.

Role C. Professional middle line management

Key roles: professional-managerial collaboration, mutual adjustment.

Technical skills: specialist professional knowledge and credibility.

Human skills: leader skills for mutual adjustment.

Conceptual skills: understanding of systems of skills-standardisation and the changing regulatory environment.

Role D. Middle leadership

Key roles: project management, mutual adjustment.

Technical skills: project management.

Human skills: leader skills for mutual adjustment.

Conceptual skills: understanding of processes of innovation and strategic change.

Figure 1.4 Four roles of middle management

Role A middle managers occupy the middle line of machine bureaucracies and have a limited but crucial role. While the design, planning and coordination of work tasks are the responsibility of the technostructure in a machine bureaucracy, changing technical standards and arrangements require translation to the operating core. The basis for this ability is a sufficient grasp, if not an expert understanding, of the relevant business and technical knowledge in order to ensure workflow in the form of the smooth-running of the organisational machine. In addition, and in an apparent

paradox for a 'hard' mechanical environment, machine middle line management requires the 'soft' human skills of communication and people management.

The human skills required by machine middle line managers can be identified as having three purposes. These are: i) for conflict resolution to bridge gaps between the technostucture and the front line; ii) to receive and convey information effectively from above and beyond the departmental boundaries and between the front line, other parts of the middle line and other parts of the organisation; and iii) to help defuse conflicts and maintain a harmonious working atmosphere on the line, in view of the difficult human conditions that tend to exist in machine bureaucracies (Mintzberg 1979: 316, 334-40).

Overall, the role of machine middle line managers is closest to Floyd and Wooldridge's implementing deliberate strategy role. Machine middle line managers may also exist in other organisational structures than the machine bureaucracy, as mini-machine bureaucracies arise as substructures, for example, to organise the catering or cleaning staff within a professional bureaucracy. In the previous section, the safety bureaucracy variant of the machine bureaucracy was also emphasised, in which the middle line had an augmented staff liaison and vertical communications role. This suggests a variant of machine middle line management, which may be termed 'emergency middle line management'. (This variant is elaborated in Chapter 5).

Role B middle managers are best viewed as 'mini-general managers', running independent divisional operations (Mintzberg 1979: 384). Despite their importance, however, Mintzberg devotes remarkably little space to the roles of middle line managers in divisionalised forms and has little to say about their required skills. The significant point to make about these middle managers, here called 'business division managers', is that their divisions have a natural tendency to be organised as mini machine bureaucracies. This is due to the standardising influence of headquarters, which exerts its influence and retains control by standardising the outputs of the divisions and by specifying measures of the required quantity and quality (Mintzberg 1979: 385, c.f. also Mintzberg 1989:155-72, 2009:107). Due to the strong emphasis on upward reporting, business division management is most closely approximate to Floyd and Wooldridge's 'synthesising information' role.

Business division managers require various technical skills in resource management, planning, budgeting, coordination, information and change

management to ensure organisational efficiency and continuity. They require the conceptual skills for output standardisation within the often complicated framework provided by the organisation's performance management system. Included here are also strategic management skills, including knowledge of all the organisational functions of operations, human resources, marketing and finance, in order to manage the development of their business divisions in the medium- to long-term and to respond to changes in their particular market environments. Finally, due to the tendency to run mini-machine bureaucracies and liaise with headquarters, they require similar human skills to their machine middle line manager counterparts. The breadth of skills required by business division managers means that, of all the four types of middle management, Role B management represents the closest approximation to Fayol's (1949) classic full range of management activities (planning, organising, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting) and Hales' (2006/7) outline of the classic middle management function in Section 1.1.

Role C middle managers constitute the middle line in professional bureaucracies. Due to the power of the professional operating core to standardise and control its own work, professionals seek also to exert influence over the middle line, which has to make decisions about how colleagues are hired, fired and promoted, how resources are distributed and which new projects the organisation should choose to embark upon. Mintzberg argues that professionals exert control over the middle line in two ways: either by doing the work of the middle line themselves; or, to enable them to concentrate on their professional work, by collaborating closely with professional administrators in formulating policy and making decisions (1979: 358-363).

Professional middle line management therefore requires a complex set of skills. This is particularly the case if a professional turns completely to administration, while having to keep up-to-date and in-touch with ongoing developments in the profession. First, in order to have credibility in the professional community of the organisation, the professional middle line manager has to have the recognised technical skills. This means being a qualified member of that profession, or as Mintzberg puts it, appropriately 'trained and indoctrinated' (1979: 95). Second, in order to manage the complexities of resource-allocation and other managerial tasks, the professional middle line manager needs to possess the requisite conceptual skills for skills-standardisation. Similarly to Role B managers, required here are abilities in planning, budgeting, coordination, information and change management, but with the more specific purpose of understanding changes in the regulatory

environment so that ongoing changes to organisational systems and procedures are managed in ways that protect and develop professional standards.

The third skill area required by professional middle line managers, in order to work in collaboration with professionals, concerns the advanced human skills for mutual adjustment. As Mintzberg describes it:

Seldom...can a senior administrator *impose* a solution on the professionals or units involved in a dispute. Rather the unit managers ... must sit down together and *negotiate* a solution on behalf of their constituencies. Coordination problems also arise frequently..., and it often falls to the professional administrator to resolve them (Mintzberg 1979: 362 - emphasis in original).

The advanced human skills required for mutual adjustment – those of negotiation and collaboration without the exercise of formal authority – are re-interpreted in this thesis as ‘leader skills’. These are to be distinguished from the more basic human skills required by machine middle line management and business division management, which are not to be under-estimated, yet which are ultimately concerned with communication and effective interaction with others in order to secure agreement with instructions. In contrast, leader skills are concerned with influencing and motivating others to commit to organisational objectives and changes, without having to issue instructions or ‘pull rank’ by drawing on one’s formal authority. This area of activity also involves initiating change upwards, and is therefore most approximate to Floyd and Wooldridge’s ‘championing alternatives’ role for middle managers.

Role D management, termed here as middle *leadership*, is required in adhocracies. The distinction between ‘leader’ and ‘leadership’ is made here in order to emphasise the difference between the individual-level, motivational dimension of relating to others and the organisational-level, shared activity of contributing to strategic change and innovation. By virtue of their operating environment, middle managers in adhocracies deal with greater uncertainty than in the other middle management roles. Work has to be coordinated through project teams that span across conventional functional boundaries in the organisation, and change is achieved through mutual adjustment rather than centralised command-and-control. This means that middle leadership is characterised by the ongoing responsibility to work collectively with other managers to innovate and find solutions to organisational problems. This is akin to Floyd and Wooldridge’s ‘facilitating adaptation’ role.

With regard to the Role D skills-set, the leader skills required for mutual adjustment on an individual level have to be supplemented with the technical skill of project management in order to work collectively with other managers and technical specialists in an unpredictable operating environment. Project management includes abilities in planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, as well as the softer skills of communication and teamwork. Middle leadership also requires a relatively high level of conceptual skill in order to understand and appreciate the interrelationships involved in project work and how the projects relate to the dynamic environment and changing strategy of the organisation. Middle leadership has therefore much in common with professional middle line management, but without the requirement to be qualified and socialised into the relevant professional community.

Middle leadership is most prominent in the adhocracy, but it may also appear within any of the other three organisational types as the management of the technostructure or support staff. This will depend on the existence of high-skill or professional technical and support functions in the organisation. The alternative is for the support function – and in certain cases, the technostructure - to be run as a set of mini machine bureaucracies. This is possible if the work tasks are routine, such as catering and cleaning on the support side, or timetabling and scheduling on the technical side. Across the four organisational types, therefore, middle line management should range from Roles A-D, whereas staff management should mainly exhibit either Role A or Role D.

The different roles of middle management across the four main structural configurations are summarised in Figure 1.5 in a way that distinguishes between line- and staff- management.

	Middle line management	Staff management	
		Bureaucratic	Adhocratic
Machine Bureaucracy	Role A	Role A	Role D
Divisionalised Form	Role B	Role A	Role D
Professional Bureaucracy	Role C	Role A	Role D
Adhocracy		Role D	

Role A = machine middle line management; Role B= business division management; Role C = professional middle line management; Role D = middle leadership

Figure 1.5 Middle management roles according to line- and staff management functions

(developed from Mintzberg 1979)

The A-D role typology, including an appreciation of the line-staff distinction, helps to differentiate more sharply than the existing literature has allowed between the various roles of middle managers. It enables a clearer understanding of what this important group in organisations is required to know and be able to do in different contexts.

1.4 Transitions between organisational types and changes to middle management

The four contingent middle management roles and skill-sets outlined in the previous section were each based on the influence of one organisational type - the machine bureaucracy, divisionalised form, professional bureaucracy or the adhocracy. This section sets out the three main processes of change - divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation - that involve transitions between the organisational types and produce changes to middle management roles and skill requirements.

The specific way in which organisational change is interpreted in this thesis is as transition between Mintzbergian structural types. As Mintzberg argues, when an organisation searches for greater control over its changing environment, it experiences new 'pulls' on its structural configuration to make complete or partial transitions towards another of the ideal organisational types (1979: 477-79). This kind of organisational change results "from a growing misalignment between an inertial deep structure and perceived environmental demands" (Weick and Quinn 1999: 365, cited in Entwistle 2011: 667). Such change necessarily alters the basic coordination mechanism and is therefore radical rather than incremental in nature.

The difference between radical and incremental organisational change can be further clarified by reference to Dunphy and Stace's (1992) four-stage scale of organisational change. Their scale ranges from: i) fine-tuning; to ii) incremental adjustment; iii) modular transformation; and iv) corporate transformation. Dunphy and Stace's first two types represent smaller-scale, ongoing adjustments to operations that may be reasonably viewed as a normal part of organisational continuity rather than organisational change. The last two types are akin to Mintzberg's structural transitions in that they are concerned with the transformation

of parts of the organisation (modular transformation) or the whole organisation (corporate transformation). Modular transformation may be said to represent partial structural transition, or the creation of a structural hybrid, whereas corporate transformation represents a full structural transition from one organisational type to another.

Mintzberg's treatment of structural transitions and hybrids is somewhat underdeveloped, but it is helpful as a starting point for analysing changes to middle management roles. It would be to stretch the theoretical framework too far to match specific middle management roles against an exhaustive typology of structural transitions and corresponding hybrids. Rather, it is more sensible to recognise that organisations, in search of greater flexibility, make strategic attempts to practice more decentralised forms of management (Hales 2001: 128-159). On a continuum of decentralisation, three key strategic attempts can be conceptualised as divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation.

During divisionalisation, the machine bureaucracy moves towards the divisionalised form. Hales (2001) argues that divisionalisation tends to be market-driven, in which "Greater market uncertainty... cannot be handled through programmed and standardized operations" and in which "management functions are devolved to make unit operations more sensitive and responsive to local market conditions" (p.140). The divisionalisation process involves the breaking down of the organisation into sub-units according to product lines or geographical markets. The main implication of divisionalisation for middle managers is that greater responsibility for operational management is devolved down to business units from senior managers. Middle managers therefore become divisional heads, autonomous to a degree, but subject to central performance controls and use of central specialist services such as HR, marketing and procurement (*ibid*). The retention of centralised controls means that divisionalisation represents a partial rather than full structural transition away from the machine bureaucracy.

In effect, divisionalisation is vertical decentralisation, or decentralisation 'within' management. It is a less radical alternative to horizontal decentralisation, or decentralisation 'beyond' management to technical specialists (*ibid*). This latter type of decentralisation includes the other two types of organisational change, professionalisation and adhocratisation. These two types of change are *knowledge-driven* rather than *market-driven*, as "responsibility for and control over work operations resides with professionals or technical experts in order to reap the benefits of their expertise" (*ibid*).

The specific way in which professionalisation is conceived in this thesis is as a knowledge-driven change in organisational management. This is in contrast to the more frequently-used political sense in which professionalisation is understood as an occupational strategy of groups of skilled employees to maintain their autonomy from management control (Hales 2001: 144). Professionalisation as it relates to organisational change is:

a way of circumventing some of the deficiencies of bureaucracy in the face of increasingly complex work processes and turbulent environments.... [This involves] balancing the demands of professional autonomy with the need for managerial control ... [or] devolving management functions to those whose specialist work requires that they are given some freedom to manage themselves and whose training equips them to do so. (*ibid*)

Professionalisation involves a shift in the machine bureaucracy or the divisionalised organisation towards the professional bureaucracy. During professionalisation middle managers assume greater responsibility for achieving business outcomes through collaboration with managers in other parts of the organisation such as the technostructure and support staff. They also assume more responsibility for the recruitment and development of staff to uphold the accepted professional standards, rather than for the implementation of bureaucratic processes that determine how work is completed. Depending on how far managers assume this full range of new responsibilities, the organisation makes either a partial or full structural transition to the professional bureaucracy.

Adhocratisation entails moving beyond the machine bureaucracy, divisionalised organisation or professional bureaucracy towards a highly decentralised form. This involves “creating a loose federation of temporary work units, or project teams, in which technical expertise and creativity are given free rein” (Hales 2001: 147). As Hales remarks:

adhocracy is defined as much by absences, what is not present, as by what is and may be seen as a kind of anti-structure (or deliberate dis-organization) where the usual paraphernalia of organization charts, rule books/manuals, operating procedures and job descriptions are missing. (*ibid*)

The main implication for middle managers, as organisations move in this direction, is that they become less concerned with line-responsibility and increasingly responsible for collaboration with specialists from across the organisation and beyond. The middle line and staff managers increasingly intermesh through matrix structures, acting as coordinators of project teams, “offering guidance or advice, rather than exercising managerial control” (Hales 2001: 148). In reality, however, full transitions towards this type of coordination tend to be limited to very specialised knowledge-intensive work environments and are therefore rare (pp.150-51). Due to ongoing pressures to organise work activities efficiently and the psychological reluctance of managers to decentralise decision-making powers completely (Hales p.156), it is more common to build a ‘parallel organisation’ of project teams alongside the existing hierarchy, thus hybridising the bureaucracy and the adhocracy (p.152).

The three transition processes of divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation are illustrated in Figure 1.6 in relation to Mintzberg’s four main organisational types.

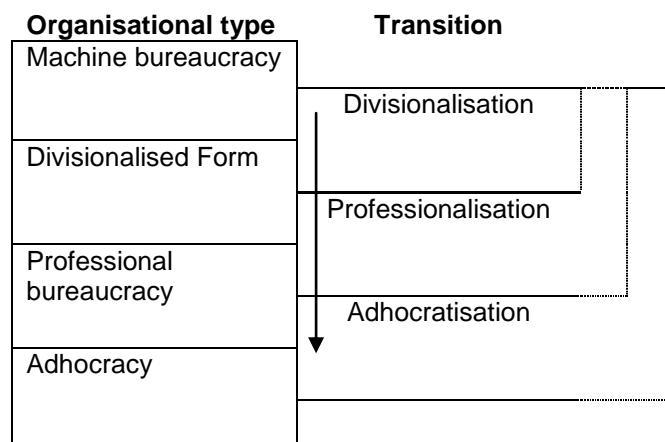


Figure 1.6 Transitions between organisational types

The concentric rectangles on the right of Figure 1.6 imply that the three processes of decentralisation may occur across any of the four organisational types. In fact, in Mintzberg’s original text, there are multiple, two-way directions of travel to represent an even greater variety of structural transitions (1979: 470-71). However, following Hales’ continuum of decentralisation, the transitions have to be understood as a set of unidirectional downward shifts (as depicted by the arrow in Figure 1.6). Although it may be possible, for example, for the machine bureaucracy to undertake a radical,

three-stage shift towards adhocracy, the most likely organisational transition is one or two shifts downwards, towards the divisionalised form, or towards the professional bureaucracy.

The above location of the three transition processes against Mintzberg's organisational types can be developed to model changes to the middle line. Figure 1.7 builds on Figure 1.6 to represent the four middle management roles A-D and the expected changes to the middle line.

Organisational type	Middle line	Transition	Changes to middle line roles
Machine bureaucracy	Role A (machine middle line management)	Divisionalisation	A → B
Divisionalised Form	Role B (business division management)	Professionalisation	B → C (poss. A→C)
Professional bureaucracy	Role C (professional middle line management)	Adhocratisation	C → D (poss. A or B → D)
Adhocracy	Role D (middle leadership)		

Figure 1.7 Changes to the middle line during organisational transitions

As transition attempts are most likely to involve shifts of only one stage down the continuum, it follows that the most likely changes to the middle line are those highlighted in bold in the far-right column of Figure 1.7. It is recognised, however, that pressures for changes to the middle line may extend further down the continuum. (The pressure to change middle management roles from Role A to Role C, for example, is of particular interest in safety bureaucracies, as is discussed in Chapter 3).

Any shift between the middle management roles implies the need for new skills. For example, middle line managers in machine bureaucracies during divisionalisation can be expected to possess or have to develop not only the skills associated with machine middle line management, but also some or all of those associated with business division management (see **A → B**). Similarly, middle line managers in professional bureaucracies during adhocratisation can be expected to possess or have to develop not only the skills associated with professional middle line

management, but also some or all of those skills associated with middle leadership (see **C → D**), and so on.

It is argued in the next chapter that MLD represents a strategic instrument through which organisations try to achieve the necessary changes in the skills of middle managers to support divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation. The discussion in this chapter has served to set out the initial conditions within which MLD plays this role. The three initial conditions may be summarised as follows:

Initial condition 1. Skill-fit to organisational structure.

The main tasks and key skills required of middle managers vary according to four main roles, which correspond to Mintzberg's four main organisational types.

Initial condition 2. Line-staff division across the four roles.

The various middle management roles found within an organisation are determined by the responsibility for either a line or staff function.

Initial condition 3. Skill needs for structural transition.

The skill needs of middle managers are driven by one of the four main middle management roles and/or another role associated with greater organisational flexibility.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

The rest of the thesis is set out as follows. Following the argument that structural organisational change produces a demand for new management skills, Chapter 2 reviews MLD as an instrument of organisational change and develops a model of MLD in three steps. The first step is to differentiate MLD options – management development, leader development and leadership development - according to their underlying strategic aims. The second step is to model the outcomes of the different MLD options at individual, group and organisational levels. The third step is to model the use of MLD to achieve strategic changes to middle management by linking the hypothetical MLD options and outcomes with the A-D role typology and the structural transitions of divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation. This produces a full model of contingent MLD for middle management, which leads to four hypotheses which drive the empirical enquiry.

Chapter 3 sets out the methodology of the thesis. It justifies the use of a comparative case study strategy for the testing of the three initial conditions and the four hypotheses, and introduces three PSOs as case studies. The three case organisations are selected to investigate the role of MLD for middle managers in divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation respectively. The data collection strategy and processes in the case studies are explained and discussed.

Chapters 4-6 each present one of the case studies. Chapter 4 investigates the contribution of MLD in a train operating company from 2003-6, a machine bureaucracy which divisionalised, including changes to its middle line of depot and station managers. Chapter 5 investigates the contribution of MLD in a fire brigade, a safety bureaucracy which entered into a process of professionalisation in 2002-5, including changes to its middle line of fire station managers. Chapter 6 investigates the contribution of MLD in a local authority social services department, a professional bureaucracy which introduced a degree of adhocratisation in 2005-07, including changes to its middle line of adult social care managers.

Chapter 7 synthesises the lessons from the three case studies and demonstrates how the hypotheses are broadly supported by the evidence. The case studies, while limited in number, each provide a rich insight into the actual experience of middle management and its development in organisations. Together they demonstrate sufficient variation in organisational type and direction of change to suggest the importance of organisational structure as a primary influence in shaping MLD options and outcomes. Chapter 8 sets out the theoretical implications of the findings of the thesis, while also considering its limitations and suggested directions for future research.

Chapter 2. Management and leadership development: options and expected outcomes

[E]mployer approaches to developing their managers are a good deal more contingent and cogent than they used to be. Partly this has been forced upon them.
(Mabey and Finch-Lees 2008: 230)

The previous chapter argued that middle management roles and skill requirements are contingent on the organisational type and direction of structural transition. This chapter hypothesises that contingent combinations of MLD methods are required to achieve specific strategic organisational changes by adapting the skills of middle managers.

As organisations try to effect strategic change, they rely upon managers having the motivation and capability to perform new roles. As discussed in the previous chapter, when organisations seek greater flexibility, broader sets of responsibilities for coordination and change tend to be devolved to middle managers. This devolution of responsibility progressively requires skills of leadership relative to skills of managerial control. To ensure that middle managers fulfil their new responsibilities effectively, organisations employ a number of strategies, including restructuring, performance-management and the altering of the reward system, with varying degrees of success (McGovern et al. 1997, Hales 1999, Balogun 2007, Morris and Farrell 2007). One of the least researched strategies is the use of MLD as a means of adapting the skills of managers.

MLD is investigated in this thesis for its contribution to organisational change. It is therefore understood as an organisational investment in managers' learning in order to meet strategic goals (c.f. Mole 2000). These goals necessarily involve the simultaneous pursuit of both organisational stability and change (Leana and Barry 2000, Boxall and Purcell 2008: 20). Amongst the variety of aims and methods, three broad MLD options can be distinguished (Day 2001). The first is management development, which uses training-orientated methods to develop the competence of managers to ensure organisational stability and continuity. The second is leader development, which uses individualised methods to enable managers to influence and motivate others towards strategic change goals. The third is leadership development, a collective and less prescriptive type of intervention, during which managers learn to facilitate organisational adaptation (c.f. also Gold et al. 2003).

The key argument is that: i) different types of management development contribute to various forms of organisational stability; and ii) different combinations of management development, leader development and leadership development are required to enable specific directions of organisational change, namely divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation. This twofold argument is constructed in more detail through the development of a theoretical model over the next three sections of the chapter.

The first section of the chapter explains the interpretation of MLD as an organisational investment in managers' learning; it also elaborates the three main MLD options in terms of their methods, and deduces their underlying strategic aims. The second section identifies the main contextual variables that influence the MLD process and deduces the expected outcomes of the different MLD options at multiple levels within a single organisation. The third section applies the hypothetical outcomes to the middle management roles A-D and maps them across the processes of divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation. Thus a full model of contingent MLD outcomes is constructed, culminating in four hypotheses, which rest on the three initial conditions set out at the end of Section 1.4. The final section of the chapter reviews the main argument of the thesis, including a consideration of potential challenges to the theoretical model.

2.1 MLD options

In conceptualising MLD as a means of achieving organisational change, this thesis is adopting a broadly functionalist perspective, in which MLD is seen as "the process by which individuals improve their capabilities and learn to perform effectively in managerial roles" (Mabey and Finch-Lees 2008: 33). There are, however, a number of competing interpretations of what MLD is and what it is for. Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008) show how MLD has been theorised in three main alternative ways: i) as a means of satisfying multiple objectives and the different interests of various individuals and groups; ii) as an effort by elites to enforce control and subordination; and iii) as a process of identity-construction (see also Mole 2000, Chapter 9, Storey and Tate 2000: 196-99, 2008: 23, and Stewart 2009 for similar accounts of MLD's various aims).

These alternative conceptualisations of MLD would identify different types of empirical outcomes than those predicted by the approach adopted here. This thesis is ultimately concerned with factors relating to organisational efficiency, whereas the logic of the three main alternative interpretations is that MLD should be primarily concerned with political compromise, compliance and domination, and changes in managers' self-images respectively.

Out of the three main alternative conceptualisations, MLD as an expression of political compromise has the greatest potential to co-exist alongside expected efficiency-related MLD outcomes. As Pichault and Schoenaers (2003) argue, political tensions between stakeholders are integral to organisational change, during which new strategies, structures and HRM models may be adopted. Given the plurality of stakeholders involved in MLD - including individual learners, their line managers and colleagues, the HR function, management trainers, senior managers and possibly external certificate-awarding bodies – there is considerable scope for the balancing of different interests through MLD intervention. Nevertheless, if MLD is a chiefly a strategic investment by organisations in managers' learning, then MLD activities should be found to aim to achieve changes in management behaviour that enable long-term efficiency goals to be met. While this may involve other outcomes such as political compromise, the most salient outcomes should be those relating to long-term organisational efficiency. As Mabey (2002: 1141) puts it, "providing important differences are aired and the opportunities for compromise and synergy between different interest groups are not lost, the [MLD] arena *can* be managed despite its pluralist nature" (citing Burgoyne and Reynolds 1997: 61 - emphasis in original).

The assertion that MLD is fundamentally motivated by strategic organisational concerns is ripe for further investigation. Research to date on the influence of business strategy on management development has produced mixed conclusions. While some have argued that human resource development (HRD) is a function of long-term business priorities and/or structural configurations (Fombrun et al. 1984, Schuler and Jackson 1987), a view which has received some empirical support from Gratton (1997), others (Storey et al. 1997) have observed a lack of strategic integration of management development activities in organisations, at least in the UK (Mabey 2002: 1141-42). Mabey's (2002) survey findings (reported also in Thomson et al. 1997, Thomson et al. 2001) support the conclusion that the relationship between business strategy and MLD in organisations is weak. However, in a later review of the evidence, Mabey and Finch-Lees note that MLD in

organisations is becoming more “contingent and cogent” (2008: 230, see also the opening quote to this chapter). This observation raises the possibility that the relationship between organisational-level strategy and MLD may have strengthened in recent years, indicating that a reappraisal of MLD’s strategic role and fit is timely.

A sharper conceptualisation of the relationship between organisational strategy and MLD is also overdue. In his 2002 study, representing the most detailed recent attempt to measure the relationship, Mabey identifies a key limitation in the measurement of the ‘structural context’ surrounding MLD using the variables of organisational size and degree of centralisation. He suggests that future research on MLD could benefit from a “construct which captures the prevailing business strategy of the organization” (p.1156). This thesis offers the Mintzbergian constructs of organisational configurations and structural transitions as the most suitable response. ‘Purer’ models of business strategy, such as those of Miles and Snow (1978) and Porter (1980), do not capture the relationship between strategy, structure and management roles with the same comprehensiveness provided by the Mintzbergian map of divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation. Particularly due to its focus on management roles, the Mintzbergian map has greater potential to illuminate the role of MLD in altering managers’ skills and behaviour for strategic purposes.

Regardless of organisational type, however, if MLD is an instrument of HRM, then it can be assumed to be related to an organisation’s HR strategy. Indeed, Mabey (2002: 1152-54) found the ‘HRM context’ (measured by presence of ‘planned career structures’, ‘fast track programmes’ and ‘succession planning’) to be a strong influence over the ‘design’ and ‘amount’ of MLD in an organisation, particularly when MLD was articulated as part of the organisation’s HR strategy.

But MLD is not a straightforward instrument of HRM strategy. It does not always equate to formally-organised, internal provision, so the HR function does not always fully ‘own’ the responsibility for MLD. As Mabey (2002) points out, the most effective MLD may happen “when the individual manager takes, or at least shares, responsibility for diagnosing needs and choosing the goals for their own self-development” (pp.1143-44). Much learning may be informal or externally-sourced, and the individual learner is clearly the most important actor in the MLD process. Nevertheless, for MLD to be effective in organisational terms, “the role of HR specialists and line managers in managing development is obviously crucial” (Mabey 2002: 1144). Whether or not the HR function entirely initiates, designs and

delivers the learning activities, it still has responsibility for the effectiveness of the MLD process and for the committed organisational resources. In this sense, MLD practice may be seen as strongly and necessarily linked to HR strategy.

The different ways in which HR strategy is linked to the design and delivery of different MLD interventions have not been fully theorised in the literature. The various approaches to training and developing managers that are employed in organisations are abundantly described (c.f. Burgoyne and Reynolds 1997, Mumford 1997, Mole 2000: 21-26, Storey and Tate 2000, Mumford and Gold 2004, Guest and King 2005, Mabey and Finch-Lees 2008). But there is considerable “conceptual confusion” (Day 2001: 581), which has limited the development of theory on the specific strategic aims of MLD. The confusion is cleared up to a large extent by Day (2001), who provides a typology of MLD from which the various strategic aims of different types of interventions can then be deduced.

Day distinguishes between management development, leader development and leadership development. Management development, according to Day, has “an emphasis on acquiring specific types of knowledge, skills and abilities to enhance task performance in management roles” (2001: 582). He maintains that management development has “mainly a training orientation” and characterises it as “the application of proven solutions to known problems” (*ibid*). For example, managers at various levels in the organisation need to be competent in the management of people so that HR policies on absence and discipline are adhered to and basic performance standards are maintained. Similarly, they need to be competent in the management of financial resources to ensure that departmental budgets are not over-spent. For such reasons, organisations frequently invest in standard management development programmes, with well-defined objectives and expected learning outcomes, typically delivered in a classroom setting in order to ensure that managers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to maintain organisational performance and implement business plans.

In contrast, leader development is described by Day as developing the individual manager “to think and act in new ways” (2001: 584). This is more concerned with the psychological and emotional aspects of work in organisations, and is not necessarily related to a specific managerial position. It is about understanding one’s own character and personality, how one fits into the broader strategic organisational picture, and how one’s behaviour is perceived and impacts on others. For example,

a manager might discover that colleagues perceive him or her to be sympathetic but overly submissive in his or her interactions with others. Alternatively it may be learnt that he or she is perceived as decisive but overly dominant. Leader development is designed to address such issues and work with the individual to become more effective in social interactions. It tends to have less prescribed learning outcomes than management development and uses individualised methods such as 360-degree feedback, coaching, mentoring and personal development plans.

The question of the quality of relationships between employees and their line managers has attracted much attention in recent years as part of attempts to understand how employee motivation and discretionary effort might be increased (c.f. Purcell et al. 2003: 7, Boxall and Purcell 2008: 219). This goes a long way to explaining why, in addition to investing in management development to ensure an adequate stock and flow of competent managers, organisations also invest in leader development. Leader development activities are often included as the self-development or self-management element of standard management development programmes, to encourage managers to learn about how they can improve their relationships with others and influence their teams more effectively to commit to strategic goals. There is, in short, a strong incentive to promote the development of their managers' human skills so that they might 'lead' staff more effectively.

In a more general effort to promote innovation and the organisation's ability to manage the uncertainties of the future, HR practitioners tend to turn to leadership development. Leadership development is described by Day as a collective process for "building capacity in anticipation of unforeseen challenges" (2001: 582). It involves networking, action learning and special project assignments, which include both planned and *ad hoc* group activities, designed to guide and draw upon interactions between managers so that solutions to organisational problems may emerge.

Due to its emphasis on collective learning and relationship-building between managers, leadership development is concerned with the creation of 'social capital'. This is to be distinguished from 'human capital', which is rather the concern of leader development (Day 2001: 583-84). The development of social capital involves efforts to increase mutual understanding, trust, commitment and obligation between managers to "enhance cooperation and resource exchange in creating organizational value" (Day 2001: 585; see also Nahapiet and Goshal 1998). Such activities have a strong association with 'organisational capacity-building' (O'Connor

and Quinn 2004, Tyler 2004), communities of practice (Brown and Duguid 1991, Lave and Wenger 1991) and organisational learning (Argyris and Schön 1978).

Survey evidence suggests that the majority of MLD activity in the UK constitutes standardised management development programmes, or elements of them. The remainder of MLD activity is mostly in the form of leader development (Gold *et al.* 2003, Burgoyne *et al.* 2004: 22). Gold *et al* (2003: 9-10) claim that leadership development activities, in the form described above, are in fact rare. It is clear that, in practice, there are overlaps between the different types of MLD activity within organisations (Day 2001: 584, Gold *et al.* 2003: 7). But to separate out and distinguish between them provides analytical clarity and forms the basis for enquiry into the contribution of different types of MLD interventions under varying conditions. Indeed, empirical evidence of ‘what works and when’ is notably lacking in this area (Burgoyne *et al.* 2004: 1, 82).

Day’s typology provides much-needed conceptual clarity, but stops short of linking MLD activities to specific strategic concerns. Day suggests that there may be different orientations in organisations, towards either the building of human capital (leader development) or towards the building of social capital (leadership development) (p.605). But his overall conclusions are general, arguing that “Either approach is incomplete by itself” (*ibid*) and that the keys to effectiveness are “consistent and intentional implementation” and “linking initiatives across organizational levels and in terms of an overall developmental purpose within the context of a strategic business challenge” (p.606).

For MLD to be effective, it may indeed be necessary in any organisational context to have a balance of human and social capital development activities, managed by a competent and strategically-orientated HRD function. As Boxall and Purcell (2008: 20) have pointed out, organisations typically pursue a range of strategic HRM goals simultaneously; operational efficiency is typically sought at the same time as seeking to maintain the trust and confidence of the workforce, and securing flexibility and capacity for the future. Thus organisations may be expected to invest a range of MLD activities to support their various HRM goals. Yet it is also logical to expect that organisations will seek to strike different balances of human and social capital development according to their changing strategic priorities, and therefore to pursue different blends of MLD practices (as the above-mentioned empirical evidence from Gold *et al* also suggests). So Day’s typology requires further development in order

to identify how specific HRM goals might be reflected in an organisation's MLD choices.

If the three main MLD options are taken to be instruments of HR strategy, and HR strategy is understood as a subset of organisational strategy (Boxall and Purcell 2008), then more specific underlying goals of the MLD options may be deduced, as can the broader organisational goals to which they are intended to contribute. The goals driving management development, leader development and leadership development can therefore be respectively derived as: i) efficient and effective management; ii) effective leading of staff; and iii) adaptive capacity. The organisational outcomes to which the three MLD options are intended to contribute may also be respectively derived as: i) organisational stability; ii) planned strategic change; and iii) emergent strategic change.

These theoretical linkages will now be elaborated in more detail, taking each MLD option in turn. Firstly, management development is driven by the requirement for efficient and effective management and thus is intended to support organisational stability in terms of the viable, ongoing provision of the organisation's services to customers and the smooth implementation of the organisation's business plans. Secondly, leader development is driven by the concern to ensure the effective leading of staff; it aims to do this through activities that enhance individual managers' abilities to take the initiative and to influence others to commit to longer term, strategic goals. In this sense, leader development is intended to support the overall organisational goal of deliberate and planned strategic change (c.f. Mintzberg and Waters 1985). Thirdly, leadership development is driven by the concern to build greater adaptive capacity in the organisation; it aims to do this through activities that foster relationships and help generate shared knowledge amongst managers in pursuit of the overall goal of improving the organisation's future flexibility. In this sense, at organisational level, leadership development is intended to contribute to emergent strategic change (c.f. *ibid.*).

This differentiation of the three main MLD options according to three broad organisational goals necessarily underplays the overlaps that are likely to exist between MLD interventions in practice. For example, management development interventions may contribute to planned strategic changes as well as to continuity of service to customers. The value of this novel framework, however, is to clarify the linkages between various strategic HRM goals, associated MLD interventions and intended organisational outcomes. The linkages are illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Strategic HRM goals	Associated MLD intervention	MLD activities		Contributes to intended organisational outcomes
Efficient/effective management	Management development	Prescribed learning programmes e.g. Work-related assignments, management qualifications	MLD outcomes	Continuity of service for customers Effective implementation of business plans
Effective leading of staff	Leader development	Individualised learning activities e.g. 360-feedback, coaching, mentoring, personal development plans		Planned strategic change
Adaptive capacity	Leadership development	Collective learning activities e.g. networking, special project assignments, action-learning		Emergent strategic change

Figure 2.1 MLD goals, options and intended organisational outcomes

The model illustrated in Figure 2.1 assumes that, in their pursuit of different HRM goals (column 1), organisations seek the most effective option by investing resources in the associated MLD intervention (column 2). It then assumes that HR practitioners in organisations will design or buy MLD interventions according to conventional MLD practice, and deliver a typical set of associated short- to medium-term activities (column 3). The three broad sets of MLD activities can then be expected to contribute to the respective, intended organisational outcomes of stability (in terms of continuity of service for customers and the effective implementation of business plans), planned strategic change or emergent strategic change (column 5).

In order for MLD to contribute to the overall intended organisational outcomes, however, the process requires an intermediate stage, namely the production of MLD

outcomes as they relate directly to managers and their colleagues (column 4). This is the subject of the next section of the chapter.

2.2 MLD outcomes

Effective MLD interventions may be expected to produce outcomes at three main levels, that of: i) the individual manager; ii) the group with whom he or she works; and iii) his or her organisational unit (c.f. Martineau 2004, Tyler 2004). However, the processes by which learning outcomes are produced are complex and subject to a variety of influences (Thomson *et al.* 2001, Mabey 2002, Mabey and Finch-Lees 2008). The extent to which the intended learning outcomes of MLD interventions are achieved will partly depend on the quality of the management of the learning process by HRD practitioners. Also, what managers learn, and how they apply their learning, takes place amid wider contextual factors outside of the formal development process, some of which the HRD function may be able to influence, yet some of which are beyond its control.

The first half of this section reviews the literature to set out the main principles of conventional best practice in MLD and to identify the two main contextual factors that may either enable or constrain the processes by which managers' learning is transferred into the workplace. These factors are identified as: i) HRD competence (which is broken down into operational and strategic HRD competence); and ii) political obstacles. This lays the theoretical ground upon which, in the second half of the section, a model of multi-levelled MLD outcomes is constructed for the single organisation.

The management of MLD by HRD practitioners is concerned with ensuring an effective learning transfer process that contributes to strategic organisational goals (c.f. Mole 2000: 2-4). But, as the voluminous organisational behaviour and psychology literature has demonstrated, the processes by which managers learn and apply their learning in organisations are highly complex (c.f. Argyris and Schön 1978, Kolb 1984, Dotlich and Noel 1998, Antonacopoulou 2006). The problems facing the HRD function in achieving intended MLD outcomes are also well documented. In practice, MLD interventions are often misconceived, ill-matched to both individual and business needs, poorly implemented and ineffectively followed-up (c.f. Hansen *et al.* 1999, Mole 2000, Conger and Toegel 2003).

Research by the Center for Creative Leadership in California (also drawn upon by Day (2001)), suggests that effective MLD depends upon three key elements: assessment, challenge and support (Van Velsor and McCauley 2004). Under 'assessment' are the various types of diagnostic activities used in organisations to identify learning needs, such as training needs analysis, multi-source feedback and psychometric testing. Under 'challenge', are various MLD activities which are matched to the learning preferences of individuals and designed to 'stretch' them in ways that will result in memorable learning experiences. Under 'support', is the range of formal and informal mechanisms for follow-up, feedback, reward and evaluation.

The assessment-challenge-support model is influential amongst practitioners and its application may be said to constitute conventional 'best practice' in MLD. To apply the model fully requires considerable resource and expertise within the organisation's HRD function. With regard to the 'assessment' and 'challenge' elements, as Guthrie and King (2004) demonstrate, specialist training and development expertise is required to select and administer the appropriate diagnostic tools, and to design and facilitate relevant, stretching learning activities. Similarly, Mole (2000: 29-30) points out how HRD functions rarely deliver all MLD activities in-house and therefore require the competence to commission appropriate specialist MLD services. With regard to the 'support' element, as Martineau (2004) illustrates, to engage managers and their colleagues over several months in follow-up and evaluation activities requires the HRD function to yield significant influence amongst the organisation's key stakeholders.

A particular problem of MLD-management, one that relates mainly to the 'support' element of the model, lies in negotiating the overlap between formal intervention and informal learning. Informal learning is concerned with naturally-occurring, incidental experiences. The extent and power of such experiences and the general importance to managers of informal development methods, such as learning through experience and reflection, are well established through research (Woodall and Winstanley 1998, Thomson *et al.* 2001, Mabey and Finch-Lees 2008: 230-31). The main issue for HRD practitioners is that the boundaries between formal and informal learning are especially blurred in the case of MLD. The term 'intervention' might imply prescribed learning objectives and planned learning activities. But particularly in the cases of leader development, individual reflective activity is central and there is considerable scope for drawing upon incidental learning experiences for developmental purposes (Guthrie and King 2004, Van Velsor and McCauley 2004).

With regard to the formal-informal learning overlap, the challenge for HRD practitioners, Guest and King (2005) suggest, is to maximise the contribution of incidental learning so that managers' experiences are converted into "planned yet informal learning" (p.250). This relies upon the HRD function being able to ensure that MLD interventions are sufficiently personalised to integrate individual managers' informal learning experiences. Key to this is the facilitation of regular reflection activities for managers, including the ongoing involvement of colleagues upon whom they rely for 'developmental relationships', namely as mentors, coaches and line managers (McCauley and Douglas 2004).

The capacity of the HRD function to implement conventional best MLD practice, by applying the assessment-challenge-support model effectively, can be understood as a contextual variable in the MLD process outlined in Figure 2.1. This contextual variable may be termed 'operational HRD competence', which an organisation may possess to varying degrees: when high, it serves to enable the effectiveness of MLD intervention; when low, it serves to constrain them. The other type of HRD competence, 'strategic HRD competence', relates to the broader organisational environment within which the MLD intervention takes place.

The effects of different types of organisational environment on learning transfer are well researched. The most notable and influential models include Kirkpatrick's (1994) five organisational learning climates ('preventing', 'discouraging', 'neutral', 'encouraging' and 'requiring'), and Burke and Hutchins' (2007) forty-eight organisational factors that either stimulate or inhibit learning transfer (cited in Broucker 2009: 4). With respect to the crucial relationship between MLD and business strategy, however, the most fruitful area of research relates to 'internal strategic fit'.

Purcell *et al/s* (2003) treatment of internal strategic fit suggests that, in order to meet their intended aims, MLD interventions have to be designed as part of a 'bundle' of complementary HR policies and practices. MLD activities are unlikely to be effective if learning aims are undermined by contradictory HRM practices or fail to be reinforced, namely through complementary recruitment, performance management and reward practices. Furthermore, due to the time-lags between MLD interventions and their eventual intended effects on individual and team behaviour, often lasting several months (Martineau 2004: 243-45), the achieving of internal strategic fit relies on consistency in the overall HR strategy, at least in the medium term. The classic

contradiction arises where managers are encouraged to follow long-term development plans, while at the same time having to deal with the threat of redundancy or the pressure of short-term performance targets (c.f. McGovern *et al.* 1997).

The capacity of the organisation to achieve internal strategic fit in MLD has been otherwise described as 'strategic maturity' (c.f. Thomson *et al.* 2001, Mumford and Gold 2004: 30-33, Stewart 2009: 425). The most strategically mature organisations, those that achieve an effective alignment between MLD strategy, HR strategy and long-term business strategy, have been observed to be mainly large, established employers in relatively stable environments, such as PSOs (*ibid.*). While acknowledging the considerable difficulties involved in achieving internal strategic fit, Mabey and Finch-Lees point to evidence of a 'virtuous cycle' in MLD (2008: 70-71). In such a cycle, there is an initially strong link at strategic level between HR and business strategy, which is likely to produce a consistent and sustained emphasis on developing effective management throughout the organisation. This conveys the message to line managers that senior management take MLD seriously, which in turn gives greater grass-roots credibility to MLD (and employee development generally). The ultimate effect of this greater credibility is to focus attention on the quality of relationships between line managers and their staff and on the quality of the organisation's product or services. Thus, the virtuous MLD cycle is perpetuated and a long-term process of internal strategic fit is enabled. The ability of an organisation to achieve internal strategic fit through strategic maturity, and to set the virtual MLD cycle in motion, may be said to constitute strategic HRD competence.

The second main contextual variable that may influence the effectiveness of MLD is the strength of political obstacles. As argued in Section 3.1, while primarily driven by the search for greater organisational efficiency, MLD intervention necessarily involves political tensions that arise from competing stakeholder interests and priorities. It follows that the HRD function, in seeking to discharge its responsibility for designing and implementing MLD interventions in line with strategic goals, may encounter varying degrees of resistance from managers in respect of MLD activities that are perceived to be unimportant or against their interests. With respect to middle managers, such resistance would derive from their loyalty to constituencies other than senior management, such as front-line staff or a professional association or trade union.

Clearly, a high degree of conflict between managers and the HRD function over organisational priorities is likely to cause even the best designed and implemented MLD interventions to fail. Typically, however, managerial resistance to strategic HRM intervention is unlikely to be so overt. As Truss (2001) has shown, managerial resistance exists in subtle ways even in those organisations reputed for their 'excellence' in HRM, as managers' informally selected priorities may often supersede or subvert the formally espoused ones.

The political complexity of managerial learning is notably illustrated by Antonacopoulou (2006). Drawing on case studies from the banking sector, she shows how success in aligning individual managers' learning with organisational goals is likely to vary according to the quality of informal negotiation between managers and the organisation's strategic HRD function. The author concludes that, for managers to learn new skills that advance the organisation's strategic goals, this requires an organisational environment that is genuinely encouraging of personal development and the promotion of individuals' wider employability. If organisations fall short of such a negotiated, reciprocal approach to learning, MLD then becomes a "means of manipulating individuals to achieve the organization's priorities" (p.465). As Antonacopoulou shows, the learning outcomes of this latter approach can be expected to be very limited; managers are unlikely to commit to MLD intervention under these circumstances, instead opting to 'play the political game' (*ibid.*), giving the impression of learning new skills and maintaining the *status quo*, rather than actively promoting the new approaches to management being encouraged through MLD.

The negotiation of meaningful learning plans with individual managers is, to an extent, part of 'best MLD practice' as described above, in which the HRD function seeks to integrate informal and formal learning. Also, the organisational aims that drive MLD intervention – 'efficient and effective management', 'effective leading of staff' and 'adaptive capacity' (see Figure 2.1) – are themselves relatively broad and subjective concepts, so are open to some interpretation and negotiation with regard to aligning individual and organisational learning goals. However, as Antonacopoulou points out, "individual learning is as much a reflection of individuals' personal interests and histories as it is a reflection of their social identity and the regulating impact of the professional culture, which they embody" (p.468). Reluctance amongst managers to commit to MLD activities may therefore be an expression of a *collective* managerial resistance to MLD, reflecting the interests of informal or professional groups of managers that diverge from formal strategic

goals. From the point of view of the HRD function, this represents a political obstacle to MLD, which it may seek to overcome through negotiation with groups of managers rather than with individuals.

There appear to be no specific prescriptions in the literature for how a HRD function might overcome collective managerial resistance to MLD. Nevertheless, a broad approach may be inferred from Antonacopoulou's analysis, namely one of recognising differences and seeking to work in partnership with managers. This negotiated partnership approach is resonant of Brown and Duguid's (1991) slightly more detailed recommendations in respect of 'communities of practice'. Groups of managers with similar roles and specialisms, like other groups of staff, may be expected to form communities of practice through the development of influential, informal networks, based upon shared interests and experiences. Brown and Duguid demonstrate how formal HR interventions can be either undermined or enhanced by communities of practice within organisations, depending on the extent to which the organisation legitimises communities' social norms and learning activities. To secure commitment to strategic HRM interventions such as MLD, the organisation should then 'detect and support' the relevant communities of practice and 'foster learning' within them (p.49). In terms of MLD, this can be imagined as the HRD function making available its resources for use by informal managerial groups and networks and encouraging the sharing of learning experiences (c.f. p.54).

The task of 'detecting and supporting' informal managerial groups is complicated by the extension of managerial networks beyond the organisation itself, due to inter-organisational partnership arrangements and managers' membership of professional organisations (c.f. Brown and Duguid 1991: 49). While this presents the opportunity to draw upon additional resources to support managers' learning activities, it may also become more difficult for the HRD function to align MLD to strategic organisational priorities, as the actual application of learning may be disproportionately influenced by the competing priorities of external managerial networks (c.f. pp.53-54).

The overall conclusion to be drawn from this discussion of communities of practice is that although a degree of incongruence between the formal and informal priorities of groups of managers is to be expected, this does not necessarily lead to collective managerial resistance to MLD. There are negotiation strategies that the HRD function may employ to overcome the political obstacles. Nevertheless, there are likely to be limits to the HRD function's influence, both in terms of securing the

necessary and consistent support for its negotiated activities from the organisation's senior management, and in terms of its relative power vis-à-vis external stakeholders such as professional management groups and institutions.

To summarise this section of the chapter so far, the two key factors that either enable or constrain the MLD process have been identified as: i) HRD competence, involving operational HRD competence to apply the assessment-challenge-support model in line with conventional best practices, and strategic HRD competence to achieve internal strategic fit; and ii) political obstacles, deriving from managerial resistance, over which the HRD function may have less influence. If the two assumptions are made, that the organisation possesses a high degree of HRD competence and that political obstacles are easily surmountable, then expected MLD outcomes may be modelled at individual, group and organisational levels for each of the three main MLD options.

To treat learning as multi-levelled has become commonplace since Kirkpatrick's seminal text (1958) on training evaluation, from which most contemporary evaluation frameworks are still derived (Tamkin et al. 2002a, Tamkin et al. 2002b, Martineau 2004, see also Boaden 2006, Kirwan and Birchall 2006 for specific and recent MLD-related examples, see also Mabey and Finch-Lees 2008: 60-61). Kirkpatrick's model identifies four stages of evaluation: 'reaction', 'learning', 'behaviour' and 'results'. The first three of these levels are essentially concerned with the individual learner: how he or she reacts to the intervention; what he or she learns; and then how his or her behaviour changes. The fourth level, results, is concerned with the wider impact on the business of the learner's changed behaviour.

Given its focus on MLD outcomes, the theoretical model constructed in this thesis is mainly orientated towards Kirkpatrick's third and fourth levels: behaviour and results. The effective management of the learning process, considered in Kirkpatrick's first two levels - reaction and learning - is already assumed in the organisation's possession of HRD competence. The model constructed here substitutes Kirkpatrick's third and fourth levels with three levels of outcomes: individual, group and organisational outcomes. This follows the Center for Creative Leadership's leadership development framework (Martineau 2004: 241), but adds to it by differentiating the multi-levelled outcomes according to the three main MLD options. The new model, building on Figure 2.1, is illustrated in Figure 2.2.

Strategic HRM goals	Associated MLD options	MLD activities (assessment-challenge-support)	Intended outcomes		
			Individual outcomes	Group outcomes	Contributes to organisational outcomes
More efficient/effective management	Management development	Prescribed learning programmes e.g. Work-related assignments, management qualifications	Managerial competence	Operational effectiveness and efficiency Staff compliance with business objectives	Continuity of service for customers Effective implementation of business plans
More effective leading of staff	Leader development	Individualised learning activities e.g. 360-feedback, coaching, mentoring, personal development plans	Intrapersonal competence	Staff commitment to strategic objectives	Planned strategic change
Adaptive capacity	Leadership development	Collective learning activities e.g. networking, special project assignments, action-learning	Interpersonal competence	Innovation	Emergent strategic change
	Contextual variables HRD competence..... political obstacles (operational and strategic) (managerial resistance)				

Figure 2.2 Intended MLD outcomes

The intended individual and group outcomes of the three MLD options depicted in Figure 2.2 are deduced from various theoretical literature. (Organisational outcomes were conceptualised above in Section 2.1). The individual outcomes of leader and leadership development, ‘intrapersonal competence’ and ‘interpersonal competence’ respectively, are derived directly from Day (2001). To remain consistent with the theme of competence, the individual outcome of management development is conceptualised as ‘managerial competence’. This is shorthand for the possession of Katz’s technical, human and cognitive skills (see Section 1.3), but also informed by models of competence-based management (Burgoyne 1993, Horton 2002). The group-level outcomes of management development and leader development, ‘staff compliance’ and ‘staff commitment’ respectively, are derived from the theoretical distinction between management and leadership (see Section 1.1) and from Walton’s (1985) distinction between control and commitment. The group-level outcome of leadership development, ‘innovation’, is derived from theory on collaborative networks (Hudson et al. 1999, Huxham 2003, cited in Osborne and Brown 2005: 176), and follows Day’s (2001) conceptualisation of “leadership development as a type of organizational development strategy” (p.586). The intended individual and group outcomes will now be explained in more detail in order of the three different MLD options: management development, leader development and leadership development.

The intended individual outcome of management development (see fourth column of the third row of Figure 2.2), managerial competence², commonly refers to sets of normative statements that describe what managers ‘should know’ and ‘be able to do’ at various levels of the organisational hierarchy. This approach to modelling managerial work became widespread during the 1980s, spawning an international ‘competence movement’ (Burgoyne 1993, Horton 2002). Competence statements have since become well embedded in HRM practice (Guest and King 2005: 242) and continue to form the basis of recruitment, appraisal and reward systems in many large organisations, as well as frameworks of nationally-recognised management qualifications (see MSC 2008 for the UK government-sponsored model of management and leadership competences).

² The term ‘competency’ was originally used by Boyatzis (1982) as part of the McBer consultancy work in the US in the 1980s to describe ‘individual attributes for superior performance’. Over time, however, the term has come to be used more or less interchangeably with ‘competence’, especially in the UK, to mean the knowledge, skills and behaviours necessary to be able to do a particular job satisfactorily (Burgoyne et al. 2004: 14, Guest and King 2005: 243).

What constitutes a 'competent manager' is, however, not an objective question. It depends on who defines competence and on the prevailing perceptions of important managerial knowledge and skills in a given set of circumstances (Grugulis 1997, Salaman 2004). As discussed in Section 1.1, and as Rosemary Stewart has long demonstrated, in reality managerial work varies considerably according to individual choices and contingencies rather than conform to a universal set of tasks or behaviours (Stewart 1963, 1967, 1976, 1982). For such reasons, the competence-based approach has therefore been justifiably criticised for reductionism and oversimplification (Bolden and Gosling 2004: 3-4).

Yet despite criticisms from both academics and employers, the competence-based approach has remained remarkably durable in organisational practice (see Burgoyne, Hirsh *et al.* 2004: 14-16). Also, despite the wide range of competence frameworks in use, and their differentiation for different types of sectors and levels of management, there is a high degree of consistency in content across frameworks (see *ibid*; Guest and King 2005: 242). Invariably the different categories of competence cover the full range of Katz's technical, human and cognitive skills (see Section 1.3). The categories emphasising human skills (such as effective communication, teamwork etc.) tend to predominate, but as Burgoyne, Hirst *et al.* (2004) point out, knowledge, "especially knowledge gained through career experience of functions, industries, recurring situations etc." continues to be valued in organisations (p.16). The more technically- and conceptually-orientated skills are therefore still seen as important, and there is a related 'canon' of theory in marketing, finance, operations, HRM and strategy, selections from which managers may be taught, alongside more skills-based models, tools and practical 'textbook' techniques (see Pedler *et al.* 1994, Cole 2003 for popular UK-based examples).

In line with the modelling of middle management skills in Section 1.3, the term managerial competence is defined in this thesis as *the possession of the requisite blend of technical, human and conceptual skills for managerial control in a particular organisational context*. This definition occupies a midway position between, at one extreme, the critical argument that competent or effective management cannot be objectively defined, and, at the other, a normative model of management based on sets of universally applicable statements. As argued in Section 1.3, in order to perform their organisational roles, managers require different blends of technical, human and conceptual skills. These blends of skills can be expected to vary according to job and organisational context, and in the ways in which they are applied by individuals. But in order to exercise managerial control, that is to

coordinate efficiently the activities and resources associated with their job roles, and to work effectively with the teams of staff for which they are responsible, there are sets of conventional models, tools and techniques to which groups of managers with similar roles may be introduced through management development. Managerial competence therefore serves as a general description of the intended individual outcome of management development.

Turning to the intended group-level outcomes of management development (see fifth column of third row of Figure 2.2), it is important to remind of Day's conception of management development as "the application of proven solutions to known problems" (2001: 582). This is to be contrasted with the less predictable sorts of organisational problems that are addressed through leader and leadership development. At group level, management development is concerned with achievement of formally planned operational efficiencies and effectiveness *through staff*. The related intended group outcome of management development is therefore *staff compliance*, in which managers coordinate the work of staff so that work tasks are controlled to meet business objectives.

Staff compliance is to be distinguished from *staff commitment*, which will be associated as the intended group outcome of leader development. Securing the agreement of staff to work towards the business' objectives is a necessary goal of management and requires human skills of the part of the manager. However, this is essentially a question of ensuring that staff comply with the system of managerial monitoring and control. Staff commitment, on the other hand, in the sense that is used by Walton (1985), is more concerned with mutual adjustment and the generation of shared values and goals. As argued in Chapter 1, this is the goal of leadership, rather than management, and requires more advanced human skills, which may be addressed through leader development.

The fourth row of Figure 2.2 models the intended outcomes of leader development. As explained in the previous section, leader development activities often form part of management development programmes, but they may also be found as discrete interventions for individuals or groups of managers in organisations. What distinguishes leader development from management development is the more intangible and personal nature of the learning and what it is designed to achieve. Leader development seeks a deeper and more reflective personal experience of change than the application of standard management tools and techniques. Day conceives this is intrapersonal competence, as illustrated in Figure 2.3.

Leader development intervention	Intended outcomes	
360-degree feedback	Self-knowledge Behavioural change	
Coaching	Self-knowledge Behavioural change Career development	Intrapersonal competence
Mentoring	Broader understanding Catalyst for promotion Insights into lessons learnt and how to avoid future mistakes	

Figure 2.3 Individual outcomes of leader development
(adapted from Day 2001: 588)

Day breaks down intrapersonal competence into three components: self-awareness (e.g. emotional awareness and self-confidence); self-regulation (e.g. self-control, trustworthiness and adaptability); and self-motivation (e.g. commitment, initiative, optimism). The three main leader development activities – 360-degree feedback, coaching and mentoring - are then said to result in slightly different sets of individual outcomes to develop overall intrapersonal competence.

The personal nature of the intended outcomes means that the effectiveness of leader development intervention is particularly dependent on the individual's ability to reflect on the learning activities and on his or her motivation to change their behaviour (c.f. Van Velsor and McCauley 2004). By comparison, management development, which tends relate to the acquisition of more abstract knowledge and skills, is less likely to face psychological obstacles to the learning process. Management development outcomes are also relatively easy to measure, in contrast to the elements of intrapersonal competence such as self-knowledge. When measuring the individual outcomes of leader development, the main criterion is that the manager is observed to have increased his or her self-awareness, -regulation and -motivation. Ideally, this requires the use of a well-validated psychological research instrument (see especially Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe 2001, Avolio and Bass 2004).

The intended group outcome of leader development, as indicated above, may be described as increased staff commitment within the manager's team to the organisation's strategic objectives (see fifth column of fourth row Figure 2.2). In Chapter 1, it was argued that leadership is less concerned with the control of staff to

meet specific business objectives, and more with a manager's ability to motivate staff to increase discretionary effort in pursuit of shared organisational goals. In particular, Bowen and Ostroff (2004, cited in Boxall and Purcell 2008: 220) present evidence that, as individual managers develop relationships with staff through exchanges based on mutual trust and respect, this contributes over time to a strong and positive social climate in the organisation, which is then conducive to the achievement of organisational goals. Learning how to build and sustain such relationships with staff may be seen as the key process by which leader development is intended to contribute to increasing staff commitment to planned strategic change.

The fifth row of Figure 2.2 illustrates the intended outcomes of leadership development. The intended individual outcome, 'interpersonal competence', goes beyond the conventional understanding of interpersonal skills as being able to 'work well with people'. In Day's conception, interpersonal competence is related to the advanced human skills required to initiate and work within organisational networks. He breaks down interpersonal competence into two main components: social awareness (e.g. empathy, service orientation and developing others); and social skills (e.g. collaboration and cooperation, building bonds, and conflict management). Day then outlines the intended individual outcomes of the three main types of leadership development – networking, special project assignments and action learning - as illustrated in Figure 2.4.

Leadership development intervention	Intended outcomes	
Networks	Better problem-solving Learning who to consult for project help Socialisation	
Special project assignments	Skills development Broader understanding of the business	Interpersonal competence
Action learning	Socialisation Teamwork Implementation of strategy	

Figure 2.4 Individual outcomes of leadership development
(adapted from Day 2001: 588)

As with leader development, the intended outcomes of leadership development (see for example 'socialisation' in Figure 2.4) are less prescribed than management development outcomes and more difficult to quantify. At group level, the intended outcomes of leadership development are also difficult to measure, but nevertheless

tangible. Leadership development can be expected to lead to the building of collaborative networks, through which managers seek to develop new ways of achieving organisational goals (c.f. Osborne and Brown 2005: 176). While the process of building such networks is largely intangible (Tsai and Goshal 1998, cited in Day 2001: 585), the eventual outcomes of the group interaction can be expected to take the tangible form of changes to products/services and/or processes in ways or directions that were unforeseen before the intervention.

For example, an action learning set, based around understanding and meeting the needs of disabled customers, might result in the building of a collaborative network of managers from different parts of the business, possibly extending beyond the boundaries of the organisation to strategic partners such as charities for people with disabilities. The network then generates new shared knowledge and insights, from which opportunities are identified for the development of new services, or the redesign of existing services for new customers.

Such types of unforeseen changes to products/services and/or processes represent the intended group-level outcome of leadership development and may be usefully summarised as ‘innovation’ (see fifth column of fifth row of Figure 2.2). Although the term innovation may be defined in various ways, the conceptualisation of Osborne and Brown (2005) is adopted here, in which innovation is understood as involving “the implementation and/or adaptation of new knowledge” (p.115). This differentiates innovation from the narrower concept of ‘invention’, which may be understood as the actual generation of new knowledge (p.120). According to Osborne and Brown, innovations in organisations may include changes to processes as well as products and services, and may be either incremental or radical in nature. The key characteristic is that innovation should constitute a ‘paradigmatic shift’ and be “discontinuous from what has gone on before” (p.121). Strictly, this should exclude incremental processual changes from being defined as innovation, as these provide continuity with the past and therefore belong more to organisational development than to “true innovation” (p.123). Nevertheless, as Osborne and Brown acknowledge, the basic approach to conceptualising innovation as either a product or process ‘outcome’ has the “benefit of simplicity” and has been widely adopted (*ibid*).

At organisational level, leadership development can be said to contribute mainly to emergent, rather than planned strategic change (see sixth column of fifth row of Figure 2.2). As the group-level changes that may be expected to result from

leadership development are necessarily unforeseen, this means that the organisation's strategic goals, or the ways in which they are pursued, are themselves developed through this MLD activity. The potential for leadership development to contribute to organisational development distinguishes it from the other two MLD options, which essentially serve to develop individual managers rather than a collective contribution to organisational change.

In summary, the model in Figure 2.2, similarly to Mabey's (2002) 'map of management development practice' (see p.1153 for diagram), seeks to represent the full range of key relationships that may be expected to shape the provision and outcomes of MLD in a single organisation. Unlike Mabey, however, the relationships that are mapped out in Figure 2.2 do not comprise a predictive model for measuring MLD's contribution to organisational performance. Rather, an explanatory model of multi-levelled MLD outcomes has been constructed by deducing the connections between the main MLD options, their underlying aims and associated methods (see also McGurk 2009, 2010).

The contextual variables at the bottom of Figure 2.2 serve as a reminder that *actual* MLD outcomes may differ from *intended* MLD outcomes (c.f. Boxall and Purcell 2008: 216). Not only may actual outcomes be shaped by the degree of HRD competence and political obstacles that are specific to the organisation, they may also be shaped by the specific structural organisational context. The next section addresses this issue by revisiting the varying organisational contexts set out in Chapter 1 and their implications for MLD.

2.3 Contingent MLD outcomes for middle management

In Chapter 1, it was argued that middle management groups in organisations could be expected to play one of four main roles (A-D), corresponding to one of the four Mintzbergian structural types: the machine bureaucracy, the divisionalised form, the professional bureaucracy and the adhocracy. Roles A and B, corresponding with the first two types of organisation, were argued to require skills especially of managerial control; in contrast, Roles C and D, corresponding with the last two types of organisation, were argued rather to require skills of leadership. This second chapter has thus far established how MLD options may be differentiated to develop the skills of managerial control and/or leadership.

Assuming organisations invest in development, rather than 'buying-in' the requisite skills through external recruitment, it follows that the four middle management roles can be expected to demand different combinations of MLD, according to their demand for the skills of managerial control vis-à-vis the skills of leadership. It is therefore argued in this section that: i) the four middle management roles A-D all demand management development, but of different types in line with the differing approaches to managerial coordination and control; ii) role C also demands leader development, due to the requirement for advanced human skills needed for mutual adjustment; and iii) role D not only demands management development and leader development, it also demands leadership development, due to the ongoing requirement to innovate and manage flux in the adhocratic operating environment.

The other main argument of Chapter 1 was that, as organisations seek greater flexibility through divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation, middle managers have to adapt to new roles that require additional skills. It also therefore follows that, as organisations undergo the structural transitions of divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation, they can be expected to demand new combinations of MLD options for their middle managers. So, it is further argued in this section that: iv) middle managers under structural transition require not only the MLD combination that corresponds to their ongoing role, but also that associated with a new role within a more flexible organisational structure; v) a pattern of contingent MLD options can be expected to lead to a pattern of contingent MLD outcomes; and vi) the extent of structural transition can be expected to determine the pattern of contingent options and outcomes. In short, this section takes the single-organisational model of MLD outcomes depicted in Figure 2.2 and develops it into a model of contingent MLD outcomes for middle managers.

To the first step of the argument: that the four middle management roles A-D all require management development, but of different types. In Section 2.2, it was argued that management development is driven by a broad strategic concern to ensure that the organisation has a stock of effective and efficient managers in order to achieve managerial coordination and control. Earlier, in Section 1.2, it was shown how coordination mechanisms should vary between different types of organisations. In the machine bureaucracy and the divisionalised form, the standardisation of processes and outputs respectively required for coordination were seen to demand an emphasis on managerial control, with middle managers playing important roles. It is therefore to be expected that management development interventions, rather than

leader or leadership development interventions, should be directed towards Role A and B managers.

In the professional bureaucracy and the adhocracy, the standardisation of skills and the mutual adjustment respectively required for coordination were seen to produce a stronger demand for leadership, again with middle managers playing important roles. It is therefore to be expected that leader and leadership development interventions should be directed towards Role C and D managers. Nonetheless, in these latter two cases middle managers still have to exercise control over work tasks on a day-to-day basis: to uphold professional standards in the professional bureaucracy; and to meet project deadlines and quality expectations in the adhocracy. The point is not, therefore, that only Role A and B managers require management development, while Role C and D managers require only leader and leadership development. Rather, the four middle management roles require different kinds of management development.

It is proposed here that four different types of management development should be expected to be observed in organisations: operational management development (OMD) for Role A managers in machine bureaucracies; strategic management development (SMD) for Role B business division managers; professional management development (PMD) for Role C managers in professional bureaucracies; and project management development (PJMD) for Role D middle leaders in adhocracies.

This is a novel categorisation of management development. It has some similarity with conventional competence-based frameworks, such as that of the UK's Chartered Management Institute, which differentiates between first-line, middle and strategic management, and matches these with corresponding learning programmes (see for example the Scottish Certificate, Diploma and Executive Diploma in Management respectively - Chartered Management Institute 2010). However, such competence-based programmes are designed according to "informed opinion" (Burgoyne, Hirst *et al* 2004: 16) rather than scientific evidence of differences in managerial roles. In contrast to this, the categories of OMD, SMD, PMD and PJMD are deduced from a theory of organisational differences.

OMD, SMD, PMD and PJMD may be expected to differ in their content and methods. In this regard it is instructive to introduce Mintzberg's (2004b: 198) distinction between management 'education', 'training', and 'development' to

describe three main orientations within management development (see also Guest and King 2005: 239). Mintzberg observes that management learning activities tend to break down into: i) management education, focussed on instruction in management theories and concepts and the advancement of general academic skills such as critical analysis and evaluation; ii) management training, focussed on the development of specific skills and competencies in order to perform a managerial job role in the workplace; and iii) management development, which he uses in a more specific way to describe those activities focussed on enabling managers in more personalised and experiential ways to confer competitive advantage on the organisation. (According to Mintzberg, this third set of activities also includes leader development and leadership development, although Day (2001) differentiates them from management development, as discussed in Section 2.1).

The relative emphases that may be placed on management education, training or development have been the subject of much debate. Mintzberg (2004) attacks what he sees as an unhealthy tendency to concentrate on management education, especially in the form of MBAs (Masters in Business Administration), to the detriment of more experience-based and contextualised forms of management development (c.f. also Hill 2003: 249-52, Gosling and Mintzberg 2006). In response, Watson (2006) questions the empirical basis for this attack, arguing that the development of "general intellectual skills produced by a good liberal higher education" (p.430) can make an important contribution to effective management in organisations. Taking a more general stance, Guest and King (2005) argue that all three groups of management development activities – education, training and development - are necessary, and that "the key lies in finding the right balance between them" (p.239). This thesis advances the contingency argument: that the OMD, SMD, PMD and PJMD categorisation captures all three orientations of management education, training and development, but in different concentrations according to the type of managerial role to which the MLD is directed.

Figure 2.5 illustrates the different emphases on education, training and development in OMD, SMD, PMD and PJMD that may be expected across the four middle management roles A-D (see bullet points in second column). It also introduces the second and third steps of the argument by mapping leader development against Roles C and D, and leadership development against Role D. The more detailed MLD requirements of the four middle management roles will now be considered in turn, from Role A to Role D.

Middle management role	MLD requirements
<p>Role A. Machine middle line management</p> <p><i>Key roles:</i> ensuring workflow, conflict management, liaison and communications.</p> <p><i>Technical skills:</i> relevant business and technical knowledge.</p> <p><i>Human skills:</i> soft skills for communication and interaction.</p> <p><i>Conceptual skills:</i> ability to implement organisational policies e.g. people management, health and safety.</p>	<p>Operational management development (OMD)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical training and development of operational knowledge • Development of communication and team leadership skills • Training in implementation of organisational policies
<p>Role B. Business division management</p> <p><i>Key roles:</i> strategic and operations management.</p> <p><i>Technical skills:</i> tools and techniques of resource management and performance monitoring.</p> <p><i>Human skills:</i> soft skills for communication and interaction.</p> <p><i>Conceptual skills:</i> understanding of systems of output-standardisation and business strategy.</p>	<p>Strategic management development (SMD)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and development in strategic and operations management • Development of communication and team leadership skills
<p>Role C. Professional middle line management</p> <p><i>Key roles:</i> professional-managerial collaboration, mutual adjustment.</p> <p><i>Technical skills:</i> specialist professional knowledge and credibility.</p> <p><i>Human skills:</i> leader skills for mutual adjustment.</p> <p><i>Conceptual skills:</i> understanding of systems of skills-standardisation and the changing regulatory environment.</p>	<p>Professionalised management development (PMD)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and education in professional standards and regulations • Education and development in use of applied business management tools and techniques <p>Leader development (LD)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 360-feedback, coaching, mentoring, personal development planning
<p>Role D. Middle leadership</p> <p><i>Key roles:</i> project management, mutual adjustment.</p> <p><i>Technical skills:</i> project management.</p> <p><i>Human skills:</i> leader skills for mutual adjustment.</p> <p><i>Conceptual skills:</i> understanding of processes of innovation and strategic change.</p>	<p>Project management development (PJMD)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and development in use of project management tools and techniques <p>Leader development (LD)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 360-feedback, coaching, mentoring, personal development planning <p>Leadership Development (LSD)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networking, special assignments, action learning sets

Figure 2.5 MLD requirements for middle managers by role

Role A: It is argued here that the skills associated with machine middle line management require an operationally-orientated form of management development (OMD). Machine middle line managers can learn to perform their key tasks of disturbance-handling, conflict management and liaison mainly through conventional training activities. These include instruction in the essential technical requirements of the organisation, such as basic product or equipment knowledge, and how to implement the main organisational policies within the team. OMD also includes development in the use of 'textbook' techniques of communication and team leadership skills and how to manage oneself and one's time. Of all the types of management development, OMD has the most predictable learning outcomes.

Not to be underestimated in machine middle line management, however, is the importance of tacit operational knowledge. In order to handle disturbances to workflow and conflict on the line, it is necessary for machine middle line managers to have practical experience and understanding of the jobs undertaken by the operating core, combined with a general understanding of the social norms of the working environment. Such practical experience and understanding cannot be successfully taught through a management training programme. It is developed over time, and communities of practice may play a significant role. As Mintzberg (2009) argues, managing is a 'craft', rather than an art or a science.

Role B: It is argued that business division managers may also require OMD, including similar training in communication and team leadership skills, as such managers tend to be responsible for divisions that function as mini-machine bureaucracies within a wider organisational group. In addition, however, business division managers require understanding of a broader set of management models, tools and techniques. As 'mini general managers', it is necessary to be able to apply strategic management models and work with potentially complex management and performance information. This may require a more extensive, strategically-orientated type of management development (SMD), including education in strategy and operations management and ongoing development in the use of strategic models (such as 'PEST' and 'SWOT' analysis, see for example Cole 2003). However, it follows that SMD, as a more advanced type of management development, builds upon OMD and cannot be effective in isolation from it.

Role C: Professional middle line managers, rather than dealing with standardisation of work processes or outputs, are concerned with the standardisation of skills. This necessitates a slightly different type of management development (PMD). To an

extent, PMD resembles SMD due to the requirement for professional middle line managers to possess strategic awareness. Like business division managers, professional middle line managers have to assess and respond to changes in the environment and their impact on the profession. However, as Mintzberg (1979: 371-76) describes it, the processes involved in the coordination of skilled work, the management of differences in professional competence and discretion, and the management of innovation in professional bureaucracies are highly political and complex. Therefore, professional middle line managers not only require a thorough education and training in the professional aspects of their work in order to secure credibility in the professional community, they also require development in the cognitive skills of problem-solving, administration and political skills to manage the ambiguities and uncertainties that professional standards and conventions cannot automatically accommodate.

PMD is therefore concerned with the study of one's professional standards and regulatory environment as well as development in the use of applied management tools and techniques for problem-solving and administration, in order to help resolve ongoing coordination, standardisation and innovation problems. To a degree, PMD has predictable learning outcomes as many of the standards, regulations and management activities are likely to be common across the profession. To a greater extent, however, competence and confidence in applying the necessary problem-solving and coordination skills can only come from engagement with, and the support of the professional community of practice. This necessitates a more workplace-based type of learning, such as competence-based development, in which specific experiences are reflected upon with one's line managers and professional colleagues as part of a gradual process of development.

Closely related to PMD is leader development, which is also ideally required by professional middle line managers and which should entail activities such as 360-degree feedback, coaching, mentoring and personal development plans. Leader development should enable professional middle line managers to develop the advanced human skills (leader skills) for mutual adjustment. Required here is the intrapersonal competence to collaborate and negotiate effectively with other parts of the organisation, principally the strategic apex and support staff, but also with stakeholders outside the organisation such as governmental agencies, and with one's professional colleagues. As Mintzberg maintains:

Change in the Professional Bureaucracy does not sweep in from new administrators taking office to announce major reforms, nor from government technostuctures intent on bringing the professionals under control. Rather, change seeps in, by the slow process of changing the professionals – changing who can enter the profession, what they learn in its professional schools (ideals as well as skills and knowledge), and thereafter how willing they are to upgrade their skills (Mintzberg 1979: 379).

A combination of PMD and leader development interventions may therefore be required to develop the professional middle line manager fully.

Role D: Middle leaders, due to the less programmable nature of work in adhocracies, are likely to have less need for standardised management development interventions. However, there is one relatively standardised area of learning that is relevant for such managers, namely project management (requiring PJMD). The effective organisation of work in the adhocracy through continuously changing sets of projects is well served by a defined body of knowledge and skills that can be taught through the use of conventional training techniques, and which is increasingly practised through use of computer software. Yet, by definition, project work is not predictable or programmable, so ongoing, reflective development activities are required beyond the initial training in order to achieve fuller competence in this aspect of the middle leadership role.

Beyond PJMD, middle leaders require skills to work in their specific technical fields. It is difficult to generalise about the work of adhocracies, except to comment that they are most commonly found in high-tech and knowledge-based sectors. This means that, in addition to PJMD, it is possible, depending on the sector or field, that the knowledge and skills associated with PMD or even SMD are prerequisites to work effectively within a particular adhocracy. As argued above, middle leaders also require the advanced human skills for mutual adjustment and middle leadership skills for innovation and organisational adaptation. These should be served by leader development, as described above in relation to the professional middle line manager, and by leadership development, which should make use of activities such as networking, special assignments and action learning sets.

The above exposition of the expected MLD requirements of the four middle management roles presents the first three steps of the argument in this section, that: i) all four roles all require management development, but of different types; ii) role C also requires leader development; and iii) role D not only requires management

development and leader development, it also requires leadership development. Thus far, MLD has been presented as a means to ensure that middle managers possess the skills required for their current rather than future roles. It has therefore been treated as an instrument of organisational stability rather than change. As argued in Section 1.4, however, pressures for structural transition can be expected to produce changes to middle management roles. This may be expected then to produce a demand for *additional* MLD intervention.

A consideration of the skills required to support organisational change introduces the fourth step of the argument: that middle managers under divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation require not only the MLD combination that corresponds to their ongoing role, but also that associated with a role within a more flexible organisational structure. (Again this assumes that organisations invest in the development of existing middle managers rather than recruit new ones). Figure 2.6 develops Figure 2.5 to illustrate the expected MLD requirements of the middle line under divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation.

Middle line	MLD for stability	MLD for structural transition
Role A Machine middle line management	Operational management development (OMD)	<i>Divisionalisation</i> OMD + SMD
Role B Business division management	Strategic management development (SMD)	<i>Professionalisation</i> OMD/SMD+ PMD + LD
Role C Professional middle line management	Professional management development (PMD) Leader development (LD)	<i>Adhocratisation</i> OMD/SMD/PMD + PJMD + LD + LSD
Role D Middle leadership	Project management development (PJMD) Leader development (LD) Leadership Development (LSD)	

Figure 2.6 MLD requirements for middle line management under structural transition

(See Figure 2.5 for explanations of Roles A-D and the various MLD options)

Figure 2.6 summarises how, under the divisionalisation of the machine bureaucracy, Role A managers can be expected to require not only OMD, but also SMD. Under

professionalisation, depending on the original organisational type (machine bureaucracy or divisionalised form), Role A or Role B managers can be expected to require not only OMD or SMD respectively, but also PMD and leader development (LD). Under adhocratisation, depending on the original organisational type (machine bureaucracy, divisionalised form or professional bureaucracy), Role A, B or C managers can be expected to require OMD, SMD or PMD respectively, as well as PJMD, leader development (LD) and leadership development (LSD).

In practice, this pattern of contingent MLD options is unlikely to be quite so neat or straightforward. Similarly to the observation made earlier in Section 2.1, that management and leader development are likely to overlap in practice, it is recognised that there is also likely to be some commonality across the different types of management development (OMD, SMD, PMD and PJMD), particularly as organisations undergo transition and invest in multiple interventions. Also, it is probable that the various learning needs of individuals may lead to a diversity of MLD interventions among a group of managers who share similar mid-hierarchy positions in the same organisation. So MLD combinations may be driven in part by individual differences as well as by the requirements of organisational change.

The above modelling of contingent MLD options enables the elaboration of the fifth step of the argument: that a pattern of contingent MLD outcomes should also be expected. To illustrate this fifth step of the argument, Figure 2.7 combines the model of multi-levelled MLD outcomes for the single organisation in Figure 2.2 with the model of contingent MLD options in Figure 2.5. In this combined model, MLD's role is restricted to the enabling of organisational stability rather than change.

At individual level (see third column of Figure 2.7), the intended outcomes of leader development and leadership development - intrapersonal competence and interpersonal competence respectively - may be read across directly from Figure 2.2 (fourth column). These two outcomes are mapped against Roles C and D, rather than Roles A and B, in line with the previous argument that the former have a specific demand for the skills of leadership. In contrast, the individual outcome of management development, described in Section 2.2 as 'managerial competence', is not read directly across from Figure 2.2, but differentiated in Figure 2.7 across the Roles A-D to reflect the different managerial contexts. This requires some further explanation.

Middle management	Expected MLD intervention	Individual outcomes	Group outcomes	Contribution to organisational outcomes
Role A <i>Machine middle line management</i>	OMD	OMC	Compliance	Organisational stability
Role B <i>Business division management</i>	OMD SMD	OMC SMC	Compliance	Organisational stability
Role C <i>Professional middle line management</i>	PMD LD	PMC Intrapersonal competence	Compliance and commitment	Organisational stability and planned strategic change
Role D <i>Middle leadership</i>	PJMD LD LSD	PJMC Intrapersonal competence Interpersonal competence	Commitment and innovation	Emergent strategic change

Role A = machine middle line management; Role B = business division management; Role C = professional middle line management; Role D = middle leadership; OMD = operational management development; SMD = strategic management development; PMD = professional management development; PJMD = project management development; LD = leader development; LSD = leadership development; OMC = operational managerial competence; SMC = strategic managerial competence; PMC = professional managerial competence; PJMC = project management competence

Figure 2.7 Contingent outcomes of MLD for middle management

Managerial competence was defined in Section 2.2 as the possession of the requisite blend of technical, human and conceptual skills for managerial control in a particular organisational context. In order to enable managers to develop the skills required for different types of managerial control, it was argued earlier in this section that roles A-D required four different types of management development (OMD, SMD, PMD and PJMD). It therefore follows that these different types of management development may be expected to lead to different types of managerial competence. These may be termed operational managerial competence (OMC), strategic managerial competence (SMC), professional managerial competence (PMC) and project management competence (PJMC).

OMC represents the blend of technical, human and conceptual skills required by Role A machine middle line managers. Referring back to Figure 1.4, this is the competence to manage workflow in the machine bureaucracy, including disturbance-handling and the demands of conflict resolution through upward and downward communication. The term SMC represents the blend of technical, human and conceptual skills required by Role B business division managers. This is the

competence to coordinate the various functions within a business division in line with the corporate performance monitoring regime (see Figure 1.4). The term PMC represents the blend of technical, human and conceptual skills required by Role C professional middle managers. This is the competence to coordinate work in accordance with complex and changing professional regulations (see Figure 1.4). The term PJMC represents the blend of technical, human and conceptual skills required by Role D middle leaders. This is the competence to manage projects effectively (see Figure 1.4).

At group level (see fourth column of Figure 2.7), the intended outcome of management development is staff compliance, as read across from Figure 2.2 (fifth column). This applies as a generic concept to all four types of management development except PJMD. As argued in Section 2.2, the common goal of management development is for individual managers to develop the competence to control work tasks through people in pursuit of business objectives. Although staff compliance is depicted as the outcome across the middle management roles A-C, the circumstances under which staff comply with the manager's direction necessarily vary. For Role A managers in machine bureaucracies, the goal is to implement organisational policies to maintain staff discipline on the line. For Role B business division managers, the goal is to ensure staff adherence to the business plan and performance monitoring regime within the business unit. For Role C managers, the goal is to interpret and implement policies so that staff uphold the agreed standards in the professional bureaucracy. Despite these varying circumstances, all three examples are of the same generic outcome of staff compliance. The exception is PJMD, for which the concept of staff compliance is less applicable. This is because the coordination of work through projects does not rely on standardisation and conformity for its effectiveness. Instead, PJMD has a stronger association with staff commitment and innovation, which are seen as intermeshed, representing the cumulative intended group outcomes of MLD for Role D middle leaders (see below).

Alongside staff compliance, staff commitment may be expected as a group-level outcome of MLD for Role C managers in the professional bureaucracy. This is due to the organisation's expected use of leader development alongside management development. Whereas PMD is primarily orientated towards the ensuring of the compliance of colleagues with professional standards, leader development for Role C managers is orientated towards influencing and motivating staff to commit to new strategic directions. These new directions enable the profession to adapt to the

changing external environment. Mintzberg (2007: 341-42) has more recently described this activity in professional organisations as 'strategic venturing'.

Staff commitment may also be expected as a group-level outcome of leader development for Role D middle leaders in the adhocracy, intermeshed with innovation, which is the expected outcome of leadership development. It is sensible to view the leader and leadership development group outcomes for Role D middle leaders as intermeshed due to the lack of hierarchical separation of the middle line from the operating core, and the necessary orientation amongst colleagues in the adhocracy towards collaboration and innovation. Rather than artificially conceptualise discrete group effects of leader development and leadership development, it is more sensible to expect a cumulative effect in the form of increased collective commitment to ongoing innovation in processes and services. Mintzberg (2007: 362-63) has described such activity in adhocracies as 'strategic learning'.

At organisational level (see fifth column of Figure 2.7), the intended outcomes of MLD for Roles A and B may be expected to be contributions to organisational stability, as read across from Figure 2.2. These are the logical outcomes of individual managerial effectiveness and staff-level compliance, to which management development is oriented in the machine bureaucracy and divisionalised organisation through OMD and SMD respectively. For Role C managers in the professional bureaucracy, MLD may be expected to contribute at organisational level both towards organisational stability, as managers learn to secure staff compliance to uphold professional standards, and planned strategic change, as managers learn to influence colleagues to commit to new strategic ventures. The logical outcome of MLD for Role D middle leaders in the adhocracy is emergent strategic change, as managers learn to coordinate projects and motivate others to participate in continual innovation.

Figure 2.7 therefore summarises part of the fifth step of the argument in this section: that not only the MLD options, but also their outcomes can be expected to be contingent on the middle management roles with which they are associated. To complete the fifth step of the argument, however, the contingent pattern of MLD outcomes must be elaborated to include the effects of structural transition. This may be illustrated by developing Figure 2.7 to produce Figure 2.8, which depicts a full model of contingent MLD outcomes.

Structural transition and changes to the middle line	Expected MLD interventions	Individual outcomes	Group outcomes	Organisational outcomes
<i>Divisionalisation (Role A→B)</i>	OMD SMD	OMC Some SMC	Staff compliance	Organisational stability
<i>Professionalisation (Role B→C) (poss. A→C)</i>	SMD (poss. OMD) PMD LD	SMC (poss. OMC) Some PMC Some intrapersonal competence	Staff compliance and some staff commitment	Organisational stability and some planned strategic change
<i>Adhocratisation (Role C→D) (poss. A or B → D)</i>	PMD (poss. OMD/2) PJMD LD LSD	PMC (poss. OMC/2) Some PJMC Intrapersonal competence Some interpersonal competence	Staff compliance, staff commitment and some innovation	Organisational stability, planned strategic change and some emergent strategic change

Role A = machine middle line management; Role B= business division management; Role C = professional middle line management; Role D = middle leadership; OMD = operational management development; SMD = strategic management development; PMD = professional management development; PJMD = project management development; LD = leader development; LSD = leadership development; OMC = operational managerial competence; SMC = strategic managerial competence; PMC = professional managerial competence; PJMC = project management competence

Figure 2.8 Contingent MLD outcomes for middle management under structural transition

The principal shifts in middle management roles during divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation, as argued in Section 1.4, are most likely to be from Role A towards Role B, from Role B towards Role C, and from Role C towards Role D respectively (as indicated in bold font in the first column of Figure 2.8, as read across from Figure 1.7). In addition, earlier in this section it was argued that a specific pattern of MLD options could be expected to accompany these shifts (see column two of Figure 2.8, as read across from column three of Figure 2.6). Finally, it was argued that a specific pattern of MLD outcomes could be expected to correspond with the four middle management roles A-D (see Figure 2.7). Therefore, with regard to MLD outcomes for middle managers under structural transition, it may be argued that the expected combinations of MLD options across the different Roles A-D should lead to not only those multi-levelled outcomes associated with the original middle management role but also some of those associated with the newer role (see columns three, four and five of Figure 2.8).

The reason that it is proposed that only 'some' of the MLD outcomes associated with new middle management roles should be expected to be achieved is due to the transitional rather than complete nature of divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation. As argued in Section 1.4, the structural transitions are best conceived as movements between organisational types on a Mintzbergian map, rather than necessarily full-scale transformations. In order to transfer their learning from MLD interventions into the workplace fully, managers require the *opportunity* to practice new approaches to management within their new roles (c.f. Boxall and Purcell 2008: 5). The source of such opportunity is the organisational environment, in which the wider 'support' element of the assessment-challenge-support model can be manifested. If MLD is used as a HRM instrument to *accompany and support organisational change* (c.f. Pichault 2007: 278) as well as for organisational stability, then it is logical that a full transition to a new organisational structure will not have been completed. This means that while organisations may invest in MLD options that are associated with a more flexible organisational form, it is unlikely that the associated MLD outcomes will be fully achieved.

During divisionalisation, therefore, an organisation may be expected to invest in OMD and SMD for its middle managers, which should then be expected to produce outcomes of: i) OMC and 'some' SMC at individual level; ii) general compliance at group level; and iii) a contribution to general organisational stability. During professionalisation, an organisation may be expected to invest in SMD (or OMD, if originally a machine bureaucracy), PMD and leader development for its middle

managers, which should then be expected to produce outcomes of: i) OMC/SMC, some PMC and some intrapersonal competence at individual level; ii) staff compliance and some staff commitment at group level; and iii) a contribution to organisational stability and some planned strategic change. During adhocratisation, an organisation may be expected to invest in PMD (or OMD or SMD, if originally a machine bureaucracy or divisionalised organisation), PJMD, leader development and leadership development for its middle managers, which should then be expected to produce outcomes of: i) PMC/OMC/SMC, intrapersonal competence, some PJMC and some interpersonal competence at individual level; ii) staff compliance, commitment and some innovation at group level; and iii) a contribution to organisational stability, planned strategic change and some emergent strategic change.

The question of the *degree* to which the MLD outcomes are met during divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation, when only partial outcomes are expected, brings this section to its sixth and final step of the argument. It is proposed that *the extent of structural transition* can be expected to determine the pattern of contingent options and outcomes. As argued earlier in this section, MLD is an HRM instrument to accompany and support organisational change. In Section 1.4, organisational change was conceived as a continuum of: i) movements in the direction of another structural type; ii) partial structural transition in the form of a hybrid; and iii) a full structural transition. The position on the continuum of structural transition may therefore be seen as setting the conditions for new management roles to be enacted.

The logical conclusion of this is that the investment in MLD options, designed to enable middle managers to perform new roles, can be expected to produce outcomes that *mirror* the extent of the structural transition. The more advanced the structural transition, the stronger the MLD outcomes associated with the more flexible organisational form, and the stronger MLD's contribution to organisational change. Conversely, the less advanced the structural transition, the weaker the MLD outcomes associated with the more flexible organisational form, and the greater the preponderance of MLD outcomes associated with the original organisational structure. In this latter scenario, MLD contributes more to organisational stability than to change.

In summary, the three initial conditions of contingent middle management roles and skills deduced in Chapter 1 – skill-fit to organisational structure, line-staff division,

and skill needs for structural transition -, when applied to the three main MLD options and their expected associated outcomes, have enabled the construction of a full model of contingent MLD options and outcomes. The argument concerning MLD's contribution in organisations may be expressed as four hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1. Role of MLD.

MLD interventions for middle managers are investments to enable them to contribute to organisational stability and/or strategic change.

Hypothesis 2. Contingent MLD options.

MLD options for middle managers are contingent on one of the four main middle management roles and/or another role associated with greater organisational flexibility.

Hypothesis 3. Contingent MLD outcomes.

The outcomes of MLD for middle managers are contingent on one of the four main middle management roles and/or another role associated with greater organisational flexibility.

Hypothesis 4. Extent of structural transition and effect on MLD.

The extent of structural transition determines the extent to which MLD serves organisational stability and/or change.

2.4 Overall assessment of the theoretical model

Now that the theoretical model of contingent MLD options and outcomes has been fully constructed, it is pertinent to review it in the light of rival theoretical approaches and to assess possible counterfactual patterns of MLD. This final section assesses the theoretical model in terms of the three main areas of MLD goals, options and outcomes.

Firstly, with regard to MLD goals, the model is derived within a broadly functionalist perspective, in which organisations are expected to invest in MLD as a means of promoting efficiency. Noted at the beginning of the chapter, however, were three rival explanations for devoting organisational resources to MLD. These were: i) to balance the interests of different stakeholders; ii) to reinforce control and subordination in the workforce; and iii) to reproduce managerial identities. According to these three alternative explanations, the motivation for investment in MLD would

respectively be: i) to reconcile competing stakeholder interests, for example , between the HRD function and professional bodies who both seek greater investment in managers' development but with different emphases; ii) to alter the balance of power between management and subordinates, or between different groups of staff, such as administrative and operational staff; or iii) to legitimise managerial positions in the organisation by altering the language and self-perceptions of managers.

The theoretical model here, though based on the premise that MLD is motivated by long-term efficiency-seeking, is nevertheless sufficiently flexible to account for the possibility that MLD may sometimes serve a range of purposes in the short term. In particular, it was noted in Section 2.1 how HRM goals may reflect shorter-term priorities or socio-political rather than economic goals (c.f. Boxall and Purcell 2008: 20). Shorter-term and/or socio-political HRM goals could potentially influence MLD activities. Organisations may, for example, use MLD as a way of rewarding particular individuals, and being seen to invest in their careers, rather than directly for the purposes of organisational efficiency (Jansen et al. 2001, Mabey and Finch-Lees 2008: 7). However, in the long-term, MLD interventions that do not primarily serve organisational efficiency needs may be expected to result in an eventual lack of support amongst the senior management. Other stakeholders may also withdraw their support, as individual learners or their line manager sponsors come to regard the MLD activities as unhelpful for improving individual or team performance.

Secondly, with regard to MLD options, the model asserts that organisations will follow a predictable pattern of investment in MLD, differentiating between management development, leader development and leadership development. Should a divisionalising machine bureaucracy invest in leadership development, for example, or should an adhocratising professional bureaucracy fail to invest in leadership development, then this would be counterfactual to the theoretical model. It is important to remember, however, that the model of contingent MLD options is qualified by the condition that the organisation should possess HRD competence. Therefore, while organisations may make MLD investments that run counter to the model, this should be a reflection of a lack of HRD competence, rather than of the inability of the model to explain MLD investment choices.

Thirdly, with regard to MLD outcomes, the model makes three main assertions. The first of these is that, assuming HRD competence in the organisation, MLD intervention leads to observable changes in individual and group behaviour that

positively advance the organisation's goals. If, therefore, MLD were to result in 'null' or 'negative' outcomes, then this would be counterfactual to the model. Null outcomes can be said to arise when no discernible changes are observed, either at individual, group or organisational levels. Negative outcomes can be said to arise when MLD has the reverse intended effect, in which individual or organisational performance actually worsens.

Certainly it is a common complaint that MLD activities lack relevance to managerial reality and produce cynicism rather than the intended outcomes of improved staff commitment or innovation (Mabey and Finch-Lees 2008: 4). Null or negative outcomes may however be explained through the model's contextual variables. A lack of operational HRD competence or the presence of insurmountable political obstacles may be the cause of ineffective MLD, rather than the inherent inability of MLD to produce individual and group-level change in pursuit of the organisation's goals.

The second, more implicit assertion with regard to MLD outcomes is that observed changes in the behaviour of individual managers and groups may be actually attributed to MLD. At the beginning of the chapter, however, it was noted that organisations have a number of HRM instruments at their disposal which they may employ when attempting to alter the behaviour of managers and their effect on the behaviour of staff. Such instruments may involve changes to recruitment, performance management and reward (c.f. Boxall and Purcell 2008, Leopold and Harris 2009) or broader efforts to change organisational culture (c.f. Watson 1994, Grugulis 2007: 115-32).

Given that organisations may employ a bundle of HRM instruments (Boxall and Purcell 2008), the MLD outcomes observed in organisations are likely to be intertwined with changes to management and employee behaviour that are attributable to interventions other than MLD. While the difficulty of isolating MLD effects is largely a methodological issue, one that will be discussed further in the next chapter, it is also a potential weakness of the model that the processes of MLD intervention are conceptualised somewhat in isolation from other HRM interventions. At best, the model assumes strategic HRD competence in the organisation, which in turn assumes alignment and complementarity between HRM policies and practices; but the finer details of specific HRM bundles, of which MLD may be a part, are not fully captured in the model.

The third and final assertion with regard to MLD outcomes is that particular patterns of changes in individual and group behaviour may be expected. For example, management development is expected to lead to individual managerial competence, group compliance and organisational stability, whereas leader development leads to individual intrapersonal competence, group commitment and planned organisational change, and so on. It would therefore be counterfactual to the model if, for example, a management development intervention resulted in intrapersonal competence and led to greater staff commitment, or if a leader development intervention resulted in managerial competence and led to greater staff compliance. It has, however, been recognised in the development of the model that there are overlaps between the three main approaches to MLD intervention, so some intermeshing of the expected outcomes may be expected. But, over time, and across the various groups of managers in the organisation, the broadly expected pattern should eventually be observed.

To conclude, the model of contingent MLD options and outcomes represents a theory of 'external strategic fit' in MLD (c.f. Mabey and Finch-Lees 2008: 58). The model predicts clear and predictable relationships between different organisational strategies, structures, HRM goals, MLD options and MLD outcomes. The model has some built-in flexibility, through its recognition of the contextual variables of HRD competence and political obstacles, and of the possibility of influential short-term HRM goals and overlapping MLD interventions.

If the model is wrong, however, then MLD investment will not be found to be motivated by long term efficiency concerns but by internal political concerns or HRM fashions. MLD activities will not be found to be matched or differentiated according to the categories of management development, leader development and leadership development, but will be randomly designed. MLD outcomes will not be found to produce changes at individual or group levels, or to make a contribution to organisational stability and change; rather, MLD intervention will have null or negative outcomes. Where changes in individual and group behaviour are observed, these will not be attributable to MLD intervention, nor will they conform to an expected pattern, in which managerial control leads to staff compliance and leadership leads to staff commitment and innovation; rather the observed changes will be attributable to other HRM interventions or other factors, and will not follow a consistent pattern across individuals or groups.

In order to ascertain the extent to which the model is right, the four hypotheses developed in this chapter have to be tested. The most appropriate way of testing the hypotheses is the central concern of the next chapter on methodology.

Chapter 3. Methodology

[T]here is a need for more receiving-end research to get 'beneath the skin' of an organization and build our understanding of the purposes and meanings that people attach to management development experiences and activities with which they are involved (Thomson et al. 2001: 178)

The first two chapters culminated in the central proposition of the thesis: that MLD for middle managers plays an important role in enabling organisational stability and change, but that MLD options and outcomes for middle managers are contingent on the organisational type and the direction of structural transition. A theoretical model of contingent MLD options and multi-levelled outcomes was constructed. The empirical task that follows is to test the model by observing actual MLD options and their outcomes at the levels of the individual middle manager, the group and the organisation across a variety of organisational contexts.

The testing of the model requires firstly that the organisation is taken as the unit of analysis in order to examine the interrelationships between the organisation's main middle management roles and its MLD options and outcomes. Secondly, the study of a number of organisations is required in order to observe the effect of varying organisational context. A balance therefore has to be struck between the necessary depth for the investigation into organisational processes, and sufficient breadth to observe a variety of organisational contexts. This methodological trade-off is best reconciled through the use of a comparative case study strategy.

The first section of this chapter elaborates on the justification for a comparative case study research strategy. The second section explains the multiple case study design and the criteria for case selection to illustrate MLD's contribution during divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation. In addition, this section introduces the three case organisations. The third section outlines the data collection strategy used in the case studies. Particular attention is paid to the use of the critical incident interview technique used with middle managers, to the triangulation of the interview data with other sources of evidence, and to interviewee-selection. The fourth section outlines the fieldwork protocol and the research process adopted across the case studies, including the strategy for data analysis. The fifth and final section presents an overall assessment of the validity and reliability of the research design.

3.1 Comparative case study strategy

The testing of the theoretical model requires rich, qualitative data to be collected. At organisational level, the questions that need to be answered include:

- how and why MLD intervention was made in the organisation, and its relationship to strategic goals;
- the extent to which MLD activities were designed and implemented in line with conventional best practices;
- the changes that MLD led to for individuals, groups and the organisation; and
- how far contextual factors may have enabled or constrained the MLD process.

Such 'how and why' questions, and the contextualised accounts of personal, group and organisational change, require detailed information to be obtained from multiple sources within an organisation. This is best approached using the case study research strategy (Yin 1994).

Case studies tend to use qualitative methods, particularly interviews, to obtain the rich, contextualised data required (Cassell 2009, Fitzgerald and Dopson 2009). This is a relatively unusual empirical approach for the testing of hypotheses. As Easterby-Smith *et al* (2002: 27) point out, hypothesis-testing in management research is typically associated with quantitative methods and large surveys, underpinned by a positivist research philosophy. In contrast, qualitative research has a stronger association with a phenomenological philosophy. Yet, as Easterby-Smith *et al* also point out, research design and the choice of quantitative or qualitative methods are ultimately questions of preference, not predetermined by philosophical tradition (p.31, see also Yin 1994: 14-15, Bryman and Buchanan 2009: 713). It is the nature of the specific research problem that should determine, for example, a hypothesis-testing approach over a hypothesis-generating approach, and the choice of qualitative over quantitative methods.

Research questions, which are underlined with an initial theoretical clarity about what needs to be investigated, are best suited to a hypothesis-testing approach (Easterby-Smith *et al.* 2002: 36). As illustrated in the previous chapter, this is the case with the question of the effects of MLD across different management roles. Additionally, some hypotheses are best tested through qualitative methods. This tends to occur when the hypotheses are concerned with processes of change and their meaning for stakeholders, thus requiring detailed data that capture the various

interpretations of the key variables and their interrelationships (c.f. Easterby-Smith *et al.* 2002: 32, George and Bennett 2005: 19). As will be further argued below, to understand how different types of MLD contribute across different organisational contingencies requires insights that are best generated through qualitative rather than quantitative data.

Previous researchers have responded similarly by developing hypotheses and using qualitative methods to test them. Notably Goldthorpe *et al* (1968) used mainly interview data to test the *embourgeoisement* thesis in their landmark study of attitudes and behaviours among affluent manual workers. More recent examples that are directly relevant to this thesis include Winterton and Winterton's (1999) largely qualitative testing of their hypotheses about the contribution of competence-based management development to organisational performance, and Pichault's (2007) use of interview data to test hypotheses that predicted a variety of effects of HRM interventions across Mintzbergian types of organisation in the public services.

The testing of hypotheses using qualitative methods has certain advantages and disadvantages. Basing fieldwork on a clear set of hypotheses or propositions has the advantage of providing a systematic framework for the collection and analysis of data (Yin 1994: 28). This also helps strengthen the replicability of the study for other researchers (Easterby-Smith *et al.* 2002: 36). Furthermore, qualitative studies that are guided by a clear preliminary theory can benefit from the use of counterfactuals to strengthen the test of causality and to evaluate rival theories (c.f. Yin 1994: 27). This was illustrated in the Goldthorpe *et al* (1968) affluent worker study, in which the qualitative evidence countered the predictions of *embourgeoisement* theory about changes in working class behaviour and attitudes. On the other hand, qualitative research is necessarily less precise than quantitative research for the confirming or disconfirming of hypotheses about causal effects. Whereas qualitative research might enable the drawing of strong conclusions about *whether* or *how* a variable matters in producing effects, quantitative research is likely to enable more confident estimates of *how much* a variable matters in relation to other variables (c.f. George and Bennett 2005: 25).

In summary, while the use of qualitative methods in a small number of in-depth cases is well suited to testing whether and how the use of MLD is shaped by job and organisational context, it cannot test precisely how much the job and/or organisational contexts matter, which would require a much larger sample of cases.

Such a trade-off of parsimony for richness is inherent within the case study research strategy (George and Bennett 2005: 31).

Case studies have been widely used to investigate the actual experience of HRM amongst stakeholders and its contribution to broad, organisational outcomes (see for example Hartley 1994: 211, McGovern *et al.* 1997, Truss 2001). Although case study research strategies have been criticised for imprecision (Fitzgerald and Dopson 2009: 465), the study of carefully selected cases can make valid contributions to theory through a partially deductive approach and 'analytical generalisation', rather than statistical generalisation (Yin 1994). In other words, wider conclusions may be drawn from individual cases by locating them in a theoretical context.

The use of qualitative methods, characteristic of case studies, is also timely, considering the current state of knowledge about MLD's strategic contribution in organisations. The most extensive recent attempt to test the full range of relationships between business strategy, HR strategy, MLD options and outcomes was a quantitative study by Mabey (2002). Mabey analysed data from an interview survey of 501 HRD managers to demonstrate MLD's positive impact on organisational performance and the pivotal role played by 'the HRM context' (akin to HRD competence). The key limitation of the study, however, was acknowledged as the use of HRD managers as single respondents from the sample organisations. Mabey concluded that, in future research, the views of other stakeholders, particularly those of line managers as the recipients of MLD, should be compared to those of HRD managers (p.1156). As Mabey and others put it elsewhere, such research should examine the receiving-end experiences of managers to get "beneath the skin" of MLD's strategic contribution (Thomson *et al.* 2001: 178, and the opening quote of this chapter). The case study research strategy, and the use of qualitative methods, is well suited to this task. By exploring the views and experiences of the various stakeholders in MLD, the detailed processes by which MLD contributes to organisational goals and the key influences on these processes may be identified.

In addition to the in-depth investigation of key relationships at single-organisational level, the thesis requires an examination of the effects on MLD intervention of organisational type and structural transition. A comparative case study strategy is therefore required to enable observation of the interaction between interventions and their contexts (Ackroyd 2009: 535). The main dependent variable, the outcome

of MLD interventions for middle managers, has to be investigated in terms of the influence of the independent variable, namely organisational-structural transition. Due to the 'small-n' character of the comparative case study research strategy, it is important to select cases according to limited variation on the dependent variable and maximum variation on the independent variable in order to accentuate findings pertinent to the causal role of context. The goal of case selection here is to produce "contrasting results but for predictable reasons" (Yin 1994: 46).

Limited variation on the dependent variable is achieved by selecting organisations that are known for their HRD competence, and thus for their implementation of conventional best practice in MLD. This reduces the likelihood that variations in MLD options and outcomes are to be explained by ineffectual or atypical HRD functions, or the lack of application of conventional learning-management principles within individual organisations. To achieve variation on the independent variable requires the selection of cases across the continuum of divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation.

The main challenge in case selection here is to achieve sufficient variation on the independent variable, namely adequate representation of divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation. The best way to accomplish this would have been to replicate the representation of each type of structural transition by selecting multiple cases in each category. This approach was used by Whipp *et al* (2005), who investigated the impact of management changes in several social security departments grouped by different types of local authority, and by Winterton & Winterton (1999), who investigated the impact of competence-based management development by selecting several case organisations grouped by industrial sector. On a slightly smaller scale, Kessler *et al* (2000) and Truss (2008) used matched pairs of cases in each of their organisational categories when investigating changes to the management of public services.

Unfortunately, due to resource limitations, this researcher could only conduct three case studies – one each of divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation – and was therefore unable to replicate or match cases in each category. This means that it is particularly important for a systematic approach to be taken to analysing the case study evidence so that valid theoretical generalisations may be made. This process is aided by a robust theoretical framework and a clear set of theoretical propositions, as developed in Chapters 1 and 2, to guide the analysis (Yin 1994: 103-4).

The main limitation of using a small number of cases is that the potential for interfering factors is increased. The two main contextual variables of HRD competence and political obstacles were discussed in the previous chapter. However, external influences such as professional regulation might also provide some explanation for the MLD options and outcomes observed in a case, even though these fall outside of the key theoretical relationships considered. The main strategy for overcoming this problem, as will be discussed further in Section 3.3, is the triangulation of evidence within each case and then the triangulation of findings across the three cases when drawing conclusions (Yin 1994: 91-92).

In summary, the comparative case study strategy can be justified as the most suitable approach to testing the central proposition of the thesis, as it enables a detailed examination of MLD interventions across contrasting organisational contexts. The main limitations, deriving from the small number of cases, are the potentially distorting effects of interfering factors on MLD outcomes and the single-organisational representations of structural transitions. These limitations are largely mitigated by careful case selection.

3.2 Case selection

The comparative case study strategy necessitates an “embedded multiple case design” (Yin 1994: 38). This means that each case study is treated separately, with each set of findings embedded in a single organisational context, rather than pooled across the case studies in order to make generalisations. As Yin argues, the selection of multiple case study organisations has to be in accordance with the logic of ‘theoretical replication’, rather than on the basis on representative sampling from a population (Yin 1994: 46-47). Therefore, the quality of theoretical replication rests upon appropriate case selection according to the independent and dependent variables. A rich source from which to select case organisations according to both variables is provided by PSOs.

PSOs are an important group of organisations, employing approximately eighteen per cent of the UK workforce (Kersley *et al.* 2006: 18). To select the case study organisations from among PSOs has the advantage of gaining some consistency in the sample, while allowing for the necessary variation on the independent variable.

With regard to consistency, PSOs tend to be large, mature bureaucratic work organisations that are subject to relatively strong external regulation of their operations (Flynn 2007). In contrast, private organisations are likely to vary more widely in terms of their size, products and services, and their operations tend to be subject to less external regulation. To select case study organisations from the public services therefore helps to hold constant factors of size, age, sector and institutional regulation.

It is important, however, not to overstate the distinction between public and private sector organisations and their management. Rainey and Han Chun's (2005) review of the evidence concludes that, while "most public managers will face conditions much more strongly influenced by ... governmental institutions and processes" (p.90), a clear distinction cannot be sustained between public and private sector operating environments, management goals, structures and processes, and organisational efficiencies. In short, the differences between PSOs are more significant than their collective differences with private sector organisations. This means that, although case study organisations taken from among PSOs share some important similarities, their public sector nature does not significantly reduce their representativeness in terms of their management functions.

The organisational diversity amongst PSOs is explained by Grout and Stevens (2003: 217-19). The authors present a fivefold categorisation of the increasing variety of ownership and contracting arrangements for the provision of public services, including: i) publicly-owned and -controlled organisations, such as most local authority schools; ii) privately-owned but publicly-rented and -managed organisations, such as some newly-built hospitals; iii) publicly-owned but privately-rented and -managed organisations, such as 'failing' schools run by private education contractors; iv) privately-owned and-managed organisations whose services are contracted by the government, such as private hospitals providing state-funded surgical operations; and v) privately-owned and -managed organisations that sell regulated and often state-subsidised services directly to the public, such as privatised utility firms and transport providers.

When selecting case study organisations from among PSOs, therefore, the researcher is faced with a potentially wide choice of types. However, some types are more prevalent than others. As Grout and Stevens point out (p.218), the first and fifth types – traditional public sector organisations and privatised providers – are the most common. The three case organisations in this thesis – a publicly owned and

controlled fire brigade, a local authority social services department, and a privatised train operator – reflect these more dominant types of PSOs.

Another important feature of PSOs in recent years, related to the increased diversity of ownership and control arrangements, is governmental pressure on them to achieve greater organisational flexibility and responsiveness. As discussed in Section 1.4, such environmental pressures have important implications for management roles and skills. Public management reforms in recent decades have taken many forms and operate on a number of levels (Pollitt 2002, Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004). At organisational level, however, the common theme has been greater decentralisation, motivated by attempts to speed up managerial decision-making, adapt services more easily to local conditions, encourage innovation and increase staff motivation and identification (Pollitt 2005: 378, 381).

The three chosen case studies for this thesis - namely SWT, LFB and KASS - are exemplars of PSOs under these kinds of decentralisation pressures. In general terms, recent changes to the management of PSOs provide a good illustration of the theoretical range of different types of organisational decentralisation, both vertical and horizontal (Pollitt 2005: 384-85). In more specific terms, public management reforms at organisational level provide good illustrations of the most important points on the continuum of decentralisation: namely divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation. Thus, each of the three case study PSOs in this thesis helps achieve the required variation on the independent variable.

With regard to variation on the independent variable, PSOs in recent years may be said to exemplify the divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation of mature bureaucratic work organisations. Firstly, PSOs are the “natural home of bureaucracy and the bureaucrat” (Hales 2002: 58) and span a wide spectrum of organisational types (Grout and Stevens 2003: 217-19, Flynn 2007: 210), including machine bureaucracies, professional bureaucracies and adhocracies (Pichault 2007). Secondly, with regard to exemplifying divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation, PSOs have seen significant structural changes in their management in the past two and a half decades, particularly in the UK (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004).

Divisionalisation has been widespread in the UK public services in the last three decades, producing a rich source of cases from which to select. At organisational level, the shift from ‘Old Public Administration’ to the ‘New Public Management’

(NPM) in the 1980s and mid-1990s (Dunleavy and Hood 1994) has meant the breaking up of large, multi-purpose bureaucracies and their replacement by decentralised sets of smaller, more autonomous units (Pollitt 2002, Dunleavy et al. 2006). The driving force behind such reforms has been the pursuit of efficiency-maximisation, through a localised emphasis on the achievement of outputs, rather than the management of inputs and processes through centralised, hierarchical decision-making (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004).

The breaking up of large centralised bureaucracies into smaller, more autonomous and commercialised units, described by Dunleavy *et al* (2006) as 'disaggregation', has been particularly pronounced in the civil service, which encompasses a range of professional and machine-like bureaucracies. In addition, and of most interest to this research, is the type of divisionalisation in which machine-like PSOs are 'chunked up' into deregulated or privatised services (c.f. Dunleavy *et al.*: 5). Examples of such PSOs may be primarily found in utilities, distribution and transport.

Professionalisation and adhocratisation are more readily detected within the second wave of public service reform from the late-1990s to the late-2000s, which has been observed as a shift from NPM towards 'modernisation' (Newman 2002). This second wave is characterised, amongst other agendas, by a fresh concern with quality and innovation in services (Dunleavy *et al.* 2006, Bach and Kessler 2007, Bach 2010: 157-58). Notwithstanding the continuation and strengthening of centralised performance controls, particularly in the form of audit (Power 1997), the key changes at the level of the PSO have been the accentuation of professional involvement in managing quality, greater technological sophistication, and the creation of partnerships between public, private and voluntary organisations to deliver 'joined-up' and innovative public services. Implicit here is the increasing importance of learning and mutual adjustment, processes that are common to professionalisation and, particularly in the case of partnership work, to adhocratisation.

Cases of professionalisation in the UK are less easily observable than those of divisionalisation. Indeed, the opposite trend of *deprofessionalisation* has been more commonly observed, and there is good evidence of the weakening of professional control and the intensification of work in many areas of the public services, particularly in education and health (c.f. Ferlie and Geraghty 2005: 424). However, this trend has not been entirely even or unidirectional. Various patterns are in fact visible, including 'professionalisation projects' that seek professional status and

recognition for various groups of workers, such as in nursing (Abbott 1998, cited in Ferlie and Geraghty 2005: 425, 426).

An important element of deprofessionalisation has been the increase in competence-based management in the public services (see Winterton and Winterton 1999, Horton 2002). As part of NPM-inspired measures to standardise quality of service, there have been widespread attempts by central government to establish new sets of competences for professionals and other skilled employees. This has resulted in the introduction of new professional standards in health and social care, education, local government and the emergency services.

For the more established and socially powerful professions, such as teaching and medicine, the new professional standards therefore represent greater centralised control, rather than the devolution of control to autonomous professional bodies (Broadbent and Laughlin 2002). For less powerful groups in the public services, however, namely those skilled employees who might be termed 'emergent-' or 'semi-professionals', new vocational or professional standards can be interpreted as empowering, or can at least be adapted in an empowering way in practice (c.f. Ashworth and Entwistle 2011: 434-35). For such groups of workers, new standards generally signal an intended move away from predictable, routinised work that favours close supervision and command-and-control management, towards work tasks that deal with greater uncertainty and require the exercising of a broader set of skills and informed judgement.

This second type of professional standard-setting reflects underlying attempts to shift the coordination of work away from standardisation of work processes towards standardisation by skills. Driven by pressures to become more responsive to public service users, the renegotiation of professional standards for such groups as nurses, unqualified social care workers, police officers and firefighters has often been contentious. Nevertheless, it represents an attempt to identify new sets of competences and to redefine the professional status of the work of these groups.

It is these types of PSOs, that predominantly employ 'emergent-' or 'semi-professional' labour, which best illustrate professionalisation in the sense in which it is used in this thesis. In organisational-management terms, as explained in Section 1.4, professionalisation represents a shift from machine-like bureaucracy towards professional bureaucracy, and in terms of the middle management role typology it represents a shift from Role A machine middle line management towards Role C

professional middle line management. While the shift from Role B (business division management) to Role C may be more consistent with the consecutive stages of the theoretical continuum (see Figure 1.7), the shift from Roles A to C better captures the typical practice of professionalisation.

Adhocratisation in PSOs is commonly found in professional bureaucracies that are attempting to achieve greater flexibility in parts of their operations. Although Mintzberg recognises the theoretical possibility of transition from machine bureaucracy to adhocracy through a leap in the sophistication or automation of the technical system used to provide the product or service (1979: 471), there is scant evidence of this type of radical shift in the public services. There have been cases of fully automated public services using 'zero-touch' technology, such as London's road congestion surveillance system, but large and routinised back-office functions that resemble machine bureaucracies are still required in most PSOs, even if parts of the organisation require no human intervention (c.f. Dunleavy *et al.* 2006: 20).

The most common adhocratisation attempts are those arising from modernisation reforms that have tried to shift the delivery of services away from single providers towards partnerships and networks of providers (c.f. Newman 2002). The concept of partnership-working in the public services has been loosely defined in policy documentation to cover a wide range of quite different institutional arrangements (Entwistle and Martin 2005: 235, cited in Bach and Givan 2008: 528). In general terms, however, partnership reforms have had a significant impact on professional bureaucracies, particularly in local government, leading to the rise of a new type of 'boundary-spanning' public manager (Williams 2002, cited by Ashworth and Entwistle 2011: 437). It is this type of change, which seeks to join up different PSOs to deliver services, in which adhocratisation attempts can be most widely observed.

To summarise, PSOs provide a rich source from which to select case organisations that represent divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation, and therefore the required variation on the independent variable of structural organisational change. In turning to the question of case selection according to limited variation on the dependent variable – through the implementation of conventional best practice in MLD -, it is important to point out that PSOs have been the recipients of sustained investment in MLD in recent years. Indeed, the issue of raising the quality of management and leadership has been central to the public service reform debate. The individual manager in the PSO has been viewed particularly by NPM advocates as the key agent through whom the efficiency and

quality of services can be improved (Clarke and Newman 1997). This emphasis has also continued in the modernisation debate in the form of a preoccupation with individual 'leaders', who are expected at all levels in PSOs, to help 'transform' services (Lawler 2008: 22, O'Reilly and Reed 2010).

Attempts to raise the quality of management and leadership in PSOs through investment in MLD have featured strongly in governmental policies to reform PSOs (see OECD 2001, DfES/DTI 2002: 1, Burgoyne *et al.* 2004: 69-70). In the UK, through the creation of various academies and national centres of excellence in areas of the public services such as the civil service, health, education and social care (Burgoyne *et al.* 2004: 69-70, Storey 2004b: 4-5, Guest and King 2005: 248-49, Lawler 2008: 22), MLD practice in PSOs has been well developed and supported by expert advice. 'Best-practice-in-MLD organisations' are therefore common amongst PSOs and can be identified through their accreditation by such external awards as 'Investors in People', or through their reputations as acknowledged leaders in MLD practice in their sectors. While awards like Investors in People do not automatically indicate good practice in MLD (Hoque 2003), they nevertheless demonstrate a high degree of adherence to conventional best practice principles.

The final set of considerations in case selection relates to the need to keep extraneous factors constant as far as practicable. There are three main factors. Firstly, the case organisations should be of a similar size. The decision to study PSOs is helpful in this respect, as such organisations tend to be large and therefore comparable in terms of workforce size and institutional maturity. Secondly, the case organisations should be of a similar geographical location. This reduces the potentially distorting effects of managers and their teams being recruited from labour markets with different norms or institutional conditions. Thirdly, the case studies should be taken from a similar time period. This reduces the potentially distorting effects of incomparable external environmental factors and regulatory conditions.

3.2.1 Introduction to the three case study organisations

The use of MLD during divisionalisation is well illustrated by South West Trains (SWT) in the years 2003-7. The basic coordination mechanism on the railways is machine-bureaucratic, involving the standardisation of work processes through centralised control and the regulation of services by national train timetables and through passenger safety routines. However, privatisation of the rail network in 1996 broke up the national coordinating structure into regions, and passenger

services such as SWT were sold as private franchises on a fixed term basis through a market-tendering process (Wolmar 2005). The winner of the South West franchise, Stagecoach plc, became responsible for operating (but not owning) the stations and trains on the regional network on a customer-satisfying and profit-making basis.

After privatisation, responsibility for operations was devolved to train operating companies, but monitored at national level by the government-controlled regulator through an extensive framework of performance indicators (Cole and Cooper 2005). Within SWT itself, accountability for the performance of trains, stations, depots and other business units was devolved to managers in a way that largely mirrored the national performance measurement regime. This created new managerial responsibilities, particularly at middle level. Alongside an ongoing process of restructuring, the company experienced significant employment relations problems from 1997-2003, but became renowned in the industry for overcoming these through HRM and MLD interventions from 2003-2007. This period of SWT's history therefore represents an excellent opportunity to study the role played by MLD for middle managers during an apparently successful divisionalisation of a machine bureaucracy.

The London Fire Brigade (LFB) during the period 2003-5 provides a good illustration of the use of MLD during professionalisation. As noted in Section 1.2, fire departments may be seen as a variant of the machine bureaucracy, namely the safety bureaucracy (Mintzberg 1979: 332-333). Coordination in safety bureaucracies is achieved through standard or routine work procedures that, although not used continuously, are highly formalised and extensively rehearsed to minimise risks to safety and to enable effective response to situations of an emergency but essentially predictable nature. In fire services, this approach to coordination is known as 'incident command'. The main operational responsibility for incident command lies with the mid-hierarchy managers in charge of fire stations, who may be said to practice a variant of machine middle line management, called here 'emergency middle line management'.

By the mid-1990s there was a consensus amongst stakeholders, including the government, fire service managers and the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) (Fitzgerald 2005: 655-56), that the operating environment had changed. Knowledge and technology in fire safety and prevention had advanced and, although the number of fires on average was falling, there was a rise in less familiar emergency situations

such as dangerous hoax calls, floods and terrorist attacks. This changing landscape meant that the traditional range of firefighters' work tasks had necessarily broadened and become subject to greater local variation. Local fire service management therefore assumed a wider range of functions beyond the coordination of incident command, notably in the promotion of fire prevention and community fire safety.

During a lengthy and acrimonious industrial dispute with the FBU in 2002-4, the UK government seized the opportunity to reform what it saw as outdated and overly centralised bureaucratic operating procedures in the fire service and sought to abolish "strongly entrenched working practices" (Fitzgerald 2005: 649, see also Seifert and Sibley 2011). In 2004, radical modernisation measures were introduced in an effort to make the fire service more flexible and professionalised. The measures included the restructuring of brigades, the introduction of localised community fire safety plans, new terms and conditions for firefighters, targets for greater gender and cultural diversity in the workforce, and a new competence-based development system for all uniformed managers and staff (ODPM 2003).

A key component of the modernisation reforms was a move away from the traditional rank structure for uniformed staff towards new occupational roles based on sets of competences. This was accompanied by the abolition of recruitment and promotion practices based on technical knowledge, and their replacement with competence-based development programmes at all levels of the uniformed hierarchy. MLD therefore assumed a new significance through the introduction of revised management development programmes, which were modelled around the modernised managerial roles. LFB was at the forefront of reforming the traditional rank structure to a role structure, and of the development of sets of new competences for fire service managers. In short, LFB led the national attempt at professionalisation and the use of MLD as an instrument in this process.

The use of MLD during adhocratisation is well illustrated by Kent Adult Social Services (KASS). Social work for children and adults in the UK had traditionally been delivered through a classic professional bureaucracy. From 1993, however, the management of social services was devolved to the level of local authorities, although social workers continued to be regulated by strict, centralised professional standards (Means and Smith 1998). From 1998, there was another devolutionary push. The new Labour government began to incentivise local authorities to commission more care services from voluntary and private sector organisations, and

to work together with a wider range of public agency partners to stimulate and innovate new ways of providing care. This had significant implications for middle management, where the main responsibility lay for assessing and meeting care needs within a particular district (c.f. Flynn 2007: 87).

KASS was one of the first social services departments in England to commission almost all of its care services from private and voluntary sector providers, rather than provide it directly. After pronouncing Kent Social Services as 'poor' in 1998, government inspections in the mid-late 2000s awarded maximum ratings of excellence to the council and the social services department, making particular references to excellence in leadership, innovations in care provision and investments in people management, including MLD (SSI/Audit Commission 2001, CSCI 2007). KASS therefore provides an excellent opportunity to investigate the role of MLD in promoting the management of new partnership arrangements and more adhocratic ways of coordinating care provision.

More detail on each of the three case organisations, and the extent to which they exemplify divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation, will be provided in each of the case study chapters 4-6. With regard to their exemplification of limited variation on the dependent variable, it is important to note that the three case study organisations, as leaders in their sectors, may be expected to demonstrate conventional best practice in MLD. In terms of limiting the effects of extraneous variables, the factors of organisational size, geographical location and historical period were kept reasonably constant. All three organisations are large, with between approximately 4000 and 7000 employees. All are based in the South East of England. Finally, the case studies all belong to the late 1990s and early 2000s, thereby reflecting similar operating and political environments.

Given the strong extent to which the case organisations can be expected to exemplify the necessary variation of on the independent variable and limited variation on the dependent variable, and the way in which important extraneous variables have been held largely constant, the observed differences in the organisations' MLD options and outcomes might then be expected, in line with the hypotheses, to be explained by the influence of organisational context.

In illustrating the contribution of MLD to divisionalisation, SWT should be expected to have invested in both operational and strategic types of management development (OMD and SMD) for its middle managers, both to ensure the ongoing

smooth-running of the overall machine-bureaucratic operation and to promote the strategic development of its local business units to be more efficient and provide better customer service. Within this process, individual middle managers at SWT should be expected to have developed greater competence in operational and strategic management to secure the compliance of staff towards local business performance objectives.

In contrast, in illustrating the contribution of MLD to professionalisation, LFB should be expected to have invested in both operational and professional types of management development (OMD and PMD), and in leader development for its middle managers. This may then be expected to have the effect of ensuring the smooth-running of the safety bureaucracy at the same time as promoting firefighters' competence in a wider range of operational situations and their commitment to the new community fire safety agenda. Within this process, individual fire station managers should be expected to have developed competence in traditional incident command as well as the intrapersonal competence to motivate and develop the firefighters in their teams to undertake a wider range of operational tasks.

Finally, in illustrating the contribution of MLD to adhocratisation, KASS should be expected to have invested in a professional variant of management development (PMD) to ensure the stability and adaption of the professional social work bureaucracy, as well as training in project management (PJMD), leader development and leadership development for its middle managers in order to promote more innovative, partnership-based ways of delivering care services. Within this process, individual social care managers should be expected to have developed competence in the upholding and development of professional regulations as well as in managing projects; in addition they should be expected to have developed the intrapersonal and interpersonal competence to engage in collaborative networks.

There is, however, one strong feature of all three the case selections that may be considered a potentially interfering factor in the MLD process: that of gender bias. It has to be observed that SWT and LFB had male-dominated workforces, whereas KASS had a female-dominated workforce. The best way to have neutralised potential gender-effects in the case study analysis, as alluded to in the previous section, would have been to select multiple or paired cases. For example, LFB might have been matched to a case of female prison wardens undergoing a similar process of professionalisation. In the absence of paired or matched cases, however,

it is necessary to be alert to the possible gender effects that are suggested by the MLD literature.

Research suggests that gender bias tends to affect MLD in two main ways: i) by restricting access to women to certain MLD activities; and ii) by influencing stakeholders' perceptions of the value of MLD outcomes due to assumptions based on gender stereotypes . On the first point, it has been observed that the more informal methods that tend to be used in leader and leadership development often serve to discriminate against women. Learning through special job assignments, for example, typically relies on access to high-level informal networks, from which women tend to be marginalised in comparison to their male counterparts (Grugulis 2007: 85, Mabey and Finch-Lees 2008: 215-16).

The implication of this first type of gender bias for this research is that if leader or leadership development is observed as more effective at either SWT or LFB relative to KASS, then this may have more to do with greater opportunities for male managers than with the fit between the MLD activities and the organisational context. (It is important to reiterate, however, that these two particular MLD options of leader development and leadership development are not hypothetically expected in divisionalisation at SWT, and only leader development is hypothetically expected during professionalisation at LFB).

The second main way in which gender bias may affect MLD is through gendered perceptions of managerial effectiveness and performance. This seems to be accentuated in competence-based MLD that relies upon purportedly objective statements of managerial competence (Mabey and Finch-Lees 2008: 210-11). As Grugulis (2007) observes, “Jobs are often designed around ideas of masculinity and femininity ...[so] Competence in work is rated more highly when employees are the ‘right’ gender for that job” (p.84).

In male-dominated environments such as SWT and LFB, therefore, if MLD is perceived by stakeholders to have developed competences that conform to stereotypically male traits of competitiveness and rationality, this may simply be a reflection of positive assumptions about managers' appropriateness for their roles, rather than the actual effect of MLD in terms of furthering the organisation's aims. A similar effect may occur in a female-dominated environment, such as KASS, if MLD is perceived to have developed competences that conform to stereotypically female traits of nurturing and empathy (c.f. Rees and Garnsey 2003, Grugulis 2007: 84-85).

Conversely, if, in male-dominated environments such as SWT or LFB, new managerial roles, which MLD is designed to support, are seen as modelled on 'female' competences, then any perceived ineffectiveness of MLD might have more to do with negative assumptions about the value of the actual MLD outcomes, rather than their appropriateness for the organisational context. A similar effect may occur in female-dominated environments such as KASS if new managerial roles, which MLD is designed to support, are perceived to be based on 'male' competences.

These two potential effects of gender bias will be reconsidered in Chapter 7, when the case study findings are compared. The only other strong common feature of the three case organisations that should be highlighted is their densely unionised workforces. High union density is common amongst PSOs generally, and reforms to management and services in PSOs have often been met with ambivalence from the public sector trade unions (Bach and Givan 2008: 523). The recent histories of adversarial employment relations in the fire service (LFB) and in SWT have already been noted; with regard to the third case, there is also a history of ambivalence amongst social workers to some of the recent reforms to social care (see *The Guardian*, 'Deep sense of shame', Social care special issue, 1 August 2007).

The potential for political obstacles to the MLD process, as described in Section 2.2, is therefore high in all three cases. Due the requirement for specialist qualifications to enter work in public service environments, middle managers in PSOs tend to share similar occupational backgrounds to the rank-and-file, and may be members of the same trade unions or professional associations. This means that the middle managers in the cases might be reluctant, out of loyalty to their union colleagues, to commit to the formal aims of some MLD activities, if these activities are directed towards priorities of senior management that are contested by the unions. Indeed, the content and emphasis of the MLD interventions in the three cases, given the histories of adversarial employment relations, can be expected to be orientated, at least in part, towards developing managers to overcome employee resistance to organisational change.

The probability of middle-managerial resistance to MLD out of union loyalty is highest in the fire service, in which the FBU is the dominant occupational union for all uniformed staff, including junior to middle managers. It may also be likely among social care managers in local authorities, who are traditionally social workers by profession and can be expected belong to the dominant trade union, Unison, and/or the professional association for social work, the British Association of Social

Workers. In train operating companies, however, managers are most likely to belong to the union for non-operational staff, the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA), rather than the train drivers' union ASLEF (Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen) or the Rail Maritime and Transport workers union (RMT), thus reducing the probability of middle-managerial resistance to MLD out of union loyalty in this case.

As with the issue of gender bias, the selection of a greater number of cases might have neutralised the potential effects of unionisation by matching each of the cases of divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation with a non-unionised but otherwise similar organisation. For example, SWT might have been matched with a non-unionised bus company. However, because the potential for political obstacles due to middle management unionisation is common to all three of the cases, this means that, in itself, unionisation need not be considered as an explanatory factor with regard to the similarities or differences in MLD outcomes *between* the cases. Instead, unionisation may be most appropriately considered as a dimension of the contextual variable of political obstacles to MLD *within* each case.

3.3 Data collection strategy

The type of data required in the case studies is similar to those required in training evaluation, on which there is a large literature. Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008) distinguish between two main approaches: strategic MLD evaluation and operational MLD evaluation. Both of these approaches are relevant to the comparative case study strategy and inform the choice of research methods used.

Strategic MLD evaluation seeks to measure “the fit between management development policies and practices and the strategic goals of the organization” (Mabey and Finch-Lees 2008: 57). In the terms used in the previous chapter, this is the assessment of internal strategic fit, or strategic HRD competence in the organisation. It is concerned with the degree of appropriateness of the MLD options chosen in relation to business and HRM goals. Observers have pointed out that the precise contribution of MLD to organisational outcomes is notoriously difficult to identify, due to the wide-ranging objectives and activities of different types of MLD, their long-term orientation and the range of variables that contribute to organisational performance (Guest and King 2005: 250-51, Mabey and Finch-Lees 2008: 68-69). However, as argued in the first section of this chapter, organisational

case studies, based on qualitative evidence, offer a suitable way of obtaining rich information to analyse these changing relationships.

Operational MLD evaluation seeks to measure “how well training and development activities are designed and delivered” (Mabey and Finch-Lees 2008: 57). In the terms of the previous chapter, this concerns the assessment of operational HRD competence. There exists a range of available operational MLD evaluation frameworks, which offer a variety of ways to measure the results of MLD intervention (Tamkin *et al.* 2002a). A particularly thorough method is outlined by Mole (2000: 113-188), drawing on an example by Latham and Saari (1979). Mole advocates extensive data collection, mainly through questionnaires, in order to give measurable data on participants’ reactions, learning and job performance at various intervals up to one year after the intervention. He also advocates the qualitative assessment of participants’ conduct during audio-recorded role plays, based on known critical incidents for the target group, to observe changes in the participants’ behaviour. In addition, Mole highlights the involvement of a range of stakeholders and emphasises the importance of careful design in MLD evaluation. This includes the use of control groups for comparison with observed changes in the MLD participants’ behaviour, and the development of working hypotheses about the expected outcomes of MLD at the beginning of the design process.

Mole’s recommended data collection strategy is exhaustive and necessarily tailored to the organisation and the specific situation. It requires the close involvement of the evaluator at the beginning of the MLD design process and access to a range of stakeholders at various points for at least one year after the main intervention. While this is desirable, it is not always practical or achievable. Particularly the organisation of control groups and the extensive use of questionnaires over a protracted time period are difficult for external researchers with access restrictions. Unobtrusive, unthreatening and limited periods of research activity in an organisation are easier to negotiate than ongoing, extensive and frequent repeat evaluation activities (c.f. Buchanan *et al.* 1988). A flexible, pragmatic approach is therefore usually necessary for external researchers.

Due to restrictions of time and access, this researcher was unable to administer controlled, before-and-after tests of the impact of MLD intervention, as advocated by Mole, and had to rely on documentary evidence and retrospective accounts of individual, group and organisational change through interviews. The limitations of this uncontrolled and retrospective approach to observing MLD outcomes, but also

how these were largely mitigated, are discussed in more detail below. Before consideration of these more detailed questions, however, it is necessary to provide an overview and justification of the overall data collection strategy adopted here.

Firstly, in line with Mole's recommendation of careful evaluation design, the data collection strategy was guided by the need to establish the three initial conditions from Chapter 1 and to test the four hypotheses developed in Chapter 2. Secondly, specific data requirements were identified in advance, guided by the model of expected multi-levelled MLD outcomes in Figure 2.2. Finally, and consistently with Mole's recommendations for multiple sources of evidence, capturing the perceptions of a range of stakeholders (see also Yin 1994), a mixture of primary, secondary, qualitative and quantitative data were collected in each case organisation.

Below is a reminder of the initial conditions and hypotheses that guided the data collection strategy:

Initial condition 1. Skill-fit to organisational structure.

The main tasks and key skills required of middle managers vary according to four main roles, which correspond to Mintzberg's four main organisational types.

Initial condition 2. Line-staff division across the four roles.

The various middle management roles found within an organisation are determined by the responsibility for either a line or staff function.

Initial condition 3. Skill needs for structural transition.

The skill needs of middle managers are driven by one of the four main middle management roles and/or another role associated with greater organisational flexibility.

Hypothesis 1. Role of MLD.

MLD interventions for middle managers are investments to enable them to contribute to organisational stability and/or strategic change.

Hypothesis 2. Contingent MLD options.

MLD options for middle managers are contingent on one of the four main middle management roles and/or another role associated with greater organisational flexibility.

Hypothesis 3. Contingent MLD outcomes.

The outcomes of MLD for middle managers are contingent on one of the four main middle management roles and/or another role associated with greater organisational flexibility.

Hypothesis 4. Extent of structural transition and effect on MLD.

The extent of structural transition determines the extent to which MLD serves organisational stability and/or change.

The specific data collection requirements for the case studies, in line with the above initial conditions and hypotheses, are detailed in Figure 3.1.

Conditions and Hypotheses	Key constructs (concepts to be studied)	Data required (how concepts will be observed)	Sources (where data will be found)
<i>Initial conditions 1-3</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • key coordination mechanism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - standardisation of processes, outputs and skills - mutual adjustment • structural configurations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - machine bureaucracy - divisionalised form - professional bureaucracy - adhocracy • structural transition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - divisionalisation - professionalisation - adhocratisation • The 'middle line' (and staff management) • Middle management roles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - machine middle line management (Role A) - business division management (Role B) - professional middle line management (Role C) - middle leadership (Role D) • Middle management skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - technical skills - human skills (soft skills and leader skills) - conceptual skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation charts • Workforce statistics • Strategic plans • Performance management objectives and standards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job descriptions and competency profiles • Operational instructions • HRD/MLD strategies • Middle management development plans and programmes <p>• Perceptions and experiences of expert witnesses (senior/HR/middle managers and employee representatives)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate strategy documents • HR strategy documents • Performance management documentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR information systems • Interviews with expert witnesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - senior managers - HRD managers - middle managers - employee representatives

Hypotheses	Key constructs (concepts to be studied)	Data required (how concepts will be observed)	Sources (where data will be found)
<i>Hypothesis 1</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MLD options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - management development (operational, strategic, professional and project management development) - leader development - leadership development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRD/MLD strategies • Middle management development plans and programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR information systems
<i>Hypothesis 2</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MLD outcomes for individuals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - managerial competence (operational, strategic, professional and project management competence) - intrapersonal competence - interpersonal competence • MLD outcomes for groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - compliance - commitment - innovation • MLD outcomes for organisations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - organisational continuity / stability - strategic change / structural transition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical incidents of middle manager learners • Business unit plans and outcomes • Perceptions/ experiences of expert witnesses • Organisational strategy and performance data • Perceptions/ experiences of expert witnesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical incident interviews with middle manager learners • Unit business plans/ performance documentation • Interviews with expert witnesses • Organisational strategy and performance documentation • Interviews with expert witnesses
<i>Hypotheses 3 & 4</i>	All of the above	All of the above	All of the above

Figure 3.1 Data collection strategy

As Figure 3.1 illustrates, Initial conditions 1 and 2 are concerned with the dominant type of coordination and organisational structure and the pressures for structural transition in each case organisation. The existence of these conditions was established by studying organisational and strategy documentation, which is akin to strategic MLD evaluation. Crucially, however, the realities of how strategic change was developed and implemented, and how this might relate to MLD, had to be observed through the informal accounts and views of the key decision-makers, notably senior managers and HR managers. This important aspect of data collection is therefore highlighted in bold in Figure 3.1.

Senior and HR managers' accounts of strategic change and the role of MLD were ascertained through semi-structured interviews (see the interview questions in Appendices I and II). The use of semi-structured interviews ensures on the one hand a degree of consistency across interviews and cases (Bryman and Bell 2003: 346), while on the other allowing flexibility for the researcher to pursue emergent issues of interest, and to re-examine or re-visit the same line of enquiry from different angles to get closer to the interviewee's real understanding, motivations or perceptions (c.f. Easterby-Smith *et al.* 2002: 75). A systematic approach to the analysis was then guided by the testing of the three initial conditions.

The other concern of Initial conditions 1-2, along with Initial condition 3, is the role of the middle line and other types of staff management in the organisation, as conceptualised in the middle management roles A-D. To establish the existence of these roles required an investigation into changes to the middle management function of each organisation, with the additional requirement to investigate the changing skill profiles of middle managers. A study of job descriptions and competence profiles for middle managers was therefore needed, alongside a consideration of related HR and MLD strategies, plans and programmes, and how their aims related to the requirements of organisational continuity and change.

Documentary evidence of the formal organisational expectations of middle managers, and how these were seen to have changed, had then to be triangulated with the informal accounts of middle managers to ascertain the realities of the situation. Middle managers' perceptions and experiences of their changing roles and skill requirements were investigated through semi-structured interviews. Through the use of 'interlocking questions' (c.f. Winterton and Winterton 1999: 47), the views of middle managers could

then be either corroborated or found to conflict with those of the senior managers and other staff. The first two interview questions for middle managers (see Appendix III) were designed to collect data on how middle managers perceived their changing roles and skill requirements.

The data collection activities required to test Hypotheses 1-4, concerning the MLD options and outcomes in the organisation, have a stronger association with operational MLD evaluation than with strategic MLD evaluation. The overall objective was to establish the relationship between HRM goals, different types of MLD intervention, and MLD outcomes at individual, group and organisational levels. The establishment of these interrelationships required the researcher to draw in part upon the background documentation and interview data described above in relation to Initial conditions 1 and 2. The most important data, however, were middle managers' interview accounts of the changes that had resulted from MLD intervention.

In the absence of controlled before-and-after tests, care had to be exercised in order to achieve confidence in the attribution to MLD of reported changes in individual or group behaviour or improvements organisational performance (see similar difficulties encountered by Winterton and Winterton 1999: 45 in their MLD case studies). The two measures taken to ensure confidence in the attribution of causality were: i) the use of the critical incident interview technique (Flanagan 1954); and ii) the triangulation of the interview results with evidence from other sources (Yin 1994).

With regard to the first method, it is important to recognise that the critical incident interview technique dealt with the heart of the empirical task: observing how MLD interventions led to changes in the organisation. The technique is designed to draw out the interviewee's most memorable incidents in order to identify moments of real tension in the workplace (Flanagan 1954, Chell 1998). In this research, the tensions of interest were between an individual's skill development needs and the actual experience of MLD. This required advanced interviewing skills (Chell 1998), particularly in the use of probing questions to tease out the most important information without 'leading' the interviewee and biasing the results (Easterby-Smith *et al.* 2002: 80). In particular, the reasons for the memorable nature of the incidents had to be probed in relation to what actually changed at individual, group or organisational level. This approach should then produce interview data that goes beneath superficial learner perceptions of personal

change or the ‘placebo effects’ of participation in development activity and research (Chell 1998, Easterby-Smith *et al.* 2002: 83-84).

As a crucial source of evidence, the critical incidents of middle managers are highlighted in bold in Figure 3.1. Question 3 in the interviews for middle managers (Appendix III) employed the critical incident technique most explicitly and formed the key part of the interview. The remaining questions presented the researcher with the opportunity to re-examine and re-visit critical incidents and compare them in significance with other learning experiences. Another important consideration was the timing of the interview in relation to the MLD intervention. The MLD literature is remarkably thin on the question of timeframes for behavioural and other types of change attributable to MLD. However, Mole (2000: 113, 115) and Martineau (2004: 243-45) concur that the intended changes in individual behaviour are best investigated within a few months and up to one year after the intervention. Once completed across a sample of middle managers within this timescale, patterns of critical incidents could then be analysed across the interviews to infer with some confidence the contribution of MLD for middle managers to group and organisational outcomes.

The triangulation of methods, the second measure to ensure confidence in the attribution of changes to MLD intervention, was achieved by corroborating the reported patterns of critical incidents with two other main sources of evidence: other stakeholders’ accounts of the MLD intervention; and the organisation’s MLD evaluation documentation (see bottom right area of Figure 3.1). With regard to the first source, alternative accounts of MLD’s effectiveness, or the lack of it, were gained through semi-structured interviews with other expert witnesses, notably with senior managers who may have sponsored, commissioned or supported MLD programmes for the middle managers in their teams. With regard to the second source, MLD evaluation documentation from the HRD function, the researcher obtained where possible learner feedback on the quality of the MLD interventions (sometimes known as ‘happy sheets’) and other evidence from the business units, to which the learners belonged, in the form of progress against business plans and other related performance data. However, due to the complexity involved in attributing performance improvements specifically to MLD, and a general tendency not to undertake in-depth evaluation for internal political reasons, MLD evaluation data from organisations is often unreliable broad and superficial (Winterton and Winterton 1999: 31, Mole 2000: 45, c.f. also Corby *et al.* 2005). MLD evaluation documentation and expert witness accounts therefore helped to

an extent to corroborate managers' critical incidents, but the quality of the findings relating to MLD outcomes was largely dependent on the middle management learner interview data.

The dependence on the middle manager interviewees raises the issue of selection bias. As discussed above, the potential for such bias might have been neutralised by comparison with interview data from control groups of middle managers, who had not participated in MLD intervention. The interview data from the control groups could then have been compared with the reported critical incidents of the middle management learners in order to assess them for 'Hawthorne effects' (Bryman and Bell 2003: 45). As explained above, however, time- and access-restrictions prevented the systematic adoption of this strategy.

Despite this, it may be argued that the existence of multiple and simultaneous MLD initiatives in the same case organisation served to increase confidence in the attribution of MLD effects through the interviews. This is because the researcher was able to compare the reported effects of different MLD activities across a mixture of respondents, some of whom would not have participated in all aspects of the combined intervention. Thus quasi-control groups were identifiable within the mixed sets of respondents, amongst whom there were managers who had participated in either none, one or several of the MLD activities during the period studied. The overlaps between the outcomes of the various learning activities in each case also served to enable patterns of outcomes to be identified for different combinations MLD activities, which could then be compared to help isolate the effects of a specific MLD activity.

The issue of selection bias is further complicated by the various ways in which managers are selected for their participation in MLD programmes in organisations. There are four main possibilities: i) all managers are instructed to participate by their line-management or the HR function; ii) some managers are selected to participate, either because they are seen as having the potential to achieve higher performance as a result of the MLD, or because they are perceived as unable to perform satisfactorily unless they participate; iii) managers volunteer and therefore self-select for MLD; and iv) managers are randomly selected for an MLD activity as part of an ideal controlled experiment. These possibilities may vary from organisation to organisation, and across different types of MLD in the same organisation.

The first scenario, the compulsion of *all* managers in the organisation to participate in the same single-event intervention, could be the result, for example, of an organisation-wide HRM initiative to ensure that the entire current stock of managers possesses a specific knowledge or skill in order to meet new organisational requirements. Clearly, such a blanket, single-event approach renders the selection of control groups impossible. However, it allows the selection of a representative sample of interviewees, thus increasing confidence in the interview findings.

The second scenario may lead to two different types of selection bias. Those managers who are selected for MLD due to perceptions about their high potential are likely to link learning with the anticipated rewards associated with high individual performance and therefore to pursue enthusiastically their MLD activities. This group of managers may then be expected to report stronger-than-average MLD outcomes. Conversely, those managers selected for MLD due to their perceived underperformance are likely to be less accepting of the formal goals of MLD, less inclined to respond enthusiastically, and therefore more likely to report weaker-than-average MLD outcomes.

Managers in the third scenario, who volunteer for MLD, are likely to be positively predisposed towards the MLD activities and therefore motivated to meet the intended goals. Like the group of identified high-potential managers in the second scenario, this group of managers may be expected to report stronger MLD outcomes than those instructed to participate or encouraged to do so due to perceived underperformance. A middle ground, in which average-strength outcomes could be expected to be reported, might be occupied by managers who are 'encouraged to volunteer' by line managers or the HR function due to a perceived development need, thus a weak form of self-selection bias.

The fourth scenario – random selection - provides the ideal scientific conditions under which to investigate the effects of MLD, so long as a control group is also selected. This final scenario is, however, the least realistic of the four, given the range of stakeholder interests vested in MLD provision, which tend to ensure that managers are not selected randomly for MLD activities that require the commitment of the organisation's scarce resources.

In view of the time- and access-restrictions facing the researcher, and given the range of possibilities for selection bias, both across the case organisations and within each

case organisation, the approach to interviewee-selection had to be pragmatic. The strategy chosen was therefore to conduct interviews with 'expert witnesses' to the MLD experience, rather than attempt to achieve statistically representative interviewee samples. This involved identifying a target sample of ten middle manager witnesses, who would then be probed for their reasons and motivations for participation in MLD in order to detect selection bias and be alert to its possible effects. From the group of expert witnesses, a broad and detailed picture of MLD outcomes could then be constructed for each of the organisation's MLD interventions and cross-comparisons could be made.

The standard approach to middle manager interviewee-selection was to invite all participants of an identified MLD intervention from the last twelve months to be interviewed. Letters of invitation were sent via a HR administrator in each organisation (see Appendix V), explaining practical arrangements and procedures for confidentiality and dissemination. Positive respondents to the invitation would then be forwarded to the researcher to be selected for interview. To counter the possible effects of volunteer bias, it was attempted to achieve a cross-section of individuals by organisational function, gender and length of service, thus helping to limit potential distortions (c.f. Bryman and Bell 2003: 357). Interviews would ideally be held in a 'neutral' office space at the interviewees' place of work, such as a meeting room (c.f. Cassell 2009: 504-5).

In practice, the approach to interviewee-selection for the middle manager interviews was more opportunistic than intended. At SWT, the organisation's workforce data was insufficient for identifying all middle managers in the organisation who had participated in MLD intervention in the last twelve months. Therefore, rather than invite all circa five hundred managers in the organisation, it was decided to invite fifty front-line to middle managers who had participated in three recent workshops run by the HR function to explore ways of increasing 'management effectiveness'. Out of these fifty, eighteen managers, representing participants from two different MLD interventions, came forward for interview.

The possibility for volunteer bias at SWT was neutralised to an extent by the balance of motivations that managers held for participating in the workshops from which the interviewees were sourced. The researcher attended one of the workshops and observed a roughly even division of opinion between managers. On the one hand, those managers who were positively predisposed to the HR function could be expected

to exaggerate the contribution of formal MLD intervention to their own effectiveness; on the other, managers who were negatively predisposed towards the HR function, and who attended the workshops in order to air their frustrations, could be expected to downplay the actual contribution of the MLD experience. Therefore, while the typical mid-range or neutral experience amongst middle managers at SWT might have been under-represented, the likelihood that both positive and negative extremes were represented amongst the eighteen interviewees meant that a spread of results could be expected.

The potential for volunteer bias was also present at LFB, as the invitation to all circa one hundred middle-ranking managers in the organisation resulted in only fourteen volunteers. The managers' motivations for volunteering for interview were less easy to ascertain than in the SWT case, so a representative spread of views could not be relied upon. Nonetheless, the fourteen managers were roughly representative of the demographic profile and different parts of the brigade (more on this in Chapter 5) and their fourteen sets of experiences, probed in detail, represented a not insignificant set of results.

At KASS, the simple lack of positive responses to the invitation to interviews necessitated a 'snowballing' approach to interviewee-selection (see Bryman and Bell 2003: 105). Circa eighty participants across three recent MLD interventions were invited to interview, but this resulted in only three volunteers. The researcher therefore initiated and administered the snowballing process by following leads and recommendations from previous interviewees in order to recruit further interviewees. There are two possible selection bias effects here, which may be argued to neutralise one another. On the one hand, the interviewee-selection necessarily reflected the preferences of the interviewees making the referrals, which may not have been representative, as they were likely to be motivated by a desire to have to their own perceptions of MLD supported rather than challenged. On the other hand, the snowballing interviewee-selection process was subject to some control by the researcher, who was in the position to probe and infer interviewees' reasons for recommending further interviewees. This could then alert the researcher to underlying bias in the interviewees' responses.

In summary, with regard to neutralising interviewee selection bias, pragmatic steps were taken in each case to ensure a sufficiently broad sample of middle managers in

terms of their function, professional background, gender and length of service in order to enable the researcher to identify meaningful patterns of MLD outcomes in each of the organisations. Issues of selection bias will be returned to, when analysing the interview data in the case study chapters 4-6.

3.4 Fieldwork protocol and data analysis

The data collection strategy described in the previous section, drawing on both strategic and operational MLD evaluation techniques, was designed to ensure the validity of the findings in each case study. This strategy has to be complemented with measures to ensure the reliability of each case study, so that the research could be repeated in further cases and by other researchers. In other words, the data collection process in each of the three individual case studies had to follow a common protocol (Yin 1994: 63).

The protocol for the fieldwork was largely contained within the research proposal document prepared for each of the participating organisations. Personal contacts through management development practitioner networks were used successfully in all three cases to gain initial access and secure agreement to undertake the fieldwork. Research proposals were then sent to key HR contacts in the proposed case study organisations with accompanying requests for an initial exploratory meeting with interested parties. The proposal papers outlined the rationale, aims and objectives of the research, proposed fieldwork activities, outcomes, timetables and arrangements for reporting and dissemination (see Appendix IV for an example). The initial meetings to discuss the proposal papers led to formal agreements around access to organisational documentation (invariably by email through a central administrative contact in the HR function), a programme of fieldwork visits and activities, including interview schedules and arrangements for selecting interviewees, and the preferred format for reporting and dissemination.

Despite the intention to conduct the interviews face-to-face in a neutral office space (see previous section) some of the interviews had to be conducted by telephone (see Chapters 4-6 for more detail). This was due to the practical difficulties of travel and the multiple sites of work for some of the managers in all three of the organisations. The

relative disadvantage of telephone interviews can be that the researcher is unable to pick up upon important non-verbal cues. Nevertheless, there is little evidence to suggest that data generated from telephone interviews are of higher or lower quality than from face-to-face interviews (Cassell 2009: 504).

Notwithstanding the practical difficulties in arranging and conducting the interviews, the fieldwork protocol served as a useful template for the research process. Once the protocol had been agreed with HR managers, the main fieldwork activities took place on a flexible basis over an approximately three-month period, followed by a further three months' lead-time for analysis and reporting back. LFB were contacted formally in March 2005 and the fieldwork took place in June/July 2005. SWT were contacted formally in May 2006, and the fieldwork took place in June/July 2006, with additional interviews in March 2007. KASS were contacted formally in May 2007 and the fieldwork took place in June/July 2007. Internal reports were disseminated to the HR managers and interviewees in the three cases, as originally promised in the case study proposals. The diagram in Figure 3.2 illustrates how the data collection process was conducted and how it related to the overall analytical strategy.

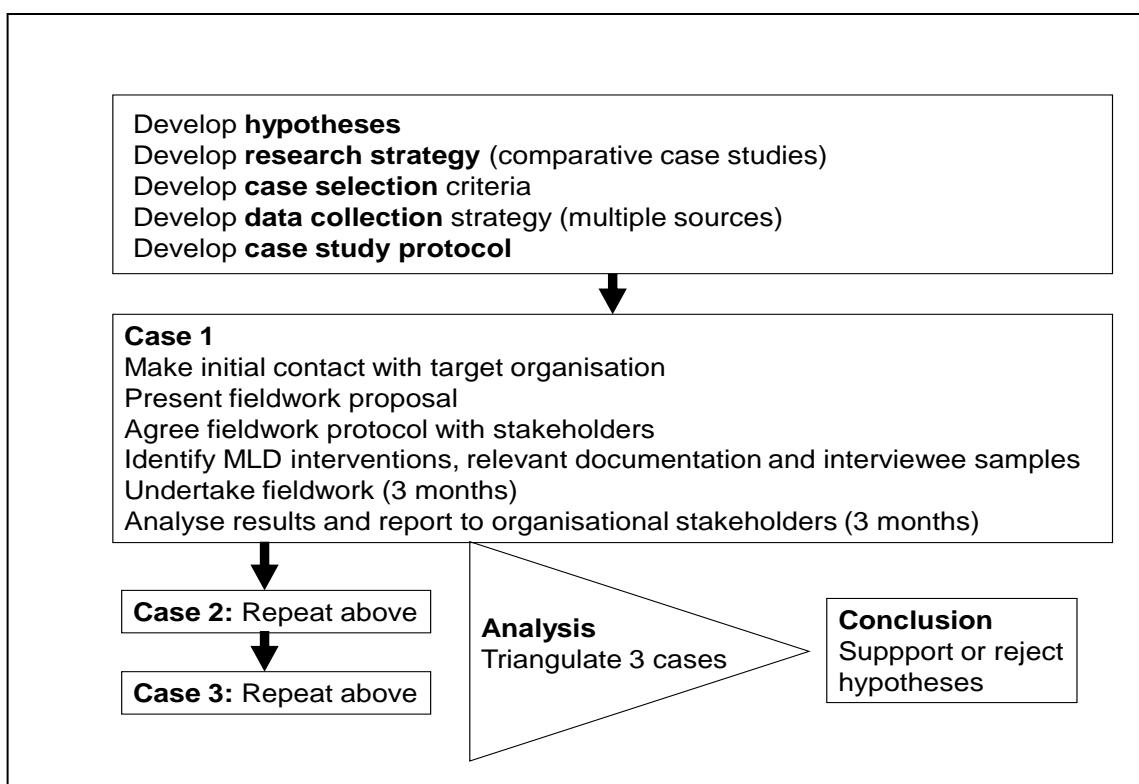


Figure 3.2 The research process

Some further details of the research process are necessary to explain. All interviews - seventy-six in total across the cases (see Appendix VI) - were audio-recorded and transcribed near-verbatim. The exceptions were four LFB interviews, which were unrecorded telephone conversations, two LFB interviews and one KASS interview in which the recording equipment malfunctioned, and nine interviews with senior managers at KASS, which took the form of informal discussions (seven of which were audio-recorded). For all of these sixteen exceptions, detailed interview records rather than transcripts were made. The near-verbatim transcripts and interview records, notably for the middle manager critical incident interviews, served the purposes of thoroughness, external transparency and the capturing of differences in stakeholders' perceptions through nuances in language (c.f. Heritage 1984: 238, cited in Bryman and Bell 2003: 353). (The transcripts and interview records may be found in electronic format on a CD-ROM embedded in the back cover of this thesis). Transcripts or electronic copies of the interview recordings were distributed to the interviewees for their own records by way of reassurance against misquotation or misrepresentation. The transparency of the whole interview process - from the official explanatory letter of invitation, that emphasised the benefits to the interviewees of reflecting on their own MLD experience, to arrangements for confidentiality, the sharing of interview recordings and final dissemination - was designed to engender relationships of trust, collaboration and openness with the interviewees (Easterby-Smith *et al.* 2002: 77).

The data analysis strategy was similarly systematic, guided by the initial conditions and the hypotheses and the conceptual model of contingent MLD outcomes. Tabulation frameworks were constructed in line with the data collection strategy to aid the identification of patterns in the documentary evidence and interviews. The treatment of the data from the middle manager interviews was, however, slightly different to that of the other interviews. This was because the analysis of the middle managers' critical MLD incidents represented the most important and complex part of the overall data analysis process and provided the most direct evidence of MLD outcomes. A deep analysis of the text was therefore particularly important in order to interpret and trace patterns.

It was decided to make use of the software Nvivo7 to help collate the middle manager interview data, and systematically identify the frequency and type of references made to the hypothetical MLD outcomes. Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software

such as Nvivo7 is often associated with studies using grounded theory, as it aids the process of coding text from large and unstructured transcripts (Lee and Fielding 1991). In such studies, it is conventional to move from 'open coding', to 'axial' and then to 'selective' coding, as explanations are built up inductively to develop new theoretical constructs. However, such an inductive process was unnecessary in this research.

The broadly deductive approach of this study enabled the researcher to move immediately to a 'selective' type of coding, in which already well-defined conceptual categories could be used to analyse the text. Thus, using the schemata developed in Figure 2.7, the middle manager interview transcripts could be analysed according to the type of MLD intervention (MD, LD and/or LSD) and the type of individual MLD outcomes described (managerial competence, intrapersonal competence and/or interpersonal competence). The individual transcripts and the collated incidences of individual MLD outcomes could then also be analysed for patterns of MLD outcomes at group level (compliance, commitment, innovation) and organisational level (stability or change).

A further advantage of the Nvivo software was that it was sufficiently flexible to employ both a set of predefined codes ('tree nodes') as well as new categories for analysis as they emerged ('free nodes'). Thus, the analysis of the interview transcripts with middle managers could not only be coded with reference to the schemata developed out of the hypotheses, but could also start to build a picture of the comparative role of informal learning and the organisational factors, such as HRD competence and political obstacles, that were seen to influence the success or failure of MLD interventions in each case. The full nodal structure used in the analysis of the middle manager interview transcripts may be viewed in Appendix VII.

3.5 Overall assessment of the research design

In concluding this chapter, it is pertinent to summarise and make an overall assessment of the quality of the research design. Useful here are Yin's four 'design tests' of construct validity, internal validity, reliability and external validity (Yin 1994: 33).

The first design test, construct validity, refers to the correct operationalisation of the concepts under study. In this research, construct validity is underlined by a well-

developed theoretical model that conceptualises causal processes of MLD intervention and outcomes, against which empirical observations can be made. A chain of evidence is established by the use of organisational documentation and interviews with a range of expert witnesses. Finally, the dissemination and presentation of the initial findings to stakeholders within the case study organisations presented the opportunity for the construct validity to be scrutinised by those close to the reality of the changes being observed.

The second test, internal validity, refers to the establishment of causal relationships between variables and factors. In this study, the aim is to produce explanations for the relationships observed between organisational context, MLD intervention and MLD outcomes. The development of initial conditions and hypotheses establishes expectations about the nature of these relationships. The initial conditions and hypotheses therefore structure and guide the analysis of the empirical data in a consistent way in each organisational case, including the tabulation of results using largely pre-defined sources of evidence. In addition, the semi-structured nature of the interviews helps to ensure that the relationships between organisational strategy and change, middle management roles, MLD interventions, MLD outcomes and other organisational factors are traced in a similar way in each individual case. In the absence of controlled before-and-after tests of MLD intervention, the critical incident interview technique and the triangulation of alternative sources of evidence served to strengthen internal validity. The use of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software and accompanying analytical schemata served to strengthen further the internal validity by enabling a picture of the key relationships between variables and factors to be systematically built.

The third test, reliability, refers to the ability to repeat the empirical enquiry with the same results by a different researcher. The continuum of divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation to represent the independent variable provides a clear criterion for case selection within the comparative case study design. Furthermore, the use of a clear fieldwork protocol in the three cases helps to ensure reliability. The fieldwork protocol, combined with the use of a computer-based coding system, provides a transparent and standardised approach covering organisational access, fieldwork activities, confidentiality and dissemination, data collection, interviewee sampling, interviewing and analysis of interview transcripts. Replication of a similar set of case studies would therefore not only be possible but also desirable, as

additional cases for each of the three types of structural transition would deepen the empirical enquiry.

Finally, external validity refers to the generalisability of the overall findings. Matched pairs of cases, rather than single cases, would strengthen the explanatory power of the research. However, in view of the researcher's limited resources, the priority was to trade breadth against depth within the comparative case study design. This meant the selection of cases to enable generalisation about the effects of variation across types of organisational structural transition, rather than the concentration of resources on explaining one specific context. As argued in Section 1.1, academic work has largely failed to appreciate the importance of organisational type in differentiating what middle managers do in organisations, and the skills that they require to perform a variety of roles. The research design of this thesis enables this gap to be addressed. Also, as argued in Section 2.1, the academic literature has largely failed to distinguish between the aims of different types of MLD investment and their contributions under different organisational conditions. By investigating the actual experience of three sets of MLD investments and their relationships with organisational context, the findings of this research may be generalised to demonstrate the effects of different types of MLD intervention under varying structural conditions.

The three case study chapters that follow have a common structure, guided by the initial conditions and hypotheses. First, to research the Initial conditions 1-3, actual middle management roles and skill requirements and the extent to which these changed in line with structural transition are established. Second, to research Hypothesis 1, the MLD options for middle managers during the period studied are discussed in terms of their underlying aims and methods, and how they related to changes in middle management roles. Third, to research Hypothesis 2, the multi-levelled outcomes of the MLD interventions are observed. Fourthly, to research Hypotheses 3 and 4, the organisational factors which best explain the MLD options and outcomes are assessed.

Each case study therefore has four parts: i) changes to middle management roles; ii) MLD options; iii) contribution of MLD to change; and iv) overall assessment. The next

chapter presents first of the three case studies, which investigates the experience of MLD during divisionalisation at SWT.

Chapter 4. MLD and divisionalisation: the case of South West Trains

Sending everybody ... to some poncey college in Switzerland to do an MBA would be crazy. It would generate completely false expectations. (Interview with senior project engineer, South West Trains)

This chapter investigates the contribution to divisionalisation of MLD for middle managers. The key hypothetical expectations during divisionalisation are twofold: i) that middle management roles should shift from machine middle line management (Role A) towards business division management (Role B); and ii) that this shift should be enabled by investment in both operational management development (OMD) to support stability in the machine bureaucracy, and strategic management development (SMD) to promote the process of divisionalisation.

The contribution of MLD for middle managers during divisionalisation is investigated through a case study of the train operating company SWT. The case presents an account of changes to middle management roles and the experiences of two MLD interventions that were designed to support organisational change. There are two main findings. First, the case demonstrates how investment in operational management development (OMD) enabled organisational stability in the machine bureaucracy and supported limited divisionalisation in the form of devolution of HR responsibilities to line managers. Second, the case demonstrates how the company made a hypothetically unexpected investment in leader development rather than a broader form of strategic management development (SMD), but also how this enabled some transition from Role A towards Role B middle management in the more customer-facing divisions of the company. Overall, the case lends support to the hypotheses, but highlights how in practice MLD's contribution may be constrained and distorted by a limited and uneven process of divisionalisation.

The chapter focuses on the changes to middle management roles during the period 1996-2006 and the contribution of MLD to organisational change from 2003-6. It draws on an evidence base of thirty interviews with the main stakeholders and a range of

organisational documentation. The first section of the chapter examines the process of divisionalisation, the changing roles and skill needs of middle managers and the extent to which these represented a shift from Role A towards Role B. The second section analyses the main MLD choices made by the company during this period, namely a suite of line management training courses and a talent management programme that employed leader development methods. The extent to which these represented the expected investments in operational management development (OMD) and strategic management development (SMD) are discussed. The third section analyses the outcomes of the two key MLD interventions at individual, group and organisational levels. The fourth section assesses the overall contribution of MLD to organisational change at SWT and the use of MLD as an instrument of divisionalisation.

4.1 Divisionalisation and the changing roles of middle managers

The process of divisionalisation at SWT derives from national rail privatisation in the UK in the late-1990s. The overriding objective of rail privatisation in 1996 was to make train services less costly to the state and more responsive to passengers. This was to be achieved by running the railways according to 'business-led', rather than 'production-led' principles (Dingwall and Strangleman 2005: 479-80)³. Underlying the intended cultural change was a desired structural shift in the coordination mechanism in the industry. The structural shift in the industry entailed a move away from the standardisation of work processes through the use of national timetables and operating procedures, towards the standardisation of outputs, as applied through a national regime of performance indicators.

Railway privatisation represented a divisionalisation of the nationwide machine bureaucracy in the sense that it devolved much of the control of regional train operating services to semi-autonomous units. Mintzberg (1979: 385, 2009: 107) argues that the transition of the machine bureaucracy to the divisionalised form tends to result in a collection of mini-machine bureaucracies. This line of argument produces the expectation that the train operating companies would then operate as localised but

³ Fifteen years on, a government review of the rail industry concluded that privatisation had largely succeeded in achieving higher levels of customer service, but failed in terms of reducing costs and prices (The Guardian, 'Railways face radical overhaul to give 'better deal for all'" (Report by Dan Milmo), 19 May 2011).

highly centralised machine bureaucracies. However, as the case of SWT will demonstrate, the divisionalisation of the national bureaucracy was replicated to an extent at local organisational level by devolving some of the responsibility for service performance and customer satisfaction further down to middle managers.

Pre-privatisation, operating procedures for train service operators were largely standardised across the network. This meant that the work tasks of the operating core on trains and in depots and stations were effectively coordinated at national level. Some local devolution existed pre-privatisation: passenger services were organised on a regional basis, and service performance was extensively measured and attributed to the different parts of the network. Nevertheless, minimum safety standards and an array of technical specifications were centrally controlled. Procedures for obtaining train-driving licences, for example, and compliance with other technical and health and safety standards were statutory concerns and could not be devolved to local level.

Privatisation involved the franchising out of regional services to private operating companies and the relinquishing of much of the centralised regulation of work processes. Subject to institutional constraints, franchises could determine their own prices, timetables of services and terms and conditions for staff. To regulate the performance of local franchises, an extended performance measurement system was introduced across the network along with a system of contractual clauses and financial penalties to disincentivise underperformance.

At local organisational level, the key management change was the assumption of new devolved responsibilities for service performance. The three main areas of performance measurement in the rail industry are: i) safety; ii) punctuality and reliability; and iii) customer satisfaction. The first two are longstanding, pre-dating privatisation and continuing beyond it. The key performance indicator for safety is the number of 'SPADs' (signals passed at danger) in a given time period. Punctuality and reliability are measured through the number of service delays and cancellations attributable to the local operator; these were then published in the 'Public Performance Measure' in the post-privatisation period. The third area, customer satisfaction, assumed particular significance post-privatisation. This became subject to intensive monitoring through the sixth-monthly 'National Passenger Survey', commissioned by the government from the independent organisation Passenger Focus to measure the 'on-train' and 'on-station' customer experience. Although criticised for taking a narrow commercialist focus on

train services (Cole and Cooper 2005), the National Passenger Survey is the area of performance monitoring in which the train operating company is most accountable and subject to the greatest public exposure.

To research the strategic background to changing middle management roles at SWT, eleven semi-structured interviews were held with key individuals from the senior management. These included the heads of the three large operational groups of staff (guards, drivers and fleet), the heads of three service functions (train service delivery, pensions and payroll, and information technology), the HR director and four HR/learning and development managers. An additional unstructured interview was held with two representatives from the train drivers' trade union ASLEF to gain an employee perspective on the changes.

SWT was the first of the regional passenger services in the UK to be privatised in February 1996. In the first few years of the franchise after privatisation, the company operated a centralised machine bureaucracy model. The Stagecoach Group, which had previously specialised in bus services, acquired the franchise in 1996, inheriting 5500 staff. The company went on to retain the franchise in 2002 and 2006. Under Stagecoach's license, SWT was subsidised heavily in the first two franchise periods by public funds⁴ and, like all train operating companies, was subject to performance contracts with the government's rail regulator. In its first few years it did not radically change its organisational structure to become more flexible; rather it attempted to achieve financial efficiencies by slimming it down and shedding staff.

Organisational and management problems soon became apparent, however. Financial and customer service performance was poor and employment relations deteriorated during the first franchise period and into the early part of the second. In 1996 the company experienced a series of industrial disputes and received fines from the regulator for poor performance, which was manifested in service cancellations, delays and customer complaints (see *Financial Times* 10 January 2002, Wolmar 2005: 77-78). A series of downsizing measures followed in 1997, but ongoing employment relations

⁴ Wolmar (2005) reports that SWT was making annual pre-tax profits of around £50m through the 2000s, yet also received a £51m subsidy for the first franchise in 1996 and a £170m subsidy on re-franchising in 2002, £55m of which was for the leasing of a new stock of trains from Siemens. Then, in 2006, Stagecoach paid £1.19bn to re-franchise for 10 years, but controversially raised ticket prices on off-peak services by 20% in 2007 (*The Guardian*, 18 May 2007).

problems came to a head with two forty-eight hour stoppages by the RMT in January 2002. Overall, by the company's own estimates, industrial disputes between 1996 and 2002 cost approximately £18m (SWT documentation). As the HR director described the problems in the early 2000s:

[Stagecoach] had a disastrous start when they got rid of too many drivers and they couldn't run the timetable; and they got heavily fined. They were headline news in the [Evening] Standard, I think, for about the first eighteen months of their franchise.... Government is always there in the background.... the word was, "You've got to find a way out of this mess...." So the pressure was on there and also [with regard to] the unions.... we realised that our relationship with them had to change and they in turn realised that it wasn't good for their members to have this constant fighting going on.

(Interview with HR Director)

To address the company's problems, SWT's directors embarked on a reappraisal of employee relations and the company's management structure. Out of this reappraisal came a new corporate strategy in May 2003 that aimed to transform the organisation from a traditional rail operator to a modern customer service provider. An important part of the diagnosis was that line managers had been overly occupied with the supervision of technical work tasks, and that customer satisfaction, as the route to greater profitability, would be best achieved by devolving greater responsibility to local managers for managing their staff and their team's contribution to business performance. As the HR director, who had previously been part of the HR team at Tesco plc, explained:

[W]hen we did a major restructuring of the management function back in 2003, we actually modelled our organisation on my experience of Tesco's in terms of how they managed and organised their management team. The emphasis was all about managing through people, rather than going out, hands-on and doing it yourself. That has been a very significant change for this company, but also within the industry. ...I think we were the first and I don't think too many other companies within our industry have made that leap (Interview with HR Director)

The new 'Employee-Centred Strategy' led to a restructuring of the management function in 2003. In order to demonstrate how this represented a process of

divisionalisation, it is necessary to explore three main features of the restructuring process in some detail.

First of all, the company became a much more 'managed' organisation. The total number of managers was seen to increase from 320 in 1999 to 489 in 2003, and then to 545 by 2006, representing a greater number of locally-managed teams and an overall manager-employee ratio in 2006 of approximately 1:10. The operating core was constituted of three main functions: customer service, drivers and fleet. In an attempt to orientate the organisation's activities more strongly towards customers, the company almost doubled the number of managers in the customer service function (responsible for tickets, face-to-face service and passenger information in stations and on trains) from 69 to 135 between 2002 and 2003. By 2006, the managers in the customer service function had grown to 175, outnumbering the managers in two next largest functions: the drivers' function ('operations') and the fleet function, which had 174 and 104 managers respectively. Figure 4.1 shows the trends in manager headcount by function at SWT between 2000 and 2006.

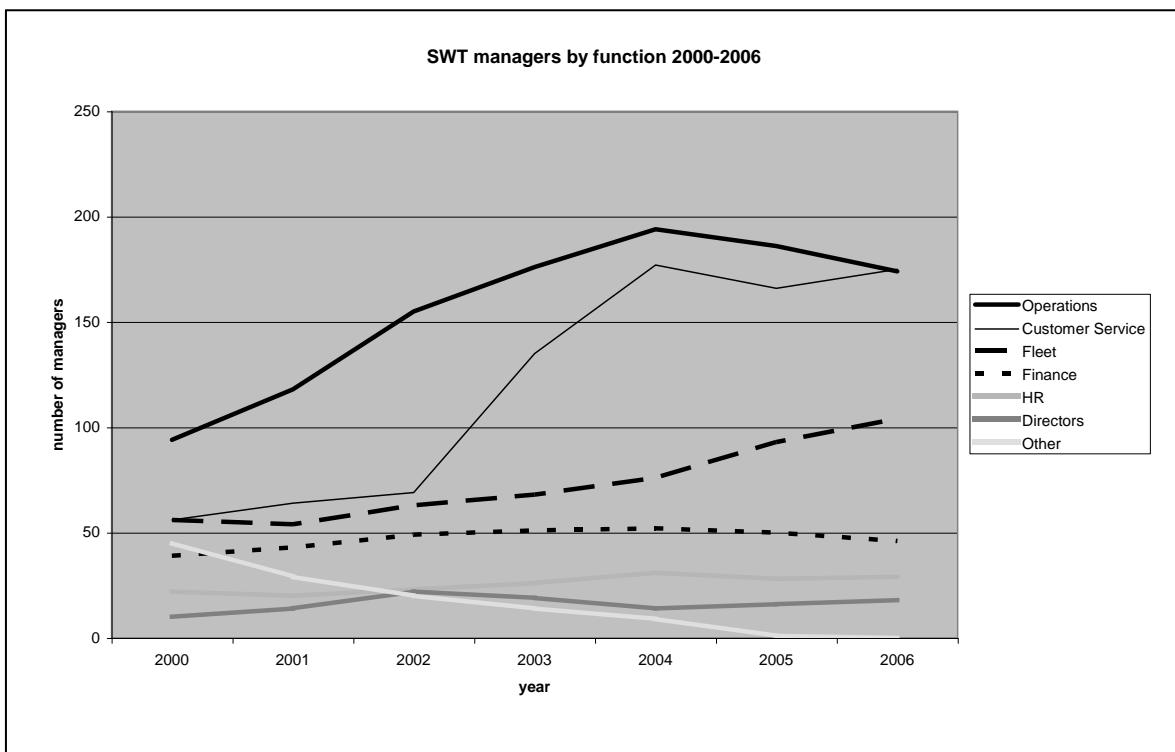


Figure 4.1 Managers at South West Trains by function 2000-2006

(Source: SWT HRM Information System)

Secondly, the company began to recruit more managers externally. By 2006 approximately thirty per cent of all managers had been recruited from outside the company. This included the recruitment of some individuals from outside the railway industry, in a sector which had traditionally sourced its managers internally. Despite this, according to estimates by the HR team, approximately half of the managers at SWT had spent their entire careers working on the South West rail network⁵.

Thirdly, the company simplified the management structure significantly by reducing the management tiers to four levels: directors, senior management, middle management and front-line management. At the same time, it changed managerial responsibilities to place greater emphasis on the local implementation of HR policies. The flattening of the hierarchy and the broadening of the line management role were designed to bring managers closer to front-line staff and to pay more attention to staff's interactions with customers and therefore to the quality of service provided.

The restructuring at SWT in 2003 represented a divisionalisation of the machine bureaucracy in that it devolved responsibility for business and HR performance firstly across the three divisions of customer service, drivers and fleet, and secondly across teams within the divisions at local station or depot level. New local responsibilities for customer satisfaction were created and distributed across an increased and partly externally-sourced group of local managers. HR procedures that had previously been administered by the HR function, particularly around absence and discipline, became the direct responsibility of line managers across the company.

Like in the national process of divisionalisation, however, the coordination of some important functions at SWT remained firmly in the control of the centralised technostucture. As with the retention of technical and safety standards at national level, timetabling and most of the management decisions around physical and financial resources at SWT were retained at company headquarters. Because the broadening of divisional responsibilities at SWT was essentially restricted to customer service

⁵ In 2006, 43% of managers had been in post more than ten years, compared to 58% of supervisors, 51% of senior managers and 32% of all staff (SWT HR information system).

performance and HR matters, it is more accurate to describe the restructuring process at SWT as 'limited divisionalisation'.

The strong focus on the devolution of HR responsibilities to line managers meant that the employee-centred strategy had an explicitly political dimension. Integral to senior management's strategy to achieve profitability through improved customer service was the strengthening of line management in relation to the trade unions. Central to this was an attempted shift in the emphasis of the employment relationship away from engagement with staff through the unions to the individual employee's relationship with his or her manager. As the Head of Drivers put it:

We need to move away from, "...I've got a problem...I'll go and see my union...my union will sort it out," rather than, "I've got a problem, let's go and see my manager and my manager will sort it out." So, there's a lot of work about reinforcing the employee-centred strategy and try[ing to]... get people to see that managers are there for them (Interview with Head of Drivers).

In the eyes of the trade union representatives, the employee-centred strategy was motivated more by political reasons than by reasons of customer service or efficiency. The train drivers' union representatives interviewed complained that the organisation of SWT had not in fact changed fundamentally, but had become simply a more profit-driven version of its former self. However, while the trade unions may have perceived the post-2003 organisational changes in these terms, it is important to acknowledge that the restructuring in 2003 was primarily concerned with strengthening and reorganising the management function, not the operating core. It was an attempt to increase the size of the management function and broaden the roles of individual managers to suit the newly divisionalised bureaucracy, rather than alter the essentially machine-bureaucratic work tasks of the operating core.

The new management configuration had significant implications for the middle line, which underwent a partial transition from Role A-type machine middle line management towards Role B-type business division management. In the ideal machine bureaucracy, the middle line is primarily responsible for managing workflow according to standardised procedures and for disturbance-handling when the 'machine' fails to function. In the divisionalised form, the middle line has a broader set of responsibilities

for the strategy and resources of a business unit and is accountable to senior management for its performance.

The typical middle line manager in a train operating company is responsible for an operational business unit in the form of a station or depot. He or she heads up a team of front-line managers and a group of operational staff, principally drivers, guards or fleet operatives. These teams constitute the operating core of the organisation. Within the technosphere, middle managers head up teams of specialist technical staff, such as engineers, and on the support side, they head up teams of administrative and support service staff, such as finance or security officers. The changes to the middle line, as opposed to staff management, are of most interest when analysing the effects of divisionalisation at SWT, as line management is where the main transition is theoretically expected to occur. The transition in the middle line in the post-2003 period is represented in Figure 4.2.

Role A (machine middle line management)	→	Role B (business division management)
Driver depot management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigation of safety incidents • Implementation of staff sickness and care procedures • Driver-competence checks • Overseeing rolling stock-maintenance checks 		As in Role A, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of absence-management and discipline policies • Staff development and engagement • Action planning for local improvements in train reliability and punctuality
Station management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedural and safety-compliance checks • Implementation of staff sickness and care procedures • Guard-competence checks • Overseeing stock and equipment maintenance 		As in Role A, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of absence-management and discipline policies • Staff development and engagement • Action planning for local improvements in on-station and on-train customer satisfaction
Fleet depot management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedural and safety-compliance checks • Implementation of staff sickness and care procedures • Overseeing equipment and premises maintenance 		As in Role A, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of absence-management and discipline policies • Staff development and engagement • Action planning for local improvements in train readiness- and –presentation

Figure 4.2 Transition in the middle line at South West Trains

Before the employee-centred strategy and the management restructuring at SWT, station, train depot and fleet depot managers were primarily focussed on the technical

aspects of workflow. After the management restructuring at SWT, the work priorities of the three main parts of the operating core – customer service, operations (driving) and fleet – became orientated towards the new and increasingly detailed performance control framework, derived directly from the national performance indicators and enabled by the use of information technology. The priority of the middle line shifted from responsibility for observance of operational procedures towards accountability for the performance of individual business units in the form of stations and depots. The strongest emphasis within this new accountability was on effective people management to ensure staff engagement with the business, as measured by a staff satisfaction survey, as an overall means to ensure improved customer satisfaction.

In the case of driver depot managers, the key managerial responsibilities were to implement changes to investigate safety incidents, manage staff sickness and implement regulations around drivers' competence. After the implementation of the new strategy, however, the emphasis shifted towards people management concerns. As one experienced driver-manager related:

When I first took on the role it was basically assessing...investigating incidents, dealing with driver attendance..., maintaining the driver's competence, make sure their rules are all done, make sure their cab rides are carried out, make sure you've got process in place for their sickness for those that don't demonstrate a good level of sickness – things like that were high-profile. But now we're sort of more into people management; that's sort of high-profile now.... Now it's more like 'how is the driver within himself?' as opposed to things he did wrong. (Interview with driver standards manager)

The refashioning of the middle line also altered the work of station managers and fleet depot managers. Whereas station management had been primarily concerned to ensure compliance with technical regulations on the station and with managing staff sickness, it became closely linked to on-station and on-train customer satisfaction targets derived from the National Passenger Survey, such as the 'availability' and 'attitude and helpfulness' of their staff, and the frequency and quality of passenger information. The company used its own 'mystery shopper' surveys to generate internal performance data, in addition to that of the published passenger survey. Fleet depot managers, who had been primarily concerned with technical compliance in maintaining rolling stock, became increasingly evaluated in terms of the speed with which trains were made available for service from their depots, as well as the 'train presentation'

scores arising out of internal and external assessments of the quality of the trains' appearance and facilities on leaving the depot.

Driver depot managers were slightly more removed from the measurement of customer service⁶ but were monitored for their team's attributable contribution towards train punctuality and reliability. Not all service delays and cancellations could be attributed to the individual driver depots, as there may be a number of other contributory factors, such as technical faults and coordination problems on the rail network. The most immediate performance indicators were therefore concerned with the attendance rates of drivers in the depots and their motivation and engagement according to staff satisfaction surveys.

Overall, it would be too much of a generalisation to suggest that the middle line at SWT underwent a full transition from Role A machine middle line management to Role B business division management. While the station and depot management roles were broadened by new responsibilities for various forms of business performance, this did not extend to full discretion over the strategy of the business unit or the deployment of local physical and financial resources. Some limited discretion at station or depot level was necessarily afforded to local managers to make small incremental improvements, for example, to the appearance of the station environment or trains. But strategic resource management tended to be the responsibility of the company's senior management and technostucture, or the most senior middle managers, such as the group station managers (of which there were in eleven in 2006). On balance, it is clear that the process of limited divisionalisation had the effect of broadening middle line responsibilities, but that the transition from Role A- to Role B-type management was partial and mainly concentrated in the station and fleet divisions rather than in the driver function.

On the staff side, there were no fundamental changes to middle management roles. The technostucture simply grew at the SWT headquarters to oversee the performance control system and to identify where safety, punctuality, reliability, and customer satisfaction problems could be attributed and how they could be resolved. Support services such as cleaning and maintenance were partly brought under the control of the

⁶ Unlike drivers on the London Underground, SWT drivers were not 'customer-facing' in the sense that they were not responsible for passenger information announcements on trains; this was the responsibility of the on-train guards.

group station managers but, within the services themselves, work tasks continued to be coordinated essentially as before. The support service teams involved with finance and information technology grew, but they remained under centralised control at headquarters and were essentially unchanged in terms of their management processes.

Staff management therefore continued to be characterised by adhocratic-type approaches (Role D) in the most knowledge-intensive parts of the organisation (such as service delay-attribution in the technostructure and information technology in the support services) and by machine-bureaucratic approaches (Role A) in the most routinised services (such as clerical functions in finance, performance-monitoring in the technostructure, and cleaning and catering in the support services). The most fundamental management changes in the organisation were in the middle line, which had implications for the development of management skills.

4.2 MLD options

Under divisionalisation, and the accompanying shift from machine middle line management (Role A) towards business division management (Role B), the theoretical expectation is that the organisation should invest in both operational management development (OMD) to support centralised bureaucratic coordination, and strategic management development (SMD) as it introduces divisionalisation.

As will be demonstrated, in line with the partial divisionalisation and partial transition in the middle line observed at SWT, the MLD investments made for middle managers in the company only partially conformed to the hypothetical pattern. OMD was represented by a range of short training courses in various technical aspects of railway management and a suite of people management training courses. These latter courses received particular attention and heavy investment to support the devolution of HR responsibilities to line managers after 2003. As the company continued to devolve responsibilities, and as middle management roles broadened further, investment in SMD for middle managers increased, but this tended to employ leader development methods instead of strategic management education and development. While leader development was hypothesised in Section 2.3 as more likely to be found in professional environments (see Figure 2.5), in which mutual adjustment is more important than

standardisation, it was used at SWT to try and improve divisional business performance. Only a few, more experienced middle managers were sponsored to participate in a broader type of SMD.

An overview of the MLD investments made at SWT in the period 2003-7, broken down according to OMD and SMD, is illustrated in Figure 4.3.

<u>MLD interventions at SWT (2003-07)</u>	
Operational management development	Strategic Management Development
Various technical railway-management training courses	The 'Wow Factor' (2003)
'Managing for Attendance and Poor Performance' (2-day course)	• 3-day introspective small group workshop
'Managing discipline' (3-day course)	Talent Management Programme (2005-07)
'Time With Your Manager' training (1-day course)	(leader development methods)
Workshops for driver-managers from 2004 (leader development methods)	• 360-degree feedback
• 1-day workshops on self- and people management tools and techniques	• Online psychometric tests
	• One-to-one interview with HR consultant
	• Personal development planning
	• Ongoing line manager support

Figure 4.3 MLD interventions at South West Trains 2003-7

4.2.1 Operational management development

All newly appointed SWT managers attended a week-long induction programme, followed by a series of day-courses, interspersed over several months. The selected day courses for middle managers varied somewhat, according to the differing technical and health and safety requirements of the manager's functional role. For example, while drugs and alcohol awareness training was mandatory for all managers, training in how to investigate accidents tended to be particular to driver depot managers. Similarly, training in train breakdowns and derailments tended to be particular to fleet depot managers, and training in ticketing systems particular to station and revenue inspection managers. The most significant training, however, which was mandatory for all SWT managers, concerned staff attendance and discipline management.

Ensuring sufficient staffing levels and discipline to provide a safe and consistent service is a vital part of managing this type of machine bureaucracy in a safety-critical operating environment. Attendance and discipline management is therefore important but challenging. Train operating companies have to run a twenty-four hour, seven-day-a-week operation in often hostile conditions. As one interviewee characterised the unglamorous work of his station and depot manager colleagues: “*They’re sacking people regularly because of poor behaviour. They’re breaking up fights. They’re working nights*” (Interview with senior project engineer).

In the case of SWT, issues of staff attendance and discipline were made more acute by privatisation and the history of adversarial employment relations. By the end of 2001, staff absence at SWT was 6.45 per cent of total working hours. In 2003, absence at SWT was lower but still running at 5.16 per cent, significantly above the average of 4.2 per cent for the transport sector (CIPD 2003). The financial costs of sickness absence became a major concern to senior management, especially in the light of the company’s low profitability in the early part of the franchise. Furthermore, although exact data on grievance and discipline were unavailable, the senior management were also concerned about the number of long and expensive grievance and disciplinary cases going to appeal stage and to employment tribunals.

Beyond the imperatives of the smooth-running of the machine bureaucracy and the financial concerns surrounding sickness absence, the level of staff attendance also had a direct impact on the level of customer service provided by the company. Staff absences led directly to cancellations and delays of train services and to reduced levels of service on trains and stations. The management of attendance therefore became a key strategic issue in the post-privatisation period and the during the accompanying divisionalisation process.

The management of staff absence and discipline were central to SWT’s employee-centred strategy. In consultation with the trade unions⁷ and with the facilitation of the independent employment relations body ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service), new policies on attendance, performance management and discipline were agreed. The policies aimed to address the issues of absence and discipline in a robust, fair and transparent fashion. In addition, there was a new expectation on line managers

⁷ The recognised unions were the RMT, representing guards and other operational staff, the drivers’ union ASLEF, and TSSA, representing administrative, professional, technical and managerial staff.

to take responsibility for managing absence and discipline issues themselves in the first instance, rather than refer them on to the HR department. Staff attendance rates became an important performance indicator for each business unit.

The key feature of the new absence management policy, named 'Managing for Attendance', was to clarify the difference between sickness and absence, and to provide simplified procedures for managing them. The policy emphasised full attendance as the key objective and addressed absence as often having multiple causes rather than necessarily being sickness-related. The new attendance procedure therefore contained a clear series of 'triggers', stages and timescales and it required the line manager to take responsibility for initiating the procedure in response to absence data provided by the HR department. In addition, this responsibility included communicating with one's staff directly in the early stages of a period of absence, keeping records, and, through one-to-one interviews, discussing the pattern of absence, strategies for increasing attendance and options for support.

The reworked policies for grievance, discipline and performance management were also characterised by a simplification of the procedures at progressive stages. The new policies distinguished between the monitoring of operational incidents and taking action as a result of disciplinary incidents. Line managers were presented with detailed guidance on their roles and responsibilities at the various stages. In particular, the policies required greater involvement of line managers in the early stages of disciplinary procedures, including acting as 'investigating officers' in disciplinary incidents and making them responsible for issuing minor disciplinary notices to their staff.

The new attendance and discipline measures were therefore 'hard' rather than 'soft' instruments of people management, in that they were concerned with compliance and the achievement of short-term, quantifiable results. However, the company also introduced a soft HR intervention as part of its attempt to address underlying issues of staff motivation. 'Time with Your Manager' was a system of sixth-monthly, informal but compulsory one-to-one discussions, unrelated to performance appraisal, to be held between the line manager and each direct report. The process was designed to improve relationships between managers and staff, by focussing on support and the long-term development of each individual employee.

Training for line managers was a key component of the introduction of the new HR policies. A raft of training interventions was developed from 2003 to enable line managers to become competent and confident in implementing the new procedures. The courses that emerged from the Employee-Centred Strategy evolved into a mandatory line management training programme. By 2006, the three main courses were: Discipline (three days); Managing for Attendance and Poor Performance (two days); and Time with Your Manager (one day). These three courses represented the main investment in MLD made at SWT. The training courses were run by external trainers for all managers and made extensive use of role-play, in particular around 'dealing with difficult people' and disciplinary interviews. The drivers' function extended this type of work by contracting an external leadership development consultant to run extra workshops on the use of specific tools and techniques for self-management and people management.

Taken together, the core people management and technical training courses represented SWT's investment in OMD. The main aim was to ensure successful coordination in the machine bureaucracy through compliance with regulatory requirements and minimum standards of employee performance and conduct. Included within this, however, was a strong emphasis on devolved HR responsibilities. In this sense, the people management aspect of OMD supported part of the divisionalisation process as well as the ongoing stability of the machine bureaucracy.

4.2.2 Strategic management development

The more strategically-orientated dimension of MLD intervention for middle managers at SWT began with a culture-change initiative in 2003. This was followed by a 'talent management' programme in 2005.

In the early part of 2003, all managers were included in an initiative to develop a distinctive 'vision' and a new set of 'values and behaviours' for the company. The consultation was launched through a three-day mandatory programme called 'The Wow Factor', facilitated by an external HR consultancy. Based on a model of 'values-centred leadership' and the concept of emotional intelligence, the programme was delivered to small teams and was introspective in nature. Participants were encouraged to explore and share their self-perceptions, their feelings about the company and their relationships with their colleagues, their personal values, beliefs and choices. In short,

the aim of the programme was to explore “*the emotional aspect of management and how people felt about themselves and, in turn, how that would impact on the way they would manage their people*” (Interview with HR Director).

The Wow course was an unusual type of intervention for a traditional, blue-collar and uniformed industry, and it divided opinion among its participants. For example, the head of information technology described it as “excellent in parts”, while the head of guards described it as “appalling”, “diabolical” and a “waste of time”. The long-term significance of the Wow course was that it led to the development of the company’s official ‘vision, values and behaviours’, which became the reference point for formulating future company policy. The Wow course also placed MLD high on the strategic agenda. While line management training put a heavy emphasis on line managers’ communication skills, the Wow course was the first intervention under the Stagecoach franchise to highlight the emotional and relational dimension of line management.

In 2005, the board decided that, as part of its new HR strategy, it would try to identify and retain its future senior managers, and to invest in a talent management programme. The talent management programme began in May 2005 for fifty ‘high-potential’ volunteers, sponsored by their line managers. In common with many talent management initiatives, the objectives were multiple and rather general (cf. Lewis and Heckman 2006, Iles 2007: 106). The stated aims of the talent management programme at SWT were: i) the retention of managers; ii) the development of individual managers; and iii) improved individual and business performance. Measurable evaluation criteria were not specified.

In contrast to the group-based activities of the Wow course, the talent management activities were individualised. The fifty participants on the programme, selected from approximately two hundred applicants, consisted largely of middle managers, who were seen as having the potential to become senior managers in the medium-term future. In the latter months of 2005, each manager completed several online psychometric tests and participated in a 360-degree feedback exercise, using the company’s management competence framework and rating scales. The participants then had a one-to-one session with a HR consultant, lasting three to four hours, to analyse the results of the tests and the 360-degree feedback exercise. The interviews resulted in personal development plans, the implementation of which relied on the continuing support of the participants’ line managers and the HR function throughout 2006.

In terms of the talent management programme's overall strategic significance, it is important to point out that the programme was not just an isolated intervention for a select group of perceived high-performers. The programme was in fact viewed as a pilot that would be expanded to all managers by 2008 so that each manager in the company would have a personal development plan that was linked to corporate strategic objectives.

As already noted, the methods used in the Wow and talent management programmes were essentially leader development methods, which might be expected in a more professionalised environment to develop the intrapersonal competence of individual managers to support the mechanism of mutual adjustment. However, the motivations for Wow and talent management were multifarious and went beyond a concern with individuals' intrapersonal competence. The primary motivations behind Wow and the talent management programme were in fact related to more specific strategic concerns about managers' human skills. Whereas Wow was primarily concerned with the development of managers' understanding and commitment to the corporate aims of customer service, the talent management programme was concerned to increase managerial retention, to improve individual and business performance and to provide career development and succession. These intertwined with the more general concerns to develop intrapersonal competence in individual managers. In this sense, although Wow and talent management utilised conventional leader development methods rather than broad education and development in strategic and operations management models, they can be seen as a narrow form of strategic management development (SMD).

There was some evidence of investment in a broader type of SMD for some individuals, notably the more experienced middle managers. One interviewee had, for example, been sponsored to study for an MBA. He reflected that:

[T]he Wow course...and to some extent the talent management programme, will focus on softer skills, how you come across to people, how you communicate. But where there is a real lack in the organisation is [in] general business education. There are people ... in management posts... who don't understand ... a simple line graph, who don't know what a KPI [key performance indicator] is, who don't know how to construct a paper or a

business case.... the hole that needs to be plugged is to give people the harder skills
(Interview with Head of Train Service Delivery)

This sentiment, that there was a need for more general business management education, was shared by a number of other middle manager interviewees. It suggested a demand for more general SMD-type provision beyond the company's mandatory people management training and the talent management programme, especially in the more senior part of the middle line.

That investment in broader SMD was not prioritised is a reflection of the limited nature of divisionalisation at SWT. While divisionalisation demanded that managers pay greater attention to performance data, there was no significant increase in managerial discretion amongst middle managers over the allocation of resources or the strategic management of business units. Choices with regard to financial or physical resource management were relevant to some station and fleet depot managers, but not to the extent that decisions relied on the development of advanced conceptual skills or more formal education in strategic management models. The key priority across the management group was the development of human skills for the purposes of communicating and managing staff to improve customer service, and the team's local contribution to the overall level of customer satisfaction. Therefore, the main thrust of SMD was orientated towards leader development-type activities.

In summary, the MLD choices made at SWT for middle managers largely reflected the organisational needs of the machine bureaucracy, combined with the needs of some aspects of divisionalisation, notably the devolution of HR responsibilities and responsibility for customer satisfaction. How these interventions were applied and experienced by their participants is the subject of the next section.

4.3 Contribution of MLD to divisionalisation

Following the model of MLD options and outcomes developed in Figure 2.8, it is expected that, under divisionalisation, operational management development (OMD) should lead to operational managerial competence (OMC) among individual middle managers. This should ensure the compliance of staff with routinised operational demands at group level and contribute to the stability of the machine bureaucracy. It is

also expected that strategic management development (SMD) should lead, at the level of the individual manager, to a degree of strategic managerial competence (some SMC). This should ensure a degree of compliance at group level with the specific demands and performance expectations of the business unit or division.

Given the partial nature of divisionalisation at SWT, however, and the accompanying limits on the authority in divisionalised management roles, it is to be expected that the outcomes at individual, group and organisational level should be weaker in relation to SMD than in relation to OMD. Null or negative outcomes might even be expected, as the Wow course and the talent management programme actually resembled leader development rather than broad strategic management development (SMD). As will be shown, however, although weaker than the outcomes of OMD, there was some evidence of positive outcomes associated with SMD. Specifically, improvements to divisionalised business performance were attributable to SMD in the customer-facing division (i.e. retail), more so than in the fleet or driver depots. An overview of the expected MLD outcomes as compared with the actual outcomes at SWT is provided in Figure 4.4.

Structural transition	MLD intervention	Individual outcomes	Group outcomes	Contribution to organisational outcomes
<i>Divisionalisation (Role A→B middle management)</i>	<p>OMD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Technical and line management training</i> • <i>Workshops for driver managers</i> <p>SMD [LD methods]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Wow course</i> • <i>Talent management programme</i> 	<p>OMC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Competence and confidence in applying organisational policies</i> <p>Some SMC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Strategic awareness and some intrapersonal competence</i> 	<p>Compliance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Increased staff attendance</i> <p>• <i>[Some increased staff motivation]</i></p>	<p>Organisational stability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Improved operational efficiency and customer satisfaction</i> • <i>Improvements in some divisional performance (station management)</i>

Role A = machine middle line management; Role B = business division management; OMD = operational management development; SMD = strategic management development; LD = leader development; OMC = operational managerial competence; SMC = strategic managerial competence; *Actual SWT outcomes in italics*

Figure 4.4 Expected and actual MLD outcomes at South West Trains

In broad terms, as illustrated in Figure 4.4, SWT's investment in OMD was found to have led to the expected outcomes at individual level in terms of improved managerial competence and self-confidence, leading to more effective management of staff attendance at group level. As will be seen, this may be linked to evidence of greater operational business efficiency and customer satisfaction at organisational level. Also illustrated in Figure 4.4 are the outcomes of SMD. Due to the unexpected use of leader development methods for SMD purposes, a slightly unexpected pattern of outcomes at individual and group levels was observed, including some evidence of increased intrapersonal competence at individual level and some increased staff motivation at group level. At organisational level, SMD was observed to have contributed to the main expected strategic goal of improved divisional performance, though, as will be explained, this applied mainly to station management rather than fleet depot and driver depot management.

The findings relating MLD outcomes in the SWT case will now be explained in more detail, broken down according to OMD and SMD respectively. The data comes primarily from the interviews with eighteen middle managers. These included thirteen line managers and five staff managers from across the company. Five of the line managers were relatively new in post at SWT and had participated in the OMD only. The remaining ten had participated in both OMD and in the talent management aspect of SMD. In addition, two of these interviewees had been with the company long enough to have participated in the 2003 Wow intervention, and a further two had participated in the leader development workshops in the drivers' function. The views of various senior managers and the ASLEF representatives are also taken into account.

4.3.1 Contribution of operational management development

The most significant MLD experiences for the five newer managers, who had only participated in OMD, were the 'harder' aspects of people management training, notably the attendance and discipline management courses. Six out of the ten interviewees, who had participated in both OMD and SMD, also considered training in attendance management and discipline as very significant, with three describing it as more important and consequential than the talent management programme. Training in the 'softer' aspect of people management, namely the Time With Your Manager course, was considered less significant by interviewees, although some managers claimed to

have learnt to pay greater attention to individual employees and their motivation as a result of OMD generally.

With regard to OMD, the critical incidents of the five newer managers are most interesting to explore. These managers may be considered a quasi control group in that their experiences of OMD may be expected to be less affected by other MLD interventions with different aims. The MLD outcomes relating to this group of managers are summarised in Figure 4.5.

Individual outcomes	Group outcomes	Contribution to organisational outcomes
More effective management of attendance and discipline (3)	Improved staff attendance (2)	Improved service reliability (1)
Greater confidence in managing staff (1)	Perceived improvement in staff motivation (2)	Improved depot performance (2)
Improved one-to-communication skills (1)		

(brackets indicate number of interviewees)

Figure 4.5 Outcomes of operational management development at South West Trains

In terms of individual-level outcomes, all five of the newer managers interviewed confirmed that the OMD left them feeling confident and competent to implement HR policies. Much of the success of the training lay in the impressing upon line managers of the legal importance of implementing the attendance management policy correctly. As a group station manager succinctly put it:

There is actually a very specific process to follow about certain questions that you must ask up-front. There are certain things that you must do and not say, and say, and record. And without that training, you are screwed (Interview with group station manager 2)

It was also clear from several interviews that the use of actors to help role-play common one-to-one disciplinary scenarios made the experience of the attendance and discipline management training particularly memorable. As one of the five newer managers related:

I've come unstuck a couple of times in role play and I've really had to sit back and think "I did that wrong", or "Hold on, can we stop and start again... before I dig myself an even bigger hole?" And I think by making the mistakes at [that] level, you don't make them then, when you're in the field. (Interview with fleet depot manager 2)

The quality of the design and delivery of the training therefore seemed to be an important factor in its effectiveness.

In terms of facilitating the devolution of HRM, OMD was effective in making line managers aware of their new responsibilities, as opposed to previous practices of referring on individual cases to the HR function. As one manager, an ex-engineer who had recently joined SWT from an engineering division of the civil service, explained: “[*In my old job] I'd always had an infrastructure around me which applied those things to the people*” (Interview with fleet depot manager 1).

With regard to promoting divisionalisation, in the sense of encouraging managers to be proactive in assuming local responsibility for business performance, interviews with two of the five newer managers suggested that OMD had had an effect. For example, one highlighted how the training course in attendance management had changed the way he viewed and approached the managing of staff attendance on his depot:

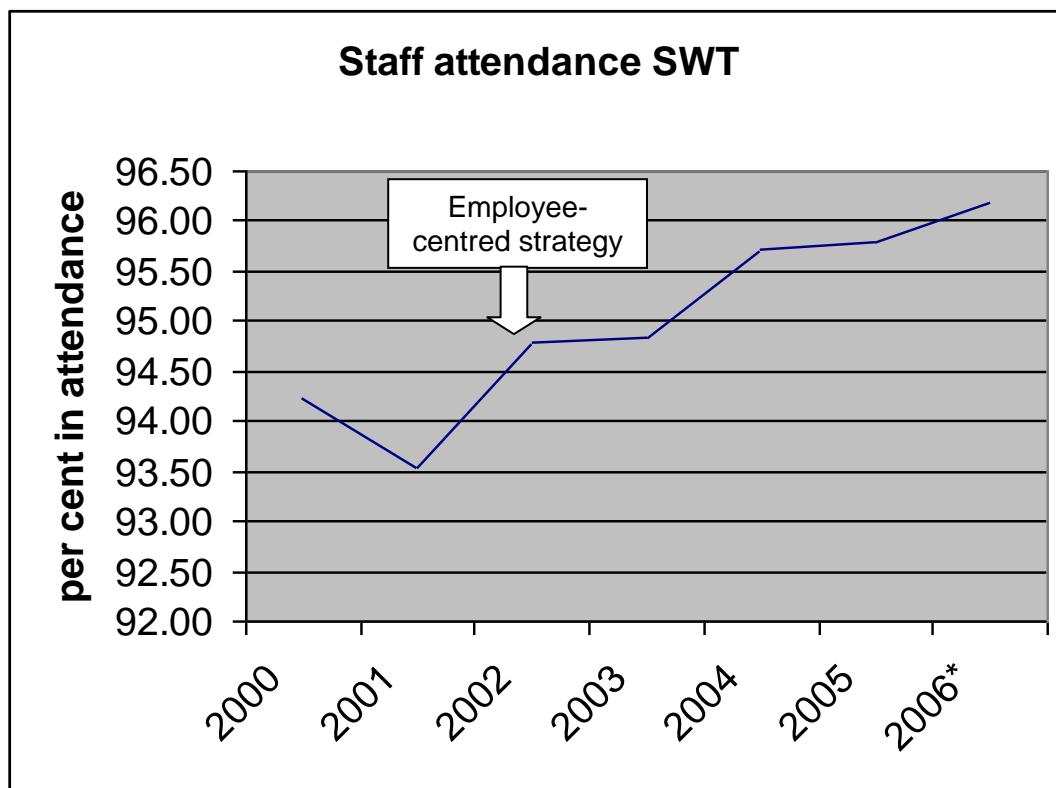
Every morning I speak to the managers [on my depot] and say “Right, who's off? What have you done about it? Have you called them? Have you referred them to occupational health? Have you had the challenging conversations?” (Interview with fleet depot manager 3)

At the level of group outcomes, the evidence suggests that competence and confidence at the level of individual managers (and, in some cases, their enthusiastic commitment) converted into improved staff attendance and discipline across the company. All five of the newer managers described specific critical incidents of improvements in staff attendance and performance as a result of their effective implementation of the HR

policies. Two of the talent management group also made a specific point out of the increased attendance in their teams as a result of OMD. To take a specific example, one manager claimed to have managed to reduce staff absence on his depot from approximately fourteen to three per cent within one year. As he related:

[T]he attendance [at my depot] was really poor.... I used to look at the attendance board and some days bang my head against it.... So what I did was I stuck rigidly to a set of ideas that I had and used the attendance process the way it was supposed to be used (Interview with fleet depot manager 3)

Improvements in staff attendance in an organisation may be attributable to various factors (Marsden and Moriconi 2008). Nevertheless, the company-level data certainly support the interpretation that the development of the new attendance management policy, coupled with effective training, was correlated with markedly increased staff attendance from 2003 onwards (see Figure 4.6).



* 2006 refers to quarters 1 and 2 only

Figure 4.6 Staff attendance at South West Trains 2000-2006
(Source: SWT HR Information System)

At organisational level, improved staff attendance had a direct effect on improving service reliability. Strategic Rail Authority statistics (2005) record the percentage of SWT's trains arriving on time as increased from 74 to 90 per cent from Quarter 4 of 2003-4 to Quarter 4 of 2004-5, and the National Passenger Survey records passenger satisfaction with punctuality and reliability as increased from approximately 60 to over 80 per cent between Autumn 2003 and Autumn 2006 (Passenger Focus 2006: 36). Both improvements took the company above the sector average. Other factors such as investment in new rolling stock and a revised timetable in 2005-6 doubtless helped improve train reliability and customer satisfaction in the middle years of the decade. Nonetheless, the full range of evidence suggests a positive correlation between improved operational performance and the line management training introduced through the Employee-Centred Strategy.

Beyond the enforcement of 'hard' attendance and discipline management policies, softer outcomes of line management training were also evident in the claims of some managers that they were practising more frequent informal communication alongside the application of necessary HR procedures. However, only one individual from the five newer managers reported Time With Your Manager training, specifically designed to promote the softer side of line management, as his most significant MLD experience. He claimed that this training enabled him to develop questioning techniques when talking to and counselling staff, and, as an example, related how he had consequently secured special support and resources for a member of staff with dyslexia (Interview with fleet depot manager 2). Overall, however, the interview evidence suggests that the impact of Time With Your Manager training was over-shadowed by the 'harder' realities of people management. This was certainly the perception of the ASLEF representatives who dismissed the Time With Your Manager practices as a pointless 'noting exercise'.

Despite the apparent lack of impact of the Time With Your Manager training, three of the five newer managers linked their newly-developed competence in people management to the group-level outcome of improved staff motivation. Two of them went further to make connections to the organisational-level outcome of improved depot performance. As one of the fleet depot managers related:

My ground frame operators now do other works, they assist me. At weekends they'll do CET [chemical emission toilets] work... although there are no cleaners on duty, rather

than sit around - as they used to do - for the whole day. They'll wash the trains at the weekend...I've asked them to do engineering checks....they're all additional works that we've given them, but they've accepted them, because I've *asked* them, rather than *told* them. We are the only fleet depot that has had a hundred per cent of trains left depot on time at start of service. We get them in the right order, at the right time, and away they go. (Interview with fleet depot manager 1)

The other fleet depot manager, also as a result of his greater appreciation of the importance of informal communication learnt through the people-management courses, claimed to have helped motivate staff to have turned around his fleet depot's performance to achieve virtually no 'TINS' ('trains not in service') in the previous quarter and an improvement in train presentation scores from 94 to 98 per cent, compared to the company benchmark score of 90 per cent.

Such isolated examples alone cannot be taken as firm evidence of the overall contribution of OMD to increased staff motivation and improved operational performance. However, the claims of increased staff motivation are reinforced by the company's anonymous and externally-administered staff satisfaction survey, named 'Tell Us'. In the 2005 staff satisfaction survey, completed by 65 per cent of employees, 64 per cent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement '*I am likely to go above and beyond my normal duties*' and 90 per cent strongly agreed or agreed with the statement '*my manager treats me with respect*'.

These statistics suggest generally positive line manager-individual relationships in the company during this period, which appear to have been aided by OMD. However, the evidence is more ambiguous with regard to the claims by all five newer managers in their interviews that OMD had improved their relationships with staff by enabling them to apply (and being seen to apply) HR policies with fairness and consistency. Other interview accounts, and Tell Us data, contradict this perception by showing a lack of consistency in this area across the company. As a driver depot manager related:

We had an operational incident about six weeks ago....The driver got a bit of a slap on the wrist and got some points on his license, which is not the end of the world... the guard received a disciplinary Form 1 [first written warning].... and the platform staff got the sack. They were all involved in the same thing, yet the end-product is vastly different it's very difficult to breed a kind of teamwork ethic amongst the whole company when they've seen the guy that gets paid twice as much as everybody else [is] fine and back

out there the next day.... that's down to people's interpretation of how they apply the disciplinary policy.... I think more robust training would have prevented that. (Interview with driver depot manager 2)

The perception that training was ineffective overall in achieving consistency in treatment by line managers is supported by other Tell Us survey data from 2005, in which only 33 per cent of front-line staff strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that '*The way policies are implemented at [the company] is fair and just*'.

The disparity in the Tell Us data between the positive results at line manager level and the comparatively negative results at organisational level suggests that, while line managers were generally well regarded by staff, the policies that they were tasked with implementing were not. This may have been a reflection of more general employee dissatisfaction with the increasing assertiveness of the HR function in the day-to-day employment relationship, against which employees had traditionally been cushioned through the intermediation of trade union representatives. Indeed, a negative attitude towards the company's HR policies was clearly expressed by the ASLEF representatives, who maintained that line managers, despite positive relationships with staff in some cases, were effectively unquestioning agents of senior management, and were responsible for the 'blind application' of policies and the enforcement of top-down HR directives:

[ASLEF representative 1]: They [the managers] have team meetings... where they are given objectives forcibly. When an individual will perhaps try to personalise his approach, if it's outside their expected profile, they'll be corrected and they'll be reminded perpetually "if you perform poorly, we'll remove you." It happens very regularly, you see managers fail, dismissed, removed. (Interview with ASLEF representatives)

In summary, the following picture of the outcomes of OMD has emerged. While there is evidence to suggest that training in attendance management contributed to reductions in staff absence, the full range of interview data implies that this was largely due to a process of rigid enforcement of HR policies, with which employees had little choice but to comply. The softer dimension of line management training, the Time With Your Manager course, was not prioritised as highly in terms of MLD investment and made

less of obvious impact. Nevertheless, staff satisfaction survey data suggest that many individual managers had positive relationships with their staff and that the company enjoyed relatively high levels of staff motivation. This might have been attributable to the more general strategic effort to reinforce the importance of the softer aspects of line management through the company's 'vision, values and behaviours' initiative. Within this process of reinforcement, the Time With Your Manager course may then have made a contribution to staff motivation.

The conclusion may be drawn that OMD served largely to support the stability of the machine bureaucracy by attempting to standardise the implementation of centralised HR rules. Various initiatives to promote the importance of positive relationships at local level between managers and staff also seemed to contribute to the smooth-running of the machine bureaucracy. Beyond this, the softer people management initiatives may have helped to enable some effective divisionalisation in the form of encouraging greater local managerial responsibility for customer satisfaction through more effective people management.

4.3.2 Contribution of strategic management development (talent management programme)

The talent management programme, as already noted, had three objectives: i) the retention of managers⁸; ii) the development of individual managers⁹; and iii) improved individual and business performance. From the point of view of SMD's contribution to divisionalisation, the third objective is of principal interest.

The critical incidents reported in the interviews with the ten middle manager participants were the main source of data. Eight interviewees were from the middle line, including three group station managers, two driver depot managers, a driver standards manager, a guards depot manager and a fleet depot manager. These differences in function prove to be significant for the outcomes of SMD. The remaining two staff managers were from the technical side, namely a performance, compliance and planning manager (hereafter 'performance manager'), and a senior project engineer.

Overall, the interviews demonstrated that the talent management programme did not make as strong an impact across the group as compared with OMD in the previous section. As will be shown, this was partly to do with some inappropriate selection for the programme and lack of organisational support for the ongoing learning process.

However, as will also be shown, those individuals, through whom the talent management intervention did produce some discernible changes for the business, demonstrated striking similarities in their critical incidents. Moreover, the group station managers, responsible for customer-facing divisions, and in possession of detailed and frequent local performance information, demonstrated the strongest contribution to business outcomes through their participation in MLD. A summary of the individual, group and business outcomes as identified in the interviews is presented in Figure 4.7.

⁸ In terms of the first objective, the 'retention of talented managers', the intervention may in fact have exacerbated the problem of managerial turnover in a year when the company was preparing for re-franchising. Internal documentation shows that fourteen of the fifty talent management participants (28 per cent) left the organisation voluntarily in 2006-7 as compared to approximately 15 per cent of all managers across the company. Immediately after the new franchise agreement in 2007, the company resolved to cut the manager-headcount by 33 per cent and offered voluntary redundancy to all managers.

⁹ In terms of the second objective of the talent management programme, 'to develop the careers of high-performing managers within the company', SWT could claim a little more success. Internal documentation claimed that more than fifteen of the fifty participants had moved into new and, in some cases, more senior management positions within a year of the intervention. Only four participants, however, attributed their career moves to the talent management programme (SWT documentation). The programme was scrapped under the new franchise in 2009.

Individual outcomes	Group outcomes	Contribution to organisational outcomes
Increased reflection and self-confidence in managerial role (3) Greater reflection on communication styles (2)	More effective objective-setting with individuals (4) and with team (1)	General improvement in customer service indicators (2 – group station managers) Improved business processes (1 – performance manager)
Self-(re)assurance (1) Purchasing-negotiation skills (1)		
No change (3)		

(brackets indicate number of interviewees)

Figure 4.7 Outcomes of strategic management development at South West Trains

For five of the ten interviewees (see the second row of Figure 4.7), the talent management programme represented their most significant MLD experience. The relative lack of prior experience of leader development was the common factor amongst the five. For this reason, the time and attention invested through the talent management programme made a generally strong impact. As one summarised:

[The talent management programme] is most thorough thing that I think I've ever undertaken. ...There were four or five online exercises ... and the 360-interviews. And then to do the whole five hours of one-to-one interview, which was a really in-depth look at yourself and consideration of the results, and drawing up an action plan against that. That felt really thorough. Certainly, the opportunity to just step back as an individual for that period of time - in a business which traditionally just does stuff, doesn't stop to reflect and then moves on to the next thing that it's got to do - [that has] been really good. (Interview with performance manager)

The interviews with these five managers demonstrated clearly that the 360-degree feedback and the accompanying introspective discussions with the HR consultant were the most influential elements of the programme, as they provided the opportunity to reflect on one's personality and role in the organisation. In contrast, activities connected to the personal development plans, including any related coaching and mentoring, were insignificant. The reason for this was that the full learning transfer process initiated by the talent management programme, requiring ongoing challenge and support, was not followed through. A lack of HRD competence in the organisation - in terms of the ill-matching of managers to the MLD intervention, as well as the lack of challenge and support - was also at the root of the ineffectiveness of the programme for the remaining five managers (see the bottom two rows of Figure 4.7).

However, for the five managers for whom the talent management programme was effective (see the second row of Figure 4.7), the reported incidents of change at individual level were all linked to increased reflection and a greater sense of self-confidence in one's managerial role. Partly, the increased self-confidence came from the prestige of being identified as a 'high-performer', and being seen by senior management as having the potential soon to be promoted up the hierarchy. Beyond this, however, the interviews revealed two main themes in terms of individual outcomes: i) a greater awareness of one's strategic role (3 managers); and ii) greater awareness of different communication styles (2 managers).

With regard to the first theme, the common element was that the talent management intervention forced the managers to reflect on their role within the organisation and how they worked with their team members to meet objectives. The driver depot manager in the group, for example, came to his role from a customer service rather than a driving background. He recognised that the talent management programme had highlighted for him how he contributed to the business:

I can't go out and assess train drivers because I haven't been a train driver. So I have to really focus on managing my team to do that.... [The talent management programme has] helped me to realise that I do bring some stuff to the party, rather than just fire-fighting and doing what people say. I can think of new and better ways of doing things
(Interview with driver depot manager 2)

Similarly, the performance manager found that the 360-degree feedback session forced him to focus more closely on ensuring that his team's objectives were fully understood across the team: "*[J]ust because I was confident and capable or clear what A to B meant, some people actually needed the road map that went with it of how you get from A to B*" (Interview with performance manager). The fleet depot manager, rather than focus on specific business objectives, argued that the general experience of the talent management programme encouraged her to introduce more reflective practice into her management team: "*just a general philosophy of taking time out to reflect on what we've done and thinking about how we can improve it for next time*" (Interview with fleet depot manager 4).

The second theme of self-reflection concerned an increased awareness of communication styles. As a result of the first individual feedback session in the talent management programme, two station managers realised that their communication styles were often perceived by staff as overly direct, and that softer, more open styles of communication were more effective with certain members of staff. As one of these managers explained:

[T]here were certain specific incidences of feedback where I thought 'Ooh, blimey. I didn't realise I was perceived in that sense'. Much of it was to do with [that] I am a quite a direct person and sometimes I might be a little bit too direct, to the point of being blunt some of my managers actually really appreciate the direct, blunt approach, because they know where they stand. But I had to adapt myself for some of my team, because they obviously didn't react to that particular way of management (Interview with group station manager 3)

This newfound appreciation of the effectiveness of a softer, more diplomatic approach to communication was echoed in a third interview, in which a station manager recollected the Wow course:

[I]t's taught me to be more tolerant of ... people and understand why they haven't got the same standards as I have, and how we can still come to the same desired outcome ... but using the way they prefer to operate (Interview with group station manager 1)

As well as reflecting a degree of intrapersonal competence, which is to be expected as a result of leader development-type intervention, these individual level outcomes are

reflective of a degree of strategic managerial competence (SMC) required for divisionalisation. The ability to be more reflective about one's managerial position in relation to organisational goals, and how to negotiate different ways of achieving them at local level, is part of the competence required to promote divisional performance. Evidence of development of this type of competence (SMC) was most accentuated amongst those in station management roles. These managers faced the greatest uncertainty in how work tasks should be accomplished due to their responsibility for interaction with customers. This appears to account for their greater need for the softer skills of communication relative to driver or fleet depot managers.

In terms of group-level outcomes, the five interviewees above tended to describe how their increased self-awareness led to more effective interactions with others.

Interviewees invariably speculated that the changes in their behaviour made them more effective as managers across the organisation, and that they had helped to increase staff motivation in their teams. While these claims cannot be substantiated without more objective and measurable evidence, it was interesting to discern from the interviews the ways in which the managers claimed to have achieved more effective interactions.

The unifying theme was a perceived improvement in working towards objectives with individuals and, in one case, with the team. Three interviewees described how they had improved the ways in which they defined objectives and communicated these through regular one-to-one and team meetings. In particular, they claimed that the talent management programme had enabled them to take better account of the bigger strategic picture and how their teams' objectives were located within this, as well as improving their ability to formulate and communicate clear objectives. Two managers placed special emphasis on how their attitude towards one-to-one meetings had changed as a result of the talent management programme, as the following two quotes illustrate.

I absolutely categorically don't miss one-to-ones, ever, with my direct reports previously, it would be a bit of a case of 'What are you doing this morning?' 'Oh, nothing'. 'Oh, cool, do you want to do your one-to-one?' But now....I know exactly when they are... They're structured, I know what I'm going to discuss in advance, I make sure I'm prepared, I make sure they bring stuff in so that they're accountable for their actions.
(Interview with driver depot manager 2)

I've actually looked at the one-to-ones I was carrying out twelve to fifteen months ago in comparison the one-to-ones that I'm doing at the current time and there is a distinct difference in the quality. There's far more guidance, coaching and specific objectives to improve within them. (Interview with group station manager 3)

In a slightly different vein, the performance manager from the staff side related how the talent management programme had led him to introduce an exercise into monthly team meetings to involve all team members in understanding each other's objectives. As a result, this manager claimed that the whole team had become "*very clear of what the objectives are, and what we're trying to achieve*" (Interview with performance manager). In contrast to the previous two managers, however, the performance manager was responsible for a small, knowledge-intensive, office-based team, which kept regular business hours (a self-confessed 'ivory tower'). This was a more conducive environment for team communication than a twenty-four-hour-a-day depot environment, in which more isolated interactions with individuals were more typical.

Beyond the outcome of more regular and purposeful communication of objectives, four managers claimed a greater degree of consultation with team members about methods for achieving objectives, as a result of the talent management programme. In particular, two station managers related how they began to practice informal types of coaching with the front-line managers in their teams. One related how he had invited feedback from a station manager on his communication style, who told him that he wanted more explanation and guidance. As a result, the group station manager claimed:

I changed ... how I approached my one-to-ones and my walkrounds with him, and there was a noticeable difference in how he performed within his job role as well, because he felt more comfortable to come to me and ask for things (Interview with group station manager 3)

Another group station manager had a similar experience, in which he introduced a coaching-type approach as a result of personal insights gained through the Wow course:

I was out with a guy, one of my managers, last week, just going round his group of stations and helping him see what I see, and telling him how I approach addressing looking at a station and what is right and what's wrong about it and just giving him a few

pointers about some of things that I do that perhaps he doesn't. The way I approach things, what I call the thirty-minute station walk-round. Just getting him to see how I approach looking at stuff, and then getting him to tell me how he approaches it and just giving him some pointers about what he could do differently. (Interview with group station manager 1)

For the driver depot manager, the discussion of objectives with individuals was more concerned with behavioural style. He related how his increased self-awareness as a result of the talent management programme had led him to confront the behaviour of one of his front-line managers. He explained how this manager, though hard-working and technically competent, had a habit of upsetting drivers by only communicating with them in order to point out problems with their performance. Through regular one-to-one meetings the depot manager continually pointed out to the front-line manager how he was perceived within the team and how he could soften his style. He claimed that the manager gradually began to change his behaviour by engaging in more informal conversation and by taking more care to have constructive interactions with staff.

Relating this change back to the talent management intervention, the manager argued:

[T]hat's come through me being organised enough to really, properly allocate quality time to them [one-to-one meetings], and equally be courageous enough to tell them [staff] where I think they need to change people are prepared to say that to me, so I equally need to be prepared to say that to other people. (Interview with driver depot manager 2)

Amongst these incidences of greater communication concerning objectives, it is important to note that, while the communication processes themselves may have been relatively open and subject to some negotiation between the line manager and the direct report, the behavioural outcomes - framed by the company's official vision, values and behaviours - were not. As one group station manager put it: "*How you get the message across is obviously down to the individual person, but ultimately the same message needs to be conveyed*" (Interview with group station manager 3). The interviewees invariably spoke in terms of setting objectives 'for' their staff, rather than 'with' them. This reflects the process of divisionalisation, in which outcomes tend to be standardised across the organisation, although a degree of flexibility and variation in methods may occur at local level.

The process of tracing individual and group outcomes of the talent management programme to the organisational level proved difficult, as specific connections between managers' learning and business performance were not straightforward. Only three of the ten talent management interviewees were able to identify a connection between their individual learning and more general business outcomes. This was partly to do with the personalised nature of the talent management programme, but it was also to do with the programme's rather vague objectives and the general lack of attention to evaluation of learning in the organisation over the longer term.

It is significant, however, that the group station managers were the most able to establish connections between their learning and business performance outcomes. These managers were in the position to set objectives for their staff that could directly influence trends in business performance, due to the existence of detailed customer service indicators in their areas of responsibility. For example, the group station manager, who had related how he began to coach a station manager during 'thirty-minute station walkarounds', was able to demonstrate how this had contributed to improvements in the 'mystery shopper' scores rising "slowly but surely" in this particular manager's station. In a similar way, the performance manager, who introduced greater clarity in working with objectives in his team, argued that this had contributed to a new joint performance management process with Network Rail being commended as industry best practice. He was also confident that the new process had contributed to sharply improving performance on the 'time-to-five' indicator that measured the company's train punctuality.

In contrast, driver depot managers had less immediate divisional performance indicators around which to frame objectives for their staff. Beyond the enforcement of compliance with competence standards, driver depot managers were left to negotiate around attitudinal and behavioural issues with their front-line managers to encourage them to build more motivational relationships with the drivers in their teams in a general effort to raise train service performance. The reference point in such negotiations is the company's 'vision, values and behaviours', including such requirements as 'honesty' and 'respect'. But, as one driver depot manager mused: "*how can you train somebody to be 'honest'? How can you make somebody 'respectful'?*" (Interview with driver depot manager 2)

As mentioned at the beginning of this subsection, the talent management programme was not uniformly effective. In the cases of five managers (see the bottom two rows of Figure 4.7) this was due to a lack of HRD competence at SWT. Three of the five managers related how their previous experience of MLD had been effectively ignored, and how their personal development plans were either too vague to recall in detail or not meaningful in terms of their job practice. Two of the three in the very bottom row did not even mention their participation in the talent management programme when invited in their interviews to recall their MLD experiences. Even when prompted, none of these three could identify how the intervention had led to any new insights or learning experiences. For the remaining two managers (in the third row of Figure 4.7) the talent management programme was accepted as having led to perceptible outcomes; the senior project engineer received sponsorship to go on a purchasing-negotiation skills course, and the guard depot manager felt that the programme had provided her with reassurance in her managerial abilities. But there were no significant changes to report at individual level. As the latter manager put it: *“The results that I had [from the 360 degree feedback] were very good...but there was nothing for me to change”* (Interview with guards depot manager).

Yet beyond the issue of the relative lack of HRD competence at SWT, the reasons for the talent management programme’s ineffectiveness in the drivers’ function appeared to have deeper structural reasons. For driver depot manager 1, for example, the talent management intervention had been ineffective because the working environment simply constrained the opportunities for practising more flexible approaches to management. As he commented: *“It was quite difficult for me to find anything that I felt I couldn’t do that related to the job”* (Interview with driver depot manager 1). Similarly, the driver standards manager had a personal development plan that could not be implemented effectively, as part of it depended on his participation in budgeting meetings, the opportunities for which did not easily or naturally arise in his area of work. The lack of fit between the use of leader development methods and this part of the middle line lends support to the hypothesis that MLD produces null or negative outcomes if ill-matched to organisational requirements.

In conclusion, while some of the expected outcomes of SMD were observable at SWT, the achievement of the full range of multi-levelled outcomes was prevented by the structural constraints of the machine bureaucracy, the limited nature of divisionalisation and a relative lack of HRD competence. The lack of HRD competence was both

strategic, in terms of investing in ill-fitting SMD options, and operational, in terms of the ineffective application of assessment-challenge-support principles. Nevertheless, some effective and well-matched use of SMD was observed in the most autonomous, customer-facing part of the organisation, namely station management, and also suggested amongst those technical managers who had the opportunity to coordinate the work of their staff in more flexible ways.

4.4 Assessment

The case of SWT lends broad support to the theoretical model of MLD options and outcomes under divisionalisation, as advanced in Chapter 2. To illustrate this, the actual outcomes of MLD at SWT as compared with the theoretical model of MLD outcomes under divisionalisation are revisited in Figure 4.8.

Structural transition	MLD intervention	Individual outcomes	Group outcomes	Organisational outcomes
<i>Divisionalisation (Role A→B middle management)</i>	OMD SMD LD	OMC Some SMC [intrapersonal competence]	Staff compliance [Some staff commitment]	Organisational stability (increased performance in customer service)

Role A = machine middle line management; Role B = business division management; OMD = operational management development; SMD = strategic management development; LD = leader development; OMC = operational managerial competence; SMC = strategic managerial competence

Figure 4.8 Actual MLD options and outcomes at South West Trains

SWT followed the pattern of expected MLD options and outcomes with regard to operational management development (see the top half of Figure 4.8), but with an unexpectedly strong focus on developing human skills. The company invested, as expected, in standard technical and procedural training for the middle line to meet the demands of stability in the machine bureaucracy. But it concentrated primarily on people management training in order to adjust to a commercial environment and the

devolution of HR responsibilities. Investment in OMD at SWT was effective for two main reasons. First, it was designed and delivered effectively. Second, it was closely matched to the needs of organisational coordination. This was evident in its apparently important contribution to increased staff attendance and the relative absence during the post-2003 period of employment relations incidents such as strikes and lengthy disciplinary cases, which had severely disrupted operations in the early part of the franchise.

In contrast to OMD, the way in which the company invested in SMD deviated somewhat from the theoretical model. The Wow course, the driver manager workshops and the talent management programme all addressed a perceived need for improved human skills amongst front-line and middle managers in order to help secure staff commitment to new strategic objectives. In the light of the strategic priority of customer service and the history of adversarial employment relations, this type of MLD, using leader development methods (LD), took priority over investment in broader strategic management development (represented by SMD in Figure 4.8) because the real extent of divisionalisation in the company was limited. While leader development did not fit exactly with parts of the organisation, which lacked the opportunity to coordinate work through mutual adjustment, it nevertheless served to develop a degree of intrapersonal competence amongst managers. This was most pronounced amongst station managers who could enable adjustment to local divisional priorities amongst their staff to concentrate on specific improvements in customer service. For most middle managers at SWT, however, divisionalisation did not herald a significantly new degree of flexibility and discretion in managerial decision-making, with which a broader type of SMD might have been compatible. Investment in MLD was therefore shaped by a limited and even process of divisionalisation.

The conclusion that the experience of SWT broadly supports the hypothetical pattern of MLD options and outcomes under divisionalisation may be sharpened by a consideration of what the counterfactual outcomes might have been. For example, SWT might have made a blanket investment in strategically-orientated management education for all managers, such as sponsorship for to study for MBAs, in order to respond to the newly commercialised environment. As the senior project engineer indicates in the opening quote to this chapter, however, this would have gone far beyond the requirements of the still limited divisional management structure. The likelihood that such an investment would have been tolerated by a senior management,

who were otherwise supportive of widespread MLD investment, is small. Similarly, the company might have invested in more open and collective leadership development activities for its middle managers, such as action learning sets; but this would also have been unsuitable for the still essentially bureaucratic rather than adhocratic approach to the coordination of the organisation's core work tasks.

The confidence with which conclusions may be drawn in this case derives from the strength of the expert witness testimonies. With regard to the people-management training (OMD), the critical incidents reported by the five newer managers were triangulated with other sources of evidence including staff attendance and staff satisfaction survey data, all of which indicated a largely successful effort on the part of the HRM function to reduce absence and increase staff motivation. The emphasis on staff compliance may have outweighed the more motivational commitment-related outcomes, and trade union resistance to the assertive implementation of the new HRM policies may also have played a constraining role. But there seems to be little doubt that that the training had far-reaching effects. Notably, the five key interviewees, along with other managers in the talent management group, had no particular incentive to overstate the effect of OMD, as they were not personally responsible for the HR policies that it supported, nor were they responsible for their own selection to participate in the training, thus reducing the probability of selection bias.

Indeed, such was the size and reach of the investment in OMD, that it attracted criticism from senior managers from the non-operational side of the business. For example, both the head of pensions and payroll and the head of information technology refused to send all their management team members on the supposedly mandatory line management training courses. The latter described the courses as "patronising" and not geared to the needs of the managers in his team, who did not need to spend several days away from the workplace "going over procedures", being "told how to conduct interviews" or "doing role plays". While arguably effective for the eighty per cent of managers on the operational side of the business, it seems that OMD reached the limits of its effectiveness in the technostructure and support side of the business.

With regard to confidence in the conclusions regarding the more strategically-orientated talent management programme, the assertion that SMD contributed to a small improvement in business performance relies heavily on the interviews with the ten talent management participants. In contrast to OMD, the critical incidents identified from

SMD were less easy to triangulate with other sources of evidence. However, the unevenness of the results from the talent management sample, who either self-selected or were encouraged onto the programme, and who volunteered to be interviewed, provides some assurance that the reported critical incidents were not uniformly subject to Hawthorne effects. This group of identified 'high potential' managers might have been expected to report strong performance-related MLD outcomes, but they actually revealed little psychological investment in the success of the programme in terms of either their personal advancement or its effect on business performance. That the strongest MLD outcomes at organisational level could be identified by a particular function, namely station management, rather than the personal motivations of the respondents, serves to strengthen confidence in the objectivity of the results of the critical incident interviews.

There are three main alternative ways of reading the SWT experience and suggesting that MLD was not strategically driven and shaped by organisational contingencies. Firstly, one might argue that, although SWT's investment in operational management development (line management training) was effective overall, its investment in leader development (Wow, talent management) was excessive, ill-advised and badly managed, despite some unintended positive outcomes for station managers. Indeed, as highlighted in Section 2.2, the poor handling of MLD interventions by HRD practitioners has been widely observed, particularly in their lack of appreciation of business priorities. However, it is important also to point out that the talent management initiative at SWT served two other HR objectives alongside strategic business objectives, and that the broader type of SMD, such as sponsorship for MBAs, was employed sparingly for the more senior middle managers, for whom the demands of divisionalisation were most acute. The use of MLD was therefore generally aligned with strategic priorities.

A second, neo-institutionalist explanation of the SWT experience would point to the tendency amongst HR practitioners to imitate MLD practices, such as leader development, that had become commonplace in the sector (in this case, privatised services). In the case of SWT, however, it has to be pointed out that the company was in fact leading the market in its MLD practices, rather than following. The main inspiration for the MLD initiatives came from the supermarket retail sector. Far from mimicking best practice in similar PSOs, the MLD interventions were adapted to the specific needs of the railway industry context.

Finally, a third interpretation of the SWT experience would be that, instead of a response to organisational efficiency demands, MLD choices reflected political motives: on the one hand, to discipline line managers to conform with the new HR policies and accept the commercial priorities of senior management through OMD; on the other hand, to reward and incorporate further through SMD those 'talented' managers who were already identified with these priorities.

With regard to the politics of the talent management programme, the point has already been made that this was intended as a pilot for all managers, rather than for a favoured group of insiders. It also has to be appreciated that, while political struggles between management and the unions were important at SWT, they were not all-dominant: investments in the softer aspects of people management were motivated by a consultative and participative view of management practice, not an autocratic one. The operational realities of the environment may have caused the harder aspects of people management to have been prioritised over the softer aspects; however, the initiatives to develop the softer side were strategically motivated to improve customer service, regardless of managers' political allegiances to the rank-and-file from which many originated. The softer-orientated aspects of MLD represented more than just short-term political manoeuvring by management in its wider political contest with the unions.

Overall, while the case lends support to the central hypothesis of contingent MLD outcomes, it also highlights the unexpectedly strong importance of human skills in the middle line of machine bureaucracies, especially where there has been significant organisational conflict and change. OMD is clearly important to support organisational stability in the machine bureaucracy, but the development of softer, human skills may need to be emphasised more strongly than originally conceptualised, above those of technical and conceptual skills.

The case has also highlighted the importance for MLD of the differences between divisions in the same organisation and of the variegated nature of the middle line in a divisionalised bureaucracy. When directed at improving divisional business performance, the case suggests that MLD based on leader development methods is likely to be most effective in those divisions that are orientated towards customer service (such as stations/passenger retail), where uncertainty in work tasks is highest. In contrast, the divisions that necessarily retain a strongly centralised and bureaucratic method of coordination (such as the driving function), this type of MLD may contribute

towards the amelioration of the social climate, but it is less likely to impact on improvements in business performance, which is strongly influenced by management decisions made outside the division. A middle ground may be occupied by other types of divisions, in which a comparatively varied service is provided by relatively autonomous and decentralised business units (such as fleet maintenance), as there is some uncertainty in work tasks but also a strong degree of centralised control.

In conclusion, the SWT case has demonstrated the actual complexities but also the underlying structural reasons for both the effective and ineffective use of MLD as an instrument of organisational stability and change in divisionalising machine bureaucracies. In the two cases that follow, quite different patterns of MLD options were observed as they supported professionalisation and adhocratisation. The MLD investment options in these two cases conformed more closely to the hypothetical pattern than at SWT but, particularly in the next case of LFB, the political obstacles were found to be greater.

Chapter 5. MLD and professionalisation: the case of the London Fire Brigade

[I]t's like the King's New Clothes. We will believe that we have better people because it says so on paper. (Interview with station commander 2 and FBU representative, London Fire Brigade)

This chapter investigates the role of MLD for middle managers during the professionalisation of a safety bureaucracy. As explained in Section 1.2, the safety bureaucracy is a variant of the machine bureaucracy, in which middle managers are responsible for managing workflow in the form of practising, implementing and adjusting emergency routines, rather than continuous work processes. For this reason, the middle line in the safety bureaucracy is described as 'emergency middle line management', as a variant of machine middle line management. The professionalisation of the safety bureaucracy refers to the broadening of the work and skill requirements of the operating core to fulfil a wider range of specialist functions beyond the core activity of emergency response.

The key hypothetical expectations during professionalisation are that: i) middle management roles should shift from machine/emergency middle line management (Role A) towards professional middle line management (Role C), in which the middle line assumes greater responsibility for maintaining and developing professional standards and liaising with other parts of the bureaucracy; and that ii) the organisation should invest in both operational management development (OMD) to support stability in the machine/safety bureaucracy, and professional management development (PMD) combined with leader development to promote professionalisation.

The contribution of MLD for middle managers during professionalisation is investigated through a case study of the fire brigade LFB. The case presents an account of changes to middle management roles in the period 2001-5 and the experiences of a new competence-based MLD system, designed to support organisational change. The two main findings are that: i) the competence-based system encompassed OMD, PMD and a degree of leader development; ii) the new development system contributed to a successful shift towards a more professionalised approach to incident management

and, to a lesser extent, employee development, but was otherwise constrained by political and institutional factors. Overall the case illustrates MLD's role in enabling a partial transition to professionalisation. It also highlights the importance of countervailing political and institutional factors that are accentuated during professionalisation.

The first section of the chapter discusses the national policy and local organisational drivers of professionalisation and the subsequent changes to middle managers at LFB from the traditional station commander role towards a modernised station manager role. The second section examines the introduction of the competence-based development system in the early 2000s, how this related to the changes to middle management, and how it combined PMD and leader development with OMD. The third section analyses managers' experiences of MLD from 2001-5, which demonstrate how MLD contributed to a professionalisation of parts of the middle management role, but which also emphasise the political and institutional obstacles to managerial learning. The final section of the chapter assesses the overall contribution of MLD to professionalisation at LFB and the broader lessons that may be drawn from the case.

5.1 Professionalisation and the changing roles of middle management

As described in Section 3.2.1, pressures from the operating environment had been building since the 1990s to broaden the skills of firefighters to include a wider range of specialist functions and fire prevention activities, such as the conducting of premises safety checks and participating in smoke alarm awareness campaigns. Although piecemeal reforms were already underway, it was not until the early-2000s that professionalisation in the UK Fire and Rescue Service (hereafter, the 'fire service') was formalised through the government's modernisation reforms. The reforms aimed to improve services by making them more flexible and responsive to a wider range of operational demands. Integral to this was a political strategy to break traditional corporatist governance structures and strengthen the relative power of employers vis-à-vis the FBU.

The fire service in the post-war period of the twentieth century operated fundamentally as a national safety bureaucracy. As Fitzgerald (2005) observes, the level of funding

from central government, accounting for over eighty per cent of the service's resources, was, until the reforms of the early-2000s, determined by "prescriptive national fire cover criteria" which "decided the number of fire stations, appliances and ultimately the uniform establishment of brigades" (p. 651). Although brigades had long been regionalised by local authority, the work tasks of firefighters, representing the operating core, were standardised according to the centrally-agreed 'Manuals of Firemanship'. Originating in the 1950s, these manuals set out the standard operating procedures for fighting fires and dealing with emergency incidents. Overall this amounted to "a multitude of semi-Taylorist procedures", which were then implemented through "FBU controlled teamwork" and developed through the "watch culture" (*ibid*). The watch culture refers to the identification of firefighters with a small group of colleagues on the same, longstanding shift. Contractually, the employer of both firefighters and non-uniformed staff was the local fire authority, with non-uniformed staff employed on the standard terms and conditions for local government employees. Firefighters' pay and conditions were however agreed at national level with the FBU through a centralised corporatist governance structure and enshrined in the "sacrosanct Grey Book national agreement" (Fitzgerald 2005: 656).

Firefighters' training was also highly regulated and typically delivered through the national Fire Service College in Gloucestershire. Firefighters became qualified and available for promotion to more senior ranks through a national system of fire service examinations, then selected for promotion through an internal 'round' of internal applications. Some operational training and development was devolved; LFB, for example, had its own training centre in Southwark. However, work processes for uniformed staff and formal HR processes remained essentially standardised according to national agreements, which were then implemented locally by fire authorities through consultative committees that included local government and FBU representation (*ibid*).

Professionalisation in the early-2000s is best understood in the wider context of the new Labour government's modernisation agenda (c.f. Andrews 2010: 600). Most public services had been subject to significant change in the 1980s and early-1990s due to the NPM reforms of the previous Conservative governments. NPM-type measures also affected the fire service, mainly in the area of local budget allocations that were linked to increasingly tight, 'value for money' assessments. However:

The fire service was protected from the early onslaught of new public management ... through its relatively low cost to the public purse, the high level of public sympathy for workers doing a dangerous job and a pay formula that removed overt conflict. (Fitzgerald 2005: 648)

As national levels of funding for fire cover and firefighters' pay remained relatively insulated from cuts throughout the 1990s, the search for greater efficiencies focussed on attempts to make firefighters' working conditions more flexible, including the covering of extra fire prevention duties. This search continued after 1997 into the early years of the new Labour administration, which was also characterised by tight local budgets and increasingly adversarial employment relations (Fitzgerald 2005: 665-56).

Labour formalised its strategy of modernisation in the 1999 Local Government Act, signalling a new approach to the management of fire service. The Act charged local authorities, including fire authorities, with the duty to seek 'continuous improvement' in services. The strategy included a "radical refocusing of councils' traditional roles", in order to tackle "the old culture of paternalism and inwardness" (DET 1998, cited in Andrews 2010: 600). Central to the strategy were the use of "rational planning processes" and "increased levels of consultation with external stakeholders" (Andrews 2010: 600).

For the fire service, Labour's modernisation agenda would translate into a top-down, professionalisation strategy, demanding a new approach to planning local services and workforce reform. It took a further deterioration of employment relations, culminating in a forty per cent pay claim by the FBU, to trigger a major government review of the fire service in 2002, chaired by Professor Sir George Bain (see Independent Review of the Fire Service 2002), and leading to the 2003 White Paper *Our Fire and Rescue Service* (ODPM 2003). After a prolonged and acrimonious industrial dispute from 2002-4, the government passed the 2004 Fire and Rescue Act, implementing most of Bain's recommendations, with the FBU's eventual acquiescence (Andrews 2010: 601).

The modernisation strategy for the fire service had two main components: i) the introduction of authority-based 'integrated risk management plans' (IRMPs), to promote greater responsiveness to local needs and priorities; and ii) the 'integrated personal development system' (IPDS), to institutionalise a set of new roles and skill-requirements for uniformed staff and managers (Andrews 2010: 602-3). IRMPs broke the link

between centralised government funding and the national fire cover prescriptions, and developed a new funding formula based around local authority community fire safety plans. The IRMPs required fire authorities “to actively engage in the provision of advice, guidance and information to citizens, households and businesses on a host of community safety issues” (Andrews 2010: 601). IPDS was heralded as the “cornerstone of the Government’s reform of the human resource management of the fire and rescue service” (ODPM 2003: 57). The military-type thirteen-tier ‘rank’ structure for uniformed staff was abolished and replaced by seven ‘roles’, including six levels of management. The seven new occupational roles were linked to a detailed nationwide competence-based career development framework. IPDS was formalised as the new basis for selecting and promoting uniformed staff, guided by the principle that firefighters should be able to demonstrate broad sets of skills and competence in order to progress their careers, rather than the technical expertise that had largely defined one’s rank.

The aims behind IRMPs and IPDS have a close fit with the theoretical concept of professionalisation as a *knowledge*-driven change in organisational management (see Section 1.4). IRMPs represent the closer involvement of specialists (uniformed staff) in the management of the local organisation through greater liaison with other parts of the bureaucracy and its stakeholders. IPDS represents a move towards the standardisation of skills as an approach to coordination, in recognising the increasing complexity of the operating environment and the specialist knowledge required by the operating core, in contrast to coordination by standardisation of work processes in the machine/safety bureaucracy. As also noted in Section 1.4, the more typical interpretation of professionalisation is as a political strategy of groups of skilled employees who seek to maintain their autonomy from management control. The changes to the fire service indeed had a strongly political dimension. But in this case, professionalisation resembled more a top-down strategy of management control (Andrews 2010: 602) than a ‘bottom-up’, self-empowering strategy of firefighters to enhance their own professional status.

Despite the top-down, policy-driven nature of the fire service reforms, there are strong theoretical grounds for viewing them as professionalising in organisational management terms. While the reforms were to an extent ideologically-driven by ‘managerialism’ (*ibid*), and while they also represented a political strategy to outmanoeuvre and disempower the FBU (Seifert and Sibley 2011), the substance of the reforms, in the form of the IRMPs and IPDS, nevertheless represented a knowledge-driven strategy of

organisational change. The FBU had in fact long championed greater recognition of firefighters' increasingly specialist skills and were supportive of the IPDS project even during the 2002-4 dispute (FBU 2003: 14). That firefighters should be seen as 'professionals' was not disputed, and uniformed officers had long monopolised senior positions in the fire service. The question was how, in such a politically-charged environment, professionalisation and the involvement of uniformed staff in managerial decisions would be defined. Ultimately, the prevailing ideological and political context enabled the government, not firefighter representatives, to determine management processes and new employee roles (c.f. Andrews 2010: 603-4).

Middle managers in local brigades were seen as pivotal to the provision of a modernised and professionalised service. The middle line of a fire brigade is constituted by those officers responsible for heading up its operational units, namely fire stations, or a small number of fire stations. Station commanders (eventually replaced by the term 'station manager' post-2005) invariably came from the uniformed side of the service, which typically accounted for around eighty per cent of the brigade's workforce.

Professionalisation involved a remodelling of the station manager role. The original station commander model is consistent with the concept of emergency middle line management (Role A), whereas the remodelled station manager role resembled professional middle line management (Role C). As outlined in Chapter 1, Role A management in machine or safety bureaucracies is primarily concerned with ensuring workflow (or emergency routines), conflict management, disturbance-handling and vertical liaison. In contrast, Role C management in professional bureaucracies is more concerned with professional-managerial collaboration and coordination through mutual adjustment.

The intended shift in middle management roles from a Role A to a Role C model as it applied to the fire service is summarised in Figure 5.1.

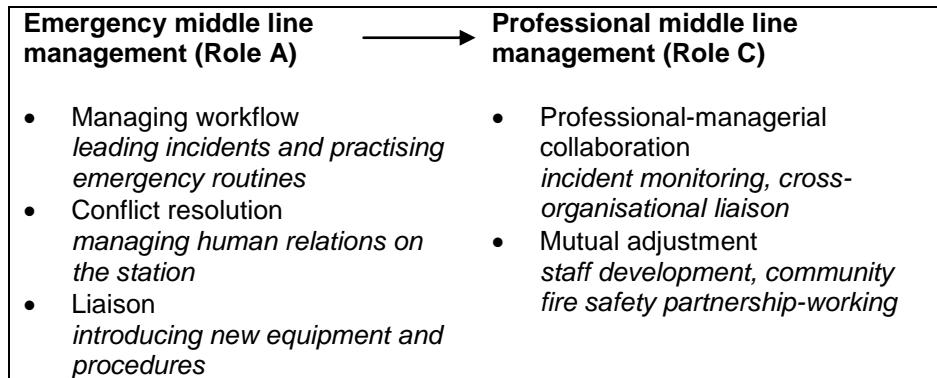


Figure 5.1 Transition in middle management roles during professionalisation in the fire service

The Role A model could be observed in the traditional approach to station command, which prioritised technical activities in the form of taking a leading role at fire incidents and ensuring compliance with standardised procedures. With regard to conflict resolution, the key emphasis was on staff discipline in the station and resolving human relations issues that undermined discipline and order. Although there was little formal responsibility for staff development, due to the intensity of station life and the time spent in the company of colleagues during 'down-time' in between fire incidents, station commanders played an important informal leadership role within the watch culture. Liaison activity was mainly concerned with the introduction of new equipment and procedures within the station. This also included a significant amount of administrative and upward reporting duties, which increased throughout the 1990s (Carvalho et al. 2006). However, it was senior managers rather than station commanders that performed most of the formal liaison activity with the other parts of the bureaucracy, such as the HR function and support services.

The Role C model was evident in the espoused new station manager role, which had four distinctive features. Firstly, station managers assumed a monitoring role rather than performing a practical, hands-on role at fire incidents. Linked to this was the second feature, which involved greater liaison activity with other parts of the bureaucracy to coordinate plans for improvements to operational efficiency and effectiveness. The third new expectation was that station managers should engage more with developing staff, in the form of the IPDS standards. Fourthly, station managers were expected to engage more in partnership-working. This was a key part of the strategic objective to move

away from emergency response towards community fire safety, requiring the station manager to interact directly with other stakeholders in the local authority area.

These four new features of the role represented a transition to greater professional-managerial collaboration and the use of mutual adjustment. Station managers, particularly in their monitoring and staff development roles, would increasingly be expected to exercise informal influence and negotiation, rather than control through formal authority, to coordinate the station's activities.

001	Interviewing techniques and incident debriefs	034	Purpose and principles of quality assurance
003	Leadership skills 1	037	Principles and purposes of assessment
004	Equality and fairness - Equal Opportunities and anti discrimination	038	Managing people performance
005	Personal Development	039	Identifying and planning development needs
006	Health, safety and risk management	040	Coaching and mentoring
007	Employee relations	041	Budget planning and control
009	Investigation techniques	042	Planning personnel requirements
010	Report writing	044	Planning and allocating work
011	Planning and leading meetings 1	048	Environmental risks and control
012	Statutory requirements for people management	049	Developing community relationships
013	Information collection methods	050	Negotiating skills
014	Presentation skills	053	Leadership styles
015	Managing Conflict	062	Managing yourself
016	Resource management - local level	071	Manage and provide information for internal and external purposes
018	Conducting Inspections	072	Crisis and contingency management
019	Conducting formal investigations	076	Analyse training needs
020	Presenting evidence at formal proceedings	078	Principles and practice of training and development
021	Planning techniques	082	Group dynamics
022	Building teams	085	Plan fire and explosion investigation
023	Continuous improvement in the workplace	086	Investigate the scene of fire or explosion
024	Preparing management information	087	Collate and evaluate documentary and witness evidence for investigations
025	Effective planning and management of meetings 2	088	Report findings of investigations
026	Working with your community	089	The role and importance of command support
027	Incident Command 2	090	Co-ordinating information for command support
028	Incident debriefs - reviewing performance		

Figure 5.2 Competence modules for station commanders

Source: IPDS module database www.ipds.co.uk (now www.skillsforjustice-ipds.com), accessed 24/4/06. Shaded modules are specific to the station commander role.

The changes to management roles, as they were actually expressed in formal documentation, can be analysed in more detail through the IPDS station commander 'role map' (see Figure 5.2). The role map constitutes a list of 'modules' in which station commanders had to demonstrate their competence in order to be available for promotion.

The forty-nine modules in Figure 5.2 are a selection from a total of ninety IPDS modules and represent the full portfolio within the nationally-agreed station commander's role-map. However, twenty-six of these modules were already required to be demonstrated to perform the next role down in the hierarchy (i.e. 'watch commander'). The remaining twenty-three modules are therefore highlighted in Figure 5.2 to represent the modules that had to be completed in order to be promoted from watch commander to station commander. These are reorganised by theme in Figure 5.3.

Operations management modules		People management modules	
019	Conducting formal investigations	022	Building teams
021	Planning techniques	025	Effective planning and management of meetings 2
023	Continuous improvement in the workplace	037	Principles and purposes of assessment
027	Incident Command 2	038	Managing people performance
034	Purpose and principles of quality assurance	039	Identifying and planning development needs
072	Crisis and contingency management	040	Coaching and mentoring
085	Plan fire and explosion investigation	042	Planning personnel requirements
087	Collate and evaluate documentary and witness evidence for investigations	044	Planning and allocating work
088	Report findings of investigations	053	Leadership styles
020	Presenting evidence at formal proceedings		
Miscellaneous modules			
		024	Preparing management information
		041	Budget planning and control
		050	Negotiating skills
		049	Developing community relationships

Figure 5.3 Development modules for promotion from watch manager to station commander by theme

(Adapted from IPDS module database www.ipds.co.uk, accessed on 24/4/06 (later changed to www.skillsforjustice-ipds.com))

The blend of modules represented in Figure 5.3 confirms the shape of the professionalised station commander role. First and foremost was the commander's overall operational responsibility for the fire station. The continued importance of advanced and up-to-date technical knowledge is demonstrated by such modules as 027, 072 and 085, related to formal investigations of incidents, crisis management and the controlling of explosions on firegrounds. There are also a number of generic operations management modules, such as planning, continuous improvement and quality assurance (see modules 021, 023 and 034 respectively). Of particular note is the emphasis on incident investigation, in which the station commander acts as the post-incident investigating officer, rather than leave investigations to specialist officers from headquarters (see modules 019, 087, 088 and 020). This is an indication of the new monitoring role and the transference of responsibility away from external technical experts towards a more empowered and professional operating core and middle line.

The second main area of responsibility in the station commander role map is people management, including the conventional line management responsibilities of planning work, running meetings and conducting performance appraisals (see modules 044, 025 and 038), but also containing a formal responsibility for employee assessment and development (see modules 037 and 039). The modules in this area are indicative of the more empowering and developmental approach to management that characterised the remodelled station manager role. As one senior manager at the LFB described the change in emphasis:

Previously it's been about moulding firefighters into a particular type, about shouting at people, giving them instructions. Now it's about understanding the different ways in which people learn and getting the balance right between the necessary discipline in appropriate situations and allowing the other work [community fire safety, employee development] to go on, when firefighters can become more proactive. (Interview with Head of Development Delivery)

The miscellaneous modules on information management, budgeting, negotiation and developing community relationships (see modules 024, 041, 050 and 049) were reflective of the new emphases on: i) professional-managerial collaboration in the form of greater internal coordination between station managers and other parts of the

bureaucracy's management; and ii) partnership-working to enable the strategic change towards community fire safety. It is notable, however, that these latter dimensions of the station manager role are small in comparison to the operations management and people management dimensions, at least in terms of the number of modules. This is perhaps indicative of the prioritising of technical and people management concerns over local resource management and external liaison in the early stages of transition from a national safety bureaucracy towards a professional bureaucracy.

To research these changes at the organisational level, managerial roles at LFB were analysed through organisational documentation and interviews with four senior managers from the training and development function, nine operational middle managers and five staff managers.

LFB, with approximately 6800 staff, was the largest brigade in the UK. The Greater London Authority, created in 2000, included the new London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority to oversee the work of LFB and integrate it with other safety-critical public services in the capital. As the 2003 White Paper viewed it:

London is a good example of an effective regional authority that provides a coherent regional perspective across all London boroughs. It is large enough to be effective. Resources are shared effectively. Efficiency savings and economies of scale have been generated. There is strong political leadership of the authority. (ODPM 2003: 34)

The institutional structures surrounding LFB were therefore relatively advanced in terms of developing the local strategic aims that might shape station managers' priorities and encourage them to liaise with other local services.

At LFB, operational staff were organised under the largest of the Authority's three directorates, the Fire and Community Safety Directorate, headed by the Deputy Commissioner. All operational staff were full time and organised into shifts, and were dominated by white males¹⁰. Employees were based across more than one hundred fire

¹⁰ Increasing the demographic diversity of the workforce was an important modernisation goal. In 2005, only 3 per cent of uniformed operational staff at LFB were female, although women comprised 50 per cent of main grade administrative staff and 11 per cent of top earners across the whole organisation. Black and minority ethnic persons comprised 9 per cent of uniformed operational staff, 25 per cent of all other staff, and 6 per cent of the organisation's top earners (LFEPA 2005).

stations, though non-uniformed staff tended to be located in the headquarters. By 2005, in line with the national reforms, the uniformed staffing structure had seven main roles from firefighter upwards. A smaller group of approximately one hundred control staff, who worked in the headquarters' control centre, still had a traditional rank structure. Non-uniformed staff were organised according to local authority grades, from 'principal officers', to 'main grade' officers, craft and manual and engineering staff and station cooks. The staffing structure for LFB is represented in Figure 5.4.

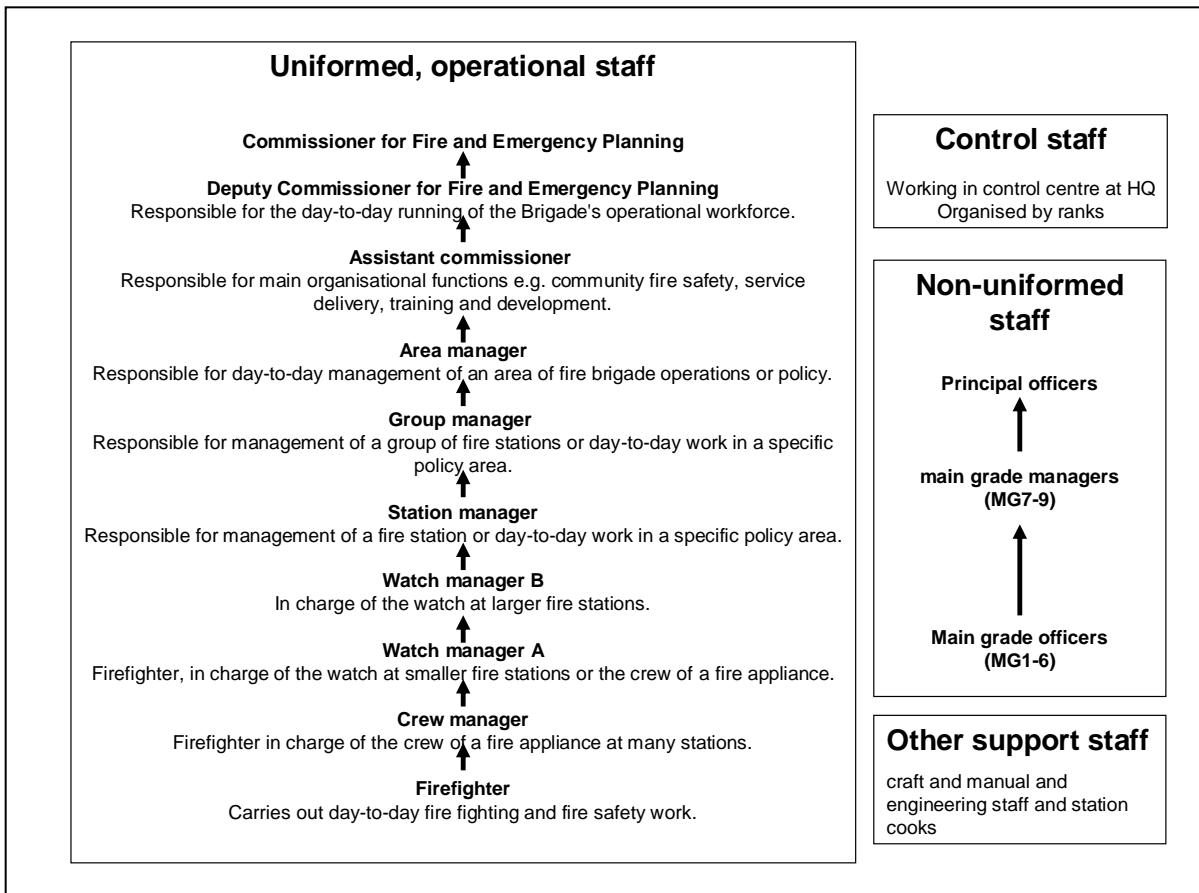


Figure 5.4 London Fire Brigade staffing structure 2005 (Adapted from LFB website, accessed 24/04/06)

The most noticeable and symbolic change brought about by the restructuring process was the replacement of the traditional military-style stripes on uniforms with single status clothing for station- and office-based work. Beyond this, restructuring on the uniformed side represented a flattening of the organisational hierarchy. Station

managers were the middle managers in the compressed hierarchy, reporting to a group or area manager, and responsible for watch managers as their first-line managers.

Interviews with several station commanders suggested that the new monitoring responsibilities of the role had become firmly embedded. Whereas the traditional station commander role had tended to be concerned with direct supervision of the work of the officers and firefighters at incidents, in the new role they were only to take formal charge once more than thirty firefighters had become involved in an incident. There were also indications that station commanders combined their monitoring activities with staff development by adopting a supportive and empowering approach with the most senior firefighter at the incident, typically the watch commander. As one station commander related:

In the past it was easier for a manager to turn up and just to take over because he was the highest ranking officer on the fireground. Now ... we actually have to explain why we took over If I do know the person who is in charge, how good they are or if I need to develop them, it gives me a chance to look at the incident without everyone coming to me saying 'What should I do? What should I do?' There's a good chance to appraise the incident, a good chance to listen, to see how well the person's doing listen to their plan and what they're going to do, and just give them guidance and a bit of advice and support if you've done your job properly, he'll [the officer] feel comfortable with what he's done, he'll feel good within himself and hopefully they'll be a few little things that he'll have picked up from what I've told him (Interview with station commander 1)

With regard to station commanders' other professionalised responsibilities, however, namely collaboration with non-uniformed managers from across the service and external liaison with partner organisations, there were fewer indications of a transition away from traditional bureaucratic management practices. Although there were some isolated examples of station commanders being involved in local projects together with external agencies such as the police and housing authorities, much of the centralised bureaucracy appeared to have remained. There was no evidence, for example, of station commanders having any discretion or responsibility for managing the station's financial budget. As one senior non-uniformed manager described the LFB:

The way the organisation is managed at the very top ... is ... very political, so sometimes decisions are made that are not necessarily for the good of the brigade but

for the good of the government and for appearances' sake.... There isn't one individual who is driving; there is a whole host of individuals. Because there is no one common goal - such as making more money or becoming more efficient, as in the private sector - it's much harder to get things implemented.... People at very senior levels are often concerned about detail, such as font size, and how things work, as opposed to the broad brush strokes. The culture below is very much 'tell me what to do and I'll do it', rather than 'give me an idea of what to do and I'll give you some options'. It has been a militaristic style organisation for many years. (Interview with vocational learning manager)

Accounts such as these reinforce the impression that only a partial shift in the station commander role had occurred in the direction of professionalisation.

On the non-uniformed side, the theoretical expectation in the transition from a national safety bureaucracy towards a professional bureaucracy is that the support services should be augmented at the local level to support the newly devolved operation. However, localised support services at the LFB were already well-established due the longstanding regional structure of the brigades and the close relationships with local authorities. Therefore few changes in the management of support staff occurred in the early 2000s.

With regard to technical staff, responsible for setting and monitoring operational procedures, the theoretical expectation during professionalisation is that there should be a reduction in the size of the technosphere at national level and an augmentation of the local technosphere, as the operating core assumes greater responsibility for the standardisation of its own work. In fact, the national technosphere represented by the Fire Service Inspectorate remained strongly influential, as the lead body for technical standards. Moreover, national-level activity related to performance monitoring and reporting actually increased significantly due to the introduction of NPM-type quality management measures (Carvalho *et al.* 2006). The national technosphere was therefore augmented rather than decreased, and a parallel technosphere covering areas such as planning and performance management was built up at local level within the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority.

With specific regard to training and development, however, the influence of the national technosphere may be said to have been reduced. Brigades had traditionally relied on the national Fire Service College to provide training and to regulate professional

standards for firefighters. But the introduction of the new role maps, particularly for senior uniformed staff, meant that brigades became increasingly responsible for assessing and developing competence at local level. As LFB developed its own HR and training and development functions, it relied less on the national technostucture, and became almost completely autonomous in terms of its MLD.

Overall, therefore, the area in which managerial work at LFB can be said to have changed most fundamentally relates to station managers, particularly in terms of incident management and staff development. This change was supported by the MLD strategy, which is the subject of the next section.

5.2 MLD options

During professionalisation of the safety bureaucracy, three main areas of MLD investment should be expected: i) operational management development (OMD) to ensure essential technical knowledge and basic human skills for the stability of the safety bureaucracy; ii) professional management development (PMD) to promote the learning of administrative and managerial skills amongst operational managers; and iii) leader development to develop more advanced human skills amongst managers and to enable greater mutual adjustment. This section of the chapter analyses the extent to which MLD investments at LFB conformed to this expected pattern.

The key MLD investment made at LFB during the period studied was the competence-based and modular 'station commander development programme', the constituent modules of which encompassed both OMD and PMD and elements of leader development. The details of the station commander development programme and how it related to the theoretically expected pattern of MLD investment is summarised in Figure 5.5.

Middle management roles	MLD investment <i>Station Commander Development Programme</i>
Emergency Middle line management (Role A) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing workflow <i>leading incidents and practising emergency routines</i> Conflict resolution <i>managing human relations on the station</i> Liaison <i>introducing new equipment and procedures</i> 	Operational Management development (OMD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Operations management modules</i> <i>Line management modules</i>
Towards... Professional middle line management (Role C) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional-managerial collaboration <i>incident monitoring, cross-organisational liaison</i> Mutual adjustment <i>staff development, community fire safety</i> 	Professional management development (PMD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Incident management modules</i> <i>Administrative and resource management modules</i> Leader development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Employee-development modules</i> <i>Leadership, negotiation and community relations modules</i>

Figure 5.5 MLD investment at the London Fire Brigade
LFB-specific detail in italics

In order to understand how the station commander development programme evolved to address OMD, PMD and leader development needs, it is necessary to explain some of the historical background.

During the 2000s, LFB moved away from the national Fire Service College training courses towards a competence-based system and the requirements of IPDS as part of a longer-term process of developing MLD in London. Traditionally, like other brigades, LFB had relied on residential 'progression courses' for station commanders at the Fire Service College, with each course lasting several weeks at a time. The courses ran alongside the national system of fire service examinations to form the basis for promotion to more senior ranks. However, during the mid-1990s senior managers at LFB became increasingly dissatisfied with what they saw as an inflexible and closed system. The predominantly technical examinations were considered to lack sufficient relevance to the local context. The system was also thought to be an obstacle to recruiting a strong and diverse flow of managers. Many potential managerial recruits chose to supplement their income with second jobs, such as taxi-driving, rather than study for promotion. Furthermore, the examinations were the only formalised aspect of the promotion process. After passing the examinations, candidates could be put forward

to be interviewed for promotion to a higher rank, and there was little transparency or control over the end-part of this process.

In an attempt to break down what it saw as a culture of 'jobs for the boys', LFB took the initiative to develop its own competence-based framework as the basis for selection and promotion. Communication skills and behavioural competences, as well as technical and managerial knowledge, were included in the framework. From the late-1990s, LFB gradually broke away from the Fire Service College - the last fire service examinations were taken by LFB employees in 2005 - and delivered its own management development activities. During this breakaway process, it pioneered an 'integrated management development model', which became the prototype for the development of senior officers and for the national IPDS project.

IPDS was formally adopted across England and Wales in 2001 as the system for firefighters' career development and promotion-selection. (The Scottish Fire Service implemented IPDS independently). The swift adoption of IPDS became an important national-level target against which brigades were measured. There were a number of nationally-agreed targets for HR-related activity, such as increasing the gender and cultural diversity of the workforce and reducing sickness absence and retirement through ill-health. MLD provision, however, was effectively a localised matter, with individual brigades holding the responsibility for ensuring that managers were developed and assessed in line with the IPDS framework. IPDS did not extend to non-uniformed roles, despite the intention of the government to integrate staff in brigades to form 'single services' (Independent Review of the Fire Service 2002: 73 paras 7.60-7.62).

In the early 2000s, LFB followed the national pattern of having an IPDS-compliant but locally-designed MLD strategy, focussed exclusively on uniformed managers. By 2005, the complete MLD provision at LFB was represented by three highly structured and formalised development programmes: i) the station/area commander development programme (for middle/senior management); ii) the crew/watch commander development programme (for front-line management); iii) and firefighter development programmes (for potential managers). The programmes were designed as sets of modules to enable individuals to demonstrate specific knowledge, skills and behavioural

competences¹¹. In addition to the formal development programmes, the training and development function at LFB offered a suite of stand-alone MLD courses, particularly on leadership skills, which were also open to non-uniformed managers. Finally, there was a provision of sponsorship for individuals to attend external, qualifications-based courses. This was very limited, however; in 2005/6 only ten members of staff were sponsored for external management qualifications.

Figure 5.6 provides an overview of the entire MLD provision for middle managers at LFB in 2005.

Operational Middle Managers	Non-uniformed managers
<p>Station Commander Development Programme (IPDS-compliant)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operations management • People management • Resource management • Community fire safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day-courses on leadership, including 'Values Centred Leadership' and '7 Habits' • Various coaching and management skills day-courses • Sponsorship for external qualifications 	

Figure 5.6 MLD provision for middle managers at the London Fire Brigade

5.2.1 *Station commander development programme*

The station commander development programme (see the shaded area of Figure 5.6) combined OMD and PMD and included some leader development for middle managers. As illustrated by the station commander role map in the previous section (see Figure 5.3) a significant OMD emphasis on technical competence was retained within the operations management modules to ensure that managers were qualified to supervise emergency incidents and ultimately to ensure the stability of the safety bureaucracy. PMD was represented by the modules concerned with the more general business management and community fire safety modules. The station commander development programme also aimed to provide leader development in its coverage of the softer

¹¹ In addition to IPDS compliance, the modules were further adjusted in 2005 to include 'personal qualities and attributes' (PQAs) which aligned them with the National Occupational Standards for Leadership and Management.

elements of people management, namely in the leadership- and staff development-related modules. However, it did not employ to any significant extent the more individualised methods, such as 360-degree feedback and coaching, which normally characterise leader development.

The main learning methods used in the station commander development programme were classroom-based, which is common to OMD. These were supplemented by workplace-based methods of competence assessment, which is more common to PMD (see Figure 2.5). The programme's four main elements were: i) a selection and assessment centre, lasting two-three days; ii) a series of taught sessions, delivered in one- to two-week blocks, using a traditional course-based approach within classrooms and various practical activities at external venues; iii) completion of a development file and a portfolio of evidence, usually lasting one-two years; and iv) periodic workplace assessment, including a placement of usually six months in at least one other area of the organisation. Successful completion of all four stages of the process deemed the candidate competent and available for selection for promotion. The complete process was lengthy, typically lasting two-three years, and represented the normal journey for promotion from watch commander to 'assistant district officer' (a collective term for a station commander or a manager in charge of a significant service area).

In order to gain a deeper insight into how the station commander development programme combined OMD, PMD and, to a lesser extent, leader development, it is instructive to examine one of the key modules in detail. Each module had: i) a scoping statement; ii) 'knowledge objectives' (approximately five in number); iii) 'skill objectives' (approximately five in number); and iv) a range of 'personal skills'. Figure 5.7 reproduces the specification of module 027 'Incident Command 2' which encapsulates the remodelled, professionalised approach to incident management.

IPDS Module 027 'Incident Command 2'

Scope:

This module is about skills and knowledge in monitoring and/or taking control at incident in progress. It includes:

- collecting information on the incident status and current plans
- supporting current incident commander to resolve the incident

This may include taking over command of the incident as demanded by the level of risk and/or complexity of the developing incident.

Skill Objectives

Analytical skills

Collect information through observation and consultation with current incident commander, draw conclusions and agree further action with incident commander to progress the resolution of the incident.

Planning and problem solving

Produce plans to resolve incidents, taking account of all influencing factors and complexity of the situation. Generate solutions to meet actual and anticipating problems. Liaise with other services to identify all relevant issues and generate combined solutions, including deployment of joint resources.

Leadership

Provide support and direction to incident and sector commanders and support officers, develop and improve skills and competence of others.

Knowledge Objectives

Incident command systems - roles, responsibilities and limits of authority

Methods and types of communication systems both on the incident ground and remote

Role and responsibilities of self and other operational plans on the incident ground

Procedures and protocols for operating with other emergency and support services

How to access information about availability, capabilities and limitations of operational equipment

How to access specialist advice and support

Hazards and risks of the incident ground and relevant action to minimise and control

Control measures for minimising risk at the incident ground

Styles and leadership and how to apply them at the incident ground

Relevant Personal Skills

Acting Assertively

Behaving ethically

Building teams

Communicating

Conceptualising

Relating to others

Searching for information

Striving for excellence

Taking Decisions

Figure 5.7 Specification for IPDS Module 027 'Incident Command 2'

(Source: IPDS module database www.ipds.co.uk, accessed 24/4/06 (now www.skillsforjustice-ipds.com))

Figure 5.7 illustrates how the station commander was expected to play a supporting role to the leading firefighter at an incident, and only to take direct control as a last resort (see scoping statement). Training in technical knowledge and skills was required (see knowledge objectives related to ‘procedures and protocols for operating with other emergency and support services’, ‘availability, capabilities and limitations of operational equipment’, ‘hazards and risks’ and ‘control measures’). There was also a strong emphasis on understanding the delimitations of formal authority and responsibility (see for example the knowledge objective ‘incident command systems’).

These last two aspects of incident management lend themselves readily to classroom instruction and simulated fireground training, and they have a strong association with OMD. The aspects concerned with service liaison (under ‘planning and problem-solving’) and access to specialist advice and support (see knowledge objectives) have a stronger association with PMD. These more generic areas of management were taught both in classroom settings and developed in the workplace by requiring the individual to reflect and record naturally-arising experiences. The aspects of incident management concerned with consultation, communication, leadership and staff development (see especially the final skill and knowledge objectives) have a strong association with the development of intrapersonal competence and thus the aims of leader development. However, the methods used to develop station commanders in these areas were classroom- and competence-based, rather than the more individualised and less prescribed activities typically associated with leader development.

The provision of various day-courses on leadership, coaching and other management skills for staff from across the authority (see Figure 5.5) indicated the strategic intent of the LFB to promote intrapersonal competence and to encourage greater collaboration between uniformed and non-uniformed staff. However, significant resources were not allocated to these activities and there was no clear organisational rationale behind them. According to the Head of Development Delivery: *“At the moment, we’ve got lots of things going on, but they’re floating around. In particular we’ve got leadership courses here, there and everywhere with no clear idea of where they sit”* (Interview with Head of Development Delivery). Similarly, while there was significant potential for the use of coaching during the completion of the development file and the six-month work placement, such activities were not prioritised in practice.

The strategic limitations of IPDS began to be recognised at national level. In 2005, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister published for consultation a 'leadership and development strategy' to address "strategic imperatives", notably community fire safety. The strategy proposed a model of leadership at all levels of management and for all parts of the service, including three fast-track development programmes for 'high-potential' individuals to move into middle and strategic management (ODPM 2005). These programmes promised greater use of leader development-type methods. By 2007, however, the strategy had still not been implemented at LFB.

Overall, therefore, the MLD choices made for middle managers at LFB are best summarised as an investment in partial professionalisation. The competence-based IPDS system supported professionalisation by institutionalising a less bureaucratic and more professional approach to incident management, and by promoting greater engagement with staff development and collaboration with the organisation's support services and partners. However, while the MLD intervention aimed to develop some of the skills required for greater mutual adjustment at middle management level, the partial nature of professionalisation was reflected in the limited investment in more individualised methods of leader development.

5.3 Contribution of MLD to professionalisation

As the middle line undergoes a transition from emergency middle line management (Role A) to professional middle line management (Role C), the hypothetical outcomes at individual level are that: i) through OMD, managers should lead to operational management competence (OMC), and ii) through PMD and leader development, managers should develop professional managerial competence (PMC) and intrapersonal competence. At group level, it is hypothesised that: i) OMC should lead to compliance amongst staff teams with rules of the safety bureaucracy; and ii) that PMC and managers' greater intrapersonal competence should lead to increased commitment amongst staff to the new professional standards. At organisational level, the group outcome of compliance with the rules of the safety bureaucracy should help to ensure organisational stability, while staff commitment to new professional standards should contribute to a process of professionalisation.

As will be shown in this section of the chapter, the experiences of MLD at LFB conformed partially to this pattern of expected outcomes, serving to ensure staff compliance and organisational stability in the safety bureaucracy, and supporting professionalisation of incident management and employee development, but making less of an impact in terms of promoting community fire safety. The outcomes of MLD at LFB are considered in two parts: the station commander development programme for operational middle managers; and MLD for non-uniformed managers. In each part, the individual, group and organisational outcomes are considered in order.

5.3.1 Contribution of the station commander development programme

Figure 5.8 summarises the hypothetical MLD outcomes at individual level and how they could be expected to be achieved in the fire service.

Middle management roles under professionalisation	MLD investments Station Commander Development Programme	Expected MLD outcomes for individuals
Emergency Middle line management (Role A) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing workflow <i>leading incidents and practising emergency routines</i> Conflict resolution <i>managing human relations on the station</i> Liaison <i>introducing new equipment and procedures</i> 	Operational Management development (OMD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Operations management modules</i> <i>Line management modules</i> 	Operational managerial competence (OMC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Specialist knowledge</i> <i>Basic human skills</i> <i>Planning and coordination skills</i>
Towards... Professional middle line management (Role C) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional-managerial collaboration <i>incident monitoring, cross-organisational liaison</i> Mutual adjustment <i>staff development, community fire safety</i> 	Professional management development (PMD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Incident management modules</i> <i>Administrative and resource management modules</i> Leader development (LD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Employee-development modules</i> <i>Leadership, negotiation and community relations modules</i> 	Professional managerial competence (PMC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Broad organisational knowledge</i> <i>Applied management skills</i> <i>Staff development knowledge and skills</i> Intrapersonal competence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Advanced human skills (leader skills)</i>

Figure 5.8 Expected MLD outcomes for individuals at the London Fire Brigade
LFB-specific detail in italics

As Figure 5.8 shows, in the context of the fire service, operational managerial competence (OMC) is primarily concerned with: i) specialist technical knowledge to

supervise emergency incidents; ii) basic human skills to line-manage people and resolve conflicts on the station; and iii) planning and coordination skills to introduce new equipment and implement adjustments to routines. Professional managerial competence (PMC) and intrapersonal competence are concerned with: i) broad organisational knowledge to enable liaison with other parts of the bureaucracy and specialist services; ii) applied management skills to monitor and plan improvements to operational performance; iii) staff development knowledge and skills to help develop firefighters' competence within the IPDS framework; and iv) advanced human skills (leader skills) for collaboration and partnership with the non-uniformed parts of the organisation and external stakeholders to promote community fire safety.

As will be shown, the actual MLD outcomes at LFB demonstrate a contribution towards developing OMC in individual managers and a degree of PMC and intrapersonal competence. The application of PMC and intrapersonal competence was limited to principally to incident management and employee development, rather than increasing employee motivation towards the new community safety strategy.

A clear pattern of individual-level outcomes for the station commander development programme was identifiable from the interviews. The main evidence of individual MLD outcomes for uniformed managers comes from nine critical incident interviews. Seven of the interviewees were station commanders, one of whom was an FBU representative, and all of whom were based in different fire stations across London. The remaining two interviewees were ex-station commanders, based at the LFB's training centre in non-operational roles. All the interviewees had been firefighters and had over ten years' service at LFB, as was typical for the role. Roughly mirroring the brigade's demographic profile, the interviewees included seven white males, one white woman and one black male. Wider group- and organisational-level outcomes were inferred from organisational documentation and Audit Commission reports.

The pattern of MLD outcomes for uniformed middle managers is represented in Figure 5.9.

Individual outcomes	Group outcomes	Contribution to organisational outcomes
Assurance of operational managerial competence (all 9)	Technical compliance	Stability of the safety bureaucracy
Assurance of professional managerial competence (2 (new managers))	Commitment to professionalised incident management	Partial professionalisation
Certification of professional managerial competence (remaining 7)	Uneven commitment to new approaches to professional development	

(Brackets indicate number of interviewees)

Figure 5.9 Outcomes of MLD at the London Fire Brigade

At individual level, the most common reaction of the interviewees to the station commander development programme was unenthusiastic and neutral. The typically reported experience was that the programme was 'nothing new' and of having 'done it all before'. As Figure 5.9 shows, and as will be explained, the individual outcomes are best described as 'assurance' and 'certification'. Importantly, however, it was evident from the interviews that the station commander development programme could not be treated as an isolated MLD intervention; it was inextricably linked with previous watch commander development and informal learning in fire stations, which were in fact reported as more memorable and influential.

Taken together with the watch commander development and informal learning experiences, and despite the somewhat neutral reports of the interviewees, the station commander development programme could then be observed through deeper analysis to have made a contribution at group and organisational levels. At group level, firstly with regard to incident management, there was a mutually reinforcing relationship between watch commander development, informal learning and the station commander development programme. Thus, MLD can be said to have contributed at group level to securing technical compliance and promoting commitment to professionalised incident management. With regard to IPDS and its related practices, the relationships between the different learning experiences were mutually supportive in some cases, but

divergent and conflicting in others. Thus, MLD can be said to have contributed at group level to developing uneven commitment to the new professionalised model of staff development. The combination of outcomes at group level contributed to the stability of the safety bureaucracy and a partial transition in the form of professionalisation at organisational level.

To return to the individual level in more detail, the most significant MLD experience for the interviewees concerned the development of technical and management expertise at operational incidents. Much of this derived from the watch commander training, which was tailored to the London context and delivered in Southwark. As one ex-station commander related:

[T]he junior officers' course [at the Fire Service College] ... was so generic. It was ship-fires and stuff, and I'm never likely to go to a ship-fire in London. But the Watch Commander Development programme was very specific; it was for London, it was for my role, it was about what was expected of me.... It taught me very basically how to fight a fire from a command-and-control point of view.... they actually said "This is how you should do it. This is textbook" It gave me more confidence.... I hope that this doesn't come across as arrogant - it confirmed that some of stuff that I was doing that was expected of me wasn't a guess.... It gave me a lot of manuals, so if I was ever unsure of something, [for example] a chemical incident, there was a little book that I referred to. That sort of thing I found very helpful. (Interview with assistant district officer 1)

This illustrates how the foundation for station commander development was to provide individual managers with assurance of their operational managerial competence to practice effective command-and-control at incidents. Such competence helped to ensure technical compliance at group level amongst firefighters, and ultimately the stability of the safety bureaucracy.

Similarly to the experience of the watch commander development programme, two newer station commanders described how the station commander development programme principally served to reassure them of their abilities to fulfil their new role and responsibilities (see top left of Figure 5.9). For the other seven interviewees, who were more experienced station commanders, rather than a reassurance, MLD was perceived mainly as an institutional certification of their existing managerial competence (bottom left of Figure 5.9). As one station commander put it:

I'd been doing the role for a few years. I'm not saying I was perfect but I was evidencing a lot of stuff which I'd proved competence in anyway.... [My borough commander] knew I was competent at the end of the day. (Interview with station commander 4)

The competence referred to by the interviewees was invariably related to incident management. There was strong evidence of commitment to the 'hands-off', developmental approach to incident management, as framed in the IPDS competence statements. Three interviewees explicitly rejected the heroic, 'hands-on' approach to leading at fire incidents, or the 'Captain Kirk' style of leadership, as one called it. Rather than issuing instructions or taking charge unnecessarily, one station commander described how he had adopted a coaching-type approach towards the next officer in command at fire incidents, asking 'have you considered?' questions.

The modelling of new incident management practices ran through the different IPDS development programmes at management levels, and this seemed to play a significant part in embedding the more professionalised approaches into normal managerial practice. One of the younger station commanders recalled his watch management training and illustrated the importance of formal development in this area:

[The trainers] couldn't ... stop me getting involved at incidents. I would just be running in there headlong ... because I didn't trust anybody else to do it. So it was a bit of a problem for me but I didn't realise it at the time.... And then one day, on the last couple of days of the ... course, they said "Right ... on this drill... we want you to assess the next officer in charge.... Where do you think [he] should be standing?" I said, "Where I am". And it was like the heavens opened and I suddenly realised that, as a manager, you need to see the big picture, you need to step away and you can see everything. It was just changed overnight (Interview with station commander 1)

For others, however, the newly endorsed and taught approach to incident management represented a continuation rather than a change. For example, a more experienced station commander (also an FBU representative) claimed:

In my career [of thirty-one years] I have only ever once had to *order* someone to do something: that's how I like to manage people. In terms of the formal training, nothing has been that significant. (Interview with station commander 2 - emphasis added)

With regard to incident management, it is reasonable to conclude that MLD, alongside informal learning on fire stations, contributed to a successful shift away from command-and-control management towards a more empowering and developmental approach. Indeed, the Audit Commission had already noted in 2004 the emergence of more thorough and reflective practices in this area:

LFEPA [London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority] takes seriously the need to learn from experience. For example, after every incident attended by more than four appliances, there is a review of the organisation's response in order to identify learning (Audit Commission 2004: 24, para 112).

The second significant area of MLD's contribution concerned the station commander's enhanced responsibility for professionalised staff development. This was revealed through the interviewees' perceptions and attitudes towards IPDS, as both users and supposed champions of the new system on the fire station. However, the results in this area were mixed in comparison to those relating to incident management.

On the more positive side, there was evidence of general commitment to competence-based development as a fairer and more transparent model of professional development and basis for promotion. Support for the new system was expressed by five of the nine interviewees, both in terms of their own careers and for their staff. With one exception, none of the interviewees expressly defended the previous, more informal system of promotion. As one station commander related:

In the old days, if you like, it was if the boss knew you as a good egg, worth his salt, et cetera, then you were deemed competent and you would progress. It was very subjective in a way, because it could almost be whether they liked you or not – you were favoured or you weren't. (Interview with station commander 7)

There were some concerns, however, that the new system had become overly formalised. Another station commander argued: "*It went from being a boy's club of people you knew... but [then] it's swung right away to the other end of the scale where people would be promoted purely by their point score*" (Interview with station manager

1). On balance, however, the system was seen to represent “*definitely a step in the right direction*” (Interview with station commander 2, and FBU representative).

Commitment to IPDS extended beyond support for its underlying principles to an appreciation of the competence-based approach to learning. As the female station manager related: “*I quite liked the development record, though I know a lot a people don't like them. Parts of it I'd already done, but to do other parts and get feedback was very useful*” (Interview with station manager 6). In addition, she welcomed the opportunity to prove her managerial competence in an alternative way to examinations and classroom instruction: “*men are so competitive – there's a lot of ego and bravado – and it makes it difficult to learn in that environment*” (*ibid*). Another station commander valued the development record, but recognised that its success as a method was dependent on line management support:

[I]f I'd done the development record with a manager I respected and I learnt a lot from, that would [have been] perfect The actual manager I did my development record with... I wouldn't say is the best manager I've ever worked with.... I found it [the development record] a bit of a passive process to be honest (Interview with station commander 4)

To turn to the more negative side, the interviews revealed some ambivalence towards IPDS, particularly with regard to the paper-based development record. On a superficial level, the negative reactions to the development record were predictable. As one station commander caricatured the IPDS development files: “*the candidate writes chapter and verse... 'I put my socks on, then I put my underpants on, and then I did this, and then I did that*” (Interview with station commander 3). Such complaints about the cumbersome and unnecessary nature of the evidence-gathering process are entirely consistent with other negative accounts of competence- and portfolio-based assessment and development (c.f. Grugulis 2000).

However, the other main expression of ambivalence amongst station commanders took the form of scepticism that IDPS could successfully uphold and improve safety and professional standards. At the extreme end, one argued that it was “appalling” that the Fire Service College examinations had been abolished, and that these had been a much better way of ensuring standards. Three other interviewees also expressed

varying degrees of concern about relying on a competence-based system to ensure that staff were sufficiently qualified to handle safety-critical situations. The more measured end of opinion was summarised by one experienced station manager and FBU representative:

IPDS should be OK in principle, but in practice [it] can't completely verify whether people are suitable or not, especially when it comes to safety.... some people can slip through the net.... if you speak to the assessors, they say that they would like to do more and do it better, such as having more time with the trainees, to sit down and talk to them and monitor them.... it's like the King's New Clothes – we will believe that we have better people because it says so on paper. (Interview with station commander 2)

Further probing revealed that much of the unease about IPDS amongst station commanders was rooted in the legacy of the firefighters' dispute of 2002-4 and the growing influence of non-uniformed staff over MLD. For one non-uniformed manager, resistance to IPDS amongst operational staff could be explained by a cultural antipathy towards non-practical tasks:

Frankly I think that they [uniformed staff] just don't like writing things down and justifying what they do, which is a perhaps reflection of the practical nature and culture of the job. (Interview with vocational learning manager)

But for several station commanders, IPDS was concerned with more fundamental questions of what constituted professional standards in the fire service, who should determine them, and how they should be demonstrated. While one newer station commander held the simple resigned view that, "*we are run now by non-uniformed people*" (Interview with station commander 1), others expressed a clear resentment of what they saw as interference by politicians and bureaucrats in technical firefighting matters. As one ex-station commander explained his pride in the uniformed tradition:

For me, the fire service for a long time was a uniformed service. I'm not saying that's a good or bad thing, that's just fact. As time moves on ... we're employing more and more main grade staff. For the uniformed side, as I see it, it's a career. It's a job for life...and there's quite a lot of us like that. It's something we belong to, it's something we believe in, we're very, very proud of it. Yes, I know some of the faults with it. It's highlighted in many, many papers... But we're part of something. I don't feel the same with the non-

uniformed side. To them it's a paid job.... There doesn't seem to be the same level of commitment. (Interview with assistant district officer 2)

He went on to relate how he and his colleagues challenged their non-uniformed co-workers to match their professional status and higher salaries:

We're saying [to them] "OK then, go downstairs, enrol as a trainee firefighter, if you get through all the assessment processes, then do all the training, prove your competence as a firefighter, then wait for the crew commander round, be successful in that, get your course, get competency as crew commander, same again for the watch commander, then get promoted to station officer, and then you can come up here and do this as well and be on my salary." (Interview with assistant district officer 1)

The involvement of non-specialists in determining and institutionalising the modernised station manager role through the IPDS framework was clearly responsible for some residual resentment among uniformed staff. With the firefighters' dispute officially resolved, however, the interview evidence overall suggests that a gradual acceptance, even a commitment to the new regulatory framework for professional development had begun to take hold.

Audit Commission reports support this interpretation. In its 2005 Comprehensive Performance Assessment, the Commission had complained of a general lack of progress nationally in embedding IPDS into normal working methods:

The changes to the fire and rescue service that IPDS is intended to realise are not yet being achieved and there is little understanding, particularly among staff, of what that outcome will look and feel like.... good authorities [of which LFB was one] still have progress to make in embedding IPDS within their systems and culture. (Audit Commission 2006: 37 para 82)

By 2009, however, the Commission noted that:

LFEPA has implemented the Integrated Personal Development System. It has a clear focus on upholding skills and competencies. Personal reviews identify training needs. (Audit Commission 2009: 25, para 85)

The partial commitment to a new competence-based, professionalised system of employee development evident from the interviews in 2005 may be explained by reference to political obstacles and a certain lack of strategic HRD competence, as conceptualised in Section 2.2. As will be demonstrated, these two contextual factors also help to explain why MLD was not observed to make a greater contribution towards developing middle managers' broader organisational knowledge and applied management skills, in order to promote greater professional-managerial collaboration and LFB's community fire safety strategy. Figure 5.10 reflects back on the hypothetically expected outcomes at individual level, as detailed in Figure 5.8, to illustrate at multiple levels where MLD was actually effective, where it was less effective, and where it was not effective.

Individual MLD outcomes	Group outcomes	Contribution to Organisational outcomes
Operational managerial competence (OMC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Specialist knowledge</i> • <i>Basic human skills</i> • <i>Planning and coordination skills</i> 	Staff compliance	Organisational stability
Professional managerial competence (PMC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Broad organisational knowledge</i> • <i>Applied management skills</i> • <i>Staff development knowledge and skills</i> 	Staff compliance Uneven professional commitment	Partial professionalisation
Intrapersonal competence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Advanced human skills</i> 		
.....constraints.....		
Political obstacles (managerial resistance)lack of strategic HRD competence		

LFB-specific detail in italics; observed MLD outcomes are highlighted (darker shading denotes stronger observations)

Figure 5.10 Partial effectiveness of MLD at the London Fire Brigade

With the benefit of the full range of evidence, there are four key observations that can now be made with regard to the areas of limited MLD impact and absent MLD

outcomes at LFB. Firstly, while applied management skills were developed in relation to professionalised incident management, there was little evidence of managers developing more general management skills such as in administration and information-management. Secondly, station commanders' commitment to staff development in line with IPDS was not as strong as might have been expected. Thirdly, the development of broader organisational knowledge was not a salient outcome. Fourthly, people management and human skills did not feature strongly amongst the reported MLD outcomes.

Although MLD may be said to have made some contribution to achieving the expected group and organisational outcomes at LFB, this may have been more salient, had political obstacles not been so strong and had other HR processes supported the kinds of changes to middle management towards which MLD was directed. The impact of political obstacles and lack of strategic HRD competence will be discussed in turn.

Political obstacles, in the form of strong informal learning practices that militated against the formal MLD process, help to explain why managers at LFB did not report more strongly as MLD outcomes the development of people management and staff development skills and broader organisational knowledge. A recurring theme in the interviews concerned the difference between the formal content of the station commander development programme and the realities of management on the station. One station commander spoke for many when she observed that "*the development record and the development programme...didn't bear any relation to the job*" (Interview with station manager 6). Another station commander reflected on what he saw as the gulf between the motivational theory that was taught and the reality of people management practice on the fire station:

It was refreshing to see that the Fire Service did such training, [but] less refreshing to realise that it was never implemented....You were taught lessons which you never implemented because the Fire Service just didn't run like that....The management training, apart from some aspects of discipline, which was based directly on our discipline code ... was "nice to know", almost, because you never got to do it. And if you tried to do it, you were out of step with the organisation. (Interview with station commander 7)

In contrast to managers' weak recognition of the value of the formal development programmes, there was a longstanding tradition of informal learning on fire stations. As one station commander described it:

I was at a station where there was quite a turnover of staff, one of the leading firefighters was always away on courses or secondments; there was always an opportunity. It was like that at a lot of the stations where the people who were interested in promotion would be mentored by the existing office staff, groomed in way, in 'this is what you do'. You tended to be put on the turntable ladder ... you would attend incidents but you wouldn't necessarily be in charge. So it was a natural thing. (Interview with station commander 3)

This 'natural' system of 'grooming' those interested in promotion represented exactly the type of informal practice that IPDS and other modernisation reforms sought to replace, on the grounds that such practices were unfair and opaque. The female station commander interviewed reminded of the informal system's marginalising effects: "*If you are one of the boys, people stick together and watch out for each other and you can network*" (Interview with station manager 6). However, it was clear that even after the formal introduction of IPDS informal practices continued to play an important but unofficial role in the development process. As one newer station commander related:

[M]y way of developing myself as a firefighter was, that once I'd learnt my job as a firefighter, [to] follow the junior officers around and [do] the office work.... I learnt all the office side of that job before I did most of the management training... So when you turn up at the fire station for your first bit of promotion, you don't have to go asking all these people what to do and seem like a bit of a clot ... We're a great organisation for helping each other out and that's what happens. (Interview with station manager 1)

This tradition of managerial learning and promotion can be seen as successful partnership between self-motivated individuals, informal organisation and formal development intervention. However, its success appeared to rely upon the individual being an 'insider' and having access to the support and cooperation of senior colleagues in fire stations.

The importance of the watch culture among uniformed staff, to which middle line managers also belonged, had long been recognised as a potential barrier to organisational change in the fire service. As Baigent *et al* (2003) demonstrate in their

‘Sunrise’ report into firefighter training, the official version of firefighting promoted during formal development activities at the training centre could be easily subverted and undermined back in the fire stations by watch and station commanders, who ‘knew better’ than those responsible for designing the training. For new firefighters to learn to display a cynical attitude towards IPDS became part of ‘fitting in’ and learning how to play the ‘them-and-us game’ between those responsible for training and those on the front line in fire stations. The watch culture, born out of the intensity of station life and the close-knit nature of the working environment, was able to transmit more powerful messages about the real nature of firefighting than those taught in formal development activities. As the leading personnel at fire stations, middle managers were close to the watch culture and often identified more readily with the unofficial culture than with their senior management colleagues. As Fitzgerald (2005) argues, the perpetuation of “strongly entrenched working practices” is rooted in “the identity of firefighters with their union through the watch system and the consequential mark this leaves on future managers who come through the single-tier [qualified firefighter only] entry system” (p.649).

It would be wrong, however, to suggest that the traditions of informal learning and the legacy of the firefighters’ dispute were insurmountable political obstacles to MLD’s contribution to professionalisation. For example, evidence of MLD’s successful contribution to broadening one’s organisational knowledge, instead of being constrained by the insulating effects of the uniformed watch culture, came from the female station commander. She related her experience while on secondment to an administrative function in the fire authority:

I did a number of different courses that were very useful, even if they were not specifically for managers. These courses helped me arbitrate, how to present the management side to audiences and they broadened my knowledge. They equipped me better than some of the specific management development programmes. (Interview with station commander 6)

Another station commander interviewee demonstrated a notably strong commitment to the new competence-based system of staff development due to its potential value for recruiting staff from non-traditional backgrounds, rather than relying on the traditional group of white male insiders:

The raw ability is there [in non-traditional managerial recruits]. It's the way it comes out. The way it's being tested for [in the old system] is not going to enable that person to show what they've got.... In fact, the additional dimension [of what they have to offer] is what's stopping them coming in (Interview with station commander 7)

Station commanders located in the middle line of the organisation were in a powerful position to influence the relationship between informal learning and the formal staff development system that embodied an important part of the intended professionalisation process. Station managers could encourage commitment to IPDS by treating informal learning practices as of equal importance or complementary to it. Alternatively they could undermine the formal staff development system by denigrating it or presenting informal learning as more legitimate. On balance, at LFB, the evidence suggests that middle managers lay between these two positions, and that this contributed to an uneven commitment to the formal development of broader management skills, organisational knowledge and specific people management skills.

A similar pattern of uneven commitment could be observed with regard to the new strategic priority of community fire safety. This dimension of the station commander's role was hardly reflected at all in the interviews with middle managers in 2005. With the exception of one young, fast-tracked station commander, the managers interviewed for this research made no reflections on community fire safety activities, either as part of their current role, or as an aspect of their managerial learning.

Some underlying resistance from firefighters towards the community fire safety strategy was indeed detectable. As even one young station commander put it:

[W]e need to make sure our focus is still on the training and that we can do the job that we're paid for. The public expect us to turn up and save them from their house going up, to save their property. (Interview with station commander 1)

Or, as put more bluntly by an ex-station commander:

The London Fire Brigade is firemen and fire engines, so to speak. (Interview with assistance district officer 2)

However, the main reason for MLD's lack of apparent impact in the area of community fire safety in 2005, as with its relative failure to promote broader organisational knowledge and wider set of applied management skills in the middle line, lay in the actual limited implementation of the national reforms at local authority level and a relative lack of strategic HRD competence at brigade-organisational level. More specifically this manifested itself in underdeveloped HRM practices and the retention of strongly centralised organisational structures, rather than a professional organisational model in which middle managers were more empowered and to which MLD could make a stronger contribution.

In Section 5.1, the observation was made that station commanders' roles had not been fully professionalised in the sense that their discretion was limited in various ways. The management of station budgets, for example, lay outside the responsibility of the station commander, and the central training function retained considerable involvement in the assessment of firefighters' competence in stations. This was despite the requirement on station commanders to complete development modules on managing finance and employee development. Similarly, as the Audit Commission reports cited above indicate, performance management processes for staff were not fully developed in 2005 to support managers' learning in the area of employee development and review.

With regard to the new strategy of community fire safety, despite the ambitious policy aims and insistence on IRMPs at authority level, there was a longstanding question in the service of how to resource fire prevention activities. As Fitzgerald (2005: 657) points out, prior to the modernisation White Paper of 2003, a leaked review of the 'Pathfinder' fire prevention pilot projects had suggested that a doubling of resources was necessary to meet the goals of a fully modernised fire service (although this was later denied by the government). This became a bone of contention during the firefighters' dispute, with the FBU arguing that:

In general Community Fire Safety work is inadequately funded by Central Government and there is no material incentive for Brigades to improve Community Fire Safety performance. (FBU 2003: 19)

By 2007/8, however, there were indications of greater progress towards community fire safety. The Audit Commission reported that LFB firefighters were spending ten per cent

of their time on community safety, which was two per cent above target (Audit Commission 2009: 30, para 111). Yet as far as managerial work was concerned, both the interview evidence and Audit Commission reports suggested that borough commanders rather than station commanders (that is senior rather than middle managers) tended to be primarily engaged in community fire safety. In their 2009 report, the Audit Commission cited only one example of a station manager (*sic*) taking a lead in community fire safety by chairing the Lambeth Safety Council; the other examples all belonged to borough commanders, who were reported as having become 'effective community leaders' (Audit Commission 2009: 16, paras 52-53).

It is therefore reasonable to conclude that, in 2005, significant opportunities to support and lead community-based fire prevention activities were not readily available at the level of fire station management. Even if a deep commitment to this new strategic priority had been stimulated amongst station commanders through MLD, the structures to support the enactment of this new professional responsibility were not yet fully formed. Similarly, the lack of broader managerial decision-making processes and more developed HRM policies meant that other learning from MLD in the areas of professional-managerial collaboration could not be fully applied by middle managers.

In short, as things stood in 2005, the limited implementation of national reforms at authority level led to only a partial structural transition towards the professional bureaucracy at organisational level, which prevented LFB from developing full strategic HRD competence and opportunities within which the full range of professionalised MLD could be applied.

5.3.2 Contribution of MLD for non-uniformed staff

Finally, it is instructive to report the very clear finding from the interviews with the five non-uniformed managers, as this puts into perspective the overall contribution of MLD in the organisation.

The non-uniformed interviewees came from across the organisation and included an administration manager, a recruitment manager, a performance planning officer, an information and planning officer, and a fire safety inspection officer. The five reflected the more diverse demographic profile of the non-uniformed staff, including four women and two black or minority ethnic persons. It was clear that MLD provision for non-

uniformed managers was not widespread and resulted in no significant outcomes. When asked about their most significant MLD experiences at LFB, all except one replied that there was 'nothing specific' to relate. The following quotes illustrate a lack of a formal MLD strategy for non-uniformed managers.

Where can I go? How can I transfer? (Interview with fire safety inspection officer)

You kind of start and you go. You just have to gauge it. We have a facility and there's a whole host of different courses that are available such as VCL [Value-Centred Leadership]. But it doesn't necessarily give you any formal strategies in which to manage or lead effectively (Interview with information and planning officer)

Main grade staff are not developed, uniformed managers are. (Interview with administration manager)

It is possible that these interview findings contained negative Hawthorne effects. The volunteers' original willingness to be interviewed may have been motivated by their general enthusiasm for training and development and therefore their subsequent frustration about the lack of structured provision for them at LFB. The one positive interviewee of the five, while keen to display her enthusiasm for development for which she had been sponsored by her line managers, had in common with the other four interviews the inability to report any specific changes to which MLD was attributable. The overall pattern of MLD outcomes demonstrated across the non-uniformed interviewees is therefore strongly consistent.

The lack of significant investment and impact of MLD provision for non-uniformed managers at LFB is indicative of the prevailing strategic concerns to professionalise the operating core. Small investments in basic management or supervisory training were made in recognition of the continuing needs of non-uniformed managers of teams with mainly routinised work tasks. But in comparison to concerns with management skills on the uniformed side, where the intention to change working methods was stronger, the need to develop the existing non-uniformed workforce was not a strategic priority.

5.4 Assessment

Overall, the case of LFB lends support to the theoretical model of contingent MLD options and outcomes during professionalisation, as advanced in Chapter 2. However, the case study also highlights how the potential for political obstacles to MLD's contribution is accentuated in the professionalisation process. The actual pattern of MLD options and outcomes for middle managers at LFB is represented in Figure 5.11.

Structural transition and change to middle line	MLD intervention	Individual outcomes	Group outcomes	Organisational outcomes
<i>Professionalisation (Role A→C)</i>	OMD	OMC	Staff compliance	Organisational stability in the safety bureaucracy
	PMD	Some PMC	Uneven professional commitment	Limited professionalisation
	LD	Some intrapersonal competence		

Role A = machine middle line management; Role C = professional middle line management; OMD = operational management development; PMD = professional management development; LD = leader development; OMC = operational managerial competence; PMC = professional managerial competence; small font represents weaker results

Figure 5.11 Actual MLD options and outcomes at the London Fire Brigade

As explained in Chapter 3, the LFB case represents an intended shift from Role A to Role C middle management. In terms of MLD options, the station commander development programme, and the IPDS competence framework more generally, represented an MLD intervention that aimed to provide both operational management development (OMD), as well as more professionalised management development (PMD). There was also a small, non-compulsory provision of leader development (LD) through LFB's training and development department.

The MLD investments were generally successful in securing the expected staff compliance, to ensure the stability of the safety bureaucracy, and a degree of the expected professionalisation, manifested in more participatory approaches to managing incidents and employee development. MLD contributed less effectively to other aspects of professionalisation, namely the involvement of middle managers in wider managerial decision-making activities and the promotion of strategic change in the direction of community fire safety. The contextual variables of political obstacles and strategic HRD

competence provided the main reasons for why MLD did not make a greater contribution to professionalisation, as will be explored further.

The rough conformance to the expected pattern of MLD options and outcomes at LFB may be illustrated more sharply by a consideration of possible counterfactual options and outcomes that might have been. In terms of MLD options, LFB could have invested in a narrower set of training activities, similar to that of SWT; however, the broader skills required of middle managers at LFB, for example for incident management, staff development and community liaison, ensured that a broader competence-based approach was required to support professionalisation, even if limited in its eventual scope. At the other extreme, LFB might have invested in collective, non-prescriptive leadership development activities to promote greater innovation; however, the standardised operating environment did not demand this, although a small investment in individualised leader development was made. In terms of MLD outcomes, although constrained for the reasons described in the previous section, there were few perverse results, such as, for example, the development of interpersonal competence instead of the operational and professional managerial competence expected.

The interview accounts, on which much of the above conclusions about MLD's contribution rely, contained many strongly expressed opinions. The potential negative Hawthorne effects on the non-uniformed managers who volunteered for interview have been discussed in the previous subsection. In the case of the uniformed managers interviewed, the contested nature of the modernisation reforms and the legacy of the firefighters' dispute may have led to two types of selection bias. On the one hand, some interviewees were motivated to emphasise the success of technical training and downplay the value of development in broader managerial skills. On the other hand, interviewees who did not identify themselves as watch culture 'insiders' may have overemphasised their enthusiasm for IPDS, as for them it represented a fairer and more transparent system of development. It was therefore necessary to probe behind some of the uniformed managers' more negative or partial accounts, and the more positive ones, to identify the critical incidents in which MLD had genuinely effected change, and where it had been less effective. Wider support for the overall pattern of outcomes could then be inferred from other sources, in particular from Audit Commission reports.

The observed pattern of MLD's partial contribution to organisational change receives further support from Andrews (2010). In his study of fire authority performance in

England from 2001-6, as measured by the Audit Commission, the author concludes that “the implementation of the IPDS appears to be having an especially marked positive impact”, whereas the implementation of IRMPs had less effect (p.613). Recognising that HRM reform in the service continues to be a controversial issue (*ibid*), Andrews comments that IPDS clearly led to improved HRM outcomes and may have helped develop greater trust between managers and staff (p.609). However, he also observes that “the implementation of IRMPs [which promote community fire safety] has been especially challenging for fire authorities” and contributed less to improving organisational performance (p.611).

The political obstacles observed in the LFB case suggest that a wider theoretical conclusion may be drawn about MLD’s role during professionalisation. In contrast to divisionalisation, in which the work processes of the operating core essentially continue to be standardised in a machine-bureaucratic way, professionalisation necessarily involves a widening of employee roles, a process of re-codification that recognises more advanced and specialist skills in the operating core. If, as in the case of firefighting, the work tasks of the operating core have traditionally been controlled by representatives of organised labour in a machine bureaucracy, then the process of redefinition of employee roles is likely to be subject to powerful union interests, to which middle managers are also likely to be loyal. As observed in Section 5.1, professionalisation in its political sense is typically expected to be a bottom-up process, in which skilled specialists circumvent management control by negotiating more autonomous work roles. If, however, the political context surrounding professionalisation is adversarial, then the likelihood is increased that the remodelling of employee and managerial roles will be strongly contested. In short, while political obstacles to MLD may be encountered in any organisation, their potential is accentuated during professionalisation.

However, post-2005 evidence on LFB suggests that political obstacles, even during professionalisation, are neither permanent nor insurmountable. By 2009, the Audit Commission was reporting that MLD had started to make a greater contribution at LFB towards the involvement of uniformed managers in wider aspects of fire service management and the promotion of the strategic priority of community fire safety. The Commission noted the implementation of the 2005 national leadership and development strategy and the successful introduction of two programmes, the Targeted Development Programme and the Graduate Entry Scheme, designed to fast-track the

development and promotion of a more diverse group of middle managers (Audit Commission 2009: 24). The Targeted Development Programme had seventeen participants, nearly a third of whom were from black or minority ethnic backgrounds. The Graduate Entry Scheme had fourteen participants, six of whom were women (LFEPA 2009). Although small in terms of numbers of candidates, the programmes were notable in their apparent use of methods such as coaching, mentoring and special job assignments, unlike the more conventional management development methods employed in the station commander development programme. In particular, the Targeted Development Programme was seen by the Audit Commission to have “contribute[d] effectively to organisational projects” (Audit Commission 2009: 24, para 82).

This later development of MLD strategy at LFB may also be an indication that the government’s modernisation reforms had started to embed more deeply at authority level, thus enabling a greater degree of strategic HRD competence in the organisation. The reality in 2005 was that LFB was still strongly centralised. This was mainly because the operating environment was still highly regulated, and because emergency response activities predominated over community fire safety, a situation compounded by a lack of investment in localised fire prevention activities. Despite a formal redefinition of the station commander role to encourage a more participatory approach to management, in practice middle managerial discretion remained constrained. Without these constraints, it is arguable that MLD would have made a greater contribution to organisational change.

This interpretation of the pattern of results in the LFB case needs to be compared against possible rival explanations. The first rival explanation, particularly for the relative lack of impact of MLD, would be that MLD represented not a strategic investment in organisational change, but an instrument of political domination and control, which was successfully opposed and resisted by unionised firefighters. While there is some evidence to support this interpretation, for example in the way that the government outmanoeuvred and disempowered the FBU during the 2002-4 dispute, there is also too much evidence to the contrary. As explained in Section 5.1, a degree of political consensus was in fact shown to exist between stakeholders, including the FBU, in the sense that investment in career development and professionalisation of firefighting was generally seen as empowering and progressive.

The second rival explanation would be a neo-institutionalist explanation one: that MLD in the fire service represented little more than an ideological fashion for managerialism in the public services, and had little substantial real impact on changing management practice towards a more flexible and efficient model. Certainly this was the view of several FBU-loyal uniformed interviewees who downplayed the actual impact of MLD. However this argument is not fully sustainable. As Andrews has argued:

Despite sharing this [managerialist] ideological bond with other public service reforms, fire service modernisation nonetheless entailed the development and introduction of new measures that were designed specifically to meet the changing needs of the service.
(Andrews 2010: 602)

In particular, IPDS and IRMPs, to which MLD was directed to support, were rooted in the very specific context of the fire service and implemented with clear intended efficiency outcomes, some of which the reforms appeared to achieve (see Andrews 2010).

The third and final rival explanation for the partial nature of the MLD outcomes, and the resistance displayed by some uniformed managers, would be one that emphasised MLD as a reproducer of managerial identity. In particular it might be argued that firefighting is rooted in a stereotypically masculine, manual working class identity, which values physicality, heroism and risk-taking. Modernisation, particularly in the form of community fire safety and fire prevention activities, arguably represented a threat to this occupational identity, resulting in resistance from uniformed managers. As Thurnell-Reid and Parker (2008) observe in their qualitative study of sixteen firefighters on the 'Green Watch' in Middleton:

Implicit within this process of organisational modernisation and change, is the need for Service personnel to be approachable, communicative and caring to the needs of the general public (clients). For members of Green Watch, this shift meant the adoption of what were widely perceived to be more 'feminine' workplace qualities (Thurnell-Reid and Parker 2008: 132)

In this perspective, uniformed managers' underplaying of the value of MLD may be interpreted as a militating against the production of a new, stereotypically feminine and white collar occupational identity. The problem with this line of argument, however, is that there were clear structural reasons for managers, including the female manager

interviewed for this research, to report a limited contribution for MLD to organisational change. Uniformed staff were not opposed to community fire safety activities *per se*; indeed, as Thurnell-Reid and Parker (2008) also go on to illustrate, several members of Green Watch came to value them and incorporate them into their occupational identities (p.133). Rather, MLD failed to make a greater contribution in the area of community fire safety because the modernisation reforms were not well funded or embedded at local level, so managers did not perceive this particular aspect of learning as important.

MLD's contribution in this case is best explained as part of an incomplete process of transition from safety bureaucracy to professional bureaucracy. Ultimately the organisation in 2005 remained closer to the safety bureaucracy than the professional bureaucracy, due to the limited implementation of the modernisation reforms at authority level and due to a highly politicised context that erected obstacles to the learning transfer process. This prevented full strategic HRD competence at LFB and constrained opportunities for the full range of intended MLD outcomes to be achieved.

This mirroring of MLD options and outcomes against the degree of structural transition is also evident in the next case, which illustrates MLD's contribution to adhocratisation, but with fewer political obstacles.

Chapter 6. MLD and adhocratisation: the case of Kent Adult Social Services

You want the good ideas... but you want some time and space and some understanding of how we deliver them, really. (Interview with district manager 6, Kent Adult Social Services)

This chapter investigates the role of MLD for middle managers during the adhocratisation of a professional bureaucracy. The key hypothetical expectations during adhocratisation are that: i) middle management roles should shift from professional middle line management (Role C) towards middle leadership (Role D), in which the work of middle managers becomes less concerned with coordination through professional standards and more concerned with multi-disciplinary projects; and that ii) the organisation invests in professional management development (PMD) and leader development to support the stability of the professional bureaucracy, as well as project management development (PJMD) and leadership development to promote greater adhocracy.

The contribution of MLD is investigated through the case of the adult social services department, KASS, in which investments in PMD, leader development and leadership development for middle managers were made during the period 2005-7 amidst far-reaching changes at national and organisational levels. The case has three main findings. Firstly, the case demonstrates how investment in competence-based management development made a significant contribution to the stability and effectiveness of the professional bureaucracy by helping to align managerial efforts to strategic organisational goals. Secondly, the case demonstrates how investment in leader development made a contribution to promoting more effective mutual adjustment, but also how the impact of this type of intervention was constrained by an over-generalised approach. Thirdly, the case illustrated how investment in leadership development enabled greater project-based and lateral coordination amongst managers, but also how the outcomes of such intervention were shaped by the limits of managerial discretion and by institutional regulation. Overall the case lends support to the hypotheses, while shedding some additional light on the importance of HRD

competence and the relationship between MLD, management structures and institutional regulation.

The chapter has four sections. The first section analyses the changes to adult social care management from the mid-1990s to the late-2000s and their implications for middle management roles and skills at KASS. The second section discusses the aims and methods of the three main MLD interventions at KASS, and the extent to which they were directed at meeting the needs of the professional bureaucracy and the demand for greater adhocracy. The third section examines the evidence of multi-levelled outcomes of the MLD interventions and the extent to which these met the hypothetical expectations. The final section of the chapter assesses the overall contribution of MLD to adhocratisation.

6.1 Adhocratisation and the changing roles of middle management

Adult social care has been essentially been coordinated in the post second world war period through a professional social work bureaucracy, but has seen two main phases of change since the mid-1990s: marketisation and modernisation. The latter phase, which introduced greater demands for inter-agency partnership working and the personalisation of care, has been responsible for introducing a degree of adhocracy.

Adult social care encompasses a range of personalised services, such as support for older people, for people with physical or sensory impairments, learning disabilities and/or mental health problems. Care can be provided in a range of settings, including residential facilities, supported housing and, increasingly, in people's own homes through outreach services. The history of institutional arrangements for the provision of adult social care is complex and reveals a highly uneven pattern of development between the different services (Means and Smith 1998: 16-34). In essence, however, local authorities assumed the responsibility in the post-war period, in conjunction with the National Health Service (NHS), to ensure that care services were provided to those legally entitled to them. Local authorities employed professionally qualified social workers to diagnose, prescribe and monitor services for individual residents. Subject to budgetary constraints and a host of regulatory safeguards, services were then provided to local residents by specialist care workers.

Marketisation of adult care services dates from the Conservative administration's NHS and Community Care Act of 1990, which devolved care budgets to local social services departments, as well as the responsibility for assessing the eligibility of individuals to receive care within new and stricter limits. From 1993, social services departments assumed the role of purchasing care on the behalf of eligible individuals, from a quasi-market of local authority homes and independent providers. Care services provided directly by the local authority then had to compete with private and voluntary sector providers, and ensure value for money from the allocated budgets (Flynn 2007: 87).

Modernisation reforms date from the Labour government's White Paper *Modernising Social Services* of 1998. These measures went beyond the 'purchaser-provider split' of the 1990 Act and demanded closer partnerships between social services and other stakeholders. Increased emphasis was placed upon the coordination of interventions between social services, the health service, housing associations, voluntary sector providers and employment and skills agencies. Social services managers became expected to stimulate the development of care services by working together more closely with partners (*ibid*).

Greater complexity, but also intensified regulation from the centre, was introduced by the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003. This consolidated the quality management regime in social services, and opened up greater opportunities for user-involvement and for individuals to choose and purchase their own care directly, with the ultimate aim of reducing people's dependence on local authority provision. The creation of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) in 2004 introduced a unified standards framework that was applied to local authorities as well as other provider organisations, requiring significant changes to internal systems and processes.

Labour's modernisation reforms had the dual effects of increasing marketisation and local autonomy on the one hand, while strengthening centralised controls on the other. Devolution of responsibility for budgets and care provision broadened management responsibilities at local authority level, but discretion over how resources were spent and prioritised, and how performance was defined, reported and monitored was increasingly subject to national regulation. This meant that the coordination mechanism in social care moved towards the standardisation of outputs, typically associated with

the divisionalised form, rather than by the standardisation of skills, typically associated with the professional bureaucracy.

Yet despite the increase in centralised performance controls, the modernisation reforms introduced sufficient uncertainty and complexity at local level to demand the exercising of professional discretion in management decisions. The oversight of complex contracting arrangements, sometimes involving multiple partners, combined with the introduction of a new qualitative, outcomes-based quality management regime, could not be easily standardised or routinised. The technical understanding necessary for this oversight lay beyond the knowledge and skills of non-specialist staff, who were required to collaborate relatively closely with care professionals in order to make management decisions.

While centralised controls may have reduced professional discretion overall and intensified the work of social workers, due to the devolution of complex responsibilities, the involvement of more senior professionals in local management decisions actually increased (c.f. Whipp *et al.* 2005: 101-2). This meant that mutual adjustment – a key coordination mechanism employed in the middle line of professional bureaucracies - became increasingly important for the middle line and front-line managers in social care, who assumed broader responsibilities for liaison with non-specialist staff. Rather than pure managerialisation or pure professionalisation, the developments in social care management in the mid-1990s represent a 'professional managerial hybridisation' (Ferlie and Geraghty 2005: 434).

The pressures to adopt more adhocratic ways of delivering services were exemplified by the introduction of individualised care plans. This heightened uncertainty and complexity in the commissioning, contracting and monitoring of care provision. The growing expectation was that local managers would commission care services in collaboration with a range of other service providers in pursuit of various, shared social care and health outcomes, with the ultimate effect of saving or freeing up local authority resources. Such collaborative working arrangements require not only mutual adjustment; they also produce opportunities for innovation in care services at local level (c.f. Means and Smith 1998: 166).

The changes to adult social care management arising from marketisation and modernisation resulted in pressures of change to middle management roles in local

authority professional social work bureaucracies. The typical middle line manager in social care is a district manager. The operational side of social care management tends to be geographically organised, so middle line managers, typically qualified social workers or health professionals, take responsibility for the provision and quality of care in a local authority district. He or she acts as the interface between senior management, responsible for policy and strategy at authority level, and front-line management across the district, who are responsible either for the direct provision of care by staff teams, or for the quality of care commissioned from the private and/or voluntary sectors.

Increasingly, district managers have also become responsible for developing partnerships with other services within the local authority and with other organisations such as the local health service and social housing providers. The other significant group of middle managers is represented by mid-level administrative managers, who are responsible for various support services such as contracting, finance and quality assurance. Support functions within local social services departments grew in importance after the devolution reforms of the mid-1990s.

The shift in middle management roles, from professional middle line management (Role C) towards middle leadership (Role D), resulting from the shift in the adult social care environment from marketisation to modernisation, and from professional-managerial hybridisation to adhocratisation, is summarised in Figure 6.1.

<i>'marketisation'</i> (leading to professional-managerial hybridisation)	<i>'modernisation'</i> (leading to some adhocratisation)
Professional middle line management (Role C) → Middle leadership (Role D)	
Specialist professional activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social work supervision • Care-planning and monitoring 	Partnership-working <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mutual adjustment with private/voluntary sector partner organisations • Common quality-management standards
Applied management activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgeting and financial management • Contracting/commissioning 	Project-management and innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local partnership projects for new care arrangements and/or services
Professional-managerial collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaison and mutual adjustment with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ social services administration managers ○ other local authority managers ○ NHS managers 	

Figure 6.1 Changes in middle management roles in adult social care

Role C professional middle line management was theorised in Section 1.3 as consisting principally of professional-managerial collaboration and mutual adjustment. Operational middle managers were seen to require not just advanced specialist knowledge but also more generic management skills. These two aspects were expected to be combined through liaison activity and mutual adjustment with other parts of the bureaucracy. In the context of adult social care, specialist activities of senior professional staff comprised mainly of supervision and care-planning to ensure compliance and the development of social work standards. The more general business management activities such as budgeting, financial management, contracting and commissioning were augmented by the marketisation reforms.

Role D middle leadership was theorised in Section 1.3 as chiefly concerned with project management and innovation. While advanced technical knowledge was seen as a prerequisite for certain specialist projects, a high degree of mutual adjustment with non-specialists was expected as the organisation seeks the development of innovative solutions to managing in an uncertain and complex environment. In the adult social care context, the modernisation reforms concerned with personalisation of care, partnership-working, the unified quality management framework and the stimulation of new ways of providing care increased demand for middle leadership behaviour. In particular, the shift from contracting to partnership-working heightened the need for professional-managerial collaboration and mutual adjustment. The scope for partnership-working was extended from other parts of the social services and the NHS to organisations from the private and voluntary sectors, framed within a common set of quality standards. Project-working and innovation took the form of local partnership initiatives to develop more personalised and integrated arrangements for providing care and for new types of services.

The shift in management roles in adult social care during the late-2000s had significant implications for middle management skills. In Section 2.3 it was theorised that Role C professional middle line management required advanced specialist knowledge, human skills and the conceptual skills to manage the changing regulatory environment. Role D middle leadership was theorised as requiring project management, advanced human skills and the conceptual skills to understand innovation and strategic change priorities. This shift in skill requirements was largely reflected in national policy interventions.

A government report in 2000 signalled the shift in skill requirements. It claimed that “First-line and middle managers will be severely challenged by the demands of the modernising agenda” (Topss 2000, cited in Topss 2004: i). The report commented further that there was a lack of a “sufficient management skill mix in the sector to respond to the challenges of managing cross-service boundaries with health, education, housing, or of service standards and new inspection and regulation structures” (*ibid*). A national skills strategy was then developed and published in 2004, which applied the competence-based National Occupational Standards in Leadership and Management to the social care profession and produced a ‘statement’ of what leaders and managers in social care ‘should do’ (Topss 2004). Detailed standards in leadership and management for the sector, and a list of recognised management qualifications against which they could be matched, were eventually published in February 2008 (Skills for Care 2008).

Officially, the national social care management standards were only guidelines, but they had a strong standardising effect across the sector. At first-line management level, for individual registered care home managers, it was made compulsory to possess not only a specialist care qualification, but also a national ‘level 4’ management qualification (CSCI 2008). Management qualifications remained voluntary for mid-level managers overseeing care in the local authorities, although the professional norms set by the sector skills council, Skills for Care, were in fact used by CSCI as benchmarks of leadership and management capacity. It was therefore in local authorities’ interests to ensure that qualified social workers in managerial roles or those seeking promotion studied for level 4-equivalent management qualifications, often within the ‘post-qualifying framework’ for advanced professional development in social work.

Overall, the model of social care management was the product of a top-down, prescriptive, competence-based approach to ensure both professional and generic managerial competence. However, the prescriptive tendency was curtailed in two respects. First, the policy documents placed a considerable emphasis on leadership, using the terms ‘leaders’ and ‘managers’ interchangeably. This reflected a recognition of the importance of senior social workers’ less predictable and tangible roles in motivating staff, participating in interdisciplinary collaboration and promoting innovation, alongside the more sector-specific managerial responsibilities. Second, the national policy espoused a ‘whole systems model’, involving an integrated approach to learning and development across individual managers, employers and partners. This provided

for a significant degree of local flexibility in the definition of specific managerial roles and in choices over how to develop managers and their careers.

The national policy documentation implicitly recognised the importance of technical, human and conceptual skills in professional social care management (Role C) and the advanced human skills required for middle leadership (Role D). To illustrate the detailed ways in which the changes to social care management impacted at the local organisational level, some background to KASS is required. The evidence is drawn from organisational documentation, interviews and consultations with nine of the council's senior managers, including the chief executive, and interviews with eighteen of KASS's middle managers during 2007.

KASS was created as a new directorate for adult care services within Kent County Council (KCC) in 2005. As in many local authorities, the 2004 Children's Act had led to the breaking up of the social services department into two departments, one focussing on children (including schools and family services) and another on adults. The breakdown of KASS's workforce for 2006 and 2007 can be seen in Table 6.1.

	2006	2007
Headcount	3967.0	3798.0
FTE	2955.0	2825.9
Full-Time FTE	1726.0	1673.0
Part-Time FTE	1220.2	1151.6
Male FTE	551.9	504.5
Part-Time (Male) FTE	114.9	96.5
Female FTE	2394.7	2320.0
Part-Time (Female) FTE	1105.7	1055.0

Table 6.1 Workforce data for Kent Adult Social Services 2006-07
(Source: KCC Adult Social Services Workforce Plan 2006-2010)

Table 6.1 shows the large proportion of part-time females at KASS, which is typical for the social care sector. Also typical was the long service amongst senior staff; the related data for KASS are shown in Table 6.2.

Length of service as at 2007	0-2 Yrs	3-5 Yrs	6-10 Yrs	11-15 Yrs	16-20 Yrs	20+ Yrs	Total
All employees	908	857	662	640	435	297	3799
Grade 13 managers	3	4	4	11	23	15	60
Grade 14 managers	2	2	1	3	10	5	23
Grade 15 managers	2	0	0	0	5	3	10
Senior managers	1	0	0	0	1	3	5

Table 6.2 Length of service amongst staff and management at Kent Adult Social Services in 2007

(Source: KCC Adult Social Services Workforce Plan 2006-2010)

The focal group of this research, middle managers, is represented by the 83 managers in grades 13 and 14 out of a total of 98 middle and senior managers (84.7 per cent). Front-line managers were recorded as staff at the top of the social work pay-scale rather than part of the council's management grading system.

To summarise, mid-level managers at KASS were mainly female and long-serving. In addition, it can be deduced from the available data that middle line managers, responsible for operational teams, were matched in number, even outnumbered, by administrative managers. The breakdown of managers across the different teams in KASS is represented in Table 6.3.

Number of managers at KASS by team in 2007	
East Kent Area	16
West Kent Area	15
Mental Health and County Duty Service	6
Resources (incl. Finance)	15
Policy Performance and Quality Assurance	15
Other	31
Total	98

Table 6.3 Managers by team at Kent Adult Social Services in 2007

(Source: KCC Adult Social Services Workforce Plan 2006-2010)

The teams responsible for the core operational work of the directorate were the East and West Kent Area teams and the Mental Health and County Duty Service. As a rule of thumb, approximately 80 per cent of the managers in each team can be expected to

be middle managers at grades 13 or 14, totalling approximately 78 of the total 98 managers in KASS. Therefore, of the 38 managers in these teams, it is reasonable to assume that approximately 31 were middle line managers, leaving approximately 47 middle managers to be categorised as administrative or 'other' managers. The 'purest' form of middle line managers were the district managers in the East and West Kent areas, each responsible for the provision and quality of care in a district of the county. The main two teams on the support service side of the directorate, as Table 6.3 shows, were in resources, finance, policy performance and quality assurance. A typical middle manager from one of these teams would be responsible for an administrative team or a number of administrative teams, each supporting a particular service, sometimes for a particular area of the county.

The large size of the group of mid-level administration managers, relative to the middle line, highlights the significant potential for professional-managerial collaboration and inter-departmental project work at KASS. These activities are key features of professional middle line management (Role C) and middle leadership (Role D). How the organisation sought to develop the requisite skills for both these roles is the subject of the next section of the chapter.

6.2 MLD options

The theoretical expectation during adhocratisation is that investments should be made in professionalised management development (PMD) and leader development to support the effectiveness of the professional bureaucracy, with some additional investment in project management development (PJMD) and leadership development to support the move towards greater adhocracy.

In the context of adult social care, PMD should be expected to aim to develop competence both in the specialist professional aspects of social care management, such as care-planning, and in the applied managerial aspects, such as budgeting and contracting. This lends itself to a relatively prescriptive, competence-based approach to learning. Leader development, employing mainly individualised learning methods, should be expected to aim to develop intrapersonal competence amongst social care managers to increase the effectiveness of mutual adjustment in the organisation.

PJMD, which lends itself largely to conventional training methods, should be expected to aim to develop competence in project-based work. Finally, leadership development, using open, group-based learning methods, should be expected to aim to develop greater collective flexibility and adaptive capacity amongst managers to respond to the changes in the adult social care environment.

In making three significant MLD interventions during 2005-7, KASS conformed quite closely to this set of theoretical expectations. The three main interventions were the diploma in management, a three-day workshop entitled 'From Good to Great' and a programme of activities named 'Inspirational Leadership'. Crudely, the diploma in management served professional management development (PMD) needs in the organisation and some leader development needs; From Good to Great represented an additional attempt to address leader development needs; and Inspirational Leadership was an attempt at leadership development for middle managers. The organisation also provided for some middle managers to be trained in the use of the project management software (Prince II) (see PJMD), but this was a small investment in comparison to the other three interventions.

Figure 6.2 summarises the key MLD interventions at KASS and the extent to which these conformed to theoretical expectations about MLD options during adhocratisation.

Expected MLD options during adhocratisation	Actual MLD options at KASS
Professional management development (PMD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> competence-based development in specialist-professional and applied management skills 	Diploma in Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> compliant with the National Occupational Standards in Leadership and Management in Care
Leader development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> individualised development in intrapersonal competence 	From Good to Great <ul style="list-style-type: none"> three-day workshop on leader skills
Project management development (PJMD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> training in project-management tools and techniques 	<i>Prince II training</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>instruction in project management software</i>
Leadership development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> group-based development for greater adaptive capacity 	Inspirational Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> nine-month series of one-two day workshops and action learning sets concerned with adult social care management

(dashed arrow and *italics* represent smaller investment in MLD)

Figure 6.2 Expected and actual MLD options at Kent Adult Social Services

The evolution of the MLD interventions at KASS requires some further explanation in order to establish their conformance to the theoretical expectations. Precise and explicit objectives behind the MLD interventions did generally not exist; however, it was possible to infer their underlying aims through interviews with senior managers. It was clear that the various MLD interventions were both a response to the changing requirements for leadership and management skills in social care from the mid-1990s onwards, as well as part of a local HR strategy to address recruitment and retention problems in social work.

A suite of management qualifications, accredited by the Chartered Management Institute, was introduced in 1994 (coinciding with the national marketisation reforms and the devolution of care budgets, although not necessarily by design). Certificates and diplomas in management were delivered at various levels for supervisors, first-line and middle managers in partnership with a local university. A small number of candidates were also sourced from partner organisations, such as the local police force and fire authority. The qualifications were broad in nature and aimed to develop generic management knowledge and skills amongst senior staff at the council, including managers from the social services department, who were the heaviest users of the management qualifications out of the council's five directorates.

In the late-1990s, the two key HR problems for KASS were staff retention and motivation. These had a significant influence on shaping MLD strategy. In 1998, the vacancy rate for social workers was around 40 per cent, compared to 25 per cent for the rest of the council (KCC HR documentation 1998). To address motivation and retention problems the social services directorate invested in its own 'staff care package' in 1998, introducing a range of measures under a 'ten point plan' to improve the quality of the employee's experience. The measures included commitments on wellbeing, training and development and work-life balance. Improved people management and supervision were central to the staff care package, so management qualifications became an important part of the overall attempt to develop line managers' competence in these areas.

The suite of accredited management qualifications developed over the years until 2005, when the council became an accredited Chartered Management Institute centre and the qualifications were brought in-house. Increasingly, management qualifications became

desirable requirements of advertised management positions. Between 2005 and 2007, 105 managers from across the council enrolled on the diploma in management, with a 98 per cent completion rate. 34 of the 105 managers over the period came from social services or KASS, equal to over a third of the middle to senior managers from the directorate. The diploma was a conventional, competence-based management development programme, run internally by KCC's learning and development function. It was a year-long, part-time qualification accredited at national level 5 by the Chartered Management Institute. For KASS managers, the qualification was also eventually mapped against the National Occupational Standards for Leadership and Management in Care.

The qualification consisted of eight modules, delivered principally through monthly taught sessions. Each module was assessed through a piece of workplace-based coursework. In addition, candidates had to complete a final 10,000-word project. The module content was roughly equally balanced between people management and other resource management priorities. The eight modules (in rearranged order) were:

- Developing your management style
- Recruitment and selection
- Managing performance
- Developing teams and individuals
- Managing information and communication
- Customer focus, marketing and planning
- Maintaining and improving health, safety and quality
- Planning and controlling physical and financial resources

The first four modules were focussed on the knowledge and skills required for effective people management, with some attention to leadership skills, reflecting the general emphasis placed by the council upon supervision and line management. The remaining four modules also covered general management knowledge, but were strongly contextualised according to organisational and specific professional priorities. Since the diploma had become an in-house programme, it only recruited candidates from within the council. All assessments were individually negotiated with the tutors and related to specific issues in the candidates' own teams. Therefore, social care managers who studied 'customer focus and marketing', for example, adapted and applied marketing

theory to issues specifically concerned with the needs of social care clients. The applied nature of the diploma in management at KASS makes it a prime example of professional management development (PMD) as theorised in Section 2.3.

In the 2000s, MLD strategy at KASS became increasingly concerned with leadership. The growing preoccupation with leadership is reflected in the evolution of the council's 'Strategy for Staff', originally published in 1998, and revised in 2001, 2004 and 2008. Effective people management and supervisory skills were a priority in all the documents, but the 2004 strategy explicitly emphasised the need for leadership "to inspire others through their ability to make sense of our complex environment and offer direction, purpose and support". The 2008 strategy went further, emphasising 'inspirational leadership', required "to work effectively across traditional boundaries, work collaboratively and in partnership to provide direction, support and epitomise behaviour that reinforces our values" (KCC HR documentation).

As noted above, the specific organisational goals behind these types of corporate-level statements are elusive. Yet the rhetorical shifts are notable: from an emphasis on people management in 1998, to 'inspiring others' in 2004, to 'working collaboratively' and 'across traditional boundaries' in 2008. These echo the broader shifts that were taking place in the adult social care environment and the corresponding changes in approaches to coordination: from effective control, to staff motivation towards organisational goals, to a more outward-looking and adhocratic way of working. The two leadership-orientated interventions at KASS, From Good to Great and Inspirational Leadership, may be seen as responses to these shifts. The former was primarily concerned with the shift towards developing individual managers' abilities to motivate staff, while the latter was concerned with the shift towards the development of new ways of working within the middle management group.

From Good to Great was developed in 2005 as a three-day residential leader development course for more experienced middle managers and new or aspiring senior managers. In comparison to the diploma in management it was a less significant investment, but it nonetheless provided for 50 participants between 2006 and 2007, in four cohorts of roughly equal size. Out of the total of 50 participants, 12 were from KASS, representing approximately 12 per cent of all middle and senior managers in the directorate. The programme consisted of a broad mixture of activities, including an emotional intelligence questionnaire with feedback from a certified trainer, various

individual reflective exercises and participative group tasks. The content of the programme was conceived and presented as a list of skill-based topics, as follows:

- Leadership and managing diversity
- Building successful teams
- Implementing strategy
- Coaching and mentoring
- Challenging self-limiting beliefs
- Conflict and pressure management
- Leading change
- Influencing

Despite its group-based delivery mode, its individualistic orientation was evident in language of the programme title and its objectives: “[The programme] will assist each participant to engage in future work with the wisdom and determination to act on a newly found understanding in innovative ways that will further enhance the performance of the department and the quality of your own life” (KCC Learning and Development documentation). The underlying aim of the programme was chiefly concerned with developing intrapersonal competence in the sense of better understanding one’s own approach to management and its relationship to the wider strategic picture.

‘Inspirational Leadership’ was a nine month-long, KASS-based programme of activities for middle managers in social care, also with rather vague aims (“to really make a difference to the future of the organisation” (KASS learning and development documentation)). The programme ran in three cohorts between 2006 and 2007 for 31 managers in total, including all of the district managers at the time. The programme was an attempt to provide an opportunity for middle managers to come together to reflect upon and respond constructively to a period of considerable environmental change and organisational restructuring. It was seen as a more flexible and less time-consuming alternative to the centrally-provided diploma in management and was structured as a series of non-assessed monthly workshops, each over 1-2 days, facilitated by an external trainer.

The workshop activities were a varied mix of management games and exercises, interspersed with individual and group reflective activities. The list of workshop activities

below is taken from the course literature, in its original order (the logic behind which is difficult to discern):

- ‘Open Business’ purchasing game
- scientific management simulation exercise
- group reflection on social control
- ‘Saboteur’ problem-solving exercise
- discussion of the practice of coaching
- group production of a training video around people management skills
- group debate exercise around organisational change
- business simulation exercise
- individual career planning and reflection on goals
- team strategic planning exercise
- self-evaluation and personal development planning
- ‘High Court Trial’ game around decision-making and justice
- group discussion of the manager as team developer
- workplace-based team development project
- ‘own-and-other-peoples’-perception’ exercise
- ‘Team Modelling’ exercise
- Ongoing paired coaching

The above activities were dispersed over nine monthly group workshops and were then followed by a series of monthly ‘action learning set’ meetings. The action learning sets were facilitated by the external trainer for the first three months and were self-organised thereafter. The sets were comprised of small, voluntary groups of managers who wished to address particular work-based issues in a practical way, supported by relevant management models and theories.

There were similarities between Inspirational Leadership and From Good to Great, but also important differences, which allow the former to be characterised as a leadership development intervention as opposed to a leader development intervention. In common with From Good to Great, the objectives of Inspirational Leadership were somewhat vague and the activities were skills- rather than knowledge-based. However, partly because the participants of Inspirational Leadership were more narrowly selected from within the same directorate, the discussions and exercises addressed specific, practical

and shared concerns regarding adult social care management, particularly towards the end of the programme. Despite its apparently lengthy list of prescribed activities, the open and collective nature of Inspirational Leadership meant that it resembled a leadership development intervention. It may be interpreted as an investment in the middle line to enable a more adhocratic approach in adult social care management.

In summary, the three main MLD interventions – the diploma in management, From Good to Great and Inspirational Leadership - although quite different in size, collectively represented a significant investment in the development of the middle management of the organisation. Conforming quite closely to the theoretically expected MLD options under adhocratisation, the interventions aimed to ensure the effectiveness and stability in the managerialised professional bureaucracy, at the same time as enabling change in the direction of greater adhocracy.

6.3 Contribution of MLD to adhocratisation

Given that the MLD options conformed quite closely to theoretical expectations, and assuming HRD competence at KASS, it is to be expected that the MLD outcomes should also follow the contingent model of MLD outcomes developed in Chapter 2. The hypothetical MLD outcomes under adhocratisation at individual level are reproduced in Figure 6.3, including an illustration of the extent to which these were met at KASS.

While not matching the hypothetical outcomes exactly, the actual MLD outcomes at individual level conformed strongly to specific elements of them. For example, 'increased self-awareness' represents an important element if not the complete set of outcomes expected within intrapersonal competence (as in Figure 2.3).

MLD options during adhocratisation at KASS	Expected individual MLD outcomes	Actual individual MLD outcomes at KASS
Professional management development (PMD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • diploma in management 	Professional managerial competence (PMC)	Increased strategic and self-awareness
Leader development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aspects of the diploma in management • 'From Good to Great' 	Intrapersonal competence	Increased self-awareness and -confidence
<i>Project management development (PJMD)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Prince II training</i> 	<i>Some project management competence (PJMC)</i>	<i>Some project management competence</i>
Leadership development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Inspirational Leadership' 	Some interpersonal competence	Some improved problem-solving capacity and implementation of strategy

(italics represent smaller investment and less significant expected/actual outcomes)

Figure 6.3 Expected and actual individual MLD outcomes at Kent Adult Social Services

Figure 6.4 summarises the expected and actual MLD outcomes at group and organisational levels under adhocratisation.

MLD intervention for adhocratisation	Group outcomes	Contribution to organisational outcomes
Professional managerial development (PMD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Diploma in management</i> Leader development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>From Good to Great</i> 	Staff compliance and commitment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Alignment of staff with council and departmental strategic objectives</i> 	Stability and adaptation in the professional bureaucracy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Improved HRM outcomes</i> • <i>Improved performance in external audit</i>
Project management development (PJMD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Prince II training</i> Leadership development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Inspirational Leadership</i> 	Innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Improved collaboration between managers and with external partners</i> 	Emergent strategic change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Contribution of middle managers to shaping organisational strategy</i>

(actual interventions and outcomes in italics)

Figure 6.4 Expected and actual group- and organisational-level MLD outcomes at Kent Adult Social Services

As Figure 6.4 illustrates, the first set of theoretical expectations is that PMD and leader development should result in the group-level outcome of staff compliance with professional standards as well as commitment to organisational strategic goals, leading to the organisational-level outcome of a contribution to the stability and adaptability of the professional bureaucracy. The second set of expectations is that PJMD and leadership development should result in the group-level outcome of innovation, leading to the organisational-level outcome of an emergent strategic contribution. As will be shown, these expected outcomes were also broadly confirmed in the KASS case, although applied and shaped according to the adult social care and institutional context.

The multi-levelled outcomes of the three main MLD interventions (diploma in management, From Good to Great and Inspirational Leadership) are now examined in turn. The main source of evidence was the eighteen critical incident interviews with middle managers. The interviews were held in July-August 2007, with the exception of one interview which took place in October 2007. Four interviews were conducted face-to-face and fourteen by telephone. The interview data were corroborated where possible by HR and performance management documentation.

Table 6.4 summarises the key information about the middle manager interview sample.

		2005*	2006	2007	Total	Interviews
Diploma in Management	KASS	12	14	8	34	7 (20.6%)
	All directorates	27	48	30	105	
From Good to Great	KASS	-	7	5	12	6 (50.0%)
	All directorates	-	28	22	50	
Inspirational Leadership	KASS	10	21	-	31	5 (16.1%)
	All directorates	10	21	-	31	

* Figures apply to whole Social Services department before KASS was created in 2005.

Table 6.4 MLD participants from Kent Adult Social Services 2005-07 and interview sample

The difficulties in recruiting interviewees at KASS, as described in Section 3.4, were exacerbated by the redeployment and turnover of managers, which was approximately ten per cent per year in the years 2005-7 (KCC HR documentation). The possibilities for

volunteer bias were also discussed in Section 3.4; the extent to which this may have affected the reporting of MLD outcomes will be returned to as an issue in the final section of the chapter.

6.3.1 Contribution of professional management development (diploma in management)

Of the seven managers interviewed about their experiences of the diploma in management, four worked on the operational side and three worked in the support services. The sample therefore roughly reflected the operational/support split in KASS. It also mirrored the demographic profile of managers within the directorate. The group were largely female (five out of seven) and were long-serving (six managers had over ten years' service).

Two of the seven managers were archetypal mid-hierarchy managers, in the sense that they managed a number of front-line managers across various operational teams. The others, although also reporting directly to senior management, had direct responsibility for front-line staff (except one, a project planning manager, who had no direct reports). That the diploma in management sample did not include more archetypal mid-hierarchy managers is to be explained by the fact that those already in middle management posts tended to have completed the diploma prior to 2005. Also, within the support services of the organisation, hierarchies were sufficiently flat so as to not to employ significant numbers of front-line managers or supervisors. The seven interviewees were typical of the diploma in management target group, namely new or aspiring middle managers without significant previous MLD experience.

The individual MLD outcomes inferred from the middle manager interviews were broadly in line with the expected outcome of professional-managerial competence, involving the learning of conventional management tools, techniques and models as they applied to the professional bureaucratic environment. However, the most striking outcome, rather than the acquisition of any specific area of knowledge, was the development of a greater strategic awareness. More than any other outcome, the critical incidents reported pointed towards a gradual, general understanding of the 'bigger picture'. Figure 6.5 summarises the main findings of the interviews with the diploma group.

Individual outcomes	Group outcomes	Contribution to organisational outcomes
Increased strategic awareness (7)	More effective working with objectives (4)	Strategic improvements to services (4)
Increased self-awareness (4)	Staff involvement and development (3)	Budget savings (1)
Improved project-management (1)	Effective management of change (1)	
Improved change-management (1)	Improved communication with individuals (1)	
Improved health & safety-management (1)		
Financial management skills (1)		

(Brackets indicate number of interviewees)

Figure 6.5 Outcomes of the diploma in management at Kent Adult Social Services

The most significant thread of outcomes – linking the individual and group levels - starts with the development of greater strategic awareness amongst individuals. All seven diploma interviewees perceived that the programme had helped them understand the council's corporate strategy more clearly and their own place within it. The project planning manager was typical in her description of this learning outcome:

Before I actually went onto the [diploma in management], I understood [the] Council and the strategic objectives and all the rest of it, but I think it for me put everything into perspective...for instance, personal action planning and team action planning. I see the purpose behind that ... how it links with your unit plan, the annual plan, and how important it is for managers to see that that happens. (Interview with project planning manager)

Four diploma interviewees were able to link a sense of increased strategic awareness to more effective objective-setting with their teams and individual reports. These managers invariably spoke of how they had learnt, and become enthused, to break down the different levels of objectives in the organisation and explain to staff how corporate strategy was related to their team business plans and personal development plans. To do this, they drew on KCC's organisation's behavioural competence and

performance-related reward framework, 'Ways2Success'. For example, the web team manager and the team leader both described how they had started to present condensed strategic plans to their teams in new, accessible formats to try and ensure that their staff understood and were motivated by how they were contributing to the collective corporate effort. As the web team manager explained:

I'm not that far away from being a teamster myself to have forgotten what it's like to be in the team room and to be asked to do things that are not connected to anything – it's just a task. Now at the other side of the fence I can see all of the connections, and the DMS [diploma] has made me try hard to try and sell those (Interview with web team manager)

The interviewees' emphasis on target-setting and action-planning at all levels reinforces the observations made in official reports that KCC had a strong culture of working to objectives (CSCI 2007, Audit Commission 2008). The diploma in management was clearly successful in helping to impress this culture on the more junior and inexperienced middle managers, and in contributing to the organisation's effectiveness in terms of meeting its formal objectives.

The second main thread of outcomes is related to individuals' development of a greater self-awareness. Exposure to theories about different management styles during the diploma led four managers to reflect on their own management style. For example, the exchequer manager decided to seek feedback on how her colleagues perceived her, learning that "*I can come across as unapproachable when I'm busy*". The most commonly claimed result of such self-reflection was to pay greater attention to communication with team members and to make a greater effort to involve them in decisions and develop them professionally. For example, the senior support time and recovery worker described how she began to share out specific responsibilities amongst her team, such as for taking a lead on hospital discharge or liaison with community groups to involve people with mental health problems.

The tying together of the two main threads of individual and group MLD outcomes – on the one hand, increased strategic awareness linked to more effective working with objectives, and on the other, increased self awareness linked to greater staff involvement and development – is manifested in five specific claims of outcomes at the organisational level.

The first organisational-level outcome was of a tactical rather than strategic nature. It illustrates how the diploma, by developing greater strategic and self-awareness in one individual, enabled the implementation of budget cuts. The manager related how she combined her newly acquired budgeting skills with her fresh understanding of the wider strategic and financial issues facing the organisation:

I used to get really, really angry. But now I don't, because I understand the budget allocation and that the government only gives you so much and you've got to look at how best you can use those monies so that everybody is treated equally and that you can actually manage the service. And you do have to cut corners sometimes because it's not a bottomless pit. (Interview with team leader)

The team leader's increased self-awareness was also an important factor in learning to 'sell' budget decisions to her team:

When they [the team] get upset I explain... "We've had less government funding" or "There's been money hived off for this and money hived off for that"....They're not happy because obviously they're the ones that have to deliver the problems to the clients if we have to reduce services, and they find that difficult. But I help them through with it and I think it's easier now they understand why (Interview with team leader)

Although a small and localised example, this illustrates MLD's wider role in helping to secure compliance with business strategy in a professional bureaucracy. It demonstrates how senior professionals become equipped with technical skills such as financial management; but it also shows how MLD helps to incorporate them into identifying with and taking responsibility for implementing the wider strategic agenda, in this case the unpopular and difficult business of budget cuts.

The other four incidences of contributions to organisational outcomes were more clearly related to new strategic priorities. Firstly, the exchequer manager described how her newly developed strategic insight helped her to realise how narrow and transactional her team's relationships were with other parts of the organisation. Building on this, and a new appreciation of the importance of effective communication, she initiated development activities and specific discussions with her staff to try to make her team more open and responsive to other parts of the organisation. As she related:

[M]y senior finance and benefits officer had a problem with care management phoning in all the time, asking [for] information. So she basically instructed her little team to say ... "Can you send an email?" So I met with her and the team and said "How do you think that alters people's perception of finance? We are a team and when somebody phones in, we need to get a response...or action needs to be taken. By asking them to then send an email, it's not only causing them more work when they're just as stretched as we are, but it gives a bad message about communication in the function." (Interview with exchequer manager)

This small example has relevance in terms of the wider strategic role of MLD in a professional bureaucracy. While the business outcome of MLD described in the example (improved intra-organisational communication) may not be linked to a specific strategic goal, it plays an important role in promoting mutual adjustment. This is the key mechanism by which support services and the middle line attempt to coordinate the professional organisation's activities. In short, this is an example of how MLD helps to ensure organisational continuity in a professional bureaucracy.

In a second example from the support side of the organisation, the web team manager related how more effective objective-setting and team involvement in exercises such as health and safety audits had the overall effect of promoting user access and engagement with adult care services through the website. This was a key strategic objective for KASS, and relied upon effective liaison and collaboration with other parts of the organisation. The web team's efforts at KASS were publicised both internally and externally for their good practice and the manager linked much of this success to his development of greater strategic and self-awareness on the diploma in management.

The remaining two examples came from the operational side of the organisation and were concerned with the application of more specific managerial techniques. The locality organiser and the senior practitioner both described how they applied their new project management and change management knowledge to initiate and see through specific changes to services offered to clients. The locality organiser related how, as part of his final project on the diploma, he initiated and implemented the re-design of the clustering of care provision in his geographical area. Using project management tools, together with a deeper understanding of organisational strategy, he liaised with the appropriate stakeholders to create multi-disciplinary provision that was concentrated in the area of the district with the greatest need. The new service was said to meet clients'

needs more effectively while achieving significant cost-savings. Similarly, the senior practitioner related how, building on her newfound self-confidence and strategic awareness, she applied change management tools to merge the work of two teams of staff to create a new 'Home Service Active Care' project in her district, making more effective use of the existing resources and savings of approximately £80,000.

There is a strong correlation between the views expressed by the interviewees and Investors in People reports. The Investors in People report on KCC in June 2007 and the 2006/7 internal Investors in People review within KASS both commented on the capability and effectiveness of managers, as well as the strong focus on business planning. The former report observed that "Business planning is an inclusive process which means people understand the business activity of their service and the contribution they make" (Investors in People Re-assessment Report 2006/7 for KCC). The diploma and the other in-house management qualifications were clearly important in enabling this organisational process. MLD helped to reinforce the strong performance management culture, driven by regular one-to-one supervision meetings between managers and their staff, as well as the appraisal and development system, based on the Ways2Success framework developed in 2002. Performance management combined with a reward strategy that recognised achievement, including performance-related pay (at KCC named 'Total Contribution Pay'), cash and non-cash gifts, development leave days, away-days, social events and personal thank you cards. The diploma is best seen as part of a package of HR measures, but a key instrument within that package to reinforce the organisation's line management processes.

The additional evidence above lends support to the view that MLD played an important role in helping to promote improvements in HRM outcomes and organisational efficiency and effectiveness at KASS. The investment in management development qualifications was seen as having contributed to KCC's achievement of 'excellent' ratings in the CSCI inspections and the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessments over the period from 1994 onwards. There were successive references in external reports to the effectiveness of leadership and the management of priorities across the council, and in social services specifically. The council achieved Investors in People accreditation in 1999 and retained its accreditation thereafter. Social worker vacancy rates declined to 12.25 per cent in 2000 and remained at a 6 per cent average from 2003 to 2006, as compared to a national rate of 9.4 per cent in 2006. The staff turnover rate in the newly created KASS directorate was lower than the 13 per

cent average for KCC and the 11.5 per cent rate for all employees in adult social care nationally in 2006 (KCC HR documentation; LGA 2007).

Overall, as hypothesised, the diploma in management made a significant contribution to developing professional-managerial competence. The overall pattern of outcomes reported in the interviews strongly suggests that the diploma in management was effective in promoting efficiency and effectiveness in the professional bureaucracy. The most significant contribution of the diploma concerned the linking of managerial efforts to organisational strategy as it related to adult social care. This was underpinned by the learning of general and applied business management skills, such as financial management and health and safety management.

Arguably the most striking aspect of the diploma's success in developing competent middle managers at KASS is the individuals' positive experiences of the competence-based development programme. As observed in the previous chapter, experiences of competence-based MLD at LFB and among managers in Grugulis' research (1997, 2000) revealed much negativity and cynicism. It is arguable, however, that the negative experiences at LFB had more to do with the portfolio-building process, than with the use of competence frameworks *per se*. The NVQ portfolio-building model had in fact been used for the diploma in management at KASS in the late-1990s. But, as one participant described it, it was neither a "proper management course" nor "a learning experience"; rather "*It was a 'demonstrating one's competence' experience*" (Interview with district manager 3).

The experience of the diploma in management at KASS shows that competence-based management qualifications can be relevant, developmental and strategically aligned, so long as the underpinning knowledge and skills are learnt and applied in a contextualised way and are supported by complementary HR processes and an effective internal HR function. The complex, professional environment of adult social care management, often with vague and qualitative aims that need to be interpreted by managers rather than blindly implemented, appears to provide the conditions to avoid perfunctory and irrelevant evidence-gathering, and to support broad competence-based MLD that can be meaningfully applied.

6.3.2 Contribution of leader development (From Good to Great)

The six From Good to Great interviewees were slightly more experienced and senior than the diploma interviewees, in line with the target group for this intervention. Two of them were district managers, and therefore from the middle line. The other four, from the service side of the directorate, were more mixed in terms of their responsibilities. Like the district managers, two of them managed front-line managers of specific service teams in performance planning and finance respectively. The remaining two included the head of contracting and quality assurance and a budget manager, both of whom line-managed teams of administrative staff.

This group's relative seniority was reflected in the prior experience of MLD of four of the six interviewees. Two had already participated in short residential leader development workshops earlier in their careers at KASS, and another two held recognised management qualifications (a diploma in management studies with an external provider and an in-house executive diploma in management). The group reflected the profile of KASS managers in that five of the six were female and all were long-serving, each with over ten years' service. The group contained a mixture of professional and vocational backgrounds, although the district managers both came from health and social care backgrounds (one previously a social worker, the other a nurse).

Figure 6.6 summarises the main findings of the interviews with the From Good to Great group. At the level of individual outcomes, a slightly fragmented pattern of critical incidents was observed, but a consistent theme was identifiable at the group level. The overall contribution to organisational-level outcomes was less clearly identifiable.

Individual outcomes	Group outcomes	Contribution to organisational outcomes
Increased self-awareness (5) Increased self-confidence (1) Increased reflectiveness (1) Improved communication style (1)	Extra effort from staff in outreach work (2) Improved stress-management in the team (1)	Development of services in the community (2)
No change (1)		

(Brackets indicate number of interviewees)

Figure 6.6 Outcomes of the From Good to Great course at Kent Adult Social Services

At individual level, the most common outcome of From Good to Great was increased self-awareness, as is to be expected from introspective, individualised leader development interventions. There were, however, discernible differences in the degrees and types of self-awareness reported across the group. Without exception, the interviewees' initial reflection on From Good to Great was to recognise the opportunity it provided to take 'time out' and reflect on one's own practice, rather than absorb new theory or knowledge. However, the extent to which this time-out manifested itself in changed practice was less identifiable. Indeed, one manager suggested that, for her, From Good to Great had a sedative, rather than changing effect:

I have to be honest... I am incredibly busy in my job and I use these [courses] to reflect. So even if they sat there and played nursery rhymes, it would be something that would be good for work (Interview with head of contracting and QA)

The other From Good to Great interviewees invariably spoke of the opportunity to reflect on their personalities, particularly in terms of how they were perceived in their interactions with colleagues. Emphasis was placed on communication skills, notably the use of body language and the voice, and listening and questioning techniques. As one

interviewee described it, the programme “*took you through the whole process of human interaction*” (interview with district manager 1).

Despite similarities in the reflections on the content of From Good to Great, however, the strength of the impact at individual level varied across the group. For district manager 1, for example, the course was “*very freeing.... chang[ing] what I do and how I do it*”. For the head of performance and planning, although “*nothing new, amazing [or] different*”, the programme was “*just what I needed*”. For those interviewees with previous experience of MLD, however, From Good to Great made much less of an impact. For the area finance manager and district manager 2, it provided some practical skills to complement the more theoretical but also more substantial diploma and executive diploma programmes. For the head of contracting and QA, it was a collection of “*lots of little things*”, but adding up to much less than her learning from a previous leader development workshop. Therefore, in contrast to the sensationalist rhetoric of From Good to Great, the overall reality of the learner’s experience was more mundane.

In addition to variability in the strength of the reported increase in self-awareness, there were differences among the interviewees in its application. For example, district manager 1 saw herself as “energetic”, “strong” and “powerful”, but realised during From Good to Great that her impatient style could be overbearing and counterproductive when dealing with others. In contrast, district manager 2 came to the realisation that he needed to be more authoritative in the way that he communicated, particularly when reporting upwards. Similarly, the head of performance and planning learnt ways of becoming more direct and decisive in order to be more effective. In a different vein, the area finance manager’s increased self-awareness took the form of fresh insights into her work-life balance.

At team level, three interviewees made connections between their increased self-awareness and perceived changes in their team members’ behaviour. District manager 1 and the head of performance and planning related similar critical incidents concerning strategies to motivate individual members of staff to become more engaged in outreach services, which necessitated working beyond the boundaries of the council to collaborate more closely with voluntary sector groups. The former related how “*I could never get ... this guy to actually ever be involved in anything at all in the voluntary sector*”. However, as a result of insights gained through From Good to Great, she took a less directive approach with this individual, with the effect that within a few months he

had attached himself to three subcommittees for various community projects. As the district manager explained:

I just actually talked through what we needed ...and ... how we could input, and what he saw as what should our role be in this, given the changes to ways local authorities were working, and getting him to think about it rather than me dictate.... [Now he's] actually getting involved in the most deprived ward of [the district]... And it's actually beginning to get us, as social services, as a positive force in there, rather than an authority to be avoided at all costs (Interview with district manager 1)

Similarly, the head of performance and planning related how she learnt to adopt an uncharacteristically searching and challenging approach to questioning in order to motivate a recalcitrant manager to work more effectively on community-based projects:

[T]he kind of questions I would be saying to him were "How did you help Jane to express that?" or "Are you working with Paul to make sure that he understands this?", to get him thinking more about how he could be more effective during the process, and then subsequently to make sure that he's still linked in.... [H]e's coming to me more now with suggestions and examples of what he's doing.... [H]e is actually doing more to generate the evidence (Interview with head of performance and planning – names changed).

The similarity between the two incidents is striking. It reflects a small but strategic success of From Good to Great in enabling managers with limited previous experience of MLD to convert intrapersonal insights into changing the behaviour of others to make greater efforts to reach out beyond the team.

In a slightly different example, the budget manager described how the extra confidence in her leadership and management abilities gained through From Good to Great enabled her to take a more proactive and empowering approach to addressing low morale and negative attitudes within her team. The pace and scale of change in adult social care in the early-2000s and the subsequent increase in reporting activity had clearly put the finance function under significant strain. As the budget manager described:

I think it [From Good to Great] made me help the team because I'd gone through a stage where I said "I am just fed up with their constant moaning. I can see why they're moaning. They're not going to change anything through moaning. Why do they have to

keep moaning and being so miserable?" I think we got ... into this rut. I said ... "I've really got to pull them out of it". This 'Good to Great' really did it (Interview with budget manager)

The manager related how she organised and led an away-day for her team, designed to enable her team members to identify for themselves how they might manage workloads and their stress more effectively. Apart from the team "seeming happier" afterwards, the more tangible result of the away-day was for team members to be more assertive in their negotiations around deadlines for providing reports to other teams, which was, according to the budget manager, a "big change for them".

The above three examples of leader development outcomes are clear cases of improvements in mutual adjustment between professional colleagues, both within and beyond the organisation. In the cases of the other three managers, however, their communication styles were already informed and shaped by previous experience of MLD. From Good to Great was therefore superficial and inconsequential by comparison to the diploma or executive diploma.

With regard to contribution to organisational-level outcomes, only two interviewees were able to make connections between their From Good to Great-related learning and consequences for KASS' services. Two incidences, were, however, of a similar strategic nature and are worth exploring. District manager 1 and the head of performance and planning, who related more effective interactions with individual team members and their subsequent extra efforts with the voluntary sector, were both able to identify specific projects where these extra efforts were having an impact. For example, district manager 1, referring back to the reluctant team member described above, observed that:

[The voluntary sector partners are] saying he's happy to resolve issues, he's happy to work with them on developing some of their processes and they really value his presence there. And what it means is that I have a very solid social services presence on various steering committees – on 'Headway' [a sheltered housing project for people with acquired brain injury], one my befriending services and one of the neighbourhood programmes that [the] Council is dealing with. And they've all got excellent things to say about him, which I never thought ever that they would. (Interview with district manager 1)

In the context of improving collaboration between KASS and the voluntary sector, it is also interesting to note the experiences of district manager 2. While he did not consider From Good to Great to be particularly significant for him, his participation in the council's executive diploma in management led him to initiate and manage a social enterprise. The manager's project, as part of the executive diploma, involved the setting up and running of a wood recycling business as a collaboration between voluntary groups that worked with people with learning disabilities, the local authority and a external funding body.

Like changes in team behaviour, such changes at business level are difficult to measure and evidence. But they are significant for this type of organisation. The professional bureaucracy requires its staff to engage in external liaison and to help introduce new ways of working into the organisation. It appears that the leader development intervention in this case had some small success in promoting this professionalised approach. However, the necessary conditions for success appeared to be that the participants had little or no previous experience of MLD, and that they managed the type of service that provided its team members with the opportunities to reach out beyond the organisation.

Overall, while the individual level outcomes across the From Good to Great sample were somewhat fragmented, they converged in terms of their contribution at group and organisational levels. It may be that the individual outcomes might have been more coherent had this leader development intervention been more extensive in terms of its methods. For example 360-degree feedback and coaching did not feature within the course, or as a follow-up activity. However, the evidence suggests that the intervention as it stood succeeded in making some managers more reflective and enabled them to develop more motivating relationships with staff in relation to the organisation's strategic goals. Therefore, as hypothesised, elements of intrapersonal competence were developed at individual level as a result of leader development, albeit in a relatively weak form, and these were linked to evidence of expected group- and organisational-level effects.

6.3.3 Contribution of leadership development (Inspirational Leadership)

Of all the middle managers interviewed, the Inspirational Leadership interviewees were typical of the middle line at KASS. They included four district managers and a

'continuous improvement' manager from the support side of the service. The interviewees were long-serving (all the district managers had over ten years' service, the continuous improvement manager had six) and comprised of three female and two males. Three of the district managers were qualified social workers, and the fourth was an occupational therapist, reflecting typical professional health and social care routes into management. (The continuous improvement manager had originally worked as a human resource manager). All five interviewees held recognised management qualifications, dating from before the introduction of the in-house diploma in 2005.

Figure 6.7 summarises the main findings of the interviews with the Inspirational Leadership group.

Individual outcomes	Group outcomes	Contribution to organisational outcomes
Increased self-awareness (3) Increased strategic awareness (1)	Improved partnership-working (1) More effective interactions with colleagues (1) Greater effectiveness in working across boundaries (1)	Improved strategic implementation - actions from the County District Managers Group (4)
No change (2)		

(Brackets indicate number of interviewees)

Figure 6.7 Outcomes of the Inspirational Leadership programme at Kent Adult Social Services

The interviews in this group were small in number but painted a consistent picture of MLD outcomes. As Figure 6.7 shows, while the strength of the impact of Inspirational Leadership was variable at individual level, and patterns of outcomes were difficult to identify at group level, there was notable congruence at organisational level. The intervention was significant for three individuals in terms of a perceived greater self-awareness, particularly in terms of how they worked with others outside the team. The most striking finding, however, related to the contribution to organisational-level outcomes. All four district managers, whether or not they found Inspirational Leadership

to have been significant for them as individuals, recognised the importance of the County District Managers Group that resulted from the action learning sets.

Like From Good to Great, Inspirational Leadership did not have a universally strong impact. For two of the five managers interviewed, the intervention failed to cover new ground or lead to any particular new insights. Again, this was mainly due to previous experience of more substantial MLD interventions. As district manager 3 related:

Building paper boats and things like that isn't something I need to do to learn something from.... Some people find it very interesting because it gets peers together ... they talk about issues that are very interesting and the facilitator interjects with occasionally models and theories that actually fit what people are saying. You may learn from that, and you may be able to take something away from that, and you may not.... it depends on where you are at in your development and your knowledge. (Interview with district manager 3)

For the other three interviewees, however, the introspective exercises, and the periodic sharing of experiences with peers over several months, enabled them to reflect on their leadership styles and how they related to others. For example, the activities of the programme enabled district manager 6 to take a calmer and more measured approach to working with her managerial colleagues. As she related:

I think we did one [exercise], we were made boats or something, and mine had to be done, dusted, sorted and floating before anybody else's...[laughing] and I learnt that "Actually ... you might have upset three other people, even though the boat floats" (Interview with district manager 6)

As a result of exercises such as the boat-building example, this manager reflected:

I think I realised that actually it's okay that other people can join in and not get there as quick as you can, and that's fine. It makes it a richer kind of thing if you've brought people along as opposed to just treading on them because they can't get it [laughs] (Interview with district manager 6)

This manager believed that such insights into her own behaviour helped her to be more effective in interacting with senior managers and colleagues from partner organisations.

Similarly, district manager 4 argued that the discussions with other district managers during Inspirational Leadership and learning about different perspectives had helped him to be more effective in his interactions with staff and care-provider partners.

Although he did not provide any specific examples, this manager claimed that the Inspirational Leadership programme enabled him to use his 'emotional intelligence' more effectively by "*thinking a bit more carefully about your options in terms of how you respond and the outcome that you are seeking, rather than necessarily just thinking about how you feel like responding*" (Interview with district manager 4).

The continuous improvement manager made more specific links between her individual style and wider organisational objectives. The Inspirational Leadership activities enabled her to gain more insights into strategic issues, "*rather than being so introspective and territorial*". In particular, working together with colleagues on a live case of a prison-building project in Chile provided the opportunity to experiment and reflect on her own style. This, she believed, enhanced her ability to work more effectively in an unfamiliar directorate, "*accepting that the environment and practices are different [to what I'm used to] but that I am the best person for the job*" (Interview with continuous improvement manager). Indeed, the tendency to look 'up and out', rather than 'down the line', was a notable theme within the reported individual outcomes of Inspirational Leadership.

The effects at group level of this tendency to reach out beyond the team were discernable in three of the five interviews. District manager 4 argued that the reflections from the Inspirational Leadership programme enabled him to become more effective not only in dealing with performance issues with his staff but also in contract negotiations with care-providers. In a similar vein, the continuous improvement manager made connections between her learning on the Inspirational Leadership programme and greater effectiveness in working with managers across the KASS directorate to maintain the Investors in People standards. In the clearest example, district manager 6 described how, as a result of intrapersonal insights from the Inspirational Leadership programme, she changed her approach to planning the redesign of dementia care services in her district:

One of the concerns is I'm not an expert on dementia ... so I felt very vulnerable on that side of it. I also really need help on board... this particular part of health have been quite

difficult ...they just don't seem that organised. They don't seem to have the ...will or enthusiasm to get this going.... I could do this without health and without the voluntary sector because we could still deliver our social care bit, and before I probably would have just thought 'Oh, just get on with it' , whereas now I'll keep going back and keep bringing them back to the table. (Interview with district manager 6)

The last three examples illustrate how Inspirational Leadership seemed to enable middle managers to pay attention to specific strategic relationships beyond the team. While the programme does not appear to have contributed significantly to HR-related improvements in the conventional sense of increasing staff motivation and commitment, its principal contribution may have been to improve the effectiveness of relationships between internal and external partners.

Tangible organisational-level outcomes emerged from the specific focus on care management within the Inspirational Leadership intervention. The action learning sets that followed the structured part of the programme, converted with time into County District Manager Group meetings. These were effectively bimonthly development meetings for district managers, convened by the district managers themselves and held without the presence of the trainer-facilitator. Even the two interviewees who did not feel they had personally benefited from the Inspirational Leadership programme considered the creation of this structure to be a significant outcome for the directorate. As district manager 3, who had been dismissive of the boat-building exercise, explained:

[T]he learning sets became ... business meetings.... that for me was the big outcome really, that we've now got a meeting which, to me, addresses the kind of things I hear other people talk about because they're of great importance and troublesome to me.
(Interview with district manager 3)

As a direct result of the Inspirational Leadership intervention, the County District Managers Group became an information-sharing and joint problem-solving forum for addressing issues of strategic implementation, and had already led to some concrete organisational changes by the middle of 2007.

To an extent, the County District Managers Group filled the structural void in the organisation's hierarchy by providing district managers with the opportunity to come together from across the county to standardise their activities, as devolution and restructuring had tended to isolate them from one another. The group was, however, more than just a missing part of the restructured bureaucracy. The terms of reference of the County District Managers Group specifically defined its role as providing 'a reality check' on the policy decisions being made at senior management levels. Indeed, the minutes of the County District Managers Group meetings from 2006-07 illustrate the wide range of policy issues that were discussed, including the arrangements for direct payments to care-providers by clients and the introduction of twenty-four-hours-a-day, virtual and remote care-provision.

The County District Managers Group was also more than a mere 'talking shop' or a short-lived initiative of a few enthusiastic district managers. Notably, the group was responsible for the pioneering, developing, piloting and rolling out a new manual called 'Commissioning for Performance' with an accompanying training programme, to help especially new district managers navigate the intricacies of commissioning care services. In addition, it became a recognised group that various senior managers would also attend to discuss the practicalities of relevant policy decisions. As district manager 5 explained:

We have become a formally recognised group of managers with which the senior management team consults and seeks views before they actually come up with a new strategy or policy and implement it. We advise them of what is sensible, realistic, possible or not, because we have a better understanding of the basics of the business.
(Interview with district manager 5)

District manager 3 was similarly enthusiastic:

We now have a really very vibrant county district managers group which is attended by our heads of services and also influences policy because we feed those things that we discuss back to HQ and they are now communicating with us. That's really been very positive. (Interview with district manager 3)

The history of problems in strategy-implementation at KASS is evident from external reports. While the CSCI 2007 report commented that "the senior management team

provide robust leadership and a vision on the direction of travel" (2007: 3-4), the 2008 Corporate Assessment for KCC also remarked that:

The carry-through of priorities into business and delivery plans, although generally good, has some gaps and needs better quality-checking. Targets tend to be over-focused on achieving planned activity rather than on outcomes for local people, and are not always SMART. (Audit Commission 2008: 21 para 65)

The issue of poorly implemented strategy is especially pertinent for the middle line. For example, district manager 6, who was instrumental in setting up the County District Managers Group, described the introduction of a new electronic system for monitoring and paying for the work of care-providers in 2006:

[The district managers] kept saying this isn't going to work, and then ...we get an email from HQ saying "You have to make this work" ... it's a ridiculous system, and we can't make it work. We'd love to make it work, I'm a great believer that it should work and we need it, because that's the future. But the actual practicalities of it, the detail, they don't want to hear.... it just puts more pressure on the very people that are supposed to implement it (Interview with district manager 6)

As a result of the problems with the new electronic payment system in 2006, many care-providers either did not get paid at all or did not receive correct payments for several months. This situation was said to have 'rattled' relationships between the partners and significantly increased the stress on staff at KASS.

With respect to MLD, therefore, the importance for the middle line of learning to manage external relationships is heightened in this type of professional bureaucracy, which increasingly engaged in partnership work and more adhocratic working methods. The collective and emergent learning activities of the Inspirational Leadership programme appeared to enable this direction of organisational change at KASS. As district manager 6 put it:

You want the good ideas, you want all of those things, but you want some time and space and some understanding of how we deliver them, really. (Interview with district manager 6)

Overall, as hypothesised with regard to leadership development, the Inspirational Leadership intervention largely succeeded in developing interpersonal competence at individual level, particularly with regard to improved problem-solving, socialisation, teamwork and strategy-implementation. That individual-level outcomes were not more strongly evident appeared to be related to inappropriate matching of candidates to the intervention, and thus a relative lack of HRD competence in the organisation.

Alternatively, the uneven nature of the individual responses may be inherent in the open-ended and deliberately vague approach to learning in this type of development activity, which does not meet the needs of those individuals who prefer working towards more specific and explicit learning outcomes.

The reported group- and organisational-level outcomes of Inspirational Leadership resembled the hypothetical outcomes, but strongly illustrated the influence of job and organisational context. At group level, instead of innovation in the sense of the generation of new ideas for business processes, Inspirational Leadership led to innovation in the form of the County District Managers group, which improved collaboration between managers and external partners. Similarly, at organisational-level, instead of emergent strategic change in the sense of developing new services or markets, Inspirational Leadership enabled middle managers to shape organisational strategy, rather than develop or redirect it. Leadership development, and perhaps project management training, therefore contributed to a movement in the direction of greater adhocracy at KASS, but in a way that was consistent with the constraints of the local authority, social care institutional arrangements and the middle manager's authority.

6.4 Assessment

The case of KASS has provided a detailed insight into the potential and actual role of MLD in a managerialised professional bureaucracy that sought to introduce a greater degree of adhocracy. While generally consistent with the theoretical expectations of contingent MLD options and outcomes set out in Chapter 2, the case highlights the importance of specific internal and wider institutional factors in enabling and shaping the actual MLD contribution during this type of organisational change. The expected and actual outcomes of MLD at KASS are summarised in Figure 6.8.

Structural transition and change in the middle line	MLD intervention	Individual outcomes	Group outcomes	Organisational outcomes
<i>Adhocratisation</i> Role C→D	PMD	PMC	Staff compliance and commitment	Stability and adjustment in the professional bureaucracy
	LD	Intrapersonal competence		
	PJMD	PJMC	Innovation <i>[Improved collaboration between managers and with external partners]</i>	Emergent strategic change <i>[Contribution of middle managers to shaping organisational strategy]</i>
	LSD	Interpersonal competence		

Role C = professional middle line management; Role D = middle leadership; PMD = professional management development; LD = leader development; PJMD = project management development; PMC = professional managerial competence; PJMC = project management competence
 Small font denotes small intervention and outcomes; *italics* denote actual outcomes at KASS

Figure 6.8 Actual options and outcomes of MLD at Kent Adult social services

Figure 6.8 illustrates how the three main MLD interventions for middle managers at KASS in 2005-7 reflected the expectation that such an organisation would invest in professional management development (PMD), leader development (LD) and leadership development (LSD). It was also expected that the pressure for change in the direction of adhocracy would result in a greater supply of project management development (PJMD). However, there was little evidence of widespread investment in project management training at KASS; only two of the eighteen interviewees referred specifically to their experiences in this area. Apart from relatively weak subsequent outcomes in the area of project management competence (PJMC), the other types of competence at individual level (PMC, intrapersonal competence and interpersonal competence) were in evidence as a result of PMD, leader development and leadership development, as hypothesised.

A counterfactual pattern of MLD options would have been, for example, that KASS invested in a narrower type of management training, such as at SWT. Alternatively it might have neglected leader development, as at LFB. A counterfactual set of MLD outcomes would have been that the three main programmes produced either null or negative outcomes, or produced outcomes that followed unexpected patterns. While there were some examples of null outcomes, such as in the From Good to Great programme, which failed to make a significant impact in changing some managers' practice, the reasons for this were linked to inappropriate candidate-selection for the programmes due to a lack of operational HRD competence in the organisation, rather than the inappropriateness of intervention itself. There were also some examples of unexpected patterns of outcomes, in that management development (represented by the diploma in management) was observed to lead to outcomes of greater intrapersonal competence for some individuals, as well as the more general type of managerial competence. This type of overlap is, however, to be expected in any management development intervention that devotes some attention to reflecting on one's management style and its fit with organisational goals. Similarly, the leadership programme at KASS (Inspirational Leadership) was also observed to produce some examples of improved intrapersonal competence, which overlapped with its main expected outcome of interpersonal competence. However, as Day (2001) argues, the building up social capital and networks of relationships through leadership development is actually based on individual managers' intrapersonal qualities, thus "highlight[ing] the importance of developing *both* intrapersonal and interpersonal competence, and the linking of leader *and* leadership development" (p.585, emphasis added).

The largely positive nature of the interview accounts of MLD from middle managers, on which these conclusions rely, raises the possibility of Hawthorne effects. However, it is notable that the positive accounts were counterbalanced to an extent by some negative accounts and the inability of some interviewees to describe critical incidents of change, particularly in the cases of leader and leadership development. This indicates that the volunteer sample of interviewees was not uniformly subject to Hawthorne effects and that the use of the snowballing selection technique had some success in sourcing a group of relatively typical participants in MLD who could offer objective expert witness accounts. Unlike LFB, middle managers at KASS were relatively removed from the front-line operating core, often in an 'arm's length' commissioning relationship, rather than intimately bound up with a watch or shift culture. KASS managers who offered negative or neutral accounts therefore had less incentive than at LFB to downplay the

effects of MLD as an expression of managerial resistance to the organisation's changing aims. Similarly, the managers who gave positive accounts of MLD's effects had little personal investment or incentive to promote or defend the organisational policies that they claimed to have learnt to implement more effectively. In fact, interviewees were sometimes very expressive of the difficulties of implementing KCC's organisational policies, a point which is returned to below.

To return to the proposed structural explanation for the pattern of MLD investment at KASS, it is instructive to consider the weak investment made in project management development. It could be argued that the lack of emphasis on project management training should be explained by a lack of operational HRD competence at KCC, in that the HRD function simply failed to identify, prioritise or sufficiently resource this important development need. However, a more structural explanation would be that, in 2007, the adoption of project-based, adhocratic working methods was actually insufficiently advanced at KASS, and that there was a relatively weak demand for training in this area.

The way that the pattern of MLD choices developed from 2007 onwards reinforces this more structural explanation. In particular, the eventual fate of the Inspirational Leadership programme lends support to the interpretation that MLD strategy at KASS was an enabler of limited adhocracy, and that greater adhocracy would have produced greater demand for leadership development as well as project management development (PJMD). After eighteen months of activity, the programme was scrapped towards the end of 2007 in favour of From Good to Great. This was partly due to internal politics (the former programme was KASS-based, whereas its replacement, From Good to Great, was administered by the central KCC learning and development function). However, the change in MLD strategy can also be interpreted as a reflection of the pressure to standardise leader development at the centre, rather than continue to sponsor decentralised and unpredictable leadership development activity in one of the directorates.

In 2006, KASS was still in the aftermath of a period of restructuring and in the early stages of a new directorate for adult social care, so Inspirational Leadership provided the middle line with the opportunity to make sense of the new and complex organisational environment, and to consolidate the new working methods required by it. The subsequent creation of a new and more flexible structure within the directorate, the

County District Managers Group, to support the refashioned middle line and its role in helping to implement strategy, superseded the contribution of the Inspirational Leadership programme. In effect, the Inspirational Leadership intervention served the temporary objective of increasing adaptive capacity at this level of the organisation, then became formalised and incorporated into a new structure.

Despite the scrapping of Inspirational Leadership, there is evidence to suggest that adhocratisation pressures persisted and were manifested in other MLD interventions that were directed at more senior managers. In particular, a leadership development programme for the council's senior managers and local partners, the 'Kent Leadership Programme', was run from September 2006 and sustained at least until 2010 (I&DeA 2010). The council's HRD function intended to extend this programme to middle managers, but it is unclear whether this actually came to fruition.

While the experience of project management development and Inspirational Leadership illustrate the limits of adhocratisation at KASS, the experience of the two larger interventions at KASS - the diploma in management and From Good to Great - provides strong empirical support for the overall theoretical model. These two interventions also provide some additional insights into how MLD contributes in the professional bureaucracy.

The diploma in management at KASS was closely aligned with a clear and distinct organisational strategy. As such, it is a good example of an MLD intervention that provides direct support to the efficiency and the effectiveness of the managerialised professional bureaucracy. The intervention was neither purely 'managerial' nor purely 'professional', but a contextualised blend of both. The experience of the diploma in management at KASS illustrates the necessary balancing act between managerial and professional demands that is inherent to the developing of the middle line in managerialised professional bureaucracies. It also illuminates the potential tensions between these contributions, depending on the strength of internal strategic alignment on the one hand, and the professional discretion afforded to managers on the other. While the clarity of strategic goals, and their communication throughout the organisation, will necessarily vary from organisation to organisation, the freedom of middle managers to allocate resources and to initiate changes to services is also likely to vary. To an extent this degree of freedom is dependent on the professional expertise

required to make managerial decisions and the extent to which managers are constrained by professional regulations.

KASS illustrated a set of circumstances in which both organisational strategy was clearly communicated and the middle line exercised considerable professional discretion over how to allocate resources and provide services. With regard to the diploma in management, the strong corporate focus was the source of both its main strength and its main weakness. On the one hand, the interviews and external reports support the view that the diploma and other in-house management qualifications helped ensure that the organisation was efficiently and effectively managed by establishing clear and consistent expectations at all levels. On the other hand, there is also evidence that the inward-looking content of the programme potentially discouraged managers from adopting a broader outlook on their management and leadership responsibilities.

The perception that KCC management qualifications were excessively inward-looking derived from what some saw as a more general organisational culture of arrogance. As one district manager expressed it:

KCC is very different to other organisations. It's a little world of its own. And you have to learn the KCC-speak, the KCC politics, the KCC philosophy.... if you want to be part of that you have to actually convert to it. Because the theory is that it's different but also superior to everywhere else.... Kent has three stars, it's an 'excellent' authority but it's also quite arrogant about its importance in the world. And the fact is that there are other authorities doing good things out there that KCC might be able to learn, but of course that isn't the way (Interview with district manager 3)

Far from simply representing the views of one disgruntled employee, the above criticism of KCC was echoed in the 2008 Corporate Assessment by the Audit Commission:

The Council has for ten years been seeking excellence and its organisation is impressive, high-quality, responsive and gives good value-for-money. But this has required a drive and firmness of direction that is seen by some as over-dominant.... Although KCC's strengths are widely-appreciated, there is some alienation at what is perceived by some to be an over-dominant style with some local partners that does not take enough time to listen and build consensus. KCC's branding is active and strong, but this can be misconstrued as an over-inclination to take credit for partnership work....

The Council can be unproductively sensitive to external criticism. (Audit Commission 2008: 6-7)

Therefore, while the diploma made an important contribution to managerial effectiveness and efficiency in terms of internal strategic alignment, it may also have contributed to constraining the effectiveness of the external dimension of corporate strategy.

Counterbalancing the constraints of centralisation and standardisation at KASS were the professional traditions of its health and social care middle managers. In particular, the tradition of regular one-to-one supervision, common in health and social care work, seemed to complement the emphasis placed at KCC on rigorous and active line management. In this sense, the diploma's promotion of the managerial practice of regular negotiation and monitoring of strategically-aligned work objectives with staff was reinforced by other professional practices. Also, the relatively high degree of discretion required for managerial decision-making in the social care field meant that middle managers were able to exercise considerable influence over how strategic plans were implemented and how priorities were best communicated and negotiated with staff. Managerial decisions in social work were still relatively non-routine and unpredictable; particularly the intricacies of commissioning care for individual care plans required relatively advanced specialist knowledge. Therefore, instead of encouraging a passive role for the middle line as top-down implementers of strategic plans, the lessons learnt about internal strategic alignment in the diploma were necessarily applied in a way that required professionally informed choices.

Two generalisations may be made with regard to professional management development (PMD). Firstly, in an organisation with a weaker approach to strategic management, this type of MLD is likely to make a weaker contribution to managerial effectiveness, as the lack of direction and clear parameters in which to apply one's managerial learning are more likely to exist. Secondly, those professionals, who face less technical complexity in managerial decision-making, are likely to be less able to apply their learning, as the opportunities to make decisions about the allocation of resources are less likely to exist. The strength of strategic management and the degree of specialist knowledge required in managerial decisions seem to be the two important variables in the effectiveness of professional management development.

The partial impact of From Good to Great provides an insight into the importance of a specific type of HRD competence in leader development. Some of the interviewees' experiences suggested that leader development can play an important role in developing greater intrapersonal awareness in middle managers in this type of organisational environment, particularly for those without prior MLD experience or for those facing new demands to reach out beyond the team. But the overall experience from KASS highlights the dangers of investing in sporadic leader development interventions in large institutional settings without paying sufficient attention to diagnosing individual MLD needs or investment in follow-up and ongoing development activity for individuals, such as through coaching and mentoring. The tendency to use over-generalised, off-the-shelf leader development methods may be accentuated in professional bureaucracies, due to their typically large size, which encourages the use of economies of scale, rather than well-tailored individualised interventions. If sparingly employed and well-targeted, however, the case study evidence does suggest that even brief and standardised leader development interventions can, as hypothesised, contribute to enabling more effective mutual adjustment in professional environments.

Finally, the experience of the Inspirational Leadership programme illustrates how structural transition in the direction of multi-disciplinary, project-based work, as hypothesised, may be enabled to an extent by leadership development for middle managers. However, the contribution of leadership development for this group of managers was also shown to be limited to specific windows of opportunity for organisational change. In effect, leadership development for middle managers was shown here to be an enabler of limited adhocratisation, or a more flexible bureaucracy (c.f. Boxall and Purcell 2008: 212).

Overall, the KASS case study provides a contextualised account of how MLD for middle managers enabled stability in the professional bureaucracy and a limited move in the direction of adhocracy. That MLD did not promote a more substantial contribution to adhocratisation is explained by a relative lack of HRD competence in relation to leader and leadership development and by the constraints of institutional regulations and mid-hierarchy job roles.

Some of the evidence, on which these conclusions rely, might be interpreted in alternative ways. Firstly, one might advance a neo-institutionalist rather than a structural and strategic organisational explanation for the findings. In particular, one might argue

that the indicators of KASS's improved organisational performance, as in the reports from the Audit Commission and CSCI, do not represent real organisational efficiencies. Instead it might be argued that they represent the enthusiasm of the HR function and senior management to follow the prevailing norms in the sector, which themselves are based on highly subjective measures of performance. In this interpretation, MLD's role in aligning managers' actions to the organisation's objectives, particularly through the more prescriptive interventions such as the diploma in management, represents an exercise in conformance to institutional requirements, rather an instrument to help meet the strategic needs of the professional bureaucracy. Similarly, the investments in leader development and leadership development could be simply seen as a reflection of managerial fashions in the local government sector, rather than a strategic commitment to improving staff motivation and organisational adaptation. That the leader and leadership development interventions were only partially effective would be further evidence that they represented little more than a faddish preoccupation with the rhetoric of inspirational leadership and innovation.

The problem with this line of argument is that the KASS case suggests a strong contribution by MLD, alongside other interventions, to real improvements in HRM and organisational outcomes. This is evident not least in the alleviation of the severe turnover problem amongst social workers and the stabilising of the organisation in the early-2000s. Moreover, the externally-commissioned reports of improved organisational effectiveness in the mid-2000s resonated strongly with interviewees' concrete examples of improved professional-managerial collaborations and of more effective work with external partners as a result of MLD. In view of such observations, it would be too simplistic to explain the substantial investments in the three MLD interventions merely as products of mimeticism.

The second and related main alternative interpretation of the KASS case study findings would be to explain the MLD investments as largely successful instruments of political control. In this interpretation MLD would be seen as a strategy to neutralise the resistance of professionals to managerialist reforms and to co-opt them into the marketisation and modernisation agendas. KASS managers' general enthusiasm for MLD would therefore be explained as a part of a process of reinforcement of the values and priorities of policy elites, which senior professionals learn to accept and internalise in return for the rewards of managerial status and salary. Similarly, the encouragement for managers to form action learning sets, and the subsequent semi-formal recognition

of the County District Managers' Group, would be interpreted as an incorporation strategy, in which professionals appear to take on new managerial responsibilities readily and voluntarily, yet in which no real extra competence or empowerment is actually developed.

There is no doubt that the marketisation and modernisation reforms in the UK have produced some deep unease amongst social workers and other care professionals about compromises in ethical and public service values (see for example *The Guardian*, 'Deep sense of shame', Social care special issue, 1 August 2007). There are also wider societal concerns about the quality of care provided at the front line and hence the extent to which organisational and management improvements such as those reported by CSCI may be seen as meaningful (see for example Beresford 2008). All of this reinforces the argument that perceptions of improved managerial effectiveness are very far removed from the realities of social care on the ground.

However, the evidence from KASS suggests a conscious and voluntary congruence between individual and organisational managers' goals, particularly with regard to the strategic objectives of personalising care and providing integrated services in collaboration with the NHS and private and voluntary sector organisations. Indeed, the interviewees were on the whole very reflective about the balancing of their professional values with managerial priorities. The main resistance or unease detected among individual managers concerned the level of resourcing for their clients' care, rather than the acceptance of responsibility for it. Local responsibility for commissioning and partnership arrangements for care was generally seen as an opportunity for managers to exercise both professional discretion and their generic management skills. MLD interventions, despite some poor internal HRD-management and some institutional constraints, were largely experienced as positive learning processes that enabled managers to serve the needs of the professional bureaucracy and more adhocratic ways of working.

On balance, therefore, the KASS case supports the central hypothesis that MLD options and outcomes are shaped by structural organisational contingencies. The extent to which all three case studies collectively support the range of hypotheses is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 7. Synthesis of case study evidence and review of hypotheses

The ultimate goal is to treat the evidence fairly, to produce compelling analytic conclusions, and to rule out alternative interpretations. (Yin 1994: 103, on analysing case study evidence)

Three initial conditions and four hypotheses were developed in the first two theoretical chapters of the thesis. The initial conditions deduced variation in middle management roles and skills according to Mintzbergian organisational types. Based on these conditions, the hypotheses proposed an organisational contingency explanation for variation in MLD options and their outcomes.

The three initial conditions were based on the argument that demand for new middle management skills should be explained through an organisation's search for greater flexibility, and hence movements on a Mintzbergian map of structural transitions, manifested in the three processes of divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation. The four hypotheses then proposed that MLD options and their outcomes were contingent on the four main Mintzbergian types and the three directions of structural transition. MLD options were differentiated as management development ('operational', 'strategic', 'professional' and 'project' management development), leader development and leadership development. MLD outcomes were conceptualised as multi-levelled, including managerial, intrapersonal and/or interpersonal competence at individual level, compliance and commitment with organisational goals at group/staff level, and contributions to different types of stability and change at organisational level.

The model of expected MLD outcomes rests on two main assumptions: firstly, that the organisation has the competence to apply conventional 'best MLD practice' principles (assessment, challenge and support) and the strategic HRD competence to achieve an internal strategic fit in MLD; and secondly, that political obstacles to MLD are surmountable. Assuming that HRD competence enables MLD and political obstacles do not constrain MLD, then the degree to which expected MLD outcomes are met was hypothesised as determined by the degree of structural transition, namely the extent of divisionalisation, professionalisation or adhocratisation.

This chapter reviews the initial conditions and hypotheses in the light of the combined empirical evidence presented in Chapters 4-6. The chapter shows how the hypotheses are broadly supported by the cross-case evidence, but also points to the main ways in which the theoretical model needs to be refined, in particular with regard to political obstacles to MLD. The merits and demerits of the main alternative interpretations of the case study findings are also considered.

Initial condition 1. Skill fit to organisational structure

The main tasks and key skills required of middle managers vary according to four main roles, which correspond to Mintzberg's four main organisational types.

The question here is the extent to which the middle managerial work and skill requirements observed in the case studies reflected the Roles A-D developed in Section 1.3. An overview of the middle management roles observed in the three case organisations is provided in Figure 7.1.

Mintzberg's 4 main organisational types	Theoretical middle line role	Middle line roles observed in case studies		
		South West Trains	London Fire Brigade	Kent Adult Social Services
Machine bureaucracy (+ safety bureaucracy variant)	Machine middle line management (+emergency middle line variant) (Role A)	● ↓ Devolution (limited divisionalisation)	● ↓ Professionalisation	
Divisionalised form	Business division management (Role B)	● ↓		● ↑ Managerialisation
Professional bureaucracy	Professional middle line management (Role C)		● ↓	● ↓ Adhocratisation
Adhocracy	Middle leadership (Role D)			● ↓

Shaded areas denote expected observations; darker shading denotes stronger expected observations
 Dot sizes increase according to strength of observations; dashed arrow denotes unexpected direction of change

Figure 7.1 Middle management roles observed in the case studies

The SWT case illustrates the applicability of the concept of Role A middle management but suggests some necessary refinements to it. The case also provides some insight into the devolution of managerial responsibility in the machine bureaucracy, as a weak form of Role B division management. The third column of Figure 7.1 illustrates how, as expected, Role A middle management was strongly observed at SWT and Role B management was observed to a lesser extent. This reflects the essentially machine-bureaucratic structure of SWT and the limited process of divisionalisation, which is described in Figure 7.1 as 'devolution'. Full transition to the divisionalised form would have required a greater diversification of services or markets. Instead, the organisation devolved HR and performance responsibilities to middle managers rather than full strategic control of semi-autonomous business units.

As seen in Section 4.1, people management and the requirement for human skills was an unexpectedly prominent priority at SWT, both as an element of Role A machine middle line management and in the transition towards a type of Role B business division management. While the soft skills for communication and interaction were expected as important elements of middle managerial work, they were accentuated in comparison to the technical aspects. The importance of people management was then further heightened due to the devolution of HR responsibilities to the line, including both

the hard aspects such as attendance management and the soft aspects requiring more advanced human skills for staff motivation and development.

The original model of Role B management in Section 1.3 emphasised the strategic management of the business unit's general resources as a key activity. At SWT, station and fleet depot managers, rather than driver depot managers, assumed some strategic management responsibility for unit performance. However, this came without the significant decision-making and financial freedoms that are typically associated with divisionalised management. Also, the main emphasis for station and fleet depot managers was the achievement of unit performance through softer people management, or effective leadership, rather than through the management of other types of resources. In effect, soft people management and leadership constituted the main strategic management responsibilities in this divisionalising organisation. For driver depot managers, for example, staff satisfaction scores, as measured by the Tell Us survey, became perhaps their most important business unit performance indicator (see Section 4.3).

The unexpectedly prominent emphasis on people management and human skills at SWT derives from the change in strategic priority away from operational efficiency towards customer service. When the machine bureaucracy is forced to become more responsive to customers, a higher premium is placed upon the people management dimension of Role A management. This aspect of machine bureaucracies in increasingly competitive and customer-oriented environments appears to have been underestimated in the original Mintzbergian model. Furthermore, if the machine bureaucracy is a natural monopoly provider, unable to diversify its services or markets, the SWT evidence suggests that such organisations necessarily maintain standardised work processes as their main dominant coordination mechanism and retain much centralised control over managerial decisions and resources. In its search for greater efficiency the machine bureaucracy is likely devolve only a certain amount of responsibility for business performance to middle managers. This is most likely to be pronounced amongst those managers in customer-facing divisions or in those parts of the organisation to which business performance data may be locally attributed. In this type of structural transition, Role B business division management is largely limited to the process of influencing staff towards the achievement of localised but centrally directed improvements in business performance, without the full range of strategic functions at its disposal or a requirement for a broader range of technical knowledge

and conceptual skills. Such effects of partial structural transition are also somewhat under-theorised in Mintzberg's original model.

The SWT evidence supports the basic premise that the main tasks and key skills of middle management are structured by the needs of the divisionalising machine bureaucracy and that they are captured by the Role A and Role B models. Certainly, these two models describe middle managerial work at SWT more accurately than Roles C and D. Nevertheless the SWT case study also suggests that the concepts of Roles A and B require some updating to include people management as a prominent aspect of the middle manager's work, as customer service assumes greater strategic importance in contemporary machine bureaucracies. The roles played by increasingly sophisticated performance monitoring regimes and the supporting information technology appear to be key enablers in the process of devolution of managerial responsibility as a form of limited divisionalisation.

The managerial work observed at LFB strongly reflects the theoretical construct of emergency middle line management, the safety bureaucracy variant of Role A middle management. This provided an accurate model for capturing the activities and technical, human and conceptual skill requirements of the station commander at LFB pre-modernisation. As Section 5.1 showed, the key managerial activities included: i) managing workflow in the form of the practising of standardised routines and leading efficient and effective emergency response at incidents; ii) vertical liaison in the form of the introducing new processes, regulations and technological changes in firefighting and in fire safety; and iii) conflict resolution in the form of mediating unofficial disputes between the fire station staff and other parts of the bureaucracy and managing informal relationships on the fire station.

The LFB case also demonstrated the value of the Role C model to describe some of the changes to station management during partial professionalisation. Particularly the emphasis on coordination through the standardisation of skills through IPDS, rather than standardisation of processes through the Manuals of Firemanship, captured the more professionalised approach to management that became embedded at LFB. The increased importance of mutual adjustment in the station management role was also demonstrated in the new ways in which station commanders were expected to use more advanced human skills to support more junior officers at fire incidents, in their oversight of the development of operational staff on the station, and in their

collaborative activities with other parts of the bureaucracy as part of post-incident investigations. However, more extensive professional-managerial collaboration was less advanced than expected due to the limited implementation of the community fire safety reforms and some residual managerial resistance to modernisation. In spite of these limitations and obstacles, there were signs that greater engagement in community fire safety and other broader management responsibilities were emerging around 2006/7. In sum, Roles A and C - not Roles B or D - provided the most accurate models for describing middle managerial work at LFB and how it was changing.

The case of KASS lent support to the validity of the Role C model. It suggested, however, as seen in Section 6.1, that marketisation reforms in professional bureaucracies, at least in the social care sector, may have altered the work of senior professionals from a Role C model of professional middle line management, towards a professional-managerial hybrid. The devolution of budgets to senior professionals in social care, and the commissioning of services from private and voluntary sector providers, required significant new technical and conceptual skills and provided considerable scope for the exercising of discretion by middle managers over the allocation of resources. This was more akin to Role B business division management, except without the same strategic or operational freedoms.

Accepting the hybrid Role C/B as the starting point, the predicted shift during adhocratisation towards Role D middle leadership was reflected in the KASS case. Modernisation reforms encouraged a more open, adhocratic approach to coordination of services, which changed the nature of the middle line to include a greater emphasis on lateral relationships and project work, rather than the more traditionally insular approach and emphasis on vertical liaison. KASS did not fully depict Role D middle leadership, because professional and institutional controls over decisions remained strong. Rather, a professional-managerial Role C/B seems to offer the most accurate model of the middle management role in those professions in which marketisation reforms have had a strong impact. Role D middle leadership offers a good description of the peripheral changes to which professional-managerial hybrids are subject, due to environmental pressures to coordinate services in a more *ad hoc* way.

Taken together, the three cases suggest that the conceptual Roles A-D of middle management capture well the main types of work and skills in the middle line, at least across a variety of typical changes in PSOs. More detailed observational methods such

as those used by Huy (2002), Balogun (2003, 2007), Weide and Wilderom (2004) and Mintzberg (1973, 2009) would be needed to establish the precise nature of middle managerial work with greater validity. Nevertheless, it may be concluded at this stage that **Initial condition 1 is largely established by the case study evidence.**

Initial condition 2. Line-staff division across the four roles

The various types of middle management found within an organisation are determined by the responsibility for either a line or staff function.

The question here is whether the four middle management roles that were observed in the case studies could also be differentiated according to line or staff management functions within each single organisation. Figure 7.2 summarises the line-staff division as it related to the four middle management roles, as conceptualised in Section 1.3, and compares this with the middle management roles observed in the three case organisations.

The shaded areas of Figure 7.2 highlight how the dominant middle management roles A and C in the three case organisations were primarily observed. Role A was also observed in the staff management of the three case organisations, along with Role D, which was dominant in parts of the organisations' technostructures and support services.

At SWT, Role A machine line management, as well as representing the middle line in the roles of station, driver and fleet depot managers, as noted in Section 4.1, was also dominant in the train service control function (part of the technostructure) and among the clerical teams undertaking routinised administration tasks such as in payroll and pensions (part of the support staff). The only other type of middle management observed to be dominant in any other part of SWT appeared to be Role D middle leadership. This was found in the less hierarchical, more adhocratic and knowledge-based service teams such as information technology, performance management and engineering, as also noted in Section 4.1.

	Middle line management	Staff management	
		Bureaucratic	Adhocratic
Machine bureaucracy	Role A SWT: station/revenue managers; fleet and depot managers LFB: station commanders	Role A SWT: <i>clerical managers in payroll/pensions, control</i> LFB: <i>clerical managers in fire safety inspection, personnel</i>	Role D SWT: <i>managers of information technology, performance management and engineering teams</i> LFB: <i>managers of training and development projects</i>
Divisionalised Form	Role B	Role A	Role D
Professional bureaucracy	Role C KASS: district managers	Role A KASS: <i>finance managers</i>	Role D KASS: <i>managers of web-services, planning, contracting, performance management, HR projects</i>
Adhocracy		Role D	

Role A = machine middle line management; Role B = business division management;

Role C = professional middle line management; Role D = middle leadership

Arrows depict direction of transition; shaded areas denote expected observations; darker shading denotes stronger expected observations

Figure 7.2 Middle management roles according to line and staff management functions as observed in the case studies

At LFB, Role A machine line management was observed in the middle line in the form of station commanders, as well as among managers of routine administration work in support service teams such as fire safety inspection and personnel (see Section 5.1). As in SWT, the only other type of middle management observed to be dominant in any other part of LFB was Role D middle leadership. This was most apparent in the less hierarchical, project-based teams such as in training and development.

At KASS, Role C professional middle line management was observed in the work of the middle line in the roles of the district managers (see Section 6.1). However, more than in the other two cases, as expected in a professional bureaucracy, the distinction between line and staff responsibilities was relatively blurred. As observed in the previous section, the work of the middle line also approximated some elements of Role

B business division management, due to a degree of local responsibility for resource-allocation, as well as a degree of Role D middle leadership, due to adhocratisation and involvement in project work. Support staff were also connected with the operational side through project work and some matrix structures. Role D middle leadership was therefore more apparent in the managerial work of KASS than in the other two cases.

An additional dimension to the line-staff division in the KASS case was observed in the finance function. While some of this non-operational work was routinised, and required predominantly Role A management, the use of projects and matrix structures to coordinate work across the organisation meant that managers even from the more machine-like parts of the support services would occasionally engage in adhocratic approaches to their work (see left-pointing horizontal dotted line in Figure 7.2). Although not reported in Section 6.3, the possession of accounting qualifications by some managers and supervisors in the finance function also suggests that the work of the finance function might have been sufficiently complex in parts to warrant professional Role C-type professional middle management at times (see right-pointing horizontal dotted line in Figure 7.2).

In line with the hypothesis, the main roles of middle management A, C and D observed within each of the three case organisations, were largely distinguishable according to responsibility for line or staff management. Line management responsibility determined that one of the three main roles of middle management A, C and D would be practised. On the non-operational side of the organisation, the dominant type of work tasks in the team determined whether the management practised by staff managers would resemble either Role A or Role D. Roles B and C were generally not observed on the non-operational side of the organisations, as these represented line rather than staff functions (or an intermeshing of line and staff). Overall, therefore, it may be concluded that **Initial condition 2 is established by the case study evidence.**

Initial condition 3. Skill needs for structural transition

The skill needs of middle managers are driven by one of the four main middle management roles and/or another role associated with greater organisational flexibility.

It has already been established that middle management roles and the changes to these roles in the three case study organisations broadly corresponded to the expected conditions. The next question is whether the functional requirements of the dominant middle management roles and the transition towards new roles produced corresponding sets of skill needs in the case study organisations. The technical, human and conceptual skills that were expected to be required by the four middle line roles in Section 1.3 are reproduced in Figure 7.3, including the directions of change that are expected as the organisation seeks greater flexibility.

$\text{Divisionalisation} \rightarrow \text{Professionalisation} \rightarrow \text{Adhocratisation}$				
	Role A skills set	Role B skills set	Role C skills set	Role D skills set
Technical skills	relevant business and technical knowledge.	tools and techniques of resource management and performance monitoring	specialist professional knowledge and credibility	project management
Human skills	soft skills for communication and interaction	soft skills for communication and interaction	leader skills for mutual adjustment	leader skills for mutual adjustment
Conceptual skills	ability to implement organisational policies	understanding of systems of output-standardisation and business strategy	understanding of systems of skills-standardisation and the changing regulatory environment	understanding of processes of innovation and strategic change

Role A = machine middle line management; Role B= business division management; Role C = professional middle line management; Role D = middle leadership

Figure 7.3 Middle management skill requirements

Figure 7.4 applies the basic template in Figure 7.3 to illustrate the main skill requirements of the middle line observed at SWT.

	Divisionalisation → Professionalisation → Adhocratisation			
	Role A skills set	Role B skills set	Role C skills set	Role D skills set
Technical skills	relevant business and technical knowledge	tools and techniques of resource management and performance monitoring	specialist professional knowledge and credibility	project management
Human skills	soft skills for communication and interaction	soft skills for communication and interaction	leader skills for mutual adjustment	leader skills for mutual adjustment
Conceptual skills	ability to implement organisational policies	understanding of systems of output-standardisation and business strategy	understanding of systems of skills-standardisation and the changing regulatory environment	understanding of processes of innovation and strategic change

See Figure 7.3 for key to middle management roles; shaded areas denote expected observations

Figure 7.4 Middle management skill requirements at South West Trains

The shaded area in Figure 7.4 represents the expected skills required by the middle line under divisionalisation, and the thick bordered area represents the actual skill requirements observed at SWT. The requirements for Role A and Role B human skills and for Role A conceptual skills were strongly evident at SWT, in line with the company's strategic emphasis on the quality of the line manager-employee relationship and the strong operational emphasis placed upon the correct implementation of HR and health and safety policies. As discussed in the previous section, due to the emphasis on customer service in parts of the organisation, there was also an unexpected emphasis on leader skills. There was, however, less emphasis placed on both Role A and Role B technical skills at SWT than might have been expected in a divisionalising machine bureaucracy.

The lack of a stronger emphasis on Role A technical skills at SWT derives from the strategic shift away from technical expertise among line managers towards the priorities of customer service. The company required its managers to have the technical knowledge to ensure that minimum operational and health and safety standards were met. But post-2003, it began to place less emphasis on managers' technical competence, for example to perform route-cause analysis of safety incidents in the

drivers function (see Section 4.1), or perhaps the use of ticketing technology in the station function and the use of specialist equipment in the fleet function.

The lack of a stronger emphasis on Role B technical skills derives from the limited nature of divisionalisation at SWT. As has been noted above with reference to Initial condition 1, organisational change at SWT resulted in the devolution of a relatively narrow range of managerial responsibilities down the line, rather than a broad set of strategic responsibilities. While a degree of technical and conceptual skill was necessary to enable middle managers to work within the performance monitoring framework at SWT and set meaningful objectives for their staff, the technical skills of strategic and resource management were less in demand.

Similarly, due to the relatively limited divisionalisation at SWT, the conceptual skills for strategic management associated with Role B were not extensively demanded of middle managers. Although managers required the skills to understand the business' key outputs and plans, for many, such as driver depot managers, the most important coordination decisions concerned driver-attendance and –satisfaction as measured by the staff satisfaction survey (see also Initial condition 1). Coordination decisions concerning train delays and cancellations, on the other hand, could often not be directly influenced by management at depot level. Slightly more complex coordination systems existed for station and fleet depot managers, relating to the physical development of the station or depot and its use of technology, but not to the extent that middle managers had to work with complex sets of strategic options (see Section 4.1). Nevertheless, the complexity of the issues around staff motivation meant that the relative lack of demand for Role B conceptual skills was counterbalanced by a demand for leader skills, normally associated with Role C and Role D middle management.

Overall, the middle management skill profile observed at SWT is largely consistent with the theoretical expectations in a divisionalising machine bureaucracy, in terms of Role A and Role B human and conceptual skills, and partly in terms of Role A and Role B technical skills. Importantly, in line with Initial condition 3, there was little evidence of demand for Role C or Role D skills.

Figure 7.5 illustrates the main skill requirements of the middle line observed at LFB.

Divisionalisation → Professionalisation → Adhocratisation				
	Role A skills set	Role B skills set	Role C skills set	Role D skills set
Technical skills	relevant business and technical knowledge.	tools and techniques of resource management and performance monitoring	specialist professional knowledge and credibility	project management
Human skills	soft skills for communication and interaction	soft skills for communication and interaction	leader skills for mutual adjustment	leader skills for mutual adjustment
Conceptual skills	ability to implement organisational policies	understanding of systems of output-standardisation and business strategy	understanding of systems of skills-standardisation and the changing regulatory environment	understanding of processes of innovation and strategic change

See Figure 7.3 for key to middle management roles; shaded areas denote expected observations

Figure 7.5 Middle management skill requirements at the London Fire Brigade

As indicated in Figure 7.5, the skill requirements of the middle line observed at LFB reflected the importance of technical expertise and knowledge of regulations amongst operational managers in the professionalising safety bureaucracy. The strong requirements for Role A technical skills requirements were therefore as expected, due to the organisation's heavy emphasis on safety-critical matters. Similarly, the strong requirements for Role A conceptual skills were as expected, due to the necessary understanding of changing rules and regulations and how these related to operational work.

Although professionalisation at LFB was shown to be partial (see Section 5.1), the demands of Role C technical and conceptual skills were still relatively strong. In order to play a supporting and developmental role rather than a supervisory role at fire incidents, station commanders required an advanced level of professional knowledge and credibility in the eyes of their watch commanders and fire station staff. Similarly, in order to oversee the development of fire station staff in line with the new staff development system (IPDS) and changing regulations around such plans as community fire safety, station commanders required the conceptual skills to advise on professional standards and how these might be learnt and upheld.

A smaller emphasis than expected was placed on the human skills of middle managers at LFB, both in the traditional safety bureaucracy and in its more professionalised form. The relative lack of emphasis on Role A human skills at LFB was a reflection of the lack of formalised people management practices at local level, such as line manager-involvement in performance and development reviews. Despite this, considerable people management responsibilities were assumed as part of the station commander's informal role; more tacit requirements for human skills were therefore present, if not formally demanded by the senior management and HR function (see Section 5.1). There was also evidence that more formalised processes around staff performance and development were introduced around 2007 (see Section 5.4).

The relative lack of formal demand for Role C human skills, namely the leader skills for mutual adjustment, can be explained by the relative lack of collaborative activity between the middle line and the support staff observed at LFB. The needs of professionalisation in the middle line were reflected to the extent that leader skills were required for the supporting and developmental role played by station commanders with respect to emergency incidents and in staff development generally. As was noted in Section 5.3, however, in practice the extent of professional-managerial collaboration at middle level in areas such as community fire safety management, requiring stronger liaison with stakeholders beyond the station, was underdeveloped.

Overall, the skill profile observed at LFB is consistent with the theoretical expectations in a professionalising safety bureaucracy, in terms of both Role A and Role C technical and conceptual skills, and partly in terms of human skills. Importantly, and in line with Initial condition 3, there was no strong evidence of demand for Role B or Role D skills.

Figure 7.6 illustrates the main skill requirements of the middle line observed at KASS. This is the most complex picture of middle management skill requirements out of all the three cases. It reflects the various demands of a professional-managerial hybrid organisation under adhocratisation pressures. While Role C requirements for technical, human and conceptual skills sets were clearly in evidence as expected, elements of Role B skills were unexpectedly as evident as those of Role D.

	$\text{Divisionalisation} \rightarrow \text{Professionalisation} \rightarrow \text{Adhocratisation}$			
	Role A skills set	Role B skills set	Role C skills set	Role D skills set
Technical skills	relevant business and technical knowledge.	tools and techniques of resource management and performance monitoring	specialist professional knowledge and credibility	project management
Human skills	soft skills for communication and interaction	soft skills for communication and interaction	leader skills for mutual adjustment	leader skills for mutual adjustment
Conceptual skills	ability to implement organisational policies	understanding of systems of output-standardisation and business strategy	understanding of systems of skills-standardisation and the changing regulatory environment	understanding of processes of innovation and strategic change

See Figure 7.3 for key to middle management roles; shaded areas denote expected observations

Figure 7.6 Middle management skill requirements at Kent Adult Social Services

As Figure 7.6 shows, the requirement for advanced human skills was constant across both the professional-managerial hybrid and the temporarily adhocratised form. However, the impact of managerialism on social services meant that middle managers at KASS required some of the skills associated with the Role B business division manager. As seen in Section 6.1, devolved discretion over the planning of services and the allocation of resources generated a demand for broader technical skills, including those of budgeting, forecasting and managerial control, than normally required by senior professionals. Also required was a degree of Role B conceptual skill in order to take strategic decisions about care provision arrangements across a district or a specific service.

As also seen in Section 6.1, the impact of modernisation reforms meant that middle managers at KASS required, as expected, some of the skills associated with Role D middle leadership. In terms of technical skills, there was some limited evidence that competence in project management was demanded in order to coordinate partnership-working with the NHS and private and voluntary sector organisations (see Section 6.4). In terms of conceptual skills, there was also evidence that a detailed understanding of the changing strategic environment for local government and adult social care was

required, along with the ability to find innovative solutions to respond effectively to the environmental changes (see Section 6.3).

Overall, the skill profile observed at KASS is consistent with the theoretical expectation of an adhocratising professional bureaucracy, certainly in terms of the three sets of Role C skills and Role D human skills, and partially in terms of Role D technical and conceptual skills. However, the evidence suggests that marketisation produced demands for a set of technical and conceptual skills that have much in common with Role B business division management, and which are therefore broader than originally expected in the Mintzbergian model.

Taken together, the case studies indicate that structural organisational transition is an important factor in shaping the skill requirements of middle managers. The case studies nevertheless raise the question of whether full transitions are likely and achievable. For example, a full transition from a safety bureaucracy to a professional bureaucracy would require less centralised and external control and a greater use of mutual adjustment at least between line and staff management. The alternative is that the organisation remains in a permanent semi-professionalised state, requiring a hybrid skill set that does not fully recognise the importance of advanced human/leader skills. Similarly, during adhocratisation, the additional middle leadership skills required by middle managers in addition to a professional-managerial skill set may be recognised only temporarily or periodically during times of significant environmental change.

All in all, however, the skill requirements observed in the three cases, while not as precisely drawn as in the original model outlined in Figure 7.3, were broadly in line with theoretical expectations. The partial and overlapping aspects of the patterns in the three cases were not sufficiently strong as to warrant a denial of Initial condition 3. The expected combinations of skill sets remained broadly intact, while suggesting the need for a more nuanced understanding of the skills for machine and professional middle line management under structural transition. It may therefore be concluded that **Initial condition 3 is largely established by the case study evidence.**

Hypothesis 1. Role of MLD

MLD interventions for middle managers are investments to enable them to contribute to organisational stability and/or strategic change.

In Chapter 2, it was hypothesised that MLD for middle managers was most appropriately understood as a set of interventions to enable the organisation to manage the strategic tensions involved in stability and change. This view was preferred over other versions such as MLD as a form of psychological reward, a political tool of elites for enhancing control, or a managerial discourse and process of identity-construction. It was also proposed that MLD interventions took three main forms - management development, leader development and leadership development - which respectively served three different HRM goals: i) efficient and effective management; ii) effective leading of staff; and iii) adaptive capacity .

Considered together, the case studies support the preferred interpretation of MLD, while recognising the secondary importance of the reward-orientated interpretation (in the SWT case) and the more political interpretation (in the LFB case). The theoretical distinction between the three main types of MLD was also well illustrated in the three cases, although several overlaps were also demonstrated in practice.

Figure 7.7 adapts the original model of MLD interventions constructed in Figure 2.1 to summarise the case study evidence as it relates to Hypothesis 1. The arrows in Figure 7.7 illustrate the main relationships observed between the MLD activities of the three cases and their underlying HRM goals, the types of MLD intervention employed and their broad, intended organisational outcomes.

As Figure 7.7 shows, the KASS case demonstrated the most strategically integrated and coherent set of MLD interventions. In particular, the investment in management development in the form of the diploma in management demonstrated a strong relationship between the expected elements of the MLD process, as it represented an investment in support of the aim of more effective and efficient management to achieve the necessary coordination to achieve explicit strategic organisational goals.



Dashed arrows denote weaker relationships

Figure 7.7 MLD options in the case studies

The KASS case also provided the clearest example of investment in leader development in line with theoretical expectations. As described in Section 6.2, From Good to Great did not utilise the full range of typical leader development methods, but had a clear focus on introducing the individual manager to ways in which they could develop their intrapersonal competence. There was a strong relationship between the HRM goal of more effective leading of staff, coupled with the expectation at organisational level that such investment should encourage more proactive and motivating management within teams in order to advance the strategic plans of the organisation.

The goals behind the leadership development investment at KASS, Inspirational Leadership, were somewhat vague, but it is clear that the motivation arose from the complexity and uncertainty in the new organisational and social care management environment. This led to an investment in a collective and non-prescriptive intervention that would provide a space out of which management solutions to organisational problems might emerge. In short, the Inspirational Leadership intervention, as expected, aimed at building adaptive capacity among middle managers. However, as discussed in Section 6.4, due to the tactical rather than strategic concerns of the participants, and by virtue of their mid-level positions in the hierarchy, the organisational-level contribution of Inspirational Leadership effectively contributed towards planned strategic change, or effective strategic implementation, rather than the outcome of emergent strategic change typically associated with leadership development.

In all, the KASS case lent strong support to the hypothesis that MLD interventions are investments in organisational stability and strategic change. Further support came from the SWT case, certainly in terms of its operational management development, and less directly from its investment in leader development. As described in Section 4.2, there was a notably strong relationship at SWT between the underlying strategic objective of improved staff attendance and discipline, the design of the operational management development, and the intended organisational outcome of the smooth-running of the train service. The case demonstrated an investment in a conventional form of operational management development clearly intended to ensure organisational stability and continuity of service, fully in line with theoretical expectations.

Leader development at SWT painted a slightly more complicated picture of MLD investment. As described in Section 4.2, the main rationale for the talent management programme, rather than to improve the quality of the leading of staff in the organisation, was to identify and prepare front-line and middle managers for succession to senior management. The overall effect of the talent management programme was therefore to 'reward' a select group of managers with a significant amount of individualised attention and advice on how to develop their intrapersonal competence. As shown in Section 4.3, this investment nonetheless contributed indirectly to the furthering of some strategic-level plans, such as improvements to business performance within the station management division. But the relationship to organisational outcomes was weaker than for leader development at KASS.

The investment in management development at LFB illustrates the complexity of the underlying aims and intended organisational contributions of competence-based development. More than the other two cases, LFB problematised the concept of 'efficient and effective management' and demonstrated its subjective nature. On the one hand, as Section 5.2 showed, the investment in competence-based management development at LFB was designed to improve coordination at fire incidents. On the other, it was a political instrument to institutionalise new terms and conditions and new HR practices of recruitment, promotion and career development. The clarity of the connection between management development at LFB and organisational-strategic aims was therefore less pronounced than in the other two cases.

In summary, the SWT and KASS cases demonstrated evidence of investment in organisational stability and strategic change through their management development interventions and, in the latter case, leader development. But the political and psychological-contractual motivations underlying MLD investment were also demonstrated in the LFB and SWT cases. Furthermore, a limitation of the theoretical model was highlighted by the preoccupation with strategy-implementation concerns in the leadership development intervention at KASS, rather than with the outcome of emergent strategic change that is normally associated with this type of MLD.

Despite some deviations from the theoretically expected pattern of MLD options, the evidence suggests overall that MLD investment for middle managers is fundamentally motivated by the intention to enable them contribute to the strategic aims of the organisation. A multiplicity of stakeholder interests and HRM goals may also drive these

types of investments, and the intended contribution to strategic change might be more constrained in reality than much of the MLD literature implies. On balance, however, it may be concluded that **Hypothesis 1 is largely supported by the case study evidence.**

Hypothesis 2. Contingent MLD options

MLD options for middle managers are contingent on one of the four main middle management roles and/or another role associated with greater organisational flexibility.

In Chapter 2 it was hypothesised that the skill requirements of different middle management roles and the pressures to move towards a more flexible structure can be expected to drive the choices made in organisations to invest in various combinations of management development, leader development and leadership development. More specifically, it was argued that: i) various types of management development options (operational, strategic, professional and project management development) should be expected to be selected according to one of the middle management Roles A-D and/or a middle management role associated with greater organisational flexibility; ii) leader development was most likely to be provided for Role C professional middle line managers, or Role A/B managers under professionalisation; and iii) leadership development was most likely to be provided for Role D middle leaders or Role C managers under adhocratisation.

The MLD options in the case studies reflected theoretical expectations to a significant degree, but with some exceptions and omissions. Figure 7.8 maps out the theoretically expected combinations of MLD options against the observed options in the three case study organisations, including a categorisation of these choices as management development, leader development and leadership development.

Expected MLD options	Observed MLD interventions in the cases		
	South West Trains	London Fire Brigade	Kent Adult Social Services
<i>Divisionalisation</i> OMD + SMD	Operational management training (OMD)		
<i>Professionalisation</i> OMD/SMD + PMD + LD	Talent management (SMD/LD)	Station commander development programme (OMD + PMD) (+ some LD)	
<i>Adhocratisation</i> OMD/SMD/PMD + PJMD + LD + LSD			Diploma in management (PMD) (+ some PJMD) From Good to Great (LD) Inspirational Leadership (LSD)

OMD = operational management development; SMD = strategic management development; PMD = professional management development; PJMD = project management development; LD = leader development; LSD = leadership development

Figure 7.8 Expected versus actual MLD options in the three case studies

As Figure 7.8 shows, the KASS case again provided the strongest support for the hypothesis out of the three cases. In line with the expected requirements of the adhocratising professional bureaucracy, the organisation invested, albeit to differing degrees, in professional management development (PMD), leader development (LD) and leadership development (LSD), though less so in project management development (PJMD). As noted in Section 6.2, with its emphasis on the learning of applied management tools and techniques, coupled with the study of the adult social care environment, the diploma in management at KASS is a prime example of professional management development (PMD). In addition, as was also shown in Section 6.2, leader development at KASS was a clear attempt to complement professionalised management competence with the more advanced human skills required for mutual adjustment to influence and lead change in the professional bureaucracy.

The additional MLD investments at KASS, namely project management (PJMD) and leadership development (LSD), were, as expected, associated with the introduction of greater adhocracy. The investment in PJMD, in the form of Prince II software training,

was apparently very limited (see Section 6.4). However, it may be imagined, if not specifically reported by the interviewees, that a stock of middle managers were introduced to project management techniques through the module 'planning and controlling physical and financial resources' during their participation in the diploma in management (see Section 6.2, see also Chartered Management Institute 2010). Similarly, the outcomes of management development, leader development and leadership overlapped at KASS, but were mutually reinforcing of different types of competence (see again Section 6.4). The contribution of leadership development towards greater adhocracy in the form of the Inspirational Leadership programme was admittedly temporary, in that it was scrapped after eighteen months; however, as noted in Section 6.4, other leadership development activities, in which middle managers may also have participated, did continue until at least 2010.

The weak investment in PJMD and the temporary investment in leadership development for middle managers may therefore be explained as support for limited adhocratisation during a period of uncertainty in the middle line after restructuring in 2005. It might be argued that these additional investments were motivated by faddism, and that such a large and monopolistic organisation as KCC was in any case in the position to offer a range of courses to suit various individual and stakeholder preferences, regardless of strategic priorities. The overall pattern and timing of MLD investments observed at KASS suggests, however, that in line with the hypothesis, MLD options were strongly related, first to the demands for efficient coordination in the professional bureaucracy, and second to the pressures of adhocratisation.

The LFB case lent support to the hypothesis, in that the station commander development programme at LFB represented, as expected, an investment in both operational and professionalised management development (OMD and PMD). As noted in Section 5.2, there was also some limited evidence of leader development (LD), which can be interpreted as an attempt to support the practice of mutual adjustment as required by professionalisation. But overall this latter investment was small, fragmented and uncoordinated. As the actual extent of the fire service modernisation reforms was constrained (see Section 5.4), the leader development workshops and those parts of the station commander development programme that were concerned with community fire safety and professional-managerial collaboration reflected aspirational rather than real organisational requirements. MLD at LFB can therefore be seen as an instrument to promote the *idea* as well as the *practice* of professionalisation.

The strongest alternative interpretation of the MLD choices made at LFB is that the rhetoric of investing in managers, rather than the actual serving of the needs of professionalisation, masked the real underlying agenda of making financial efficiency savings in the fire service. The new competence-based system, with its emphasis on portfolio building and workplace assessments, rather than external courses and examinations, may indeed have been motivated at least in part by the wish to reduce the time and resources spent on development away from the workplace at the Fire Service College (see Section 5.2). However, to give primacy to this interpretation is to ignore that significant resources were spent on classroom instruction and fireground simulation training within London itself, and that the strategic decision to replace the examinations with a competence-based approach to development and promotion-selection was taken in London well before the compulsory nationwide introduction of IPDS. It can be concluded, therefore, that investment in operational and professionalised management development at LFB was motivated more by concerns about strategic effectiveness than about cost-cutting.

Similarly, it would be over-simplistic to dismiss the isolated leadership workshops provided at LFB as faddish and unnecessary, or as a cheap alternative to fully individualised leader development, requiring such resource-intensive activities as 360-degree feedback and coaching. The evidence presented in Section 5.4 towards the end of the LFB case study, of investment in leader and leadership development for new middle managers from amongst university graduates and individuals from more diverse backgrounds, suggests that post-2005 LFB was going beyond the isolated workshops and was beginning to respond strategically to the need for greater mutual adjustment and professionalisation in its MLD choices.

The SWT case produced the most unexpected pattern of MLD intervention. The process of divisionalisation in the machine bureaucracy was anticipated to result in the provision of operational management development (OMD) and some investment in strategic management development (SMD) for middle managers. As Section 4.2 showed, the former type of management development was indeed strongly evident, but there was little evidence, except for a select few experienced middle managers, of any investment in the latter type, at least in its expected form. Instead, strategic management development at SWT took the form of leader development (LD).

It was expected that leader development needs would be less prominent in the machine bureaucracy, in which standardisation of work processes forms the dominant coordinating mechanism, as opposed to mutual adjustment. The experience of SWT, however, suggests that human skills are of large significance for middle managers in organisations that have a substantial customer service-orientated function and that have experienced radical change, such as changes in ownership and restructuring (see discussion in Section 4.4). This resonates with the findings of Huy (2002) in his case of 'Servico', from which he concludes that the intense emotions aroused by radical change in organisations place significant responsibilities on middle managers to attend to the emotions of their subordinates. Such responsibilities demand the development of intrapersonal competence, which is the primary objective of leader development.

The SWT experience suggests that not only the original Role A model of machine middle line management underemphasises the importance of human skills, but also that the theoretical distinction proposed in Section 1.3 between the basic soft skills for communication and interaction on the one hand, and advanced human skills (leader skills) for mutual adjustment on the other, might be overdrawn (see Figure 1.4). Particularly in customer service-oriented machine bureaucracies that have experienced significant change, it can be argued that leader development for middle managers is to be expected as an important MLD option.

Across the three cases, the evidence can be said to largely support the hypothesis. At KASS, all four of the expected MLD investments were observed. At LFB, only one of the three expected MLD interventions (LD) was partially absent, though leader skill needs were to some extent addressed through the IPDS-based management development programme (PMD and OMD). At SWT, one of the two expected MLD interventions (SMD) was largely absent in its expected form, although substituted with a leader development intervention (LD) which served the key strategic purpose of employee motivation and development. Where MLD investments were observed to be weak or temporary, this tended to be related to the limited nature of structural transition, which is also consistent with the theoretical model. On balance, it is reasonable to conclude that **Hypothesis 2 is largely supported by the case study evidence.**

Hypothesis 3. Contingent MLD outcomes

The outcomes of MLD for middle managers are contingent on one of the four main middle management roles and/or another role associated with greater organisational flexibility.

In Chapter 2 it was hypothesised that not only the options but also the outcomes of MLD for middle managers are contingent one of the four middle management roles and/or another role associated with greater organisational flexibility. The basis for this argument was that the specific organisational and job context provided the necessary opportunities for middle managers to apply and transfer their learning from MLD activities into the workplace. This proposition was developed to assert that those MLD investments which did not fit with the organisational and job context would fail to result in their intended outcomes due to lack of opportunity for learning transfer. Intended MLD outcomes were modelled as multi-levelled, including individual, group and organisational outcomes.

Figure 7.9 develops the original model of contingent outcomes of MLD for middle managers under structural transition by including the actual experience of MLD in the three case studies. Taking into account the partial and unexpected MLD investments for middle managers discussed under Hypothesis 2, the MLD outcomes observed at the various levels in the case studies broadly followed the expected pattern. This is to say that the organisational and job context were largely decisive in shaping the actual MLD outcomes. There were, however, some weak and unintended outcomes, the reasons for which will also be discussed.

Structural transition and the middle line	MLD intervention	Individual outcomes	Group outcomes	Organisational outcomes
<i>Divisionalisation</i> South West Trains (Role A→B)	OMD SMD LD	OMC [Some SMC] [intrapersonal competence]	Staff compliance Some staff commitment	Organisational stability (increased performance in customer service)
<i>Professionalisation</i> London Fire Brigade (Role A→C)	OMD PMD LD	OMC Some PMC Some intrapersonal competence	Staff compliance Uneven professional commitment	Organisational stability in the safety bureaucracy Limited professionalisation
<i>Adhocratisation</i> Role C→D	PMD	PMC	Staff compliance and commitment	Stability and adjustment in the professional bureaucracy
	LD	Intrapersonal competence		
	PJMD	PJMC	Innovation <i>[Improved collaboration between managers and with external partners]</i>	Emergent strategic change <i>[Contribution of middle managers to shaping organisational strategy]</i>
	LSD	Interpersonal competence		

Role A = machine middle line management; Role B= business division management; Role C = professional middle line management; Role D = middle leadership; OMD = operational management development; SMD = strategic management development; PMD = professional management development; PJMD = project management development; LD = leader development; LSD = leadership development; OMC = operational managerial competence; SMC = strategic managerial competence; PMC = professional managerial competence; PJMC = project management competence
 Crossed-out font represents absence; square brackets represent unexpected results; small font represents weak results

Figure 7.9 MLD outcomes in the three case studies

As Figure 7.9 shows, the first of the two MLD interventions at SWT, namely the suite of line management training courses representing OMD, demonstrated strongly the expected pattern of outcomes at individual, group and organisational levels. Partly this was because the training had specific aims and measurable, direct results, making the outcomes relatively easy to identify. Nonetheless, as the triangulated evidence from interviews with new managers and staff absence, staff satisfaction and other business performance data indicated (see Section 4.3.1), there was little doubt that OMD was effective in achieving operational managerial competence (OMC) at individual level and staff compliance at group level, thereby contributing to the overall stability of the machine bureaucracy at organisational level. In addition, the outcomes of the unexpected second MLD intervention at SWT, leader development (LD), led to the development of some intrapersonal competence and a type of strategic managerial competence (SMC), as shown mainly by the interview data (see Section 4.3.2). In turn, this appeared to help increase staff commitment and make a contribution towards some improved performance against business unit objectives, notably in improving customer service standards in some stations. For those managers with less clearly defined divisionalised responsibilities, however, such as driver depot managers, leader development seemed largely ineffectual. In this sense, the mixed outcomes of leader development lend support to the hypothesis that the options and outcomes of MLD are predominantly shaped by organisational and job context.

At LFB, the pattern of outcomes for the more operational aspects of the station commander development programme (OMD) was consistent with theoretical expectations at individual, team and organisational levels. Although the outcomes of OMD were more difficult to measure than in the SWT case, the confidence with which station commanders reported the outcomes of their technically-oriented training, notably in incident command, and evidence from the Audit Commission about LFB's operational effectiveness, strongly suggested the expected pattern (see Section 5.3.1). Certainly, developing operational managerial competence (OMC) seemed to contribute, as expected, to the achievement of staff compliance at group level, most notably in the discipline and competence of firefighters at incidents, thereby contributing to the overall stability of the safety bureaucracy.

The outcomes of the professionally-orientated aspects of the station management development programme (PMD) at LFB were less salient. Although interview data and Audit Commission evidence suggested a contribution towards more professionalised

approaches to incident management and staff development (see Section 5.3.1), the contested nature of professionalisation and the limited implementation of the modernisation reforms in terms of community fire safety constrained the achievement of the wider intended outcomes of professional managerial competence (PMC), particularly in terms of closer and ongoing collaboration with other parts of the bureaucracy and the support staff (see Section 5.4). Elements of the station commander development programme, such as modules on employee development, combined with sporadic leadership development workshops, also open to non-uniformed managers, may have helped developed greater intrapersonal competence in some individuals. Overall, however, the organisation did not possess the HRD competence to deliver leader development in a strategic and systematic way and therefore failed to make a significant impact in this area (see Section 5.3.2). But with greater HRD competence and less political resistance from uniformed managers, LFB might have achieved a greater degree of professional-managerial and intrapersonal competence in its middle managers, and therefore a greater contribution towards modernisation.

In the third case of KASS, the MLD experience broadly followed the expected pattern, but also with some fragmented outcomes. Professional management development (PMD) was shown, through the strong convergence in the accounts of the diploma in management participants and in external inspection reports (see Section 6.3.1), to result in the expected outcome of individual managerial competence to coordinate work in the professional-managerial hybrid (akin to PMC). The same range of evidence also pointed towards the achievement of the expected group-level outcomes of staff compliance with professional standards in social care and staff commitment to particular strategic developments (such as the consolidation of different care services in a district), thereby contributing to overall stability and adaptation in the professional bureaucracy. Leader development (LD) in the form of From Good to Great produced slightly weaker outcomes, largely due to some ineffective learning-management. Nevertheless the leader development outcomes were in line with the expectation that managers should develop greater intrapersonal competence, in particular in terms of their self-awareness, thus contributing to greater commitment amongst their staff to developing care services in accordance with the organisational strategy, such as through partnerships with the voluntary sector (see Section 6.3.2).

The outcomes of the MLD interventions that were designed to support adhocratisation at KASS were somewhat fragmented in comparison to the expected outcomes in the theoretical model. This is to be mainly explained by the temporary nature of adhocratisation at KASS, therefore still consistent with the hypothesis that outcomes are shaped by organisational needs rather than other factors. As was argued in Section 6.4, the relatively limited opportunity in reality for middle managers at KASS to work collectively in project-driven ways provides the main explanation for lack of greater investment and outcomes from project management training. The outcomes of leadership development (LSD) were more identifiable, with the overall interview evidence from the Inspirational Leadership programme suggesting the expected development of interpersonal competence at individual level, as managers developed the skills of networking and participated in workshops to make collective sense of the changed social care management environment (see Section 6.3.3). A lack of operational HRD competence led to some individuals being insufficiently challenged by the leadership development activities. However, at group level, a clear innovation was observed in the County District Managers Group, though bounded by the context of the middle management role and the institutional constraints of the professional bureaucracy. The eventual contribution of this bounded innovation was to improve the effectiveness of strategy-implementation and create a semi-formalised new structure. In this sense, MLD outcomes at KASS were shaped by a temporary period of adhocracy followed by re-bureaucratisation (see Section 6.4).

The evidence from across the three cases therefore suggests the strong influence of organisational structural context on MLD outcomes. The three main alternative ways of interpreting the evidence have been discussed and largely discounted at the end of each of the case study chapters. These alternative interpretations related to: MLD as fad or fashion; MLD as an instrument of domination and control; and MLD as a reproducer of managerial identity. When the evidence from the three cases is considered together, however, as in the above discussion of the evidence in support of Hypothesis 2, it is pertinent to focus down on two main alternative ways of interpreting the synthesised case study evidence. Firstly, given the tendency across all three cases to invest in leader development, apparently regardless of context, the argument has to be considered that the demand for advanced human skills amongst middle managers is universal rather than contingent. Secondly, the argument needs to be reconsidered that MLD, rather than a function of organisational context, is better understood as a site of political control and resistance.

On the first question of the universal demand for leader development, the differences between the cases are instructive. Soft skill outcomes were prominent in the SWT case, but less prominent in the other machine-like bureaucracy at LFB, in which the development of a culture of customer service was less important for successful coordination. In the KASS case, soft skill outcomes were also important, but explicitly driven by the demand for effective mutual adjustment in the professional bureaucracy and for adhocratisation. Overall, therefore, the central importance of advanced human skills as an inevitable focus of management learning under *any* conditions has to be questioned. Instead it is possible to discern between different types and emphases in soft skills according to organisational and job contexts.

It would also be wrong to dismiss investment in soft skills-development as HR-faddism, or as a tendency to pay rhetorical rather than substantial commitment to strategic MLD. At SWT, the leader development intervention was indeed somewhat piecemeal, ineffectual and short-lived, aimed at a relatively small number of 'high performers'; this may have been largely responsible for its relatively weak outcomes. However, the main organisational contribution made by the intervention, apart from serving to retain some of the managers, was to soften the styles of some managers on the operational side, and to ease a process of commitment amongst staff towards divisionalised objectives. Similarly, the investment in leader development at LFB, although paled into significance by the more technical elements of the competence-based management development programme, became progressively stronger and more strategically implemented in the latter years of the 2000s, in recognition of the softer skills required by middle managers to ease the process of mutual adjustment. HR-faddism and over-hyped MLD rhetoric may have explained some of the negative or null MLD outcomes in the case studies, but in a piecemeal and isolated fashion rather than in a general way.

The second main potential objection to the organisational-contingency explanation, concerning MLD as an expression of political conflict, links back to the discussion at the end of Section 3.2.1 of unionisation as a potential obstacle to MLD. In the LFB case in Chapter 5, it was concluded that the influence on the MLD process of conflict between the employers and the FBU was strong, but neither consistent nor insurmountable. A comparison with the SWT case is instructive, in which political tensions between management and unions were also important. At SWT, the training of line managers,

particularly in attendance and discipline management, may be interpreted as a means of extending managerial control over a strongly unionised staff.

Yet it is important to recognise that even the controversial attendance and discipline policies at SWT were agreed by the unions as essential tools of coordination for the smooth-running of the business. Although staff at SWT may have subsequently experienced the company's HR policies as instruments of political control, especially as employment relations problems resurfaced periodically (see for example ASLEF's strike action at SWT over taxi fares around the time as this fieldwork, BBC News Online, 18 July 2006), the reported experiences of individual middle and front-line managers suggest that MLD was primarily a strategic, functional response to organisational requirements, rather than a tactical move in the political conflict with the unionised operating core. Insofar as MLD was directed towards overcoming employee resistance to the formal HR policies, adversarial union-management relations were seen as an obstacle to be surmounted in the interests of customer service, rather than the primary motivation behind the investment in MLD.

A more consensual political environment appeared to exist at KASS, at least amongst its management, as the needs of the professional-managerial hybrid organisation seemed to be relatively uncontroversial in terms of the practicalities of middle managerial work. The congruence between individuals' learning outcomes and the strategic goals underpinning the MLD interventions at KASS has been discussed (see Section 6.4). Whereas informal learning at LFB did not fully match with the formal strategic outcomes of MLD, informal learning amongst managers at KASS largely complemented the achievement of intended MLD outcomes. Even at LFB, there was a degree of consensus around the need for professionalised incident management, if not around other strategic MLD goals such as community fire safety. Therefore, while MLD outcomes may be partly a product of a contested and political process, particularly in uniformed and unionised machine bureaucratic-environments, the overall evidence suggests that they are primarily shaped by the organisational context, within which political differences may constrain the conditions for effective learning transfer.

Before reaching a final conclusion regarding the reasons for the patterns of MLD outcomes across the cases, it is important to consider the influence of the other potentially interfering factor identified in Section 3.2.1: that of gender bias. It was argued in Section 3.2.1 that gender bias might be expected: i) to restrict access for

women particularly to leader and leadership development activities, the informal methods of which tend to rely on membership of elite networks; and ii) to influence stakeholders' perceptions of the value of MLD outcomes according to gendered assumptions about managerial job roles.

The first type of gender effect would have led to the observation of uneven participation in leader and leadership development activities in the case organisations due to the marginalisation of women. However, there was no apparent evidence of this in the three cases. KASS was a female-dominated organisation, as were the leader development and leadership development activities, at least on the basis of the interviewee sample. With respect to leadership development, the lack of investment in this type of MLD in the other two organisations prevents a comparative judgement. With respect to leader development, however, it may be observed that, at LFB, the miscellaneous leadership workshops were expressly designed to encourage the participation of non-uniformed managers, who tended to be female. At SWT, the participants in the talent management programme were over 33 per cent women, as opposed to 20 per cent of managers in the company overall in 2006 (SWT documentation). It cannot be argued, therefore, that the pattern of selection of managers for leader development across the cases can be explained by gender bias.

The second type of gender effect, related to stereotypical assumptions about managerial job roles and the perceived value of MLD outcomes, is potentially stronger in the three cases. It was implied in Section 3.2.1 that female-dominated organisational environments, that also demand stereotypically female managerial behaviours, might over-report the strength of the outcomes from leader and leadership development, as these types of MLD are generally designed to promote the softer skills concerned with communicating and interrelating. The parallel argument would then be that male-dominated environments, that also demand stereotypically male behaviours, might under-report the outcomes of such intervention. At the female-dominated KASS, there was indeed a generally positive response to leader and leadership development, whereas at the male-dominated LFB, managers tended to resist formal development interventions directed towards softer skills concerned with employee motivation and community fire safety. Following on from the point made in Section 5.4 about the possibility of gender bias in the reported MLD outcomes at LFB, it is possible that gendered assumptions about the value of softer skills played a role in the contrasting experiences of leader development in LFB and KASS. However, a contrast between

LFB and the male-dominated SWT is also instructive, in that the experiences of SWT's managers of developing their softer skills were generally positive, despite the male-dominated environment and the continued importance attached to the 'hard' skills required in the railway industry (such as driving and fleet maintenance in hostile conditions).

The most plausible explanation for these differences in the demand and perceived value of the softer MLD outcomes across the cases is that the professionalised environment at KASS was the most conducive to the softer-orientated leader and leadership development options. KASS afforded the greatest opportunities out of the three organisations for managers to reflect on their styles and adapt them for the purposes of mutual adjustment. Conversely the environment at LFB, and to a lesser extent that of SWT, presented less opportunity to apply this type of learning due to the more mechanical nature of the core work tasks of the organisation. Gender may have played some role in determining perceptions how the softer MLD outcomes were perceived in the cases, but the primary reasons for differences in the strength of investment in the softer types of MLD and in their subsequent outcomes lies in the nature of the services provided by the organisations: namely the 'harder', more physical emergency services in the case of LFB; the 'harder', safety-critical transport services in the case of SWT (though with a stronger orientation towards 'softer' customer services); and the 'softer' caring services in the case of KASS.

In the final analysis, that the Initial conditions 1-3 were established in the case studies serves to strengthen the validity of the overall proposition that MLD outcomes are shaped by structural organisational context. That the case studies established with some confidence that middle management roles and skill sets, and the changes to them, varied according to organisational structure and the strategies of divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation, provided a solid set of job and organisational structural contexts to which MLD was then applied, and within which MLD outcomes could be observed. Nevertheless, with regard to Hypothesis 3, it is necessary to reconsider the possible counterfactual explanations for the MLD outcomes.

Counterfactual explanations for the patterns of MLD options and outcomes were discussed and largely discounted at the end of each of the case study chapters. Taken together, however, the case study evidence presents the following key question: could the observed changes in the cases have been observed without MLD intervention? Or,

more specifically: i) could the improvements in HR and business performance at SWT have been achieved without investment in line management training (and, to an extent, talent management)?; ii) could progressively improved Audit Commission reports at LFB have been achieved without the station commander development programme?; and iii) could progressively improved external assessments at KASS been achieved without investment in a portfolio of MLD activities?

As discussed in Section 3.5, counterfactual explanations of group and organisational level changes are impossible to prove conclusively without the collection of 'before-and-after' data and without studying the differences between experiment and control groups. However, so far as the specific question of line management training at SWT is concerned, there was such a strong connection between the accounts of middle managers, staff satisfaction survey data and HR performance data on the operational side of the business, that other explanations for the observed changes at group and organisational level are implausible. Indeed this interpretation of a strong connection is reinforced by the negative accounts of managers on the non-operational side of the business, who resented compliance with what they saw as unnecessary investment in line management training, precisely because it was so relevant and effective on the operational side (see Section 4.4).

With regard to the station commander development programme at LFB, there is a stronger case for arguing that changes in the organisation would have been achieved without MLD intervention. Such was the strength of both the top-down centralised control over working methods and the culture of informal learning on the fire station, that it is plausible for the more professionalised approach to incident management, for example, to have been introduced without managers having to complete the relevant competence-based management development modules. Indeed, the more sceptical accounts of middle managers' experience of training emphasised this point of view (see Section 5.3). However, it is important to recognise the role of the competence-based system of development as a process of validation of learnt practice, rather than the learning experience itself. Therefore, while scepticism of the station commander development programme itself may have been expressed, it nevertheless provided the framework within which the learning of new working methods could be taught, practiced, shaped and validated. In this sense, the group- and organisational-level outcomes at LFB were the product of MLD 'intervention'.

Lastly, with regard to the combination of MLD interventions at KASS, it has already been acknowledged that MLD formed part of a bundle of staff care and HR measures to which improved HR outcomes could be attributed (see Section 6.4). With regard to the specific contribution of MLD, the consistency between the accounts of middle management learners and Investors in People reports, particularly with regard to the diploma in management, suggests that MLD played a decisive role in reinforcing the official HR policies and the strategic goals of KASS and KCC. It is therefore questionable whether such strong strategic coherence at KASS could have been achieved without the significant MLD investment. Similarly, the interview and documentary evidence suggests a strong causal relationship between leadership development activity and new approaches to coordination that were introduced through middle managers to help navigate the new uncertainties in the organisational and regulatory environment.

On balance, despite the influence of other factors on the actual MLD outcomes, it may be concluded that the influence of organisational and job context provides the best explanation for the pattern observed across the case studies, which was broadly in line with the theoretical model of contingent MLD outcomes. It is reasonable to conclude that **Hypothesis 3 is largely supported by the case study evidence.**

Hypothesis 4. Extent of structural transition and effect on MLD

The extent of structural transition determines the extent to which MLD serves organisational stability and/or change.

The limits to structural transition in the three case studies have been argued to have strongly influenced the patterns of MLD options and outcomes. The remaining question is whether the balance of MLD's contribution to organisational stability vis-à-vis organisational change is shaped by the extent of structural transition.

The central argument in this thesis has been that MLD options are driven and MLD outcomes are shaped by varying organisational requirements. It should therefore follow that the extent of transition from one organisational type to another has a decisive influence on MLD's eventual contribution. The greater the extent of transition, the greater the balance of MLD's contribution towards organisational change; the smaller

the extent of transition, the greater the balance of MLD's contribution towards organisational stability.

Any firm confirmation or rejection of this hypothesis is, however, very difficult. This is because the precise extent of transition, that is the difference between the original organisational type, representing organisational stability, and the adoption of a more flexible type, representing realised structural change, is almost impossible to establish without advanced measurement techniques. Nevertheless, patterns of MLD options and outcomes are identifiable across the three case studies and these provide an insight into the balance of MLD's contribution.

The pattern at SWT was that limited divisionalisation led to MLD options that served mainly to support the stability of the machine bureaucracy, albeit one with devolved HR responsibilities. The partial nature of the transition – in fact devolution rather than divisionalisation - had a decisive influence in determining the effective contribution of MLD at SWT. Ultimately, after the upheaval of privatisation and a period of adverse employment relations, the need for stability in the 'slimmed down' machine bureaucracy was the dominant influence in shaping MLD's overall contribution, rather than the need for change towards the divisionalised form. In this sense, MLD served mainly to enable change within the organisational type, rather than across organisational types.

At LFB, the intention was to employ MLD as a strategic instrument to promote organisational change in the form of professionalisation. First-and-foremost MLD served to support the stability of the safety bureaucracy, but it also succeeded in preparing managers for some aspects of professionalisation, by promoting and legitimising new approaches to incident management and, to an extent, mutual adjustment and professional-managerial collaboration. Even so, the LFB case illustrates how MLD *options* may be less constrained by the limited degree of actual structural transition than the eventual MLD *outcomes*.

The KASS case illustrated most clearly the balance between MLD's contribution to organisational stability vis-à-vis change. The needs of the professional bureaucracy were predominant in determining the main MLD options and shaping their outcomes. Additional MLD investments were then driven by the needs of adhocratisation, but the partial and temporary nature of this shift limited the MLD investment and curtailed the organisational reach and sustainability of the MLD outcomes. Overall at KASS, the

actual extent of transition was decisive in shaping MLD's total organisational contribution.

In summary, the evidence is not sufficiently precise to determine the exact influence of the extent of structural transition on the organisational contribution of MLD for middle managers. However, the case studies suggest strongly that the chosen or enforced limits to transition have a decisive effect on the extent to which MLD interventions contribute to strategic change, partly by limiting the willingness of organisations to invest in MLD interventions for greater flexibility, and partly by limiting the opportunities for individual managers to achieve the expected learning outcomes. Where actual transition is limited, then so are the motivations related to structural change behind MLD and/or the outcomes associated with strategic change. It follows that, where transition is more limited than it is advanced, MLD contributes more to organisational stability than to strategic change. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that **Hypothesis 4 has tentative support from the case study evidence, but that the balance of MLD's contribution to organisational stability vis-à-vis strategic change requires further investigation.**

Chapter 8. Conclusion: the contingent role of management and leadership development

It's time to bring management and leadership back together and down to earth.
(Mintzberg 2004a: 2)

The basic problem with much of the MLD literature has been to disconnect managerial learning from its natural context and organisational reality (see the quote above, c.f. also Grugulis 2007: 155, Mintzberg 2009: 234). In developing, testing and refining an organisational contingency model of MLD options and outcomes for middle managers, this thesis helps to correct this tendency and represents a significant 'Mintzberg-plus'-type advance in the academic literature.

The central hypothesis - that MLD plays an important role in organisational change but that greater contextualisation is required to understand its precise contribution – has received strong empirical support from the three case studies, which illustrated MLD's contribution to divisionalisation, professionalisation and adhocratisation respectively. As has been shown in the previous chapter, different management roles and skill sets, and the intended changes to them, may be identified according to different organisational types and the structural transitions sought by the organisation's strategic apex. As was also shown, these organisational contingencies then shape the types of MLD that organisations invest in, and the outcomes that result. Different types of MLD investments – management development, leader development and leadership development - were shown to produce outcomes at individual, group and organisational levels, but according to different and largely predictable patterns.

In short, the thesis has demonstrated the contingent role of MLD in organisational change, as opposed to other roles for MLD that are suggested in the literature. The principal rival explanations for MLD's role in organisations – as best HRM practice, as part of institutional mimeticism, as an instrument of political domination and control, and as a reproducer of managerial identities (see Mabey and Finch-Lees 2008) – have been largely discounted. The overall conclusion that MLD, as an instrument of HRM, plays a contingent role, receives support from Pichault and others (see Pichault and Nizet 2000, Pichault and Schoenaers 2003, Pichault 2007) who cite the importance of

organisational and political contingencies for understanding HRM's contribution to organisational change.

In the first section of this final chapter the broader theoretical implications of the thesis are considered. In the second section of the chapter, the limitations of the thesis and the most fruitful directions for future research in this area are assessed. In the third and final section of the chapter, the implications of the thesis for practice and policy are discussed.

8.1 Theoretical implications

The findings of the thesis point to two main areas in which existing theory needs to be refined. First and foremost, the thesis has highlighted the contingent role of MLD in organisational change. Second, the thesis has highlighted the importance of the organisation's political context in shaping MLD outcomes.

8.1.1 The contingent role of MLD in organisational change

MLD has conventionally been assumed to play a general role in promoting organisational performance and change by aligning managers' contributions to strategic goals (see for example Woodall and Winstanley 1998, Mumford and Gold 2004). Furthermore, some leadership theories have emphasised managers' potential to effect radical and transformational change (see Burns 1978, Bass 1985, Kotter 1990). Other academic literature has pointed out the importance of organisational context, but stopped short of analysing the effects on MLD of specific organisational contingencies (c.f. Mole 2000, Thomson *et al.* 2001, Mabey 2002). This thesis has shown that, in order to understand MLD's contribution more precisely, it is necessary to examine the relationships between different types of organisation, different types of MLD and different types of organisational change.

In general terms, it has been shown that machine bureaucracies and divisionalised organisations have a greater demand for conventional, classroom-based management development activities, due to their requirement for the skills of managerial control. In contrast, professional bureaucracies and adhocracies have a greater demand for

individualised leader development activities, due to their requirement for the skills associated with mutual adjustment. Moreover, adhocracies have a specific demand for the collective and less prescribed activities of leadership development, due to their ongoing requirement to innovate and manage flux in the operating environment.

In addition to this contingent pattern of investment in the three main MLD options of management development, leader development and leadership development, all four organisational types demand for their middle managers a slightly different kind of management development, due to their varying approaches to managerial coordination and control. Middle managers in the machine bureaucracy require an operationally-oriented type of management development; middle managers in the divisionalised organisation require a more strategically-oriented type of management development; middle managers in the professional bureaucracies a more applied, professional type of management development; and middle managers in the adhocracy a more project management-oriented type of development.

The contingent MLD options can be expected to lead to a pattern of multi-levelled MLD outcomes. At individual level, MLD outcomes consist of different types of managerial competence, depending on the type of managerial control required in the organisation; specifically leader development and leadership development can be expected to produce individual-level outcomes of intrapersonal competence and interpersonal competence respectively. At group level, MLD outcomes consist of various patterns of staff compliance and commitment. At organisational level, MLD outcomes consist of contributions to organisational stability, balanced with contributions to both planned and emergent strategic change. During structural transition, it has been shown how middle managers require not only the MLD activities that correspond to their ongoing role, but also those associated with a new role within a more flexible organisational structure. Moreover, the extent of structural transition can be expected to determine the pattern of contingent options and outcomes.

Specifically the thesis has discovered that: i) when the machine bureaucracy divisionalises, as illustrated by SWT, investment in line management training makes a significant contribution to organisational stability, while leader development is at its most effective in the customer-facing divisions of the business; ii) when the safety bureaucracy professionalises, as illustrated by LFB, investment in competence-based management development and leader development can successfully promote more

participatory forms of management, but that political obstacles to MLD are accentuated in this type of organisational change; and iii) when the professional bureaucracy adhocratises, as illustrated by KASS, investment in the full range of MLD options makes a significant contribution to balancing ongoing organisational effectiveness with the building of adaptive capacity for the future.

Contrary to a universalistic perspective, the thesis does not find that MLD, when implemented according to 'best practice' principles, is effective regardless of the organisational conditions. Rather, different types of MLD are appropriate according to different organisational types and directions of structural transition. Nor does the thesis find, as in a neo-institutionalist perspective, that MLD activities are primarily motivated by prevailing, fashionable norms in the sector or professional field. Rather, MLD options have been found to be driven primarily by different sets of strategic organisational concerns. Nor does the thesis find, according to what might be termed a critical perspective, that MLD is primarily a political instrument of elites to exert control over professionals and other occupational groups. Rather, it finds that MLD on the whole plays a genuinely empowering role when aligned with organisational contingencies, in which managers may effect changes to working methods in the operating core. Finally, the thesis does not find, according to what might be called a post-structuralist perspective, that MLD serves to produce new managerial identities. Rather it finds that observable efficiency-related outcomes are associated with MLD activity.

The contingency model developed in this thesis may have wider applicability for understanding the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of other strategic HRM interventions, such as performance- or reward-management initiatives, that seek to effect organisational change. The thesis suggests that a contingency approach, that recognises the differences between the coordination mechanisms across organisational types and the dynamics of structural transition, should be fruitful. Moreover the approach should have relevance beyond the study of PSOs. Machine bureaucracies, despite their lack of salience in the recent management literature, continue to be an important organisational form (Mintzberg 2009: 50). This organisational type may be clearly observed in the transport, distribution and emergency services. They may also be observed in 'office factories' (c.f. Boxall and Purcell 2008: 13) that coordinate the routine clerical work of large organisations and in commercial service industries such as in supermarkets and call centres (c.f. Boxall *et al.* 2011). Professional bureaucracies continue to be important organisational forms in the public services (Broadbent and

Laughlin 2002: 95), and it is in these types of organisations, having already experienced a wave of managerialist changes, that the pressure to adapt to greater adhocracy are likely to experienced. In private professional services, such as in the legal and accountancy sectors, professional bureaucracies are likely to face even greater pressures to adopt more adhocratic forms of coordination, assuming the continued intensification of market competition and complexity.

Beyond the machine and professional bureaucracies, however, the thesis offers few insights into the role of MLD in highly adhocratic and knowledge-intensive organisational environments, such as in consulting or research and development. (This limitation is discussed further in the next section). Nevertheless, the key conclusion remains, that organisational structural configurations and transitions are the primary influence over the nature and extent of MLD's contribution and that this has implications for understanding the potential effectiveness of strategic HRM initiatives in general.

In its adoption of a contextualised approach, the thesis has shown the value of a detailed analysis of work roles in the organisation, of the specific HRM instrument itself, and of the processes by which outcomes of intervention are reached at multiple levels. This type of approach is also practised and advocated by Pichault and Schoenaers' (2003), whose model of HRM practices is similarly based on Mintzberg's structural configurations. The authors claim that the different Mintzbergian organisational types are linked, if not mechanically, with specific patterns of HRM policies and practices, including the whole range of activities, spanning recruitment, training, performance management, reward, working time agreements and employment relations (see 2003: 124).

In its exclusive focus on MLD, the theoretical model in this thesis is narrower in scope than that of Pichault and Schoenaers. However, the model here has the advantage of enabling a detailed examination of a particular instrument of strategic HRM in its organisational context, thus revealing the diversity of approaches within the instrument itself, and the complexities of the processes by which its outcomes are reached. This necessarily trades depth for breadth, as the particular instrument is studied in isolation from other HR policies. It therefore has the disadvantage of failing to capture systematically the effects of combining HRM instruments, for example, combining an MLD intervention with a specific reward policy. Nonetheless, the thesis suggests that subjecting specific HR policies, such as reward- or performance-management, to a

similarly detailed contextualised analysis across varying structural types of organisation should be fruitful.

8.1.2 The importance of the political context of MLD

The three case studies all demonstrated the importance of the political context within which MLD policies are applied and their outcomes are reached. While the thesis has rejected the interpretation of MLD as an instrument of political control by elites, the theoretical model nevertheless recognised how MLD intervention involves attempts to reconcile different stakeholder interests.

The SWT case in Chapter 4 displayed a background of political conflict, but this centred on the residual resistance of unionised front-line staff towards some of the centralised HR policies, leaving middle managers at local level largely unimpeded as they applied their learning. The LFB case in Chapter 5 demonstrated the most overt political conflict, centring on the dispute between the employers' modernisation policies and the firefighters union, the FBU, and thus constraining MLD outcomes among the FBU's middle management membership. Indeed, it was concluded in Chapter 5 that the potential for political obstacles to MLD is accentuated during professionalisation, as this type of organisational change involves a process of redefinition of employee roles that is likely to be subject to powerful vested interests. The KASS case in Chapter 6 case demonstrated the strongest congruence between middle managers' interests and formal organisational goals, but also demonstrated how middle managers negotiated between their professional interests and the priorities of their employer, which influenced the choices they made in applying their learning.

In the theoretical model of MLD in Chapter 2, political conflict was conceptualised as a potential obstacle to MLD, a contextual variable which could be expected to constrain the managerial learning process. Yet the evidence has suggested that processes of political negotiation should be recognised as integral to the contingent pattern of MLD policies and their outcomes, rather than simply an obstacle that the HRD function has to overcome in order to design and deliver effective MLD. This resonates with the more general conclusion of Truss (2001) in her case study of HRM at Hewlett Packard, that an appreciation of the role of informal organisation is critical to understanding how

strategic HRM interventions are enacted in organisations. A more systematic approach to integrating the political dimension, rather than treating stakeholder conflict as simply an obstacle to be overcome in the managerial learning process, would appear to be a fruitful way to refine the contingent model of MLD in future empirical research.

8.2 Limitations and future directions

There are three main limitations to the thesis. The first limitation relates to the narrowness of the evidence base. A stronger test of the causality of the observed MLD outcomes would have required a control group of three organisations that did not invest in MLD, each paired against the three cases of structural transition. This would have strengthened the validity of the conclusions drawn about MLD's effects during different trajectories of organisational change. Generally, a research design that included a greater number of cases of MLD in each organisational change category, or a broader survey-based approach, might have established with greater validity the relative importance of organisational structural type as an explanatory variable in MLD's contribution. This might also have better neutralised the possible effects of gender bias that were discussed in Chapters 3 and 7. In spite of this, the depth and richness of the case study evidence provided a strong basis on which to demonstrate with some confidence the importance of the different ways in which MLD options and outcomes are primarily shaped by organisational type and the direction of structural transition.

The second limitation is also related to the limited number of cases. As noted in the previous section, the empirical focus on the machine/safety bureaucracy and the professional bureaucracy prevented more detailed insights into the role of MLD in adhocracies. This would have been avoided by including a case study of MLD's contribution in a highly knowledge-intensive and less boundaried organisation. It might have been instructive, for example, to undertake a study of MLD in a research and development organisation in the scientific, medical or engineering sectors, which may be expected to have little reliance on coordination through standardisation or centralised control.

The third limitation of the thesis concerns the research methods used in the case studies. The organisation of control groups of managers who did not participate in MLD,

and the use of more detailed instruments, such as Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe's (2001) 360-degree leadership questionnaire, to measure the before-and-after effects of MLD, as reported by both individual managers and their colleagues, would have enabled greater confidence in the observed multi-levelled outcomes in the case studies. This should have then produced a stronger answer to the important question of 'what if no MLD'? As it stands, the effects of MLD in the case studies are difficult to isolate precisely due to the range of other HRM interventions during the same time periods. For example, in the KASS case, MLD interventions represented part of a wide-ranging 'staff care package', including a range of reward incentives for improving individual performance. The use of more precise instruments to measure changes in managers' behaviour against that of a control group may have overcome this problem.

This last question of the attributable effects of MLD in organisations opens up the first of three main directions for future research in this field. The first direction concerns the contribution of MLD to organisational change relative or complementary to other HRM interventions. The thesis has demonstrated that, in specific organisational and job circumstances, MLD can contribute to strategic organisational change. However, as suggested in the previous section, there is an empirical need to compare MLD's contribution with, for example, the effects of a new performance management framework or reward policy. In particular, it would be interesting to investigate the complementarities and tensions between longer-term, developmental and resource-based approaches to HRM, of which MLD is part, and the more 'contractual' approaches to incentivising managers through performance targets (c.f. Sisson and Purcell 2010).

The second direction for future research concerns the political dimension to the role of MLD in organisational change. In particular, Pichault and Schoenaers' (2003) contextualist model of HRM, further developed in Pichault (2007), which integrates a set of political tensions into a Mintzbergian framework of organisational differences, appears to provide a promising way to refine the theoretical model of contingent MLD outcomes. The refined model could then be tested in a new study with a selection of cases that not only allowed a comparison across Mintzberg's organisational types, but also a comparison of, for example, unionised and non-unionised work environments in order to study in a more systematic way the effects on MLD of different political contexts.

The third direction for future research concerns the balance between organisational stability and change and the contribution of MLD and other HRM strategies that are aimed at altering this balance. While this thesis has demonstrated how MLD can contribute both to maintaining organisational continuity and facilitating strategic change, there is a need for greater precision in the understanding of the relationship between the two (c.f. Leana and Barry 2000). Although MLD is typically associated with organisational change, it is necessary to investigate further, through longitudinal studies, the circumstances under which MLD interventions contribute to stability over change, and vice versa.

8.3 Implications for practice and policy

In their 2004 review of the evidence of MLD's contribution, Burgoyne et al noted a persistent lack of knowledge about 'what works and when' (2004: 1, 82. See also Section 2.1 of this thesis). The thesis sheds considerable light on this question by predicting the relative effectiveness of different types of MLD under varying structural conditions. This has significant implications for both practitioners and policymakers.

For MLD practitioners, there is already much academic advice on the importance of sensitivity to organisational context. Particularly Mole (2000) has shown how MLD interventions should be designed and planned so that both individual and organisational development needs are met. Similarly, the Center for Creative Leadership in California (c.f. Van Velsor and McCauley 2004) have demonstrated both the practical importance of Day's (2001) conceptual distinction between management development, leader development and leadership development, and the importance of individualised assessment, challenge and support (see also Section 2.2). However, the 'support' element of the learning process requires a finer-grained understanding. Support for MLD is normally understood in terms of a conducive organisational culture for learning, in which MLD participants are afforded the time and space for experimentation and reflection (c.f. Guest and King 2005: 250). While this cultural perspective has generated important insights for practitioners, it overlooks the structural dimension of how the organisational environment supports or constrains the MLD process.

A greater appreciation of how organisational structure shapes MLD should help practitioners design more effective interventions and avoid costly investments that do little to further strategic organisational goals. The findings of this thesis show how MLD

participants require not only the time and support for experimentation and reflection, but also the opportunity to exercise an appropriate amount of managerial discretion. Given that a manager's discretion derives chiefly from his or her role within the organisation's structure (Mintzberg 1979, 2009), then MLD practitioners would be well advised to consider the fit between the type of MLD and the discretion afforded by the manager's current or changing role.

Organisations are complex and dynamic, so a perfect role-MLD fit is unlikely to be achieved in every circumstance. Moreover, individual learners may vary widely in their motivation and commitment, leading even the 'best fit' MLD design to fail. But the findings from this thesis suggest that even if individuals are appropriately selected for MLD (see 'assessment'), and even if the learning activities are well managed (see 'challenge'), a lack of fit between the MLD design and the organisation's dominant method of coordination or direction of change (see structural 'support') is likely to render much MLD investment ineffective. It is also important to add that line and staff managers within the same organisation may demand a different kind of fit to suit their differing methods of coordination.

In general terms, therefore: i) standardised types of management development are likely to be most effective in mechanistic or professional types of organisation; ii) individualised leader development activities are likely to be most effective in professional and adhocratic organisations where much mutual adjustment is required, or will be required in the future; and iii) more open-ended, collective leadership development activities are likely to be most effective in more adhocratic organisational situations, or in organisations that are introducing a greater degree of *ad hoc* or project-based ways of working for particular groups of managers.

Such a finer-grained understanding of MLD's role in organisations also has significant implications for policymakers. Since the mid-1980s there has been a raft of policy initiatives in the UK, aimed at developing better quality managers and leaders in both the private and public sectors (Guest and King 2005: 237-38). More recently, government concerns about the quality of public services and a lack of progress in the modernisation reforms have led to a wave of investment in leadership-orientated development initiatives for public managers (Storey 2004b: 4-6, Lawler 2008: 22). The last decade alone has witnessed the establishment of the NHS Leadership Centre, the National College for School Leadership, and the Leadership Centre for Local

Government. As researchers have pointed out, however, little is known about the actual impact of this widespread investment in MLD (Charlesworth *et al.* 2003, Burgoyne *et al.* 2004: 70).

Policymakers' lack of knowledge about the actual contribution of these MLD initiatives is partly due to the inherent difficulties of attributing of organisational performance to MLD (see Section 3.3). But it is also due to a certain blind faith, based on a widely-held assumption among policy elites that MLD must be playing a generally positive, transformative role (c.f. Grugulis 2007: 151, 155). As this thesis shows, however, an understanding of MLD's actual contribution requires an appreciation of the structural contingencies that shape it.

There is, as already discussed, considerable organisational diversity in the public services (see Section 3.2). Yet, when implementing public management reforms, policymakers have tended to overlook the importance of the specific organisational mechanisms on the ground. As Mintzberg (1996: 80-81) points out, the public services simultaneously employ, among others, the machine model, the divisionalised 'performance-control'-oriented model, the professional model and the network model. Each has its own dominant logic of coordination, within which MLD may be expected to play out differently. Policymakers seeking to improve management and leadership would therefore be well advised to adapt their policies in ways that are sensitive to the different organisational models in operation.

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- I. Interview questions for HR managers
- II. Interview questions for senior managers
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- IV. Sample research proposal to case study organisations
- V. Sample letter of invitation to middle managers for interview
- VI. Anonymised list of interviews by case study organisation
- VII. Nvivo7 nodal structure

Appendix I. Interview questions for learning and development/HR managers

- i. Please explain your role within the organisation and how you came to be in your present post.
- ii. What would you say have been the most significant changes in management development in the organisation in the last 5-10 years?
- iii. How is management development strategy formulated and what are the key drivers within the organisation?
- iv. What are the key external drivers and linkages?
- v. To what extent would you say management development is implemented strategically across the organisation?
- vi. Which specific management development activities in the last 5 years or so would you say have made the most difference to the way managers behave and work?
- vii. How is the management development strategy evaluated and what have been the main outcomes of evaluation?
- viii. How could the benefits of managers' learning be increased?
- ix. Overall, what would you say are the strengths and weaknesses of management development at the organisation and how could it be made more effective?
- x. What are the likely future developments in management development at the organisation?

Appendix II. Interview questions for senior managers

- i. Please explain your role and how you came to be in your present post.
- ii. Please give me an overview of your/your team's management development activities to date.
- iii. Tell me a bit about your/your team's most significant management development experiences to date. How did things change for you/your team as a result of these particular experiences?
- iv. How important is the learning that takes place on the job (outside of formal development activities)? How is this learning applied?
- v. To what extent is your/your team's management development specific to the organisation? To what extent does it help you/your team in your present job?
- vi. To what extent is your/your team's management development transferable to other jobs within the organisation or outside of the organisation? To what extent do you think it will help your/their career(s)?
- vii. Overall, what would you say are the strengths and weaknesses of management development in the organisation?
- viii. How could management development in the organisation be improved?
- ix. Is there anything else that you want to mention that you feel might be relevant?

Appendix III. Interview questions for middle managers

- i. Please explain your role and how you came to be in your present post.
- ii. Please give me an overview of your management development activities to date.
- iii. Tell me a bit about your most significant management training and development experiences to date. How did things change for you as a result of these particular experiences?
- iv. How important is the learning that takes place on the job (outside of formal training and development activities)? How is this learning applied?
- v. To what extent is your management training and development specific to the organisation? To what extent does it help you in your present job?
- vi. To what extent is your management training and development transferable to other jobs within the organisation or outside of the organisation? To what extent do you think it will help your career?
- vii. Overall, what would you say are the strengths and weaknesses of management training and development in the organisation?
- viii. How could management training and development in the organisation be improved?
- ix. Is there anything else that you want to mention that you feel might be relevant?

Appendix IV: Sample research proposal to case study organisations

Developing middle managers at Kent County Council

– a proposed research project

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1. Introduction

Following meetings between researchers at the London School of Economics and Chief Executive Peter Gilroy, this document outlines a proposed programme of research into the impact of management and leadership development (MLD) interventions at Kent County Council (KCC).

2. Rationale

Investment in MLD is increasing at all levels in the public services. This is an important aspect of the search for better quality public management to improve customer satisfaction and organisational outcomes. Yet little information exists in this area on which types of interventions work, and under which circumstances.

In particular, the research proposal focuses on the development needs and learning activities of middle managers (MMs). It seeks to answer the following key questions.

1. Which skills do MMs need to develop to successfully manage and lead in the organisation?
2. How do MM learn these skills most effectively?
3. What is MMs' learning contributing to organisational change and performance?

As part of a series of studies of MLD in public services, including the London Fire Brigade and South West Trains, proposed here is a case study of MM development in one of the UK's highest performing and most improved local governments, KCC. The research will focus on one of KCC's most innovative areas of provision, Kent Adult Social Services (KASS). The research will assess the contribution to this area of KCC made by MLD and identify both specific and general lessons for the future.

3. Aim and Objectives

The overall aim is to produce a consultancy report that evaluates the contribution of MLD for middle managers to organisational performance and change at KASS.

The secondary aim is to make a comparative assessment between:

- a) the Diploma in Management programme offered centrally and certificated through the Chartered Management Institute (CMI); and
- b) a more recent leadership development intervention accessed by some MMs - 'From Good To Great'.

The specific objectives of the proposed research project are to answer the following questions.

- i. What are the key features and desired outcomes of MLD, as accessed by MMs?
- ii. What were the critical experiences of individual MM-learners in terms of business outcomes?
- iii. How has the behaviour of MMs changed as a result of development interventions?
- iv. What is the role of informal learning amongst MMs?
- v. How could the benefits of MMs' learning be increased?
- vi. What are the strengths and weaknesses of MLD at KASS/KCC and how does it contribute to organisational performance and outcomes?
- vii. What are the key lessons for likely future developments in MLD at KCC? To what extent will they be effective and to what extent should they be modified?

4. Proposed activities

The key stakeholders, from whom cooperation is sought, are:

- the relevant senior managers at KCC with responsibility for MM-development in KASS;
- a member of KCC staff to provide limited administrative support; and
- a sample of 20 MM-learners from across the 2 directorates.

The main sources of data would be:

- **'critical incident interviews'** (held on-site, confidential and anonymised in the final report);
- **relevant KCC documentation**
e.g. corporate, departmental and learning & development performance data, including CPA/Self Assessment reports; staff satisfaction survey data.

The key research activities would therefore be:

- i) exploratory interviews with selected senior managers
- ii) 'critical incident' interviews with 10 MMs from KASS who have recently completed the diploma in management qualification (or near to completion)
- iii) 'critical incident' interviews with 10 MMs from KASS who have recently completed the 'From Good to Great' programme
- iv) the gathering of various relevant documentation

5. Proposed Timetable

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Date</i>
Negotiating the research agreement and fieldwork schedule	May 2007
Setting up interviews with MMs via administrative support	May 2007
Undertaking the interviews on-site at KCC	June – July 2007
Requesting of documentation via administrative support	July 2007
Analysis of findings	August – September 2007
Informal interim report	September 2007
Writing -up	October-December 2007
Dissemination of report and evaluation by stakeholders	January 2008

6. Proposed Outcome

The overall outcome would be a consultancy report for the CEO and other stakeholders of KCC including:

- an assessment of the investment in MLD for MMs in terms of individual, business and organisational outcomes;
- an evaluation of the key features, strengths, weaknesses and future direction of MLD strategy for MMs at KCC; and
- recommendations for changes in MLD strategy at KCC and general recommendations for policy on public management development.

All those interviewed would also receive a copy of their interview and of the final report in return for their participation.

Appendix V: Sample letter of invitation to middle managers for interview

May 2007

Dear Colleague

Research into Management and Leadership Development at Kent County Council

May I introduce myself. I am a Lecturer in Management at the University of Greenwich and a postgraduate researcher at the London School of Economics. I am also working with the Learning and Development Team at KCC to help evaluate its leadership and management development programmes.

As part of my PhD research, I would like to invite you to an informal interview with me about your experiences on the diploma in management programme and/or the 'From Good to Great' programme. The interviews are confidential and take only 45 minutes, to be held at Sessions House.

I will summarise the interview data from all respondents anonymously and provide an overall report for the Learning and Development team, of copy of which you will receive.

Please confirm to at Learning and Development, Sessions House, if you are willing to participate in this exercise so that we may arrange a suitable time for the interview during June/July.

I hope that you will participate in this research of practical and academic importance, and that you will find the experience a useful opportunity to reflect on your own career development.

If you have any objections or questions, please do not hesitate to contact me with your telephone number on my Greenwich or LSE email below and I will call you back.

With kind regards,



Patrick McGurk

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Appendix VI: Anonymised list of interviews by case organisation

South West Trains

Human Resource Director
Acting Head of Resourcing and Development
3 Learning and Development Managers
Head of Guards
Head of Drivers
Operations Manager
Head of Information Technology
Head of Pensions and Payroll
Head of Train Service Delivery
3 Group station managers
4 Fleet depot managers
2 Driver depot managers
Guards Depot Manager
Driver Standards Manager
Guards Manager
Route Revenue Protection Manager
Operations Compliance Manager
Technical Reliability Manager
Contracts Manager
Performance, Compliance and Planning Manager
Senior Project Engineer
ASLEF Company Council member and a branch representative

London Fire Brigade

Head of Training and Development Delivery
2 Leadership and Management Development Managers
Vocational Learning Manager
9 Assistant District Officers (including 7 active station commanders)
Administration Manager
Recruitment Manager
Planning Officer
Fire Safety Inspection Officer
Information and Planning Officer

*Kent Adult Social Services / Kent County Council
(KCC)*

Chief Executive Officer
Director of Policy and Resources
Head of Strategic Development
Head of Corporate Performance
Head of Corporate Communications
Organisational Development Manager
Acting Head of Policy Unit
Operations Manager

(KASS)

Acting Head Learning Resources
6 District Managers
Head of Performance and Planning
Area Finance Manager
Head of Contracting and Quality Assurance
Locality Organiser (residential care)
Senior Practitioner (hospital & social services)
Senior Support Time and Recovery Worker
Team Manager (learning disabilities)
Team Leader (adult social care district)
Exchequer Manager
Web Team Manager
Project Planning Manager
Budget manager
Continuous Improvement Manager

Appendix VII: Nvivo7 nodal structure (middle manager interviews)

Most important learning experience

- Management development (MD)
 - Line management training at SWT
 - Station Commander Development Programme at LFB
 - Diploma in Management at KASS
- Leader development (LD)
 - WOW at SWT
 - Talent Management at SWT
 - Leadership workshops at SWT
 - Leadership workshops at LFB
 - From Good to Great at KASS
- Leadership development (LSD)
 - Inspirational Leadership at KASS
- Learning on the job
- Mentoring
- Other

Content of learning

- Professional/technical
- Managerial
- Intrapersonal
- Interpersonal

Contribution of formal learning (critical incidents)

- Continuity
 - Professional/technical competence
 - Implementation of managerial objectives
- Change
 - Self-awareness
 - Improved 1-1 relationships
 - Improved team relationships
 - Business innovation (innovation)

Contribution of informal learning

- Continuity
 - Professional/technical competence
 - Implementation of managerial objectives
- Change
 - Self-awareness
 - Improved 1-1 relationships
 - Improved team relationships
 - Business innovation (innovation)

Organisational Conditions

- Greater importance of informal learning
- Equal balance between formal and informal learning
- Conditions for successful MLD
- Conditions for failed MLD

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