Author: Lau, Yui Yip
Title: Across the waves

Departmental leadership in the field of management and technology studies at a research university
ACROSS THE WAVES: DEPARTMENTAL LEADERSHIP IN THE FIELD OF MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY STUDIES AT A RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

Yui Yip Lau

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor of Education in the Graduate School of Education, Faculty of Social Science and Law

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Abstract

Based on change management in higher education institutions (HEIs), departmental leadership plays a key role in supporting a change agenda. As middle leaders, department heads currently face the dilemma of negotiating the demands of academic colleagues and senior management in a changing context. However, departmental leadership in Hong Kong HEIs remains under-researched. This study aimed to investigate the challenges faced by department leaders when dealing with the reform of academic departments and to explore the leadership styles best suited to solving these issues. Four academic departments were selected for data collection through 30 in-depth semi-structured interviews, followed by comprehensive thematic analysis. This study argued that change must be managed with the most appropriate leadership styles in the context of the institution. The study identified four imminent challenges faced by department leaders: new development and transformational change in the department; the need for a new paradigm for teaching pedagogy and quality; the challenge of upscaling research; and resilience and adaptation to market forces. The sources of change are not only internal to the institution, but also external. In terms of the leadership styles best suited to dealing with the changing environment of higher education, the results indicated that based on the attitudes and perceptions of academics, distributed leadership is the preferred leadership style. Specifically, the three most desirable elements of distributed leadership were found to be leadership attribution, communication within the department, and leadership power exertion. However, a complex organisational structure and contradictory expectations and demands are possible barriers to adopting distributed leadership in HEIs. This study demonstrates the importance of departmental leadership, emphasising that knowledge of leadership roles, styles and strategies for change is essential to the well-being of HEIs. This study provides constructive advice for department leaders on leading change in HEIs, with appropriate strategies and plans to prepare for the future.

Keywords: Higher education institutions; Change management; Departmental leadership; Thematic analysis; Distributed leadership
Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award.

Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: …………………………………………………………………………

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“Absorb what is useful, discard what is useless and add what is specifically your own.”
“Knowing is not enough, we must apply. Willing is not enough, we must do.”

Bruce Lee – Martial Artist (1940-1973)

When I was planning, organizing and writing in this thesis, a few rapid questions arose in my mind: how could I integrate new academic knowledge into practice? How significant were leadership issues in higher education institutions? Were energetic researchers involving in research devoted to communities and industrial practitioners? Were there any main research topics that have critically been overlooked in past literatures? In reality, the core objectives of thesis generated an applied research can contribute to policymakers, academic, community and industry in a globalized world.

The thesis highlights departmental leader’s role on the HEIs. The thesis intends understanding the current change in HEIs in China (Hong Kong) and identifies the leadership and organisational changes needed to cope with the changing higher education environment. Nevertheless, departmental leader is vital to various stakeholders within academic scholars, participators, students, policymakers, government bodies and education associations. The core topics of departmental leader are often neglected. Understanding such shortfall, I attempt to produce a timely, innovative and interesting topic in the thesis. The thesis strives to meet a number of parties’ expectations. For students and academic scholars, they may explore a new research topic to develop new academic research papers and secure competitive research grants. For participators, they may have some insights into department leader roles and needed to encounter with the ever-changing higher education environment. For policymakers and government bodies, they may investigate the best practices that provide support (e.g., financial, human capital, training) for department leader to fulfil the changing needs of society and work for the betterment of the world and Hong Kong. For education associations, they review the existing higher education programmes and training courses that match will international standards and global trend. Start from writing the proposal to its final thesis publication, I used
over two years to complete. Basically, I wrote my thesis according to four key principles, especially, “richness” (i.e., which discovers questions from different area and academic experiences to foster readers to identify unexplored issues); “clarity” (i.e., which make it easy for readers to figure out); “practical” (which prepares learners with the specified skills and knowledge to carry out in the workplace); and “innovations” (i.e., which motivates readers to think about transformation, daily exercise for improvement).

Thus, the thesis integrated fundamental knowledge into the real cases in order to meet different readers’ expectations and needs. To my best knowledge, this is the first thesis on investigating the department leader with the use of Hong Kong academic department as case studies. I strongly believe that readers can obtain valuable perception of the future way of higher education institution development. As a department leader, how to make it right leadership style to deal with the changing environment.

The completion of thesis has been attained by key support from the different parties that I would like to acknowledge. Firstly, I would like to send my special thanks to my honourable thesis supervisor, Professor Bruce Macfarlane. He gives his professional knowledge, unreserved support, positive encouragement and constructive feedback about the questionnaire design, data analysis, direction and research methodology of my thesis. Secondly, I wish to acknowledge with thanks for my colleagues, friends, doctoral classmates, students’ encouragement and support a lot on the data collection processes. Thirdly, I also thanks for my Doctoral Programme Director, Dr. Janet Orchard, my teachers (Professor Leon Tikly, Dr. Lisa Lucas, Professor Guoxing Yu) to provide prompt support during my challengeable time. Personally, I wish to give my thanks to my wife (Tracy)’s unreserved love and unconditional support for my doctoral degree study since 2015.

Yui-yip Lau

Hong Kong, China

2 August 2019
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<td>RAE</td>
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<td>STEM</td>
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of this thesis and includes seven key sections. Following this section, Section 1.2 identifies the main problem addressed in the study, focusing on the general and contextual rationale. Section 1.3 discusses the significance of the study for academia and management. Section 1.4 presents the key research aims and research questions. Section 1.5 describes the structure of the thesis. Section 1.6 presents the various research targets. Finally, Section 1.7 summarises the key points of this chapter.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Since the 1980s, dramatic growth and rapid change have taken place in higher education, leading to the need to reform and refine the functioning of higher education institutions (HEIs) (Gumport, 2000; Mohrman et al., 2008). Harris (2006) and Moos (2013) argued that it is essential to better understand the changing institutional and global context in and against which educational leadership is situated. Hallinger and Truong (2016) emphasised the significance of the educational context, in which educational leaders play a key role. Educational leadership is increasingly affected by policies, discourses, the literature, local/national values, traditions, practices and structures. To a certain extent, the type of leadership that is appropriate is highly dependent on local conditions. The big question mark is about uncertainty. More and more academic researchers have considered leadership a ‘relational process’ built on ‘the rich connections and interdependencies of organizations and their members’ (Uhlbien, 2006, p. 655).

With the strong wave of change management in HEIs (see Knight and Trowler, 2001; Branson et al., 2016), the role of departmental leadership has become very important. As a result, this study explored two main research questions, as follows. What are the key challenges for department leaders when dealing with the reform of academic departments? What leadership styles are best suited to solving these challenges?
Recent research has attempted to characterise department leaders in the changing context. For example, Branson et al. (2016) explained that department leaders face tensions because of the inherent duality of their role in HEIs. Indeed, they highlighted that a middle leader feels like “the meat in the sandwich” as s/he tries (as “manager-academic”) to negotiate the demands between, on the one hand, being a line manager while, on the other hand, being a professional colleague. As a line manager there is a presumption of power and control, while as a professional colleague, there is a presumption of relational support and guidance … extremely difficult to seamlessly align into a single role. (Branson et al., 2016, p. 142)

The position of department leader implies coercive or positional power. In reality, however, department leaders play a minimal role in the strategies of HEIs (Bush, 2008; Dennis, 2016). Their authority is established according to the nature of their relationships (Bush, 2008). As a result, department leaders in HEIs experience feelings of uncertainty, discomfort, stress and tension (Branson et al., 2016). For instance, department heads need to deal with the tension between Government Research Evaluations (GREs) and academic freedom. They are required to ensure the academic staff to fulfil their departments’ missions by fostering research allocation as well as various other activities. They must ease academics’ uncertainty and anxiety regarding their job security and increased administrative and teaching burden, which limit their autonomy (Martin-Sardesai et al., 2017). Parker (2008, p. 383) explained that academic faculty are under great stress ‘not only to lift their publication output, but to tailor it to fit the types of publications most valued’. In this regard, empowering department heads through leadership development is essential to equip them to play the role of change agents to guide others, thereby promoting positive changes in academia (Jooste et al., 2018). Indeed, Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) described educational leadership as establishing a community of scholars to formulate a path and obtain common goals through the empowerment of staff and faculty.

Moreover, Knight and Trowler (2001) identified some important issues that department leaders must address in the current turbulent environment. Typical issues involve (1) leading and
assessing student learning (see Lau et al., 2017); (2) leading research and scholarship (see Currie, 2008); (3) the quality of teaching (see Dinham et al., 2011); (4) continuing professional development (see Lau and Ng, 2015); (5) the tension between academic freedom and GREs (see Martin-Sardesai et al., 2017); and (6) transforming the leadership style of HEIs into a business model and culture driven by managerialism (see Alonderiene and Majauskaite, 2016). Unsurprisingly, department leaders currently face a lack of on-the-job/staff training to acquire the knowledge, human skills and practices needed to develop appropriate leadership (Tucker et al., 2016) and the professional learning opportunities and rich experience required to face the challenges of a ‘self-managing context’ (Dinham et al., 2011; Szeto et al., 2015). Gunter (2013) criticised current leadership training for generally failing to offer unworkable solutions to the problems encountered. In general, the design and implementation of leadership training have failed to locate educational leaders’ practices, increase knowledge and improve the level of skills in the workplace (Baldwin, 2009; Hallinger, 2011).

Undeniably, academic departments are the core units of HEIs, and the development of efficient management can play a key role in their effectiveness (Jarratt Report, 1985). As a result, department leaders work as change leaders and analyse the factors that help (or hinder) the successful process of change (Marshall, 2012). The main characteristics and qualities of middle leaders in education come from ‘observation, prior experience, modelling and acquired knowledge’ (Marshall, 2012, p. 514). The general assumption about department leaders is that they (only) serve to solve ‘negative challenges’ and create ‘opportunities’ to foster forward planning for optimal resource allocation, improve financial performance and boost reputation through teaching and research in an academic world. Clearly, department leaders provide a representative example for analysing the main changes in the management of HEIs. They offer a promising opportunity for the field of research in education by enhancing knowledge, investigating the link between situation and context and examining the different forms of departmental leadership (Middlehurst et al., 2009). Taysum (2004, p. 11) suggested that they can provide significant insights into ‘how leaders learn to become leaders’. Indeed, they offer a more holistic understanding of the directions of future research.
Academic departments profoundly changed during the reform between the first and the second periods sampled in this study, with department restructuring in the form of name changes and the creation of research centres, following a change in departmental leadership. Although Fullan (2007) argued that middle-level academic leaders play a leading role in the effectiveness of HEIs, Bryman (2007a) revealed that only a few studies have concentrated on improving the management of HEIs. This is surprising, given that academic studies at the departmental level are rare. Parry and Bryman (2006) noted that studies of the organisational settings of departmental leadership have been under-represented or have not fully analysed the effect of context on leadership. The reason for this scarcity is that departments are traditionally regarded as the operational base of HEIs. The role of middle-level academic managers has been seriously overlooked both empirically and theoretically for a long time (Santiago et al., 2006; Branson et al., 2016). Thus, Eacott (2011) argued that there is insufficient evidence of the role of qualified and experienced middle leaders in education. Spendlove (2007) also claimed that most educators have little knowledge of the skills required at other levels of leadership, including department heads. The term ‘head of department’ refers to nominated post holders responsible for a school or academic institution (Human Resources, 2016). Inman (2014) reviewed many studies of top-level leadership in the higher education context or leadership in the sector of necessary education. Middle-level management studies in departments have often ignored whether middle-level leaders make a significant contribution to HEI improvement and education reform in higher education. Thus, little is known about the relationship between departmental leadership and HEIs. To address these research issues, this study implemented comparative case studies of one HEI with four academic departments located in China (Hong Kong). These four academic departments focus on science, technology, engineering and management (STEM) disciplines. First, it is important to study academic leadership within the STEM framework in research-oriented universities, because academic leadership is the driving force behind discovery and learning (i.e., science and technology and research and development). Therefore, academic leadership is considered to be of the utmost importance in the social advancement of STEM research. Second, academic leadership cannot be acquired without substantial and foundational knowledge based on research related to both theory and practice. Third, today’s workforce needs interdisciplinary skills and qualities to contribute to society and boost the economy in this era of
globalisation. The four areas of STEM are interrelated and require very intense nurturing through a high level of learning in postgraduate institutions. Leaders need to form an interdisciplinary team to create knowledge, reinforce passion for learning and foster creativity in a research university. These research advancements do not automatically occur without in-depth and continued study across disciplinary boundaries in underexplored areas of science.

Compared with other contexts (e.g., liberal arts, arts and humanities, social sciences and education), the STEM context is unique in terms of departmental development. STEM disciplines deal with timely, complex and unstructured problems in society. As a result, a department leader must design and manage an interdisciplinary team to overcome various new and unpredictable changes that arise. This makes departmental development in the STEM context particularly complicated. In response to advances in technology and science and the demands of society, a department needs to produce creative researchers with highly specialised and advanced knowledge. It is well known researchers are required to publish more and that the competition for funding is fiercer in the STEM context. Furthermore, a department’s potential for growth is largely determined by the relationships it builds with industry practitioners, government bodies, policymakers and relevant associations – in this context, in Hong Kong and mainland China. The main objective is to obtain funding support from research facilities and industry collaboration with large corporations in the STEM area. In addition, STEM programmes need to be up to date to meet the demand of the workforce and offer possible internship positions. Having a good internship track record and many graduates who land offers at large corporations is good publicity for a programme, encouraging more students to apply. Therefore, a STEM department needs to adapt to strong market forces emanating from various stakeholders.

1.3 Significance of the study

Higher education is part of our society. In the leadership literature, the association between management and leadership is a recurring subject (Zaleznik, 1977; Kotter, 1990b). Kotter (1990b) proposed that major organisations are under-led and over-managed, especially in times of uncertainty and change. Several commentators and researchers (e.g., Breakwell and Thytherleigh,
2008; Whitchurch, 2008) have described current HEIs as complex organisations, especially when they are multi-faculty, large, multi-functional and multi-site and operate in different continents and regions. Thus, many researchers (Taylor and de Lourdes Machado, 2008; Alonderiene and Majauskaite, 2016; Chinta et al., 2016) have agreed with Mintzberg (1973) that leadership plays a key management role in the success of educational organisations. Leaders seek to improve and change circumstances. The success or failure of change is decided by the experience of educational leaders (Razzaq and Forde, 2012). As Lumby (1998, p. 201) concluded, success or failure is closely connected to the ‘reality of the experiences of those in schools and colleges’. There is no doubt that HEIs have changed dramatically over the last 30 years, with growing awareness of outstanding leaders in higher education (Jarratt Report, 1985). In research, leadership in higher education first appeared in the US, followed by the United Kingdom. Later, research spread to Singapore, China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, identifying the similarities between leadership practices in higher education and leadership theories in other organisational settings (Middlehurst et al., 2009). Educational leaders are required to follow the common global trends of neoliberalism, internationalisation, managerialism, marketisation, privatisation, education professionalisation and quality assurance. In addition, they need to think about how to change internal structures and integrate culture and practices in response to market forces (Penington, 1998; Harman and Meek, 2002; Bottery, 2006; Shanahan and Jones, 2007; Townsend, 2011; Dennis, 2016; Martin-Sardesai et al., 2017). In Asian regions, especially Hong Kong, the influence of Western social trends has led universities to seek to become increasingly competitive. In doing so, HEIs have become closely linked with external accountability pertaining to league tables, rankings, performance indicators, benchmarking, target setting and maximising resource allocation. The emergence of new managerialism and that of neoliberal performativity are interdependent and interrelated (Deem et al., 2008). In addition, the 1997 Asian financial crisis increased the HKSAR government’s desire to reduce spending on higher education, leading to a growing emphasis on privatising higher education (i.e., public service) for profitability. In this regard, HEIs have gradually pushed for the development of strong and robust managerial modes of operation. Furthermore, new managerialism has encouraged the HKSAR government to carry out a series of reviews of Hong Kong’s higher education system to diversify higher education opportunities, align changes between HEIs and the global environment and
generate the marketisation of higher education (Yuen and Ho, 2007). This all underlines the growing influence of new managerialism and neoliberal performativity on Hong Kong and its research universities. Clear evidence of new managerialism in Hong Kong HEIs includes the increased proportion of international students, growing emphasis on competitive external research grants, encouragement of massification by establishing self-financing institutions, support for the self-financing of taught postgraduate programmes (e.g., Doctor of Business Administration), introduction of cost centres in university faculties or departments and strengthening of the quality assurance mechanism through output-based assessments and performance and external audits (Deem and Brehony, 2005; Yuen and Ho, 2007; Lo et al., 2016).

Beginning in the 1980s, the extant research on higher education has focused on the importance of both management and the growth of leadership (Irving, 2015). For the studies on higher education about leadership has been varied, covering the macro and/or micro levels. The macro level covers the governance, globalisation and leadership of HEIs, and the micro level concerns pedagogical and structural changes in higher education (Teichler, 2005). The extant literature on leadership in higher education has mainly concentrated on the traits and characteristics (e.g., Spendlove, 2007; Gilley et al., 2009; Richards, 2011; Jones et al., 2015). The association between group performance and leadership (e.g., Bolden et al., 2009; Jones et al., 2015) has been assessed, and many investigations have shown a strong correlation between leadership and teaching efficacy (e.g., Ball, 2000; Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). Since the 2000s, studies in this area have largely examined the drivers of reforms in organisational operations and compositions. Maximising operational efficiency and minimising operational costs are the twin targets of HEIs (e.g., Callahan, 1962; Ionescu, 2014). Primarily, research has focused on the ubiquitous aspects rather than the distinctive characteristics of leadership of HEIs. It is unclear whether prior research carried out by some educational research communities can improve leadership in HEIs in the future. Accordingly, this study used the concept of context analysis (Steiner-Khamsi, 2010, p. 326), which ‘is seen as a tool to understand context rather than trying to abstract from it’. Context analysis examines the environment in depth, both internally and externally. Thus, it constitutes an important aspect of higher education planning and explores global trends (Moos,
Higher education in Hong Kong is an amorphous and vast sector with diverse and multiple contexts (Mok, 1999).

Ramsden (1998), a renowned qualitative researcher focused on effective leadership of higher education. He pointed out that the dimensions of leadership emerge from both sides of academic development. Sayles (1993, p. 9) proposed that ‘middle leaders become the players who must “massage” the parts and continuously “rejiggle” and re-configure the interfaces to resolve the contradictions and inconsistencies that exist in a large system’. As suggested by Bolden et al. (2009), department educational leadership is especially interesting, as it represents the main operational unit of HEIs, the main source of future senior academic leaders and the key point in the interface between the leadership of academic disciplines and the leadership of the institution. Marshall (2012) emphasised that middle-level academic leadership is essential to the effectiveness of HEIs, such as in the US, Canada and New Zealand. Middle leadership in higher education involves roles closely related to management and administrative responsibilities and contributes to the management of accountability of line managers. In reality, the roles of middle leadership are officially identified as leadership with supervisory and administrative responsibilities. Yet the roles and actual practices of middle leadership lack precision and clarity (Branson et al., 2016). Basically, there are a variety of middle level leadership in higher education, including department heads, heads of faculty, directors, associate deans, discipline coordinators, award level coordinators, institutional research registrars and student enrolment advisors (Pepper and Giles, 2015; Branson et al., 2016). A department head is a middle leader who takes on important formal leadership responsibilities (Marshall, 2012).

This study explored the relationship between departmental leadership and change in HEIs. Even when HEIs and department leaders manage to introduce change strategies and solutions, they often realise that it is extremely difficult to proceed to the next stage and effectively carry out these plans and strategies because of an inadequate educational leadership style, lack of transferable knowledge and institutional barriers. The main reasons are obsolete research methods, largely focused on single-case technocratic and isolated studies, and the common negative presumption of the effects of change and approaches to addressing the above
relationship (Gronn, 2000). As a result, this study investigated the phenomenon in depth to provide useful information on the consistency of individual performance in a specific domain. In addition, this study generated critical insights into how researchers can smoothly impart knowledge to HEIs in different contexts and showed how the effects of change can be effectively handled by an effective leadership style and decision-making process (Praktikai, 2012). These findings are expected to foster collaboration between departments and teams in HEIs, as reinforcing departmental leadership is essential to the well-being of institutions (Knight and Trowler, 2001). Indeed, this study can help practitioners, scholars, policymakers and other higher education stakeholders better understand the main issues faced by department leaders, including structure and power, leading and assessment, leading research and scholarship and continuing professional development. It can provide important guidance for department leaders on how to effectively lead change in HEIs.

1.4 Research aims and questions

The socio-economic environment gradually affects HEIs (Shin and Harman, 2009). It is clear that the expansion of higher education has been immense in recent years. Higher education has attracted increasing attention from researchers, with important implications for the global economy and human welfare. Indeed, the fundamental change in approach has taken place in the way that HEIs choose new strategies and use effective educational leadership. Academic departments were used as a representative example in this study. The reform of academic departments in HEIs has been largely under-researched; more pertinent knowledge is urgently needed. To evaluate existing gaps in the literature, this investigation conducted a comparison of four academic departments which situated in China (Hong Kong). The comparison of four case studies made it possible to address the contradictions and similarities of the cases while maintaining a holistic picture of each case (Halligner and Truong, 2016). Indeed, educators and policymakers can use best practice, international evidence or international standards to explore a potential problem and set an agenda (Moos, 2013). However, the approach adopted in this study focused on exploration, description and hypothesis development rather than exploratory testing (Halligner and Truong, 2016).
1.4.1 Research aims

This study had two main objectives.

- To understand the current change in HEIs in China (Hong Kong)
- To identify the organisational change and leadership needed to come up with the changing environment of higher education.

1.4.2 Research questions

More specifically, the following research questions helped build the key components of the research design:

- What are the key challenges for department leaders when dealing with the reform of academic departments?
- What leadership styles are best suited to solving these challenges?

1.5 Outline of the thesis

This thesis consists of five key parts. Following the introduction in Chapter 1, a literature review is carried out in Chapter 2. Chapter 2 addresses the development of HEIs in the context of the evolution of higher education since the 1980s. The changing landscape of higher education in Hong Kong is also highlighted. In addition, the chapter explores various leadership styles in higher education management and operations, focusing on theoretical models of leading, changing and managing HEIs. In Chapter 3, the change process of HEIs and Fullan’s change model are discussed. Chapter 4 presents and discusses the research design. It explores the philosophical approach before identifying an appropriate methodological and research approach. The methods of sampling, data collection and data analysis are also detailed in the study framework. In addition, methodological challenges and ethical issues are discussed. Four real-life case studies of the change management process in HEIs are presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 provides a comprehensive data analysis to summarise and explain the main results. The discussion section in Chapter 6 links relevant academic studies with the key research findings.
Finally, concluding remarks are provided in Chapter 7. Key research questions, valuable findings and responses are discussed in this section. The managerial and academic implications of this research and its limitations are summarised. Potential directions for future education studies are also provided.

1.6 The research target

The target readers of this thesis are researchers, postgraduate students, policymakers, industry practitioners, education associations and professionals in HEIs. This thesis can help readers better understand the recent trends in and key challenges to management in higher education in the new millennium. In doing so, the gap between academic knowledge and professional exercise can be significantly reduced. Readers can obtain important information and understand the future direction of higher education development. In addition, by addressing professional qualifications, this study responds to the demands and requirements of education associations. It uses not only change management and leadership theories, but also real-world HEI case studies. As a result, it can be a valuable study guide for the independent learning of manager-academics in the management of higher education in a globalised world.

1.7 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter provides background information to help readers better understand the main research idea and issues. This research is expected to make a significant contribution to future discussions of the change in HEIs in China (Hong Kong) and serve as a basis for enhancing consciousness of the importance of department leaders in higher education when dealing with the reform of academic departments. The outline of the thesis briefly explains the goals of each chapter to achieve the research objectives and construct the research work in sequence. To show how the study enriches current knowledge with substantial research findings and theoretical and methodological contributions to a specific topic, the next chapter offers a comprehensive literature review. This represents the first level of the thesis, before conducting the in-depth study.
Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

The challenges faced by HEIs are constantly changing (Bass and Avolio, 1994; Jooste et al., 2018). To respond to the demands of an ever-changing socio-economic context (Meister-Scheytt and Scheytt, 2005) and information-based society (Fu, 1991), HEIs must also evolve. Educational leadership has become to play a critical part in enhancing the performance of HEIs and managing self-initiated change in the age of globalisation (Hopkins, 1984). As a result, the literature has helped reflect the current state of educational research. Bryman (2007a) indicated that various academic scholars in higher education have observed a dramatic change in HEIs over the last 20 years. However, leadership theories have generated little systematic research about the management of higher education. Since leadership is attentively associated with the transformation of HEIs, the literature review conducted in this part highlights the relationship between two key areas: leadership and organisational change in higher education. It is based on journal articles, published books, government official websites and archives.

This chapter tends to provide an overview of the literature and is separated into eight key sections. After the introduction in Section 2.1, Section 2.2 investigates the development of HEIs in context. Section 2.3 focuses on the evolution of Hong Kong’s higher education. Sections 2.4 and 2.5 deal respectively with the progress of higher education and the importance of leadership for HEIs based on the literature. Section 2.6 explains different leadership theories. Section 2.7 describes how to lead, change, and manage HEIs using the change process model. At the end, Section 2.8 summarises the key findings of this part.

2.2 The development of HEIs in context

From World War II (1939-1945), higher education has undergone dramatic growth and transformation (Ahmad and Ng, 2015; Lau et al., 2017). The Robbins Report (1963) emphasised the need to expand the higher education sector, leading to the necessity to reform and improve
the functioning of HEIs to cope with the growing number of current and potential students. In addition, the United Nations (UN) suggested that higher education is better to focus on developing areas such as internationalisation, intercultural integration and continuous expansion (Dale and Robertson, 2014). However, today’s higher education sector copes with a global problem how to take into accounting differences rather than uniting by eliminating differences (Tagore, 1911, in Tagore, 1967). HEIs have encountered obstacles and problems in the context of these reforms (Moser, 2007). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948. (Article 26) of the Declaration stipulated that at least at the elementary and fundamental levels, everyone has the right to education which should be free (The United Nations, 2019). Consequently, Article 13 of the International Covenant on Cultural, Social and Economic Rights was published by the UN on 16 December 1966, acknowledging the global right to higher education (The United Nations, 2019). Indeed, higher education acts a crucial character in boosting the growth of both primary and secondary education (Mohrman et al., 2008) and increasing the national competitive advantage in human resource training (Lee and Kim, 2016; Lau et al., 2018c). Efforts to increase the quality, efficacy and accountability of higher education have been made by the World Bank Group since 1963. In postmodern society, HEIs facilitate economic development and nurture social unity. At the global level, the economic contribution of tertiary education graduates has raised by 17% on average annually (World Bank, 2017). The annual conference hosted by the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ) identified six core aspects of higher education that should be addressed: (i) experiential and skilful learning; (ii) leadership skills development; (iii) sustainability; (iv) various educational methodologies; (v) lifelong learning; and (vi) industry and university involvement (Ross et al., 2012).

A number of studies have adopted organisational change theory when analysing change in HEIs (e.g., Luhmann, 1987; Baecker, 2000; Meister-Scheytt and Scheytt, 2005). The transformation of higher education involves important procedures for change, improvement, development, and reorganisation (Badat, 2009). The understanding of HEIs has shifted from public benefit to the commercial benefits of knowledge and the private benefits of higher education (Martin-Sardesai et al., 2017). HEIs are believed to be important drivers of economic transformation (e.g.,
productivity and quality) (Martin-Sardesai et al., 2017) that act as impartial commentators on culture and society (Middlehurst, 1999). The notion of organisational allomorphism can clarify this as it combines and integrates the isomorphic pressures of local feedback and localisation. In general, mimesis, coercion and the effect of norms constitute the three key forms of isomorphic pressures resulting change in HEIs (Vaira, 2004). Mimesis is a reaction to unpredictability, inducing the imitation of the practices of other organisations. If an organisation functions in an unknown environment with dubious aims, its configurations are likely to be based on resemblance to other organisations, especially closely associated organisations. Coercive pressures are created by political influence and the pursuit of legitimacy. An organisation facing coercive forces is affected by the management practices and cultural expectations of other organisations. Norms are generated by expertise, connected to the activities involved in legitimising the autonomy of an organisation (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

Many studies have reported key findings to support these observations. The complexity and plurality of HEIs as organisations have been well documented (McRoy and Gibbs, 2009). Over the last two decades, HEIs have undergone an exceptional transformation process due to a changing landscape, globalisation, internal or environmental pressures, direct state intervention and new educational technologies (Middlehurst, 1999; Wisniewski, 1999; Bryman, 2007a; Chinta et al., 2016). According to Oshagbemi (1997, p. 354), change in higher education stems from ‘the pressures of demand, the cultural shift in the perception of higher education, financial pressures, structural and managerial diversity, and diversity of university missions or emphases’. Clearly, the forces of change in higher education come from all sides and the speed of change continues to increase.

Changing environmental circumstances are driving various organisations to move away from a traditional bureaucratic structure to become adjustable organisms with a more organic network structure to reap the benefits of efficiency and innovation (Richards, 2011). Higher education is part of the process of educational and social transformation (Rosado and David, 2006). Since the second half of the 20th century, HEIs have undergone diverse changes in most developed countries because of the following factors: the massification of education (i.e., replacing elitism),
a reduction in public support, major demographic changes, the internationalisation of higher education, the rapid development of advanced information technology and external changes in culture, values and attitudes relevant to academic work (Rosado and David, 2006; Richards, 2011). In a comparative study of a southern European country (Spain) and a central European country (England), Rosado and David (2006) used Bourdieu’s theoretical framework to indicate that the social implementation of age-based classification allowed HEIs to become massive HEIs. Trow (2007) also identified the shift from elite to universal in the higher education system, leading to massification. The changing context has created opportunities for progression and access and the emergence of different types of HEIs (Trim, 2001; Chen and Hou, 2016; Medland, 2016). Based on Mintzberg’s (1979) classification of organisational types, HEIs have been described as professional bureaucracies. Medland (2016) indicated that higher education is motivated to develop understanding and knowledge, with an emphasis on professional and transferable skills and intellectual and practical abilities. Specifically, more technology-oriented HEIs focus more on vocational training and professional education. Various researchers (e.g., Ng and Yip, 2009; Pallis and Ng, 2011; Lau and Ng, 2015; Lau et al., 2018) have described the characteristics of these HEIs, including the way in which their research focuses on the emerging needs of industries and their adaptation to the business context; their ability to build strong networks with different types of occupational groups, including alumni, current employers and potential employers; how they design practice-based and professional programmes to build scientific knowledge, continuously improve teaching and service quality and apply academic knowledge to solve practical problems around the world; and how they help students to obtain professional qualifications related to business. This may mean that technology-oriented HEIs are better positioned than HEIs with other orientations to respond to new developments (Middlehurst, 1999). Interestingly, technology-oriented HEIs now rely on leaders to enable critical transitions and realign their strategies with the external environment (Richards, 2011).

In addition, the rapid growth of higher education has raised concerns about its quality. Knight (2002) argued that assessment is ‘the Achilles’ heel of quality’. Educational assessment and evaluation have attracted attention to determine how to pursue excellence and develop QA systems simultaneously (Chen and Hou, 2016). Some Asia Pacific countries (i.e., Australia,
Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, China and Taiwan) and African and Latin countries have relied on the expansion and improvement of higher education to upgrade their workforces and rationalise their manpower structures (Fu, 1991). Wals (2010) argued that HEIs play an underlying role in empowering students to develop their skills so that they can provide viable solutions in terms of sustainable development. Educational leaders and policymakers have suggested that a nation’s human resources have a significant effect on its socio-economic development (Tran and Villano, 2017). The metamorphosis of HEIs has signalled different alterations in the procedures, conduct, structure, output, and purposes of some institutions (Gamage, 1992; Havenga, 1995). To achieve instructional innovation and discernment, HEIs are expected to undergo change (Kozma, 1985; Vaira, 2004), emphasising that HEIs constantly need to change their management to respond effectively to rapidly changing circumstances (Lindell, 2014). Ball (1998) proposed that this requires an overarching focus on performativity. Nevertheless, some HEIs have also shown resistance to change, as ‘each university is a mix of organising practices which are historically located and variably resistant and resilient to being whole-heartedly overthrown’ by new managers (Prichard and Willmott, 1997, p. 289).

2.3 The changing landscape of higher education in Hong Kong

The British Empire incorporated Hong Kong as a colony (1842-1997) after the signing of the Treaty of Nanking (1842). As a result, Hong Kong’s education system, under British control, was deeply rooted in the practice of British colonialism for more than 150 years in Hong Kong (Yang, 2012; Forestier and Crossley, 2015). In terms of physical location, Hong Kong is located in East Asia but has long been a meeting point for ideas and people from the West and the East. Since the 19th century, Hong Kong has provided a physical setting for the integration of traditional Chinese culture and Western civilization. The feasibility and advantages created by the East–West connection have had a profound impact on the development of higher education in Hong Kong, such as its diversity, transition and mobility. Nevertheless, the transfer of sovereignty in 1997 from the UK to the People’s Republic of China (PRC) induced HEIs to change their governance models. The PRC has made the public university system more marketised and neoliberal. In other words, higher education has shifted from a public service
sector to a private sector. Fong (2001) argued that this shift was reinforced by the Asian financial crisis. Accordingly, Hong Kong HEIs operate within an increasingly competitive and marketised context.

A number of educators (e.g., Leung, 1996; Fong, 2001; Yang, 2001) have argued that Hong Kong has long sought to mimic the English higher education system. Indeed, higher education in Hong Kong has an important colonial heritage. First, teachers and students are still expected to use English as a medium of instruction. Clearly, some British educational values operative during the colonial era remain today. Second, Hong Kong’s higher education system has nurtured Hong Kong elites by maintaining a British colonial framework. In the long term, elites can be interpreted as human capital to improve productivity and economic growth and maintain existing social structures. Students perceive HEIs as a pathway to upward social mobility (Cheng, 2014). Third, higher education in Hong Kong follows UK research evaluation frameworks, such as the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), which was established in the UK in 1986 and is now called the Research Excellence Framework. Such research evaluation frameworks improve the reputation of Hong Kong research universities and their global ranking via indices such as the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, QS World University Rankings, The Center for World University Rankings and rankings by other international accreditation bodies.

Before the 1990s, only two universities in Hong Kong offered limited elite education places: The Chinese University of Hong Kong and The University of Hong Kong (Wan, 2011). Thus, the proportion of population joined in higher education was very low (Mok, 1999). Many government documents, such as Education Policy (i.e. White Paper) in 1965, Senior Secondary and Tertiary Education: A Development Programme for Hong Kong over the Next Decade (i.e., Green Paper) in 1977, and the Development of Senior Secondary and Tertiary Education (i.e., White Paper) in 1978, allowed Hong Kong’s Government Secretariat (1981) to discuss human capital needs for economic development. However, the government policy only allowed for a 3% number of students in higher education (Mok, 1999). Eventually, this proved unfavourable to Hong Kong society and slowed economic growth.
From the 1980s, Hong Kong’s economic development was mainly dominated by the service sector after agricultural and industrial activities were moved out of the city (Economic History Association, 2019). To satisfy the need for talented, specialised and skilled workers, the government changed its higher education policy to expand the higher education sector. To a certain extent, the demand for higher education is related to the economy (Ng and Forbes, 2009). Kenneth Topley, Director of Education, conducted a large-scale review of higher education and published the *Kenneth Topley Report* to address the possibility of establishing the third university in Hong Kong and upgrading the status of various colleges to universities. As a result, Hong Kong Baptist College became Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong Polytechnic became The Hong Kong Polytechnic University and City Polytechnic of Hong Kong became City University of Hong Kong. In addition, the government supported the creation of other publicly funded institutions, including the Vocational Training Council (VTC) and the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, which were established in 1982 and 1984, respectively. Accordingly, the higher education sector was considerably expanded in Hong Kong (Wan, 2011; Lo et al., 2016). Today, Hong Kong has eight institutions funded by and under the control of the University Grants Committee (UGC), the central funding body for HEIs which have followed different paths to remain competitive. Appendix 1 summarises the key developments and settings of these eight institutions. Therefore, higher education has evolved from an extremely elitist system into a massified one (Mok, 1999). The massification of higher education provides professionals with a high level of creativity and innovation to enrich Hong Kong’s economic growth and global competitiveness (Mok and Wu, 2016).

Hong Kong is an international city that integrates Eastern and Western influences. It is a representative example for exploring the waves of educational reforms in recent decades and investigating theoretical and practical recommendations for educational leaders to lead change in higher education in terms of organisational settings and international communities (Cheng, 2009). Two main rounds of educational reforms have been undertaken in Hong Kong since the 1980s as a result of economic transformation, globalisation, competition and technological advancement. The first round sought to upgrade the effectiveness internally, such as, teaching and learning in schools, and the subsequent round intended to enhance effectiveness of interfaces, including
marketisation, accountability and quality. The main example was the introduction of the 3+3+4 education system, which adopted a novel academic structure (i.e., 3+3+4) to replace the old British education system (i.e., 3+2+2+3) in 2012. According to the *Education Commission Report (No. 7: Quality School Education)*, the main aim of the 3+3+4 structure is to enable students to experience a more consistent and all-round learning life. Links with tertiary education in different zones have been promoted and domestic universities have become more flexible in their admission systems (Reform Proposals on the Education System in Hong Kong, 2000). This clearly shows that Hong Kong has undergone a major shift in focus from the region to the world (Cheng, 2001; Cheng, 2009). In this context, complex educational reforms have forced educational leaders to acquire common administrative and leadership skills and the whole spectrum of systemic wisdom and professional knowledge. To avoid the bottleneck effect when leading, changing and managing HEIs, leadership requires a certain level of support, such as a full range of advisory skills, empirical pilot studies and extensive consultation and discussion at different levels. This will establish the validity, feasibility and legitimacy of the management of HEIs (Cheng, 2009).

Under the influence of managerialism and marketisation, Hong Kong HEIs have seen a fundamental shift in the notion of governance, from ‘big government, small individuals’ to ‘small government, big individuals’ (Mok, 1999, p. 118). This clearly shows that government involvement has gradually declined, whilst the effectiveness and efficiency of the public sector have greatly improved. Indeed, the mission in the statement of the UGC plainly emphasises the importance of obtaining better value for money and assuring the profitability of the activities of HEIs (Cheng, 1996). On this basis, Mr Nigel French, JP, Secretary-General of the UGC, declared:

> The UGC in its mission statement pledges to uphold the academic freedom and institutional autonomy of the institutions while at the same time seeking to assure the quality and cost effectiveness of their education provision, and being publicly accountable for the large sums of public money devoted to higher education. (1995, pp. 42-43)
As a result, the eight UGC-funded institutions aggressively strive for excellence and internalisation.

Influenced by managerialism, HEIs have adopted different terminology in the field of education. More specifically, educational leaders play a key role in managing HEIs and potential change in a dynamic environment in the years to come. The UGC thought that it was urgently necessary to assess students’ learning outcomes to train them to become employable graduates who meet employers’ expectations (University Grants Committee, 2018). The UGC considered fostering outcome-based approaches in its funded institutions to evaluate the effectiveness of resource allocation and teaching processes to prepare students for the expected learning outcomes (Lau et al., 2017). In addition, in January 2004, the UGC emphasised that all HEIs in Hong Kong should strive to be internationally competitive. It determined that research-intensive institutions would reach more areas of international competitiveness and obtain more public resource allocation and private funding than other institutions. Since then, it is undeniable that Hong Kong HEIs, which have shifted from teaching-oriented to research-oriented institutions, have served a key and leading function in the transformation of Hong Kong’s higher education system (University Grants Committee, 2004).

To seek growth opportunities, HEIs should focus on diversification. Alternative growth opportunities can be envisioned through mergers, reorganisation, relocation and renaming. Most importantly, HEIs are encouraged to offer self-financing programmes and establish various self-financing institutions, such as community colleges and institutes of further education, even if they are funded by the UGC and thus receive a public treasury subsidiary. For instance, Hong Kong Community College is now affiliated with The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the HKU School of Professional and Continuing Education is affiliated with the University of Hong Kong and the Lingnan Institute of Further Education is affiliated with Lingnan University. As a result, the financial burden of the government is minimised (Mok, 1999; Lo et al., 2016). Thus, self-financing institutions have grown considerably in diversity and size. In 2005/2006, there were approximately 230 and 40 self-financing post-secondary programmes at the sub-degree level and undergraduate level, respectively. This trend continued for 10 years. In 2015/2016,
there were approximately 300 and 150 self-financing post-secondary programmes at the sub-degree level and undergraduate level, respectively. Over the past 18 years, self-financing institutions and programmes in the higher education sector have occupied a large market share (i.e., over 70%). Basically, an emergence of self-financing institutions supplements UGC-funded universities by offering diverse programmes and creating more education opportunities in the higher education sector. However, the single-line allocation of resources (i.e., human resources, financial resources, campus facilities and student support) between self-financing programmes and publicly funded programmes needs to be improved (Education Development Bureau, 2018).

2.4 The evolution of leadership research in higher education

As suggested by Szeto et al. (2015), systematic reviews of research target have focused on exploring relevant research questions, adopting meaningful approaches to draw conclusions from the entire studies. To accomplish the aims of this investigation, a meta-analysis of studies on higher education leadership published in peer-reviewed, academic journals was performed. These high-impact publications were required to provide a quality indicator, to exert a considerable influence in academic research, to generate the vast majority of references, to help understand the research questions (Bryman, 2007a), to explore interrelated research issues, to use double-blind peer review procedures (Szeto et al., 2015), and to be published in English (Hallinger and Bryant, 2013). One interesting observation was that some academic journals have changed names in recent decades, for example, the Journal of Tertiary Education Administration became the Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management in 1996, Assessment in Higher Education was renamed Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education in 1981, the Singapore Journal of Education was renamed the Asia Pacific Journal of Education in 1996 and, School Leadership & Management was named School Organisation before 1996.

Fifty journals were reviewed, among which 33 contained at least 1 article related to leadership in higher education. In general, Taylor and Francis had the most journals on the list, followed by SAGE Publishing and Springer, then Wiley Online Library and Emerald. In addition, one journal
from Arizona State University was on the list. Appendix 2 presents a list of journal titles, accompanied by year of creation, editorial office (i.e., country/city) and name of publisher.

In general, the higher education sector started to undergo tremendous institutional and organisational transformation in 1980s. So, 1980 was defined as the first year to be included in the analysis (Vaira, 2004). Indeed, Bryman (2007a) highlighted that a literature review generally emphasises the current situation, which may not be reflective of the situation more than 30 years ago. In addition, many scholars in the field of higher education have argued that the prospects of higher education have changed significantly over the last 30 years. As a result, it was decided that the literature review should start from the 1980s. Subsequent to a meticulous selection process, 274 articles (co-)written by 526 scholars that were published during the study period (1980-2019) were deemed relevant and were included for further evaluation.

Basically, the literature in the field of HEIs has used qualitative or mixed approaches. Surprisingly, no study has adopted an entirely quantitative method. A qualitative study begins by identifying the goal of the research, followed by the identification of research issues based on the data gathered from a small group and a description of the data analysis method (Creswell and Plano, 2011). Qualitative research focuses on the implication of human beings’ system. However, feelings and inferences are both subjective and personal (Pring, 2004). Thus, the accuracy and credibility of purely qualitative research may at times seem questionable. Quantitative research concentrates on deductive reasoning (Cavanna et al., 2001; Pring, 2004). Specifically, it starts with a problem, followed by the development of the null hypothesis and alternative hypotheses, and then details of the instruments used for data analysis and collection (Creswell and Plano, 2011). Quantitative approaches produce abundant quantitative data, which are examined with thorough and rigorous statistical methods and of the approaches to support informed decision-making (Cavanna et al., 2001). To improve the validity of a model, academic researchers have advocated the utilization of mixed methods. Such a design allows for triangulation through integration and additional analyses with supplementary quantitative and qualitative data from associated investigations (Creamer, 2017). Academic research using mixed research designs, and qualitative designs/methods is common. Overall, quantitative approaches and data enrich and
reinforce qualitative research through supplying more in-depth answers to the research issues. Moreover, high-quality quantitative data often aid in the attainment of high qualitative standards (Hesse-Biber, 2010). Case studies, comprehensive interviews and focus groups constitute common qualitative approaches. Participant observation and theoretical models are always also used in qualitative research. Data are frequently collected via questionnaires, which are used for statistical analysis.

As a wide range of topics relating to leadership in higher education have been addressed in research over the last three decades, it is surprising that structural research on the development and trends of higher education leadership research remains scarce. Only 27 research studies (9.9%) published during the first period examined here (1980-1999) focused on leadership in higher education. During the modern period (2000-2019) of higher education research, 247 scholarly research articles (90.1%) emphasised the centrality of this subject. This finding indicates that educational leadership plays a key role in change management in HEIs in the contemporary era and has become an attractive subject in educational research. Prior to 2000, a qualitative approach was used by most investigators in this field. Indeed, approximately 50% of the studies conducted during this period were based on a single case study and one theoretical model. Furthermore, most case studies were conducted in Oceania and Europe, with very few conducted in other regions, such as Asia, North America, and Africa. In contrast, since 2000, researchers have favoured mixed approaches to investigate numerous case studies across continents. Studies have also progressively included international and intercontinental partnerships. Teichler (2005) reported that many investigations on leadership in the field of higher education between 1995 and 2005 was interdisciplinary. Moreover, the comparison of investigations in this area have highlighted globalisation and the use of quantitative data to support theoretical judgement. In addition to Europe and Oceania, an arising centre of higher education leadership has recognized as Asia, as HEIs in Asia have rapidly expanded and evolved. To date, very few investigations have focused on the African area.

Since the higher education sector joins into the global market, recognition is crucial to enhance the vying advantage of HEIs (Morphew et al., 2018). Thus, there has been a significant change in
institutional reform to better respond to the chaotic circumstances and complex demands of various stakeholders, diverse student populations and a rapidly changing socio-political and technological environment (Behar-Horenstein and Amata, 1996). The term ‘paradigm shift’ is part of the language of change and has become fashionable recently (Holmes, 1984; Spady, 1986; Dede, 1992; Simsek and Louis, 1994). Current HEIs are different from their predecessors, as they are more focused, innovative and applied in their strategic purposes and directions, more collaborative in their internal decision-making by training members in integrated teams, and smaller in structure and size (Simsek and Louis, 1994). Careful efforts are necessary to know and compare the dissimilar organisational practices and structures of HEIs. Many qualitative and quantitative studies of educational leadership have been conducted. However, although previous research has substantial merits, it still has critical gaps. First, qualitative studies have concentrated on creating comprehensive descriptions of the association between various types of educational leadership, curriculum change and teacher exercise. Second, quantitative studies have only identified small to moderate and indirect leadership effects in the context of HEIs (Hallinger et al., 2013). Yet Burns (1978) defined leadership as one of the most noticed and least comprehended phenomena in the world. Indeed, scholars have failed to provide a broad and clear definition of educational leadership over the last 25 years (Newman, 2013). According to the editor of the Journal of Educational Administration,

the phenomenon of leadership is, once again undergoing one of its periodic, sustained examinations: definitions of leadership, components of leadership, correlates of leadership, and so on, are occupying more and more journal space and more and more conference time. Yet, therein, lies an emerging danger. (Thomas, 2006, p. 11)

Although the link between leadership and change in HEIs has been discussed, the association between theory and practice remains neglected. This indicates that the efficacy on change is impeded by subjective elements and fundamental limitations that lead to unforeseen results (Morrison, 2013). Hallinger et al. (2013) stressed the importance of linking leadership studies with the moderating variables that characterise the context of HEIs. This kind of study is essential to the success of contemporary leadership studies.
Recently, Jones et al. (2015) indicated that the literature on educational leadership has emphasised the importance of more systematic research in the Asian region. Calma (2015) confirmed that few previous studies have focused on experiences from Asia. Through comparative studies, HEIs can acquire knowledge and insights to facilitate quality control and auto-corrective actions in today’s context (Chinta et al., 2016). In addition, HEIs can acquire knowledge that will help them correct their behaviour or actions in contemporary times (Chinta et al., 2016). Comparing and exploring the behaviour of department leaders from various cases require rigorous efforts by researchers. In previous literature reviews, there was a lack of pertinent cases in Hong Kong, although the importance of the topic of leadership in HEIs has increased significantly over the last decade, especially the association between departmental leadership and HEIs in the changing environment of higher education. Indeed, policymakers and educators in Hong Kong have suggested that the core of the East Asian higher education system should become more similar to that of the West. It could be argued that Hong Kong needs to develop international educational leadership and management (Dimmock and Walker, 2000; Hallinger, 2011). This research gap is evident, and some key issues remain unresolved by educational scholars. To fill this research gap, it may be interesting to compare the different strategies of leadership used to promote at the level of the department in higher education. As mentioned earlier, this study provides valuable insights into the most effective educational leadership styles and the implementation of change management in HEIs by comparing academic departments. Additional studies should be conducted to highlight related research differences.

2.5 Importance of leadership for HEIs: A contested idea in the higher education literature

Education has turned to an increasingly significant subject of research over the last 200 years (Lau, 2018a). Numerous educators have produced research on unresolved changes in the higher education landscape. Since the 1980s, the higher education landscape has evolved rapidly (University World News, 2019). Specifically, Tight (2012) conducted a meta-analysis on higher education research from the 1980s and observed that since 2000, a period of change has been underway in higher education. Accordingly, two main periods were identified, the first from
1980 to 1999 and the second from 2000 to 2017. The first period was marked by a change in higher education following a transformation in economic power, namely the advent of neoliberal political reform, a transformation from collegial to managerial higher education framework (Jung and Harman, 2009; White et al., 2011) and the rise of Internet-based liaison (Vaira, 2004; Kenny, 2009). Consequently, academic freedom and professional autonomy were stressed (Jung and Harman, 2009). Conversely, during the second period, a second wave of transformation occurred in higher education, characterised by the emergence of effectiveness measures such as quality, accountability and competitive advantage in the market (Cheng, 2009) and an increase in massification and globalisation (Jung and Harman, 2009). After the financial tsunami in 2008, HEI leaders had to adapt their managerial practices through various means, such as strategic planning, mission articulation, commercial marketing and evaluation (Davis et al., 2016), due to their budget shortfall (Ayers, 2014). Managerialism has significantly influenced HEIs, leading them to focus on income generation, academic standards, market competition with rivals for market share and compliance with administrative and policy regulations (White et al., 2011; Teelken, 2012). As a result, HEIs have become more flexible, entrepreneurial and capitalist. HEIs are now characterised by their emphasis on privatisation, accountability, competitiveness and efficiency (Ayers, 2014; Davis et al., 2016). Management styles in HEIs are primarily seen as a top-down hierarchical structure, and academic staff must work in bureaucratic systems with limited funds and powers (Chandolia and Anastasiou, 2020). In addition, HEIs face contradictory and competing demands from multiple stakeholders in the external and internal environments. Dowling-Hetherington (2013) argued that the energetic intellectual context has gradually disappeared and been replaced by management decisions and strategic policymaking. Tensions between the academic perspective and the managerial perspective have also become more serious in HEIs.

The contrast among such durations provides an insightful examination of higher education from the 1980s. It reveals a gradual increase in pace and interest in understanding the evolution and research trends of higher education. However, additional insights into and knowledge of the transformation of HEIs are needed to further develop educational research. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) explained that education in the 21st century develops professionals’ knowledge,
reinforces social cohesion and encourages economic productivity. Educational research has created social practices and revealed different activities (Usher, 1996). Closely associated with educational practices and research, educational leadership has given rise to remarkable changes in knowledge, society and culture in the postmodern period (Hallinger, 2003; Ionescu, 2014). Indeed, a large number of studies (e.g., Bess and Goodman, 2001; Bryman, 2007a; Moser, 2007; Kligyte and Barrie, 2014) have emphasised the importance of educational leadership in higher education. Educational leadership has led to new values (e.g., making a difference, authenticity, trust, service), ideas (e.g., generating enthusiasm for teaching, creating business models) and assumptions during the reform period (Bystydzienki et al., 2017).

Fullan (1985, p. 391) proposed that ‘reformers have the idea that change can be achieved by brute sanity’. However, the idea of brute sanity neglects the complex and detailed procedures and processes necessary to effect change, notably an overall plan and objectives. According to Fullan (1985), the first stage of change is initiation or unfreezing. The process induces people to focus on their current status regarding a phenomenon. Eventually, brute sanity over-rationalises and overpromises, preventing people from sustaining their performance and accepting change in the future. The success of change is strongly determined by people who prepare well for change instead of persisting with existing ways of doing things (Fullan, 1989; Fidler, 2005). In response, Galton (1869) initially suggested that leadership must be inherited brilliance. Later, McRoy and Gibbs (2003) proposed that leadership plays a key role in the change management process. Davis et al. (2001, p. 1026) argued that leadership is often recognised as the core determinant of successful change and is ‘essential in order to create vision, communicate policy and deploy strategy’. As change issues are complex and multi-faceted, leaders must strive to achieve the desired vision, create effective implementation and develop the management skills to deal with aspects of change such as fear and barriers (McRoy and Gibbs, 2009). Gregory (1996, p. 49) argued that ‘where justice, equality and participation are key philosophical beliefs … leadership itself needs to be participatory and democratic’. This was confirmed by Beare et al. (1989, p. 99):
Outstanding leadership has invariably emerged as a key characteristic of outstanding schools. There can no longer be doubt that those seeking quality in education must ensure its presence and that the development of potential leaders must be given high priority.

Representative educational leaders, such as Michael Maurice Crow of Arizona State University, Cai Yuan-Pei of Peking University, Sung Jao Yiu of The Chinese University of Hong Kong and Chen Kwan Yiu of Lingnan University, have successfully implemented educational reform and have had a significant effect on higher education in the 21st century.

Due to the multidimensionality of leadership, it is difficult to give a generic definition covering all of its features. Leadership is typically related to someone’s behaviour, when it happened or how it was noticed. Leadership is also a process that requires people to achieve specific outcomes or goals (Alonderiene and Majauskaite, 2016). Many researchers have endeavoured to define and analyse the concept of leadership. Heifetz (1994, p. 15) defined leadership as ‘mobilizing people to tackle tough problems’. Generally, the word ‘leader’ conjures a unique image of people fighting enemies, determining directions, energising troops and making key decisions (Abu-Tineh, 2012). Smircich and Morgan (1982, p. 257) suggested that ‘the absence of leadership is often seen as the absence of organization’. Thus, they argued that leadership is a key way to significantly improve an organisation (Fullan, 1985; Spendlove, 2007). In her documentary research, Spendlove (2007) proposed that leadership is an impact process undertaken to achieve a desired intention. Leadership theories explain that the behaviour of individuals can significantly influence the behaviour of others. Galton’s (1879) ideology of leaders as ‘great men’ constitutes a general topic of psychological and/or social studies (Baxter, 1985). Different perspectives and disciplines have led to the common understanding that ‘there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concepts’ (Stogdill, 1981, p. 74). Burns (1978) described leadership as the key mechanism which leaders encourage their followers to work for certain targets that express the intentions, values, demands, desires and expectations of both followers and leaders. Galton (1869) first defined leadership as an issue of hereditary brilliance. In the commercial context, leaders have been demonstrated to possess key skills and power to convince their followers to meet
foreordained corporate objectives and goals (Ejere and Abasilim, 2013; Rijal, 2016). As a result, leadership involves the propagation and initiation of behaviour has social influence (Sabeen, 2012; Ionescu, 2014). Selznick (1957) emphasised that leaders can transform an organisation into an ‘institution’. Bolden et al. (2009) defined good leadership as an operational and strategic necessity. According to The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) (2004, p. 35), leadership is defined as

agreeing strategic direction in discussion with others and communicating this within the organization; ensuring that there is the capability, capacity and resources to deliver planned strategic outcomes; and supporting and monitoring delivery. As such this embraces elements of governance and elements of management.

Research has shown that educational leadership is fundamentally different from leadership in other conditions and requires additional skills (Jooste et al., 2018). So far, the leadership models used in HEIs have mainly come from secondary education studies and business practices. In the secondary education literature, researchers (e.g., Wang et al., 2017; Castillo and Hallinger, 2018; Gumus et al., 2018) have mainly investigated how various leadership practices affect teacher job satisfaction, student achievement and school reform implementation. Flessa et al. (2018) also highlighted that secondary education research studies have mainly focused on how school-based management and the democratisation of schools affect leadership practice. Nevertheless, studies on leadership in secondary education have created a knowledge base that is also relevant to university leadership. However, most of these studies (e.g. Luyten et al., 2005; Tam, 2010; Orphanos and Orr, 2014; Ronald and Philip, 2014) have shown some shortcomings, such as the generalisation of the findings without a sufficiently comprehensive investigation of specific departments and little analysis of school effectiveness, student learning activities and teacher job satisfaction. In contrast, this research focused on the departments of management and technology studies in a university context. Thus, it made sense to focus on the higher education literature rather than relying too much on secondary school education leadership studies, to better fit the context studied here. Just as a direct transfer of business practices to education may be inappropriate, so there are important sectoral differences between secondary and tertiary
Fullan (2002) and Jones et al. (2015) stressed that educational leaders have a lasting and difficult-to-measure influence during a period of transformation. Understandably, therefore, educational leadership can drive change in HEIs. For instance, Smith (2002, p. 296) explained that educational leaders are significance ‘not only for universities for whom they deliver the academic curriculum, but also for academic staff for whom they provide academic leadership and management as well as representation to the institution’. Therefore, it is important to conduct comprehensive leadership analysis rather than focusing only on higher standards. Rowley (1997, p. 78) argued that ‘the future of academic institutions depends on the development of effective leadership skills at all levels in the organization’. To this end, Spendlove (2007) used a competency-based approach to identify the leadership behaviour required for effective leadership in higher education. Comprehensive analyses of leadership related theories based on the various behaviours of leaders in education have also been conducted (Moser, 2007). In short, leadership acts in accordance with practical bases, for instance: (1) leadership brings an effect on society, (2) leadership theories favour the position of leader and (3) leadership needs a leader to make a decisive difference in the behaviour, goals and motivation of other members of the organisation. From the perspective of organisational science, Bryman’s (2007a) literature review explored the approaches and styles of leadership and the relationships between 13 forms of leadership behaviour and departmental effectiveness in HEIs. The 13 areas of compelling leaders’ conduct in HEIs were found to be as follows: (1) a clear sense of direction/strategic vision; (2) preparing departmental arrangements to develop such a direction; (3) being considerate; (4) treating academic staff with fairness and integrity; (5) being trustworthy and having personal integrity; (6) enabling participation in major decision-making/fostering open and comfortable communications; (7) effective communication through the channels used by department leaders; (8) setting an example/having integrity; (9) creating a comfortable/harmonious collegial work environment in the department; (10) propelling departmental development concerning the external and internal constituencies of the university and being motivated in this endeavour; (11) offering constructive criticism on performance; (12) setting supportive and regulatory tasks to motivate scholarly activities; and (13) enhancing the department’s reputation via strategic academic appointments.
Educational leadership has a far-reaching effect in higher education (Aasen and Stensaker, 2007). Finally, a recent study by Fullan and Boyle (2013) identified five main leadership behaviours: (1) setting expectations and goals; (2) resourcing strategically; (3) designing, coordinating and examining learning and teaching; (4) encouraging and participating in learning and teaching; and (5) ensuring an efficient and encouraging environment. It makes sense that strong academic leaders aspire to academic excellence in a highly competitive environment (Inman, 2014).

2.6 Leadership theories

Theory provides the basis for creating a context for investigation, decision-making and operation (Morrison, 2013). Bush argued that (2011, p. 24), ‘theory is valuable and significant if it serves to explain practice and provide managers with a guide to action’. In leadership theories, there is no single theory or definition for assessing leadership mechanisms and exploring a complex structure, such as an organisational system. Theories of educational leadership provide insights into how higher education leaders engage in leadership and serve as a platform for situating research findings (Newman, 2013). As educational leadership is multifaceted, it leads to a number of theories related to context, space, time and culture. In terms of organisational management, a leadership model transforms dominant patriarchal (i.e., authoritarian) modes of operations into collective-distributive (i.e., power sharing) modes of operation. In short, the notion of leadership can neither be condensed into common statements nor oversimplified (Morrison, 2013).

Bernardo et al. (2014, p. 105) pointed out that ‘critical to the conceptualization process is to first establish the theoretical perspective of leadership and its distinction from other constructs such as management. The review culls dimensions of educational leadership that guided the research process’. In addition, it has been argued that management and leadership are interrelated, with management being a core dimension of leadership (Bernardo et al., 2014). For instance, Bush and Glover (2003) connected leadership with change management and maintenance activities. Davies (2005) argued that leadership theories in HEIs focus on measuring what leadership is to be done (e.g., transformation, vision) and its impacts (e.g., harmonious relationships, desired
transformation and achievement of expected outcomes). Even more importantly, leadership in higher education is different from that in other contexts, such as the business environment. Although the roles of educational leaders and business leaders are the same, e.g., leading, controlling, organising and planning, their purposes are different. The job of an educational leader is to nurture the next generation as human capital and to create knowledge-based organisations around the world. Therefore, the decisions made by an educational leader can affect the careers of young people, or even their entire lives. Educational leaders seek both economic return and social benefits in the long term. For most businesses, the product or service provided will not have such a long-term effect on customers. Business leaders are only looking for profitability or financial returns for their firm. There is one challenge that an educational leader must face that most business leaders do not. Specifically, it has been argued that research universities should be led by talented scholars, not just brilliant managers. Scholars who are considered credible leaders will gain more respect from their colleagues and appear to be more legitimate. Top scholars have expert knowledge and an in-depth understanding of the key issues facing universities. This is essential for decision-making and the formation of strategic priorities in the sustainable development of universities (Goodall, 2009). As a result, in this study, relevant studies using educational leadership theories were used to refine the assumptions of the investigation process and identify research gaps. Bensimon, Neumann and Birnbaum (1989) completed a thorough investigation of the models and theories of educational leadership. Eventually, six main theories of leadership in higher education were identified, including trait theories, power and influence theories, behavioural theories, contingency theories, cultural and symbolic theories and cognitive theories. In general, the formation of leadership styles is determined by leadership theories. This helped narrow down the range of leadership styles for this study. Also, this study identified the range of leadership styles commonly used in HEIs and the workplace that truly reflects the unique needs of HEIs, to identify the circumstances surrounding various behaviours. Furthermore, studies on the range of leadership styles have emphasised the importance of a holistic view of leadership and have discussed the early period of leadership studies on scientific management theory in recent decades (Asrar-ul-Haq and Anwar, 2018).
Research exploring and defining leadership behavioural theories and characteristics dates back to the ‘great man’ theory of the early 1920s (Alonderiene and Majauskaite, 2016). Leadership theories have shifted from trait-based to behavioural models (Bernardo et al., 2014). Indeed, trait-based leadership theory has been rejected, leading to the emergence of situational, leadership style, contingency, team leadership and trajectory theories (Beyer, 2012). Different theories have been suggested over time because of globalisation, societal changes, changes in work practices and technological advancement (Robbins and Coulter, 2014; Alonderiene and Majauskaite, 2016). Foster (1986) described different generations of leadership theory frameworks. The first generation involved the identification of leadership traits that were later discovered to be non-generalisable. This was followed by the adoption of two elements (task/goal orientation or consideration/relationship orientation) and the identification of leadership behaviours, which led to vague interpretations of leadership behaviours and activities and management, overlooking followers and cultural dissimilarities. In addition, Foster (1986) identified a third generation, namely reinforcement theory, exchange theory, attribution theory and the multiple influence model of leadership, which focused not on the concepts of learning and leadership but on how organisations use management to get subordinates to perform tasks (Richards, 2011). Beyer (2012) conducted a critical review of the literature, identifying 50 leadership approaches. However, Beyer found that recent ideas happen to be more of a mixture of connected concepts and ideas derived from each rather than singular hypothetical models.

Baxter (1985) described the remarkable evolution of leadership research from a simplistic personality trait and environmentalist methodology to a multivariate methodology. In general, since the 1980s, instructional leadership has been the central of research on educational leadership in higher education. Direct and strong leadership have been shown to obtain desirable results for HEIs in different fields, especially learning and teaching. The instructional leadership framework emphasises the crucial and important practices of leadership rather than the process of leadership (Bush, 2011). Knowledge and professional skills are important elements of the instructional leadership model (Lukács, 1989). However, Hallinger (2003, p. 330) noted that this model focused on ‘the principal as the centre of expertise, power and authority’. Similarly, Spendlove (2007) observed that leadership has historically been conceptualised as an individual-
level skill. Nevertheless, Robinson et al. (2008) found that the recent literature on educational leadership has started to combine transactional leadership and instructional leadership. To conceptualise and generate the best verified leadership models from the leadership literature, Bass and Avolio’s ‘full range of leadership’ model (Bass, 1985; Bass and Avolio, 1994; Avolio et al, 1999) identified three distinct and widespread leadership aspects: transactional, passive avoidant and transformational leadership. Subsequently, Young (2004) adopted the principles of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire to provide a distinct perspective on leadership styles (i.e., transactional, transformational and passive avoidant) in higher education correlated with gender identification. The matrix between appropriate leadership styles and gender attitudes was identified. Based on the work of Burns (1978), a transactional leader is recognised by an exchange relationship in which the leader motivates his/her followers by offering them punishments (or rewards) in return for their lack of effort (or effort). In the transformational leadership framework, Bass (1985) presented four key factors classified as transformational: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. From a behavioural perspective, the distinction between transactional leaders and transformational leaders requires a full range approach (Pounder, 2008). Lengnick-Hall and Wolff (1999) and Elenkov et al. (2005) argued that transactional leaders and transformational leaders are understood to discuss or predict strategic situations, outcomes and actions in the area of strategy research. Similarly, Rapp (2011) emphasised that transactional and transformational leadership, emerging from leaders’ personal qualities, are forms of situational leadership. Specifically, transactional leaders focus on leading operations and determining policy, whilst transformational leaders focus on innovation and development (Rapp, 2011; Fenney, 2018). Thus, the full range leadership model (transformational transactional) is the most widespread and standard mainstream leadership model for developing a leadership assessment tool with changing norms and structures in HEIs to build capacity for change (Pounder, 2008; Lai, 2014; Santamaria, 2014). However, many scholars (e.g., Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985; Bass and Avolio, 1994) have indicated that transformational leadership is more suited to organisational effectiveness during the appropriate time of complexity in higher education and society.
Transactional leadership theory is related to the exchange relationship between leaders and followers and the need to achieve autonomous targets, or a type of leadership in which rewards and trading are provided for a job well done (i.e., contingent reward; Burns, 1978). Furthermore, transactional leaders assess operating procedures and the achievement of subordinates’ goals and act to address them before faults occur (i.e., dynamic management by individual). In other words, transactional leadership has the characteristics of a transaction between those who lead and those who follow (Bond and Boak, 1996). To a certain extent, transactional leadership constitutes an effective leadership type. However, this type of leadership fails to produce the same benefits as transformational leadership (Zacher and Johnson, 2015).

The concept of transformational leadership was first introduced by Burns (1978) and then further expanded as a leadership theory by Bass (1985). The key objective of transformational leadership is to foster organisational transformation by adapting to a rapidly changing situation (Karadag et al., 2015). Burns (1978, p. 20) argued that transformational leadership ‘occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation’. Transformational leadership theory emphasises the intellectual stimulation, consideration and charisma of individual leaders (Bass, 1985). Transformational leadership has been conceptualised to introduce the ‘right’ leader-follower association in current HEIs (Oplatka and Tako, 2009). During the 1990s, transformational leadership appeared as consequence of a recent concentration on key issues such as, ethics and integrity (Ruddell, 2008), alternative capability in economics, the advent of a neoliberal political view (Vaira, 2004; Kenny, 2009), technological advancements (Rijal, 2016), changing funding mechanisms, competition, internationalisation (Bolden et al., 2009), and the restructuring of HEIs (for example, the growing importance of professionalism and professional development of teachers and the emergence of learning communities; Hallinger, 2003, p. 341). Ejere and Abasilim (2013) and Jones et al. (2015) further proposed that transformational leadership is crucial in the leadership literature. Transformational leadership is often described as vision-based leadership (Park, 2012). Ejere and Abasilim (2013) explained that transformational leaders seek to increase the commitment and attitudes of their followers to help achieve the goals and mission of their organisations. Bass (1985, p. 1) argued that transformational leadership can encourage
followers to exceed normal performance limits: ‘To achieve follower performance beyond the ordinary limits, leadership must be transformational. Followers’ attitudes, beliefs, motives, and confidence need to be transformed from a lower to a higher plane of arousal and maturity’. Nahavandi (2003, p. 235) proposed that ‘transformational leadership also suggests that the majority of leadership theories focus on the exchange and interaction between leaders and their followers’. Transformational leadership features an exhilarating alliance between leaders and followers, inspiring followers to enrich their worth (Ejere and Abasilim, 2013). Transformational leaders primarily adopt inspirational approaches to catalyse their subordinates to fulfil different responsibilities (i.e., inspirational motivation; Ejere and Abasilim, 2013), understand new conduct (Rijal, 2016), achieve higher individual needs (i.e., individualised consideration; Ruddell, 2008), and enrich their creative thinking and independence (i.e., intellectual stimulation; Zacher and Johnson, 2015). Transformational leadership has a positive effect on subordinates’ efforts and satisfaction (i.e., idealised influence; Pounder, 2008), a claim sustained by various empirical studies (Lowe et al., 1996; Judge and Piccolo, 2004). Bystydzienski et al. (2017) created a model of transformational leadership reflecting notable cultural adjustments in the link among college deans and department heads, with five key components: (i) a vision of support and inclusiveness; (ii) career policy that is flexible; (iii) understanding and attainment of personal desires; (iv) an explanation of current cultural presumptions; and (v) a comprehensive with welcoming atmosphere.

A leader who avoids and overlooks key leadership responsibilities, who is reactive and passive and who exhibits a laissez-faire attitude demonstrates passive avoidant leadership (Shao et al., 2012). Educators have defined passive avoidant leadership as a style of leadership that ‘abdicates responsibilities and avoid making decisions’ (Okonofua et al., 2019, p. 467). In other words, passive avoidant leadership consists of giving subordinates the freedom or scope to operate without intervention. Passive avoidant leaders adversely affect the cohesion of the teams they lead, as they do not pass on a strong moral identification to their followers (Okonofua et al., 2019). Passive avoidant leadership translates into a highly unproductive leadership style in the broad area of the leadership model (Zacher and Johnson, 2015). In summary, passive avoidant leaders are often uninterested in or indifferent to the goals of the organisations or projects to
which they are related (Hinkin and Schriesheim, 2008). Therefore, passive avoidant leadership is only appropriate for team members with intrinsic motivation and experience in their professional area (Chaudry and Javed, 2012).

HEIs were configured by hierarchy, managerial control and division of labour in the 1980s. Individualised leadership traditions have been examined in many educational research studies. As a result, the styles of nominated leaders, such as instructional leadership, transactional leadership, transformational leadership and passive-avoidant leadership, were highlighted prior to 2000 (McCauley-Smith et al., 2015). According to Calma (2015), more and more academic studies have recently addressed leaders’ ability to deal with challenges in the rapidly changing context of higher education. Three decades ago, Bossert et al. (1982) suggested that leadership should be recognised in the institutional and global context in which it operates. The educational context is subject to an overlapping influence, shifting from an institutional context to a global context. As a result, researchers have perceived leadership as a relational process (Hallinger and Truong, 2016). Uhl-Bien (2006, p. 655) proposed a relational process established from ‘the rich connections and interdependencies of organizations and their members’. Figure 1 shows the context of the establishment of relational leadership. A successful leader must explore both the nature and the effects of relational leadership in a dynamic environment (Hallinger and Truong, 2016).

Figure 1: The context of the implementation of relational leadership

Source: Hallinger and Truong (2016)
Top-down leadership approaches are often not appropriate for the governance of educational institutions in a changing context. In contrast, democratic and participatory leadership models are the appropriate styles to positively affect followers and subordinates (Bolden et al., 2009). McCauley-Smith et al. (2015) concluded that HEIs have been supported and enabled by the empowerment and distribution of leadership conducts that are centrally controlled. In this context, the evolution of HEIs has changed communities and landscapes in education. Thus, Lumby (2003) suggested that the path of responsibilities and functions is disseminated or diffused to a wide range of people in a particular environment. As transformational leadership and instructional leadership are not necessarily adopted in dynamic, holistic, fast-paced, complex, risky and interdependent environments, top-down models and the concept of a ‘heroic leader’ prevalent in the literature on change management are no longer effective or appropriate (Morrison, 2013). Nevertheless, it is necessary to investigate leadership in conjunction with the change initiative in various contexts after the 1990s (Kempster et al., 2014; Karadag et al., 2015).

New forms of leadership, such as cultural leadership, boundary spanning leadership, inclusive leadership, distributed leadership (e.g., Menon, 2005; Aasen and Stensaker, 2007; Bolden et al., 2009; Jones et al., 2015; McCauley-Smith et al., 2015; Sewerin and Holmberg, 2017) and intellectual leadership (Macfarlane, 2012, p. 1), have become common leadership models in HEIs around the world. These leadership models focus on the process of leadership and offer a systemic view of organisations rather than focusing on the actions of an individual leader (Bolden et al., 2009; Calma, 2015).

In the 21st century, the rise of distributed leadership has emphasised the importance of organisational routines not only for the director, but also for academic staff and other staff across the organisational hierarchy of HEIs (Eyal and Rom, 2015). James et al. (2007) explained that distributed leadership focuses on systemic change and cannot be achieved through individualised leadership development alone. In addition, people throughout the organisation need to review the concepts of leadership. Distributed leadership is exercised across an organisation and in various roles. This evolution of leadership has been articulated as a shift from the ‘entity’ idea of leadership to a relational, ‘constructionist’ view of leadership, in which leadership is an exercise...
of social construction resolved by meanings, practices and interactions in a group of people over time (Galloway et al., 2015). As educational leaders must encourage ‘others to be leaders in their own right’ (Sergiovanni, 1991, p. 335), they need to extend leadership across organisational roles and actors (Murphy, 2002). Distributed leadership is a type of shared, team-based, interactive leadership. To a certain extent, distributed leadership cultivates positive values such as trust and transparency (Starr, 2014). In the educational literature, distributed leadership has various definitions. For example, it has been defined as ‘shared learning through teams of staff working together to augment the range of knowledge and skills available for the organisation to change and anticipate future developments’ (Silins and Mulford, 2001, p. 7). Distributed leadership can be equated with shared leadership (Romanowski, 2017). As Harris (2009, p. 3) explained, distributed leadership

is primarily concerned with the co-performance of leadership practice and the nature of the interactions that contribute to that co-performance. In this model, formal leaders prompt emergent and creative actions among groups to whom leadership is distributed and those in formal leadership roles emphasise the management of interdependencies, rather than controls over process or outcomes.

This has evolved from a more informal and voluntary type of interaction (i.e., initiated by the formal leader) (Morrison, 2013) into a model with ‘a focus on collective, rather than singular leadership’ (Bush 2011, p. 202). Not surprisingly, distributed leadership is increasingly common in traditionally top-down organisations (James et al., 2007). Using a sense-making method of inquiry, distributed leadership can be characterised by various leadership tensions (i.e., between transactional and transformational methodologies, between leaders and followers and between bottom-up leadership and top-down leadership) (Eyal and Rom, 2015). Distributed leadership is also characterised by ‘more autonomous subunits, less control from the top, tolerance of diversity, creativity and experimentation in sub-units, reliance on informal networks for scaling-up innovative practice and reliance on a shared culture to create alignment and synergy for success’ (Dimmock and Cheng, 2013, p. 323). To a certain extent, distributed leadership can pose a threat to those in formal power positions in terms of perceived authority and ego (Uribe-
Florez et al., 2014). Buchanan and Huczynski (2010, p. 566) argued that distributed leadership redefines ‘how we think, how we solve problems, how boundaries are defined [and fundamentally] how we do business’. In addition, distributed leadership depends on core values in a dynamic and complex environment (Duignan, 2014). As Duignan and Cannon (2011, p. 26) proposed, ‘when all seems to be in constant crisis and when strategic direction seems to be swamped by short-term emergencies, leaders need to focus on core values and moral purpose’. To align with the global trend, distributed leadership has attracted the attention of policymakers, researchers and practitioners in the higher education context over the last decade (Szeto et al., 2015). Indeed, Dinham et al. (2011, p. 141) mentioned that the ‘one leadership “theory” or approach that is becoming prominent in the Australian higher education context, as elsewhere, is that of distributed leadership’. Similarly, Higham and Hopkins (2007) observed that distributed leadership is a rising trend in the UK higher education context. Under distributed leadership, staff feels empowered and have the chance to become new leaders. Many scholars (e.g., Day et al., 2009; Hallinger and Heck, 2010; Hallinger, 2011; Harris, 2014) have suggested that distributed leadership has a positive effect on the capacity for improvement of HEIs. However, Bolden (2011) conducted a comprehensive review of distributed leadership research to examine the limitations of distributed leadership as an academic construct. Bolden showed that some important issues are missing, including micro-politics, competition between leaders, the dynamics of power and influence and situational factors (social, multicultural and physical) affecting leadership. Thus, distributed leadership research has failed to apply a systemic and integrated approach and has been somewhat detached from specific locations and contexts.

Indeed, leadership is a core resource for professional learning communities (PLCs). The notion of PLC is a hot issue and a feature of distributed leadership (Dinham et al., 2011). Distributed leadership has been recognised as an important driver of HEI improvement through decision-making and the dissemination of knowledge across the HEI system. It requires a supportive and respectful environment (Morrison, 2013). In distributed leadership, many leaders and related functions are broadly shared within organisations (Wang, 2016). In the 1980s, the idea of PLCs initially arisen from the notion of a ‘teacher professional community’. Recently, another important organisational characteristic, organisational learning has been used in the management.
literature, creating the term ‘PLCs’ (Senge, 1990). Indeed, as most organisational learning practices occur at different levels of the organisation, the concept of PLCs has attracted attention (Lee and Kim, 2016). Learning organisations are complex, interconnected, and rapidly changing systems that concentrate on sustainable development and knowledge rather than restructuring or reengineering (Wang, 2016). Learning theory explains that relevance is essential for organising a community and creating an environment conducive to learning. This reflects activities, such as teamwork, in a learner-centred academic environment (Harris and Cullen, 2008). As Hord (1997, p. 1) further elaborated, PLCs are able to make ‘teachers in a school and its administrators continuously seek and share learning, and act on their learning’. Strong learning communities emerge when leaders give up control and involve others in creating leadership throughout HEIs. Leaders work with their subordinates and give them the opportunity to assume various leadership roles to generate change in different organisational settings. Therefore, producing PLCs is one of the most effective strategies for reforming HEIs (Wang, 2016).

The essential elements of the different types of leadership are summarised in Table 1.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Relevant references</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transactional</td>
<td>1. Interchange services and needs with the completion of independent objectives.</td>
<td>Spendlove, 2007; Richards, 2011;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Provide an affirmative reinforcement and trading for good work.</td>
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<td>3. Agrees objectives.</td>
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<td>5. Motivates.</td>
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<td>6. Bargains</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7. Promotes security8. Fair and consistent with current arrangements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>1. Intellectual stimulation,</td>
<td>Spendlove, 2007; Richards, 2011;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Considerate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership Style</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>References</td>
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<td>3. Charisma</td>
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<td>Jones et al., 2015</td>
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<td>4. Creates vision</td>
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<td>5. Takes risk</td>
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<td>6. Inspires</td>
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<td>7. Empowers</td>
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<td>8. Breaks the status quo</td>
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<td>Passive-avoidant</td>
<td>1. The leader is mostly absent and passive when needed</td>
<td>Zacher and Johnson, 2015;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. The leader shows lower levels of work-related creativity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distributed</td>
<td>1. Fosters teamwork</td>
<td>Bolden et al., 2009; Jones et al., 2015</td>
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<td>2. Makes a collaborative work culture of interacting individuals</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Includes stakeholders in the decision-making process</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Openness to the boundaries of leadership</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Diversity of expertise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boundary-spanning</td>
<td>1. Establishes commitment, alignment, and way through boundaries in efforts to attain a higher goal or view.</td>
<td>Miller, 2008; Yip et al., 2016; Pry sor and Henley, 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Considerable transfer away from the bureaucratic and traditional formal structures.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. A wide array of contacts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Exceptional interpersonal skills</td>
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<td>5. Understands the organisational and social complexities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inclusive</td>
<td>1. Involves the maximum number of individuals through teamwork</td>
<td>Echols, 2009; Ahsan et al., 2012</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Empowers and motivates others to act as</td>
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<td>Category</td>
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| Future leadership | 3. Reforms decision-making processes  
4. Initiates new ideas  
5. Keeps the integrity of the inherent of the collective  
6. Consultative meetings with different groups regarding decision making. |
| Cultural | 1. Leads the manipulative cultural sector from various different people  
2. Creates cultural innovation  
3. Generates impression of competence and success  
4. Motivates followers  
5. Provides effective role model  
6. Creates ideology |
| Intellectual | 1. Tolerates ambiguity  
2. Collective  
3. Democratic  
4. Meta-narrative  
5. Perspective taking  
6. Develops systematised knowledge  
7. Integrates underlying disciplines |

References:
- Trice and Beyer, 1991; Aasen and Stensaker, 2007
- Koontz, 1965; McGee Bank, 1999; Stevenson, 2012; Macfarlane and Chan, 2014
2.7 Leading, changing and managing HEIs

‘People know what they do; frequently they know why they do what they do; but what they don’t know is what they do does’ (Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*).

Melucci (1989) interpreted change as the result of targeted orientation that emerge from different opportunities and constraints. Indeed, higher education and change are closely associated in practice; ‘change is an ever-present reality for all those working in education’ (Lumby, 1998, p. 191), thus a changing education system is unavoidable (Razzaq and Forde, 2012). As Cheng (1996) argued, change is vital if the goal of education is improvement. Change has had profound effects as an evolutionary process in higher education over the last 25 years (Middlehurst and Elton, 1992). The intensification of change is evident around the world (Razzaq and Forde, 2012). It is clear that HEIs’ deliberate attempt to change is a dilemma-ridden, complex, socio-political and technical process. Thus, change can foster or redefine organisational objectives (Morrison, 2013). In practice, change is a process rather than an event and creates the organisational and management practices needed to transform over time (Fullan, 1985). Specifically, HEIs need to understand the nature of the change process and the means to do it (Szeto et al., 2015).

Change in the relationship between the landscape and HEIs has transformed the nature of leadership in HEIs (Tembile, 2003). Over the last 50 years, many educators have analysed the direct correlation between rapidly changing organisational settings and educational leadership in HEIs (e.g., Middlehurst, 1999; Taylor and Machado, 2006; Lindell, 2014). Admittedly, various researchers (e.g., Peters and Austin, 1985; Kotter, 1990a) have asserted that educational leadership is essential for rapid reform in an ever-changing environment (Shin and Harman, 2009). Representative works were produced by Bryman (2007b) and Bolden et al. (2008). Their findings were reported by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education to show that context plays a vital role in the conceptualisation and exercise of leadership. Park (2012) criticised the traditional view of leadership for focusing on predicting and explaining organisational outcomes
and performance rather than on organisational change or innovation itself. Educational leadership in higher education has been defined as taking effectual action to develop the personality and path of HEIs by participating in shared governance and communicating productively with components and administrative norms (Marshall, 2012). Aasen and Stensaker (2007) proposed that educational leadership offers new approaches to organising the decision-making structure of HEIs. Hence, images of educational leaders as coalition builders, coordinators, facilitators, entrepreneurs and symbols have been disseminated internationally. By taking into account closely related educational theories and practices, educational leadership has generated notable changes in society, knowledge and culture in the postmodern era (Bryman, 1986; Kabacoff, 2013). Inman (2014, p. 4) explained that ‘post-modernism is “post” because it refutes the existence of an ultimate truth which can be applied scientifically to everything and everybody’. Therefore, educational leadership has developed with the rise of ‘new managerialism’. Santiago et al. (2006), Middlehurst et al. (2009) and White et al. (2011) noted that HEIs were first described as bureaucracies, demonstrating their public sector affiliations; then as organisations, because of their effects on the private sector, subsequently as collegial institutions; and most recently as entrepreneurial organisations (i.e., a managerial model). Private sector management ideas have become a new model in HEIs (Netswera and Mathabe, 2006; Aasen and Stensaker, 2007). Therefore, it has been argued that educational leadership can be seen as a new coordination mechanism in higher education (Aasen and Stensaker, 2007) and a crucial factor in improving and sustaining the performance of HEIs in the rapidly changing environment of education during the last two decades (Jones et al., 2015; Jooste et al., 2018).

With the increase in public debt and deficits in the fiscal budgets of numerous countries, concerns about efficiency in the allocation of public goods and services have increased, leading to a growing demand for public governance reform (Audit Commission, 1985; Tran and Villano, 2017). This phenomenon has been described by various researchers using concepts such as ‘managerialism’, ‘new managerialism’ and ‘new public management’ (Santiago et al., 2006; Tran and Villano, 2017). In Western countries, public HEIs cannot evade the scrutiny of their activities by politicians and taxpayers. In developing countries, educational reform policies are being re-evaluated to increase the utility of the limited input resources of HEIs and their financial
accountability to society. Thus, leading, changing and managing HEIs have become key aspects of the management of higher education systems (Tran and Villano, 2017). Accordingly, HEIs must learn how to transform business management knowledge in the field of education to become competitive in the higher education ‘industry’ (Santiago et al., 2006; Hallinger and Snidvongs, 2008). As Trow (1994, p. 12) pointed out, HEIs must ‘reshape and redirect the activities of [their institutions] through funding formulas and other mechanisms of accountability imposed from outside the academic community, management mechanisms created, and largely shaped, for application to large commercial enterprises’. In his book *Education and the Cult of Efficiency*, Raymond Callahan (1962) reinforced the idea that education should be managed as a business. Indeed, HEIs generally depend on leaders who demonstrate management and leadership capacities (Bridges, 1977; Leithwood and Duke, 1999; Kligyte and Barrie, 2014).

Based on this analysis, the Organic Law of Universities (OLU) (2001, p. 1) claimed that

> if we recognize that universities play a central role in the cultural, economic and social development of a country, it is necessary to reinforce their leadership capacities and provide their structures with greater flexibility in order to apply differentiated strategies in the framework of a coordinated context.

Similarly, Sporn (1995, p. 72) proposed that ‘the future of the university is contingent on how well internal adaptation processes to external changes are implemented … The importance of management, governance, and leadership derives from the fact that support of these areas is critical’. This is the reason why educational leaders are responsible for administering the higher education reform process (Meister-Scheytt and Scheytt, 2005; Aasen and Stensaker, 2007). The main objectives of educational leadership aim to define the path of transformation, set the right goals at the right time for their organisations and ensure that followers are well prepared for change (Chinta et al., 2016). Whilst it has been recognised that leaders must acquire knowledge to lead, the amount of knowledge required has attracted increasing attention (Inman, 2009). As a result, the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (2008) was created in the United Kingdom to ‘ensure world-class leadership within the learning and skills sector’. The Leadership Foundation
for Higher Education (2008) also emphasised the importance of leadership development in the higher education sector.

Keller (1984) argued that unobtrusive leadership is no longer appropriate and that clear and decisive leadership is now a ‘must’ if HEIs are to effectively cope with change and face challenges. Transformational leadership is a representative example of the ever-changing environment of higher education (Spendlove, 2007; Jones et al., 2015). Nevertheless, Leithwood and Jantzi criticised most transformational leadership studies, concluding that most models of transformational leadership are flawed by their under representation of transactional practices (which we interpret to be “managerial” in nature). Such practices are fundamental to organizational stability. For this reason, we have recently added four management dimensions to our own model based on a review of relevant literature (Duke and Leithwood, 1994). (1999, p. 455).

Without the right kind of leadership, management is treacherous. Indeed, success requires both effectiveness and efficiency (Schneider, 2003). Recently, educational leadership has been seen as the key to reconstruction and reinvention (Middlehurst and Elton, 1992; Irving, 2015). Middlehurst (1997b) predicted that if leadership is not planned or fails to appoint people in a large-scale change programme, HEIs will disappear. Some scholars (e.g., Bess and Goodman, 2001; Bryman, 2007a; Moser, 2007) have also contended that educational leadership focuses less on theoretical decision-making and more on pragmatic reasoning and sense-making. In accordance with Middlehurst (1997a), the experience and presence of a turbulent environment establishes the psychological and actual needs of leadership. Thus, educational leaders have to foster excellence in education (Sewerin and Holmberg, 2017) and cope with the complex and chaotic nature of higher education (Irving, 2015). In other words, educational leadership is a much contested area of study (Irving, 2015) and a demanding concept in higher education.

In the context of higher education, different academic studies have provided different conceptual models or frameworks and methodologies for responding to organisational change. Research on
the implementation of change as a process finds its basis in the early work of Lewin (1947), who conceptualised change as occurring in successive stages, namely unfreezing, moving and freezing. Change management is a management competence that has attracted considerable attention in higher education in recent years (Hallinger and Snidvongs, 2008). Fullan (2001) explained that change in higher education requires an amalgamation of capacity building and accountability in the sector. As Hannagan (2006, p. 328) suggested, ‘in order to be successful colleges of further education must have strategies which enable them to cope with changes in their environment’. In this regard, White (2000, p. 166) proposed that the change strategy should be ‘able to allow for both deliberate (i.e., planned for) and emergent outcomes to be successful’. The process of change is significantly affected by organisational management. Appropriate organisational leadership requires sound organisational management to create a breakthrough in organisational change and develop a strategic response (Hannagan, 2006). Armenakis and Bedeian (1990) conducted a critical review of the change literature of the last 20 years, emphasising the process used to organise and perform organisational change. In addition, it is essential for research to examine current contextual and content factors and process issues to predict why and how organisations change. Moreover, research on organisational change should be conducted longitudinally to answer the question of how change develops, emerges, continues and ends over time and responds to contemporary organisational demands. To align with the main research trends, this study adopted qualitative methods of organisational change. In this section, representative organisational change models are proposed and discussed for application in HEIs.

A number of educational research studies have argued that comprehensive performance measurement systems are essential in the context of HEIs (Ahmad and Ng, 2015). With the trend towards marketisation, fierce competition and accountability in the higher education sector, HEIs are placing increasing importance on managing change rather than only monitoring performance (Cullen et al., 2003; Taylor and Baines, 2012). To this end, the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) provides a comprehensive framework for interpreting a university’s strategy and objectives in the form of a series of performance measures (i.e., customer perspective, internal business perspective, learning and growth perspective and financial perspective) that are easy to
understand (Ahmad and Ng, 2015). Generally, different Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are used for different BSC perspectives. As a result, each academic department follows specific KPIs to align with the vision, mission and objectives of the HEI (Naqi, 2013). From an institutional perspective, a HEI can implement a diversification strategy to generate a unique characteristic for each academic department. As a result, HEIs can increase their competitive advantage in the academic world. In addition, they can encourage different academic departments to carry out integration, expansion and contraction strategies under the concepts of managerialism and accountability. To a certain extent, the application of BSC helps HEIs to focus on developing appropriate strategies for managing continuous change in a larger global marketplace. Furthermore, HEIs can easily interpret the mission of creating, using and sharing knowledge in a coherent, comprehensive, engaging and communicable framework for stakeholders (Umashankar and Dutta, 2007).

Taylor and Baines (2012) and Ahmad and Ng (2015) pointed out the drawback of BSC: it requires considerable cost and effort to be adopted at all levels of an organisation. Consequently, it is difficult to generalise the results of a research study. The implementation of BSC is also challenging as it requires development, design, control and training. Metrics must also be used to compare each strategy in a supporting description. Most studies have used a purely conceptual approach with descriptive case studies (e.g., Kaplan and Norton, 1996; Karathanos and Karathanos, 2005; Beard, 2009; Taylor and Baines, 2012; Lau and Yip, 2016). In addition, Taylor and Baines (2012) indicated that BSC fosters the development of leadership and management styles in the planning process. However, a number of studies have failed to identify the link between leadership and change management (Kaplan and Norton, 1996; Karathanos and Karathanos, 2005; Beard, 2009; Lau and Yip, 2016). Moreover, Mohobbot (2004) criticised the fact that BSC lacks integration between top-level and operational level measures, which can lead to strategic problems. Ultimately, the organisation’s strategic plan may be unable to combine and align the different levels of the organisation. Furthermore, Norreklit (2003) elaborated that BSC does not assess significant changes in external conditions and only focuses on internal aspects. Thus, it cannot observe the whole process of organisational change management. Clearly, the results of previous research highlight some of the weaknesses of current research.
Cohen and Kotter (2005) investigated an eight-step framework for change. Eight steps are generally divided into three primary levels of transformation. The initial stage of transformation aims to cultivate an atmosphere by establishing a sense of emergency, forming guidance groups and setting the right target. The second stage of transformation involves engaging and empowering the entire organisation. Facilitating communication that encourages buy-in, enabling operation and guaranteeing short-term returns are the central factor of the subsequent stage. The third stage of transformation involves implementing and sustaining change. The key mottoes during this stage are ‘Don’t let up’ and ‘Make it stick’. The leader plays a key role in ensuring the success of change. Kloot (2009) studied the importance of Bourdieu’s framework while investigating the relationship between educational institutional change and educational leaders. Morphew et al. (2018) discussed four main strategies for change (aggregation, integration, deletion and compartmentalisation) in current higher education in North America and northern Europe.

2.8 Conclusion

In summary, I carried out a comprehensive literature review to demonstrate my understanding, identify the research gaps, develop a research methodology, support the key research findings, and identify future research directions. A literature review has been identified as ‘a systematic, explicit, and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating, and interpreting the existing body of recorded work’ (Fink, 1998, p. 3). As a result, it is easier to identify relevant studies and significant points that require to be discussed in a research study (Chen et al., 2015). The literature review section focuses on the key concepts of change management and leadership in the higher education sector. In addition, most studies have focused on Western experiences. However, the rapid growth of higher education in Asia has led to a growing demand to explore appropriate leadership styles to meet changing environmental needs. Therefore, Hong Kong offers an interesting case to analyse the changing landscape of higher education. As a result, Hong Kong was used as a contextual basis for this research to understand the current change in HEIs in Asia. The next chapter discusses the use of Fullan change model for the change process.
of HEIs. The fundamental work conducted here encourages future research to carry out a comparative study to generalise the research findings.
Chapter 3: The change process of HEIs – Fullan’s change model

3.1 Introduction

Following the literature review in Chapter 2, this chapter discusses Fullan’s change model. This chapter is divided into three main sections. After the introduction in Section 3.1, the use of Fullan’s change model for the change process of HEIs is discussed in Section 3.2. Finally, in Section 3.3, the main points are highlighted in a conclusion.

Although leadership plays a key role in administering change in higher education, the identification of leadership with organisational change in the changing environment of HEIs has been seriously overlooked in previous educational research. Specifically, there is a paucity of studies highlighting or addressing the importance of department leaders in driving change in HEIs. Therefore, this chapter focuses on Fullan’s change process model to address the association between department leaders and organisational change. Indeed, change is an important way to encourage HEIs to innovate and compete in the academic world.

3.2 The adoption of Fullan’s change model on the change process of HEIs

To supplement previous studies and findings, Fullan (2006) introduced change theories to draw attention to the importance of innovative leadership in bringing about sustainable change. He proposed that educational leaders who work innovatively within institutional boundaries and cross these boundaries to include others from the institutional environment can create breakthroughs in the education system. However, HEIs need to determine what kind of leadership is best for creating productive change and sustainable reform. In his work, Fullan (1989) conducted a critical review of studies on educational change since the 1970s. Before 1978, most studies focused on innovation adoption. 1978 marked a turning point in the history of educational innovation. Identifying and analysing the success and effectiveness of educational settings became the dominant tasks. Accordingly, this study further expanded Fullan’s three-step change process model (i.e., initiation/mobilisation, institutionalisation and implementation), as
shown in Figure 2, which enabled investigators to develop specific ideas and explore complex changes regarding success at the local level and integration with large-scale revamp initiatives.

Fullan (1989) divided the main changing activities into three key stages, initiation/mobilisation, institutionalisation and implementation, to explain the causes of change. The initiation/mobilisation stage involves assessment, determining when to start, deploying resources, and developing the first commitments. The institutionalisation stage involves designing action plans, implementing these plans; and maintaining the commitments established. Finally, the implementation stage involves establishing the process, evaluation, and integrating commitments.

In general, these three overlapping stages take place within the boundaries of HEIs. Currently, the interface between HEIs and the context is complex, the latter helping to shape the purpose and characteristics of higher education (Welsh and Metcalf, 2003). ‘Context’ refers to ‘the internal and external environments and, therefore, is the operational environment of the institution as it evolves temporally’ (McRoy and Gibbs, 2009, p. 694). Numerous internal and external factors affect and interact with the change process (Welsh and Metcalf, 2003). In doing so, internal factors (i.e., academic identity, governance structure and institutional culture) interact with external factors (i.e., market needs and segments, diverse stakeholders and public service mission) (see Figure 2). These diverse and complex driving forces make the change process more complex. It is crucial that leaders understand this complexity, look at resistance to change and ensure that the organisation engages in the change process. In this way, leaders encourage problem solving and purposeful interaction (Fullan, 2001).

The current study considered the link between institutional change and educational leadership based on Fullan’s (1999) model to identify the institutional change and leadership needed to drive the changing environment of higher education. During the change process, leaders facilitate the implementation of change and maintain new developments in HEIs. This educational process is strongly affected by the size and degree of change, and the leadership style is key to achieving this. The appropriate leadership style can motivate followers to align with the objectives of HEIs and inspire them to dedicate themselves to HEIs (Ozkan et al., 2015). Ultimately, the appropriate
leadership style enhances the organisational capacity to achieve and commitment to achieving tangible impacts in a competitive environment. The failure or success of HEIs is largely determined by the nature of the leadership style adopted. Clearly, the degree of change, leadership style and management (i.e., commitment and culture) are closely associated (Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy, 2014). One possible effect is that the university changes its orientation (e.g., from teaching to research university). Accordingly, a traditional or classic leadership style will induce stagnation in entrepreneurship and innovation. As proposed by Sart (2014), the leadership style needs to create a democratic environment (i.e., a bottom-up approach) to encourage innovative ideas from academic staff and establish comprehensive collaboration with industry. In addition, this provides convincing explanations of how educational leaders control the transformation of HEIs in an ever-changing environment and identifies the development structure of HEIs in a contemporary environment. Thus, generic solutions and change adaptation strategies for HEIs can be developed. The change process model is based on the inquiry process to gain insight, build research findings and answer research questions. Most of the change process model in this study was based on Fullan’s investigation and interpretation of educational change and the elements needed to drive change. Using the proposed change process model, different educators can design interview questions and an empirical framework for future research. In addition, educational leaders must understand the common factors (i.e., internal and external), local characteristics and complexity involved in change to design appropriate strategies and identify the best leadership styles to drive the dynamic environment of higher education. Nevertheless, the whole process takes time and the common logic of the change process aligns with the study by Hopkins et al. (1994). Various scholars have agreed that educational change is necessary for the success of the three main stages of change mentioned above, particularly the relationship between the participation of educational leaders and institutional change. For instance, Lau (2018) used Fullan’s change process model to identify and assess the suitability and effectiveness of a leadership model in the evolution of an education centre in Hong Kong. However, similar to Sarason’s (1996) perspective, the convergence of theory and research across contexts can restrict the procedures of educational transformation, leading to broad failures in different waves of educational change across nations.
3.3 Conclusion

Few studies have analysed appropriate leadership styles using a top-down approach, especially for department leaders. Indeed, most studies have only considered leadership styles from a senior management perspective. As a result, this study conducted a series of interviews and further
analysed the opinions of the informants. It is essential to identify the appropriate leadership styles to establish the desired HEIs and potentially affect their performance. It is necessary to use the change process model to determine the best leadership in an ever-changing, uncertain and chaotic environment. The next chapter presents the methodology and explores the research design used in this study.
Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

Following the discussion of the change process of HEIs and Fullan’s change model in Chapter 3, this chapter introduces the methodology. It is divided into the following nine sections. Section 4.1 is the introduction. Section 4.2 explains the philosophical approach. Section 4.3 details the methodology. Section 4.4 presents the data collection methods. Section 4.5 discusses the sampling approach. Section 4.6 describes the method of data analysis. Section 4.7 discusses ethical and methodological challenges. Before the conclusion in Section 4.9, Section 4.8 provides case investigation in Hong Kong.

It is essential to choose an appropriate research design that establishes a framework and identifies potential research questions when conducting a qualitative investigation of educational leadership. Choosing the right research design can improve decision-making throughout the research process and facilitate the discovery of results within a methodological framework (Brooks and Normore, 2015). The research process encourages the convergence of theory and practice (Bernardo et al., 2014). The research design is used to obtain valid, reliable, insightful and rich data that can help achieve the research objectives (Marshall, 2012). The research design is presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Research design

| Qualitative data collection: | Semi-structured, in-depth interviews using a number of qualitative documents (i.e. HEI improvement plans, archives, government reports, website and newsletters) |
| Qualitative data analysis: | Use thematic analysis to summarise the data collected |
| Qualitative data interpretation: | Attempt to produce results that explore meanings, views and experiences. |
4.2 Philosophical approach

Overall, the primary philosophical approaches to educational research can be separated into the following four paradigms: critical theory, interpretivism, positivism and postmodernism. In accordance to Ticehurst and Veal (1999), a paradigm expresses a primary group of philosophical views on the essence of the world. With such principles and directions, the means and skills used in the research should be compatible. In addition, a paradigm establishes a philosophical plan of the main educational and social research patterns used for more than two centuries (Pring, 2004).

Qualitative research and interpretive research are closely related (Crossley, 1999). In the social practice context, knowledge is utilized for elucidation, implication and explanation instead of control, prediction, and generalisation (Usher, 1996). For interpretive investigators, a deep understanding of the basis for the effects of human behaviour and social life in a natural environment can be obtained from qualitative research (Habermas, 1972). Castleberry and Nolen (2018) proposed that the main objective of qualitative research is to achieve a better understanding of a situation based on the experiences of those who have immediately experienced it, exploring the value of the distinct perspectives of the participants, which can only be completely recognised in the context of their worldview and experience. From an academic research perspective, qualitative research provides a deeper and richer understanding of the meanings people attribute to events, actions and associations and investigates the complex situations faced by researchers and industry practitioners.

Pring (2004) stated that the main disadvantage of a qualitative research approach is that personal feelings, connotations, explanations, statements and actions are biased. Over the last five decades, qualitative research has contributed a significant amount of knowledge of educational leadership. Many well-executed and well-designed investigations have deepened, refined, and challenged the methods used by leaders who are ready for change. As a result, several studies have offered conceptual ideas or theoretical frameworks for refining together with developing novel research objectives. The main problem is the feasibility of research reasoning while the research questions are used to produce the requisite information. In accordance with the traditional studies of educational leadership, qualitative research can identify the points influencing institutional
change and, reveal different structures and social relationships existing in the educational community. Miles (1979, p. 591) addressed the key concerns regarding qualitative data analysis as follows: ‘the most serious and central difficulty in the use of qualitative data is that methods of analysis are not well formulated’. To overcome this pitfall, interpretive scholars have used rigorous and transparent analysis (Brooks and Normore, 2015). A similar issue related to the need for a field was raised in Making Sense of Qualitative Data, in which Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p. 3) argued as follows. ‘What links all the approaches is a central concern with transforming and interpreting qualitative data – in a rigorous and scholarly way – in order to capture the complexities of the social worlds we seek to explain’. Thus, key terms such as ‘transforming’, ‘interpreting’ and ‘making sense of’ qualitative data are important for the various means of analysis (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996).

4.3 Methodological and research strategies

Starting from the late 1970s, most leadership investigators in education have employed qualitative research methods to explore multiple levels of phenomena, behaviour, dynamics, perceptions and contexts (Wolcott, 1970; Barnhardt et al., 1979). Basically, a qualitative methodology seeks to study leadership first and foremost, as leadership is highly contextual (Inman, 2014). Austin and Sutton (2014, p. 436) described the importance of methodology as the ‘explanation of the approach, methods and procedures with some justification for their selection’. Thus, a qualitative research approach was used in this study to link research questions and objectives. This qualitative research approach was able to identify and reinforce the recognition of the way in which dynamics interaction with educational leadership together with contexts (Theoharis, 2009). To a large extent, it helped explain the challenges facing educational leadership in adjusting to a new leadership context (Szeto et al., 2015). In addition, the qualitative research methodology ensured that flexibility was supported and that experiences not shared by all of the participants were considered (Marshall, 2012). Moreover, qualitative research is interpretive, taking into account a considerable amount of in-depth knowledge of the participants’ experiences (Creswell and Clark, 2007). Marshall (2012, p. 504) argued as follows:
Constructivism advocates that the only reality we can know is that which is represented by human thought as opposed to objectivism, which embraces a static reality that is independent of human cognition. While the reality may be independent of human thought, the meaning (knowledge) is always a human construction.

Furthermore, themes were identified and explained through relevant interview quotations (Oliver and Huffman, 2016). Qualitative research approaches vary broadly; they can range from the use of non-textual, image-based data to entirely qualitative data (i.e. grounded theory, phenomenology and ethnography) for qualitative educational leadership studies (Brooks and Normore, 2015). A case study design was chosen for the research process because this investigation examined change management in HEIs (Stake, 1995). As suggested by Newman (2013), a case study enhances understanding by focusing on a single circumstance and addresses the importance of context by learning more about the participants in their natural environment through real interactions. Moreover, it is generally accepted that the case study approach promotes the development of holistic representation (also called thick description), broadening the study of how the participants explain their experiences and what happens to them and in them. Furthermore, it uses a variety of sources of evidence to promote understanding from different perspectives. Hallinger and Truong (2016) indicated that case studies provide illustrative examples of people in real-life situations and a depth of description that cannot be obtained with a survey. In addition, as the study of the philosophy of leadership constitutes a relational function, the relationships between the three parties (community, organisation and participants) must be taken into account (Brooks and Normore, 2015).

4.4 Data collection methods

Data collection is the main research activity (Kozma, 1985). Glaser (1978) criticised researchers who collect general data, operating from a universal sociological view of the substantiative area rather than from preconceived hypotheses. To overcome this shortcoming, I collected visual and other types of qualitative data to answer the complex and interesting research questions. In general, the researchers’ viewpoint, cultural context (i.e., race, gender, socioeconomic reputation, educational background and class) and opinions are critical elements that determine the research
process (Bourke, 2014). As I was the researcher in this study, the validity of the research process was based on the association between the participants and me. According to Bourke (2014), it is reasonable to assume that the researcher has an impact on the research setting, the participants and the participants’ responses, which reflect their voices or experiences. Therefore, I here help readers to understand my specific research positionality. Based on Berger (2013) and Bourke (2014), I found advantages and disadvantages in the data collection and data analysis processes based on my positionality. On the positive side, as I was the researcher, in terms of the research design, data collection and data analysis, I was the gatekeeper responsible for ensuring objectivity. Some important questions were raised during the reflection process, such as the following. Why am I interested in this topic? How is it examined? What am I getting out of this? What do I really think the answer is? I was confident in my ability to co-construct meaning from the interviews and to collect and analyse data. After that, I was able to create different themes in the thematic analysis. Interdisciplinary research (i.e., covering leadership and change management) could be generated in the process of data analysis. In addition, I was able to make critical observations about my own understanding and assumptions. On the negative side, I may have been biased or relied on sophisticated guessing. In doing so, I may have unintentionally tried to collect or analyse data favourable to my hypotheses. Ultimately, my biases and subjectivity could have affected the nature of the study and interpretation of the findings.

As Freebody (2003, p. 82) argued, ‘case studies are empirically omnivorous’. Hence, collecting case study data is usually a multi-source and multi-method process (Newman, 2013). Gunter (2002, p. 12) also suggested capitalising on the ‘interplay between objectivity and subjectivity so that the binaries which establish oppositions are eliminated’. In light of this argument, interviews and additional documents were used as the two main sources of qualitative data to explore the research questions. Interviews are a particularly practical tool for creating descriptive data on past and current events and processes (Hallinger and Truong, 2016). Patton (2002, p. 4) described interviews as ‘open-ended questions and probes yielding in-depth responses about people’s experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge. Data consists of verbatim quotations and sufficient content/context to be interpretable’. For the design and analysis of interviews, Gall et al. (2003) proposed that semi-structured interviews are better than informal
conversational interviews and general interview guides. Semi-structured interviews enable the interviewees to fully explain their experiences and viewpoints. Semi-structured interviews with individual respondents may start with predetermined questions and then offer the interviewer room to adjust the questions according to the direction of the responses or ask probing questions as a follow-up (Turner III, 2010). Although open-ended interviews invite the participants to discuss their responses in as much as detail as possible, it is relatively difficult for researchers to identify similar codes or themes from the interview transcripts, as they contain unstructured and open-ended responses (Gall et al., 2003). Hence, the researcher is expected to continue to interview new participants until there is nothing new or the area of interest is saturated (Austin and Sutton, 2014). The idea is to help the researcher screen the narrative responses to identify a comprehensive overview of all interview responses through the coding process. This approach can reduce researcher bias in a study, especially when the interview process includes various participants (Gall et al., 2003). This approach is used to ensure flexibility in the manner and order in which the questions are asked to allow for more natural and intuitive conversations between participants and researchers. This method also promotes dialogue, in which the initial questions can be followed by further investigation based on the participants’ reactions (Patton, 2002). As recommended by Lewis-Beck et al. (2004) and Ospina and Sorenson (2006), in-depth interviews are able to investigate the problem in depth and capture interviewees’ narrative accounts of leadership. Similarly, Charson (1998, p. 233) defined symbolic interactions as ‘based on methodology that emphasizes interviewing, and determining how people define the situations they act in’. Phoenix (2008, p. 67) also explained that ‘participants may construct themselves as having particular philosophies and habitual ways of dealing with the world that constitute a projection of identify or that signal their pre-occupations’. Consequently, it was significant to investigate the distinctiveness of the experience of each participant, obtain their opinions, recognise familiar topics during the interviews (Marshall, 2012), follow unanticipated lines of inquiry and discussion revealed during the interviews (Pepper and Giles, 2015) and identify leadership behaviour (Wisniewski, 1999).

According to McNamara (2009), the preparation of the interview process can promote, create or destroy the process and can either facilitate or hinder problematic situations that may potentially
arise during the research. The objective of the interview preparation stage is to remain open about how the interviews will be conducted to maximise the benefits of the proposed research study. Each individual interview lasted for 30 to 45 minutes until no new information appeared and data saturation was reached. Compared with other data collection methods, individual interviews enable investigation of the non-verbal sections of a conversation, such as interruptions, tone of voice, pauses, body gestures and other mannerisms, increasing the quality of the collected data (Drew, 2009). In addition, the interviews were conducted on campus to provide a safe environment for the interviewees and better understand their professional world (Inman, 2014). Selecting a setting with little distraction can help prevent the participants from feeling uncomfortable or restricted in their information sharing (Turner, 2010). However, individual interviews are time consuming and need substantial effort and cost to analyse and interpret (Richards, 2011). All of the interviews were conducted in English by the researcher, as most of the participants were well educated and used English as their main language to communicate at work. To facilitate communication and avoid translation problems, such as problems of grammar and ambiguity, conducting the interviews in English was preferable in the data collection process.

The research instruments consisted mainly of open-ended questions. This approach helped the participants provide detailed information and fully explain their viewpoints because it encouraged the researcher to ask further probing questions as a follow-up (Creswell, 2007). In general, the open-ended questions were analysed based on their subjects using inductive analysis (Engelbrecht and De Beer, 2014). Calma (2015, p. 56) proposed that ‘filling the gap’ in research is not as easy as ‘plugging in’, a less familiar methodological tool for common interview data. A meticulous and exhaustive method is needed to identify the meaning of ‘talk’ data. This involves looking closely at the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ in conversation. Turner III (2010) highlighted that the data collected using open-ended questions are thick and rich qualitative data, making it difficult for researchers to sort through the narrative responses to accurately and comprehensively determine an overall perspective on all of the interview responses during the coding process. However, this method can reduce researcher bias, especially when the interview process involves various participants (Gall et al., 2003).
Each interview was divided into two parts, A and B. Both parts were compulsory. Part A mainly involved questions covering the personal characteristics of the interviewees, including position, department, name of HEI and years of experience in HEIs. To answer the research questions, Part B consisted mainly of questions about the main changes in the institutional and academic departments and about the organisational change and leadership needed to deal with the changing environment of higher education. First, I conducted a pilot study to evaluate content validity. The pilot study aimed to ensure that all relevant dimensions of educational leadership in HEIs were present and that the items of the survey instrument were not ambiguous and were easy to understand (Rao et al., 1999). Therefore, I asked a group of experts to examine the content of the instrument. The group of experts included one department head, one associate department head, two research centre directors, one administrative assistant and one senior lecturer in higher education in leadership management. Their feedback helped me explore the factors influencing the development of HEIs in Hong Kong and the essential elements of the leadership styles best suited to face challenges. Based on their constructive feedback, some interview questions were rearranged and reworded to avoid ambiguity and remove double-barrelled items (Malhotra and Grover, 1998). In addition, pilot tests generally encourage researchers to clarify their research questions (Turner, 2010). The refined questions were included in the revised survey questionnaire and then sent to the target interviewees to collect data to answer the research questions of the study. The interview questions are presented in Appendix 3.

The assessment of focal theme and elucidation of the social reality facilitates documentary analysis (i.e., printed and electronic materials). Archival analysis also gives ‘historical and contextual dimensions’ (Glesne, 1999, p. 59) to interviews. It can corroborate, increase understanding or lead researchers to examine data and formulate normative judgements collected from interviews (Newman, 2013). In addition, all documentary origins are the outcome of human activity, creating commonly accepted theories, ideas and principles (Sapsford and Jupp, 1996). Briggs et al. (2012, p. 297) pointed out that ‘for researchers in the field of educational leadership, documentary research might be primarily used as a data collection strategy for case studies’. Even more importantly, documentary materials provide longitudinal data and increase the reliability and validity of case study research (Welch, 2000). The typical qualitative documents,
such as HEI improvement plans, government reports, archives, newsletters and websites, examined in this study were not only published in English, but also met the four main criteria proposed by Scott (1990), namely authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaningfulness. All qualitative documents can be considered as supplementary evidence to determine what valuable information is provided and what content means in a particular term/word or image by using content analysis (Krippendorff, 2013).

Indeed, archival analysis can be described as a loosely coupled series of analytical efforts that seek to obtain information through a systematic examination of the textual materials and documents created by and about HEIs. Archival materials generate unobtrusive measures of the study process of current HEIs and important means of access in historical investigations (Covaleski and Dirsmith, 1988). Zald (1993) argued that archival work gives an idea of how to identify key questions, set up proof of evidence and make arguments regarding common instruments and forms. In previous research studies, archival materials have rarely been used to study organisations (Stablein, 1996). Based on Ventresca and Mohr (2017), this study made more intensive use of archival materials from one HEI and some government bodies. This involved reading a considerable number of institutional and publicly available archival sources, taking intensive notes and using an ‘ascending model of analysis’ (Foucault, 1980), which establishes logics of action and identifies modes of understanding.

Bowen (2009) proposed that documentary analysis requires the data to be examined and explained to draw implications, gain insights and establish empirical knowledge. It is similar to other analytical methods in qualitative research. As proposed by Fitzgerald (2012), documentary research mainly uses a data collection strategy for case studies in the field of educational leadership. Documents include text and images that have been inscribed without obstruction from researchers. Therefore, the documents used in this study served to triangulate data from multiple resources, showing a thorough interpretation of current research (Brooks and Normore, 2015). By triangulating the data, I tried to give ‘a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility’ (Eisner, 1991, p. 110). In other words, data triangulation helped to corroborate and provide various contexts to better understand the research questions (Bowen, 2009). In addition,
documentary analysis was used to explore fundamental meanings, patterns and themes (Wood et al., 2020). Documents can explain the research context or phenomenon, provide supplementary data to verify the findings from other sources and collect data if the participants cannot remember details or if the cases can no longer be recognised (Bowen, 2009). As a result, this study investigated the quality of the documents to generate comprehensive descriptions of the case studies and discuss the main activities and actors in the period of interest (Wood et al., 2020).

Hong Kong HEIs are strongly influenced by the Chinese cultural context. Therefore, academic departments tend to be fairly traditional. Part of this culture involves maintaining the confidentiality of internal affairs, so internal information is not made public. Even if the interviewees were willing to share and trust me as an interviewer, I still had to undertake complex procedures, such as preparing confidentiality agreements and ensuring that they remained anonymous in the thesis. Therefore, the data collection process was long and cumbersome. In addition, Chinese culture is limited by ‘guanxi’ (i.e., social networks of power or connections and relationships), which made it difficult to maintain a research process in which the interviewees could not expect any meaningful reciprocal benefits. Moreover, the interviewees could have refused to report factual information or be as open as I would have liked due to their fear of individual repercussions if their contribution was not seen as loyal, or they could simply have had inadequate leadership knowledge. In this case, the resulting picture would only have been a snapshot or limited view of the actual situation. Hence, it was important to triangulate data from multiple sources during the data collection process.

4.5 Sampling

Hong Kong was used as a representative case study of change in higher education. First, Hong Kong has attempted to transform its higher education by removing the impact of British colonialism. To match economic reconstruction, redistributive social policies, and democratic transformation, HEIs need to change to provide an improved student learning experience or, if they depend on government funding, to align with government revamps. In addition, Hong Kong
has experienced organisational transformation to meet societal needs in response to globalisation, in conjunction with the dominant concept of neoliberalism.

An UGC-funded university in Hong Kong, with four academic departments, was selected for this study. This university is the most appropriate HEI in Hong Kong to identify successful institutional framework models. As Bolton (1996) suggested, researchers need to explore specific academic departments to provide an interesting and valuable research subject. As an outside researcher in the context of the study, I relied on previous contacts via personal or social networks to access informants using snowball sampling. Snowball sampling has been widely adopted in qualitative research in different fields of social sciences. This sampling process is cumulative (i.e., dynamic and diachronic); it encourages educators to enhance sampling clusters and provides the opportunity to use new participants when other contacts have dried up (Noy, 2008). During the data collection, I asked key informants to introduce or refer another suitable participant. The selected academic departments have experienced change in their management practices, departmental structure and strategies to cope with economic growth, societal expectations and government policies over the last 20 years. The four academic departments selected for this study were also chosen because they are currently growing and offer degree programmes in interdisciplinary fields covering STEM disciplines. Their uniqueness is also informed by the nature of their research outputs, league table rankings, impact on society and academic staff in STEM disciplines with relevant industry experience. In addition, the four academic departments are among the top five faculties based on the size of the student population. In other words, they represent over 50% of all graduates of the total student population each year. As a result, these four academic departments can be considered as representative of a distinct part of Hong Kong’s university context, which is growing, dynamic and interdisciplinary.

This real-world case study provided strong theoretical support for the study (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Harvey (2010) proposed that interviews carried out as part of the qualitative component of an investigation on educational leaders were deemed to be elite interviews. Following Patton (1990, p. 169), who popularised the term ‘information-rich cases’ and
optimised the selection of the best candidates for achieving educational leadership, a purposive sampling method was used. Stake (1995, p. 6) proposed that ‘even for collective case studies, selection by sampling of attributes should not be the highest priority. Balance and variety are important; opportunity to learn is of primary importance’. In terms of sample size, Patton (1990, p. 186) proposed that the sample size be based on ‘reasonable coverage of the phenomenon, given the purpose of the study’. As an outside researcher in the context of the study, I relied on previous contact via personal or social networks. During the data collection, I asked key informants to introduce or refer other appropriate participants. In doing so, based on the organisational context and the epistemological position of phenomenology, the represented roles, such as heads and associate heads of department, deans, associate deans, directors and deputy directors of research centres, programme leaders, assistant programme leaders and senior administrative staff, were selected for each case (Marshall, 2012). In accordance with Miles and Huberman’s (2009) suggestion, the number of participants was limited to 15 for each case study to prevent the analysis from becoming cumbersome and complex. To strengthen the research topic, associate vice presidents, award coordinators and educational development officers were also considered in this study. Moreover, the target respondents were required to have a minimum of five years of relevant experience working in the field of higher education, as well as having been at their individual HEIs for at least three years. This ensured that they were appropriate for the study and fully understood their specific HEI’s environment (Hallinger and Truong, 2016). For the respondents who had previously worked in different institutions of higher education, disparities between their understanding of other institutions and their respective HEIs were examined. In this aspect, the target respondents with rich information generated a broad understanding of the subject matter, and provided direct and credible data to achieve the aims of the investigation (Patton, 1990). To this end, I conducted 30 in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with the target respondents from October to December 2018. The list of interviewees is shown in Appendix 4.

Based on Marshall and Rossman (1995, p. 87), the analysis of the interview data comprised the key processes: ‘organizing the data, generating categories, themes and patterns, and searching for alternative explanations’. The main objectives of data analysis are to identify core themes in the
data, explore recurrent experiences, attitudes and feelings, and reduce, code and link various categories into core topics. The coding was based on comparative analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). It involved the comparison of any coded component in terms of subcategories and emerging categories. Finally, all of the interview data were compared to identify distinct and common topics (Oplatka and Tako, 2009).

4.6 Data analysis method: thematic analysis

Data analysis gradually predominates over the course of research. Merriam (1998, p. 193) proposed that the goal of data analysis in case studies is ‘communicating understanding’. To achieve this ‘understanding’, the data analysis involved three activities. First, the case constructs concepts and their various conditions were compared. Second, the identified concepts were fitted into the following cases to adjust and refine them or to disconfirm them. The selected cases were intended to reaffirm the usefulness of the codes, to update their properties and to maximise the degree of similarity. The concepts generated by the theory and derived from the data were subjected to this process of fitting. Third, a comparison of the concepts helped develop the theory. As a result, the data collection and coding were more selective and delineated by emerging theory (Kozma, 1985).

Thematic analysis was preferred because it could fully reduce the data into workable themes and emerging conclusions (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018). According to Collingridge and Gantt (2008, p. 394), ‘an understanding of the standards of rigorous qualitative research and familiarity with qualitative approaches has not kept pace with the growing presence of qualitative methods’. Thematic analysis is a way of ‘identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79). In general, thematic analysis is considered a descriptive approach that reduces data using an adaptable method that corresponds to other data analysis approaches (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Using thematic analysis, the open-ended responses of the transcribed interviews allowed for an in-depth investigation of educational leaders in the context of higher education and provided explanations and adjustability when analysing the data (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018). To interpret the written records, it was essential to recognise
themes or patterns (e.g., notion, interactions, image, behaviour, terms, incidents and phrasal verbs) and assign them to different categories summarizing and provide interpretation to the content. Usually, this involves a large amount of manpower to conduct qualitative data analysis (Brooks and Normore, 2015). Brooks and Normore (2015) identified a crucial issue when analysing data forms educational leaders: unambiguousness analytical processes. According to Giorgi (1997), analytical procedures aim to identify the phenomena presented by the interviewees. In reality, the non-quantitative data collected needed to be pertinent, and were employed to connect educational practices and research. Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 1) mentioned that qualitative data ‘are a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable local contexts. With qualitative data one can preserve chronological flow, see precisely which events lead to which consequences, and derive fruitful explanations’. The section on data presentation in this thesis explains in what way the hypothetical construct of the qualitative examination was obtained. Overall, the thematic analysis framework had five main steps: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting and concluding (Yin, 2011).

In the first step, the interview transcript data were compiled into a workable form to help me, the researcher, to read the data and explore meaningful answers to the key research questions. Although it took time to do the transcription myself, the process helped me to understand the data by reading and rereading them line for line and word by word. Compiling gives an idea of the completeness of the data and provides a better understanding of the meaning or wording of a term when seen in the general situation (Sutton and Austin, 2015). During the interview process, taking notes constitutes an inexpensive method to archive individual interviews. To improve the precision of the written transcripts and avoid any misinterpretation of the meaning of the interviewees, audio recordings were used in this study. In addition, I sent the key points in English to the interviewees by email for confirmation. The participants had the right to modify their respective transcripts in cases of missing or incorrect information. The interviewees were asked to respond at their earliest convenience.
In the second step, the data were disassembled by coding. Coding is ‘the process by which raw data are gradually converted into usable data through the identification of themes, concepts, or ideas that have some connection with each other’ (Austin and Sutton, 2014, p. 439). I classified the information by coding or indexing the data to identify differences and similarities in the data (Sutton and Austin, 2015). Codes are names, labels or tags. In qualitative analysis, coding is the first activity and generates the fundamental principle of what appears later. Coding is the key process of identifying names, labels or tags based on the data. Even more importantly, researchers need to mark the text by underlining, highlighting or circling keywords. The pieces can be small or large chunks of data or individual words (Miles and Huberman, 1994). As suggested by Saldana (2016), the coding approach was selected to adopt verbatim phrases or words from the participants’ narrative to explain the data elements. Due to the large volume of data obtained from the participants’ voices, the codes helped to understand how the participants explained a situation. In addition, open coding is used to create substantial codes for naming, describing or classifying the situation under consideration. In the open coding process, concepts appear from the raw data and are grouped into conceptual categories later. To a certain extent, it encourages the generation of a multidimensional and descriptive preliminary framework for further analysis. Because it is directly derived from the raw data, the rigorous process ensures the validity of the work (Uwe, 2009). Sometimes, researchers need to recode earlier coded material to ensure that the data examined previously in the analysis are coded uniformly and with the same coding criteria or definition as the data used later in the analysis. During the review coding process, researchers need to eliminate repetitions and combine similar codes (Austin and Sutton, 2014). Next, axial coding breaks down the data and establishes connections between the abstract concepts after open coding. In short, this process goes from inductive analysis to deductive analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 2008).

In the third step, the reassembly process was conducted. The categories or codes of the concepts were mapped and then placed together to generate themes (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018). A theme ‘captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 82). In other words, themes are patterns in the codes and can be further divided into
subthemes (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018). In addition, analytical thinking is confirmed during the reassembly stage. Researchers start by classifying all relevant data into each potential theme and continuously reviewing each theme to decide whether it has been developed in combination with the data set and the coded extracts (Anderson, 2010). To ensure coding accuracy, it is recommended that researchers invite other experienced colleagues to evaluate the coding based on the research questions. In doing so, subjectivity can be greatly reduced, ultimately confirming reliability and validity (Yin, 2009).

In the fourth step, after completing the first three steps, it was critical to interpret the data. Interpretations are the basis of conclusions (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018). As Yin (2011, p. 207) stated, the data do not ‘speak for themselves’, so a good qualitative interpretation should have five characteristics: completeness, fairness, accurateness, credibility and relatedness to the research literature. When data are reassembled during coding, the researchers can focus on identifying the thematic patterns of the data relevant to the main research questions (Yin, 2011).

Concluding was the last step in the thematic analysis conducted in this study. In this step, the conclusions drawn must fulfil the research purpose and answer the research questions. In addition, readers should be able to recognise the similarities and differences between the research background and their situation to determine the applicability and relevance of the findings. This helps readers examine how the findings can be applied and transferred to their own area of practice (Collingridge and Gantt, 2008).

In summary, selecting good quality and relevant data from a substantial volume of raw data constitutes a crucial phase in the process of qualitative data collection. It is important to keep as many raw and fragmented materials as possible to make the participants’ stories more meaningful (Marshall, 2012). A data reduction approach is usually conducted to provide a typical overview of the content, and sum up the main elements in a smaller number of classification (Cohen et al., 2002). Data reduction aims to help draw conclusions. In practice, data reduction and drawing conclusions are closely related and occur together. The purpose of drawing conclusions is to integrate what has been accomplished into a coherent and meaningful
picture of the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The main components of data analysis are shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Key components of data analysis**

![Diagram showing the key components of data analysis: Data Collection, Data Reduction, Drawing Conclusions]

Source: Miles and Huberman, 1994

4.7 Ethical and methodological challenges

Ethics are about how we decide what is right and what is wrong. Researchers often ask their professional associations for advice and produce a number of ethical concerns when using key information and data (British Educational Research Association, 2018). Berg (2009, p. 60) argued that ‘researchers in the social sciences have an ethical obligation to their colleagues, their study population and the larger society’. As researchers, they are responsible for guaranteeing that their research adheres to certain ethical guidelines and concepts throughout the processes of research conceptualisation, data collection and data analysis (Punch, 2013). Indeed, ethical considerations must be recognised before conducting an investigative study (Wellington, 2015). Ethical issues must cover 14 main aspects: researcher access/exit; information given to participants; participants’ right of withdrawal; informed consent; complaint procedure; participants’ safety and well-being; anonymity; data collection; data analysis; data storage; data
protection; feedback; responsibilities to colleagues/the academic community; and research reporting. Researchers must exercise due diligence to ensure that all participants are respectful, sympathetic and honest at all times, particularly in qualitative research (Engelbrecht and De Beer, 2014). Therefore, it is essential that a study is seriously undertaken in a safe manner (Austin and Sutton, 2014). To address the question of ethics, approval was granted by the University of Bristol before the start of the research. After obtaining ethical consent from the University of Bristol, the chosen participants for the retrospective interview study were informed of the research purposes, the nature of the research, the research format, the research procedure, the time required of the participants, their anonymity and confidentiality, the voluntary nature of their participation and the responsibilities of the parties involved (Engelbrecht and De Beer, 2014). The participants were also advised that the research results would be published in an academic journal and a thesis in a cover letter, a consent form and an information sheet. Moreover, the respondents were requested to indicate their approval on the consent form presuming that they wanted to take part in the investigation, and their reply document were retained. The signed consent forms indicated that the participants understood that the data would be used for academic purposes. No one (except my thesis supervisor) had access to the interview data. To protect the identities of the participants, their personal information (i.e., institution name, their name, position and department name), responses and other information were kept confidential at all times. Moreover, their responses were examined globally and their anonymity was guaranteed at all times. The complaint procedure, accompanied by my supervisor’s email address, was described in the information sheet provided to the participants. As a qualitative researcher, I needed to ‘monitor the tension between involvement and detachment of the researcher and the researched as a means to enhance the rigor of the study and its ethics’ (Berger, 2013, p. 3). As a result, this guaranteed the trustworthiness of the study, ensured the ethicality of the research process and controlled the influences of stereotypes (Buckner, 2005).

In the process of research, respondents had the opportunity to provide feedback on the interview transcripts. In addition, their involvement was voluntary, and they could withdraw at whichever point in time, without loss of benefits or penalty (Sewerin and Holmberg, 2017). Due to the investigation was primarily qualitative, all names were concealed and direct quotations were
ascribed to anonymous. The investigator complied with the rules regarding the storage and use of personal data, accordance with the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (The Hong Kong Personal Data Privacy Ordinance (Cap. 486); source: https://www.pcpd.org.hk/). Moreover, all of the research data were carefully stored and archived electronically in a computer that was secured with a password. The data were in the form of audio recordings of interviews and interview transcripts. All of the data were stored in my office in a lockable cabinet or drawer, locked at all times when I was not in the office. The data will be destroyed after the publication of the thesis, journal articles, conference papers and a book (i.e., a maximum of two years).

Several methodological problems were encountered during the research study. Qualitative researchers must ensure that their examination is as rigorous and transparent as possible. If not, the trustworthiness and reliability of the research will be dubious (Bowen, 2009). Regarding the interview process, the dynamics of power that existed between the interviewer and the interviewees, as well as the impetus of the interviewees to speak freely, led to very abstract responses. In addition, the nature of the topic may have been one of the root causes of the fact that some target respondents refused the invitation to participate in the research study. Therefore, it was difficult to explore new ideas and answer the research questions. Another unavoidable obstacle was the difficulty for the interviewees of attending the interviews, as the arrangements were laborious or time consuming. To overcome these constraints, I depended on the interviewees’ readiness to involve, and a clear explanation of the importance of the study (Engelbrecht and De Beer, 2014). In addition, researchers should examine documents based on their degree of abstraction and formality. The documents depicted an idealised or established view of the operation, rather than a real or vital approach. As most of qualitative educational research is carried out with a limited scope, the lack of manageability and generalisability was readily acknowledged (Inman, 2014). Particular attention was paid to the extent to which generic solutions (e.g., the best educational leadership style) can create implementation asymmetries due to the difference between HEIs regarding the perceived effects of change on their operations in various geographical and cultural contexts (Brooks and Normore, 2015).

4.8 Case investigation – Hong Kong
This section introduces the four academic departments comprehensively examined in the thesis. This section is divided into two main parts. In the first part, background information on Kowloon University and four academic departments is provided. Characterological and chronological analyses of each department are provided. The second part explains the three stages of the change process (i.e., initiation/mobilisation, institutionalisation and implementation) in the four academic departments. To supplement these explanations, the section presents key information obtained from several qualitative sources, such as HEI improvement plans, archives, websites and newsletters.

4.8.1 Case study: background information

In this study, Kowloon University was selected as an illustrative case study that has profoundly changed over almost a century in Hong Kong. Kowloon University is part of a group of eight UGC-funded institutions in Hong Kong. It has successfully transitioned from technical college to university status, from a teaching university to a research university and from local to international. In 2018, Kowloon University was listed in the ‘Top 50 Under 50’ of the world’s top young universities in the QS World University Rankings and was ranked in the ‘Top 200 in the World’ in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings (Kowloon University, 2012). To explore the current change in HEIs in Hong Kong and investigate the organisational change and leadership required to transform the higher education context, four academic departments were chosen for in-depth research. The four academic departments are affiliated with three faculties. To align with government policies, market needs and segments, technology diffusion, public service mission, diverse stakeholders’ expectations, and university reform, the four academic departments have fundamentally changed in a transdisciplinary world over the last five decades. In addition, these four academic departments have shown interdisciplinary collaboration between faculties. Even more importantly, these departments have offered a variety of specialised programmes to produce a large number of talented graduates for nearly a century. As He et al. (2019) argued, a large supply of human capital is essential for stimulating economic growth and meeting the changing demands of society. Although the HKSAR government has made substantial investments in these four departments, they foster the evolution of the structure of the industry from low value-added exports to high value-added exports. To the best of my
knowledge, these four departments create a significant productive workforce for the four pillar industries of the Hong Kong economy. Therefore, I now briefly explain the background of these departments and their main changes in recent decades.

The Department of Business Communication covers mainly seafaring and logistics disciplines. In the 1970s, the Department of Business Communication was part of the School of Applied Science (i.e., Faculty of Applied Science). In the early 1970s, the Department of Business Communication mainly provided vocational training for electronics officers and deck officers on board ocean-going vessels (Kowloon University, 1975). Until 1989, the Department of Business Communication designed higher diploma programmes mainly focused on ship management for on-board deck cadets and potential ashore managers. Obviously, nautical studies were the main discipline at that time. As a result, the department was relatively small, reflected by the small number of academic staff in a single discipline. The whole department had only 18 academic staff (Kowloon University, 1982). In general, these staff had rich experience in the seafaring and logistics industries. The traditional nature of these industries meant that the department was dominated by men; indeed, all of the academic staff in the department were male before 1989. Most were middle-aged Hongkongers, and the department heads had industry backgrounds. The level of interaction with industry was thus high, educational programmes were ‘down to earth’ and most students participated in ‘on-the-job’ training. During this period, the department allocated resources to practical training and teaching rather than research. To achieve its economic transformation, the department had to undergo a restructuring process. Since its restructuring in 2003, the department has become part of the Business School (i.e., Faculty of Business) (Kowloon University, 2005). Obviously, its size has increased, from a small department to a medium-sized department, with more academic staff joining from applied science and business disciplines. The number of academic staff is now 38, double that in the early 1970s. In addition, around 20% of its academic staff are now women. At the same time, communication within the department has shifted from a simple and informal style to a complex and formal style. Although the department maintains strong industry networks, it allocates resources primarily to research rather than teaching activities. To this end, all higher diploma and vocational training programmes have been phased out. Research degree programmes and taught programmes with a theoretical basis are predominant, designed to develop students’ research
capability. To meet market demand, the Department of Business Communication tends to offer programmes focused on business management rather than engineering or nautical studies. On the bright side, the redesigned programme curriculum gives graduates the opportunity to choose between being management trainees in logistics companies or serving on board as deck cadets. In addition, the Department of Business Communication employs young and energetic researchers from different parts of the world who are eager to improve their academic reputation. Accordingly, 26.3% of its academic staff are over 50 years old, 42.1% are middle-aged (40–50) and 31.6% are under 40. Interestingly, 17 academic staff are from Hong Kong, 18 are Chinese and 3 are from Taiwan, Singapore and Germany, respectively. Currently, 75% of the department’s academic staff have a research background (i.e., having obtained a PhD by studying full-time early in their career and since predominantly worked in academia) and 25% come from industry. As befitting a research-intensive university, most department heads have a research rather than an industry background. Currently, the department head is a middle-aged male scholar from Hong Kong (Department of Business Communication, 2020).

The Department of Management mainly covers marketing, economics, financial services, legal studies, management information systems and management disciplines. Academic staff were allocated to six disciplines, creating a medium-sized department. At that time, 40 academic staff were employed in the department. The numbers of female and male staff were relatively equal (Department of Management, 1996). The department was also part of the Business School (i.e., Faculty of Business). It mainly offered short courses and evening courses in machine shorthand in the 1970s and 1980s (Kowloon University, 1975). In addition, the level of interaction with industry was high, as most academic staff came from industry and the primary mission of the department was to equip students for careers in the public and private sectors. In other words, teaching was the first priority in the allocation of resources in the department. In addition, most academic staff were middle-aged Hongkongers and the department heads were middle-aged male Hongkongers. The department was divided into various disciplines, leading to different unique cultures, a complex department structure and communication barriers. To diversify its specialisms and optimise resource allocation, in 2003, the new dean at the time proposed to combine three disciplines (i.e., marketing, management information systems and management) into two main disciplines (i.e., management and marketing) (Kowloon University, 1996, 2005).
Accordingly, the other three disciplines (i.e., economics, financial services, legal studies) were integrated into other new departments. Although the number of disciplines has been reduced by 50%, the number of academic staff is now around 45. The department is medium in size compared with others in the university. It has 24 male and 21 female academic staff and, as such, is reasonably balanced in terms of gender. Since 2003, the department has changed fundamentally, evolving from a teaching department into a research-centric department. Indeed, the department offers taught programmes with a theoretical basis and research degrees and recruits young and dynamic researchers from all over the world. As a result, 13.3% of its academic staff are over 50 years old, 40% are middle-aged (40–50) and 46.7% are young (under 40). In recent years, digital innovation has transformed society and businesses. The department has established an industry network to design technological innovation courses (e.g., Data Science, Block Chain and Internet of Things). Now, 25% of its academic staff come from industry and 75% from a research background. To enhance its internationalisation, the department has recruited a number of academic staff and senior management from different parts of the world. Thus, 20 academic staff are from Hong Kong, 17 are Chinese and 8 come from the US, Canada, Australia, South Korea and Singapore (Department of Management, 2020). The complexity of the context has led to the recruitment of five department heads over the last seven years. Currently, the department head is a young scholar, male and Chinese. However, recruiting academic staff from different disciplines and various cultural backgrounds, coupled with frequent changes of department heads, has led to a lack of continuity within the department.

The Department of Fashion mainly consists of textile and fashion design disciplines. The history of the department dates back to 1957. From the late 1950s to the mid-1990s, the department was part of the Faculty of Design and Commerce. From the late 1950s to the 1970s, the department was small, with around 15 academic staff with a simple office and facilities. Thanks to industrialisation, the textile industry became one of Hong Kong’s economic pillars in the 1980s. In the 1980s, the number of academic staff increased rapidly, reaching around 50 academic staff. Most academic staff were experts in the textile industry. Interestingly, the nature of the textile industry is predominantly female. Thus, a large proportion of academic staff in the department in the 1980s were women. Nevertheless, most academic staff were middle-aged and Hongkongers and the department heads came from industry and were middle-aged, male and Hongkongers. To
prepare for human capital accumulation, the department worked closely with industry practitioners to set up factories and workstations and design short courses, technical diploma programmes and higher diploma programmes. Accordingly, the department had a high level of interaction with industry and allocated resources primarily to practical training and teaching (Kowloon University, 1975, 1978; Department of Fashion, 2007). In the mid-1990s, the department became part of the School of Applied Science (i.e., Faculty of Applied Science). Since then, the department has covered a range of disciplines, including textile technology, retail and marketing, textile and fashion design, apparel science and engineering, and textile chemistry. These five disciplines offer new programmes and a revamped curriculum covering a range of new subjects (e.g., social media marketing, big data analytics, multichannel integration and visual recognition, fashion retail and distribution) to increase the employability of students (Kowloon University, 2007). Although the department is composed of five disciplines, the number of academic staff today is the same as before. In terms of gender, there are 26 male and 23 female academic staff. Therefore, the department is now better balanced in terms of gender. Since the mid-1990s, the department has focused more on research, so most resources are now allocated to research activities. As a result, the department offers taught programmes with a theoretical basis and research degrees to replace technical programmes. Indeed, the department proactively recruits young and dynamic researchers from all over the world. Therefore, 14.3% of its academic staff are over 50 years old, 51% are middle-aged (40–50) and 34.7% are young (i.e., under 40) (Department of Fashion, 2020). The department maintains its industry networks to organise a wide range of exhibitions, conferences, workshops, industry forums and seminars (Kowloon University, 2012). However, 71% of its academic staff have a research background. In addition, the department employs a number of academic staff and senior management from different parts of the world: 21 are from Hong Kong, 19 are Chinese and 9 come from the UK, South Korea, India and Australia (Department of Fashion, 2020). The department can be described as medium in size, interdisciplinary and complex. Currently, the department head is an older scholar, male and Chinese.

The Department of Engineering was officially established in 1974. The department mainly involves production and industrial engineering. It developed rapidly, as it was taken over by large workshops and laboratories for teaching. At the same time, the department established the
first industrial centre to offer higher certificate, higher diploma and associateship courses and meet the requirements of the UK Council of Engineering Institutions. As a result, the curriculum design aimed for practical and professional recognition. This was reasonable, as all of the department’s academic staff had a strong background in industrial engineering. Accordingly, the department had a high level of interaction with industry and allocated resources primarily to practical training and teaching. At the time, there were between 20 and 25 academic staff in the department, leading to a medium-sized department (Kowloon University, 1975, 1978). In addition, due to the male-dominated nature of the engineering industry, most academic staff were male, middle-aged and Hongkongers, as were the department heads who came from industry. To respond to the rapidly changing economic environment of Hong Kong and the expectations of employers, in 2003, the department realised that there was an urgent need to add logistics engineering management to expand its disciplines. In 1974, the department became part of the School of Engineering (i.e., Faculty of Engineering). In recent years, the department has revamped its programmes and introduced new subjects, such as knowledge and technology management, to respond to globalisation and the knowledge society (Kowloon University, 2012). Currently, 34 academic staff are divided into engineering and logistics disciplines within the department, with 21 working in engineering and 13 working in logistics. The number of academic staff has slightly increased but the department remains medium in size. In terms of gender, only 11.8% of its academic staff are women. Clearly, the department is still male-dominated. The department also shifted from a teaching-centred orientation to a research-centred orientation in the mid-1990s. Most of the resources are now allocated to research rather than teaching activities. Accordingly, the department offers research degrees and taught programmes with a largely theoretical basis instead of technical programmes. In addition, the department actively seeks to recruit young and dynamic researchers from all over the world. Indeed, 35.2% of its academic staff are young (i.e., under 40), 32.4% are middle-aged (40–50) and 32.4% are over 50. Moreover, 24 academic staff are from Hong Kong, 8 are Chinese and 2 come from France and South Korea. The department maintains its industry networks to participate in industrial consultancy projects and exhibitions. However, only 29% of its academic staff have industry experience (Department of Engineering, 2020). Currently, the department head is an older male scholar from Hong Kong.
4.8.2 The process of change in the four academic departments: from initiation to institutionalisation

The four academic departments offer different unique disciplines and specialisms. However, they have had to align with university policy, comply with UGC governance and face the challenges of external market forces during different waves of change at different times. This part describes the common key measures, undertaken by the four academic departments to address the three main stages of the change process, namely initiation/mobilisation, institutionalisation and implementation. The key findings are summarised in Appendix 5.

4.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I identify and explain the research design, the research methodology, the data collection methods, the data analysis method, and ethical issues in the research process. As this study was exploratory and qualitative in nature, in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were adopted for data collection. In addition, valuable historical information and past data were obtained from a number of qualitative documents, such as HEI improvement plans, archives, government reports, websites and newsletters to supplement the research findings. Thematic analysis and general inductive approaches were used to analyse the data. Recognising the potential limitations of this small-scale study, I highlighted and examined different challenges and a number of specific ethical issues in the research process.

In this chapter, I also introduced the four academic departments used as case studies to investigate the link between changes in academic departments and the changing environment of Hong Kong. An in-depth case study approach is essential to explore complex issues (Flyvbjerg, 2006). First, background information on Kowloon University and the four academic departments is provided. Each academic department has demonstrated symbolic change and has offered unique disciplines/specialisms in recent decades. The Department of Business Communication mainly focuses on applied science and business disciplines. The Department of Management focuses on management and marketing disciplines. The Department of Fashion focuses on textile technology, retail and marketing, textile and fashion design, apparel science and engineering, and
textile chemistry disciplines. The Department of Engineering focuses on logistics and engineering disciplines. I developed characterological and chronological analyses of each department, supplementing the points of view of the interviewees to be used in the discussion of the findings and to support the thematic analysis of the context of each department. During the three stages of the change process (i.e., initiation/mobilisation, institutionalisation and implementation), each academic department has changed to deal with internal constraints, align with UGC governance and university policy and overcome a number of challenges related to unpredictable and nonlinear external market forces. Therefore, each academic department has experienced transformational change, from teaching-centric to research-centric and from local to international. Under the influence of managerialism and marketisation, academic departments compete to increase their resources and budget. Although these different departments compete, they also demonstrate interdisciplinary collaboration in terms of teaching, research and student activities. To a large extent, all four academic departments have successfully helped Kowloon University to shift from college to internationally renowned university status. In the next chapter, I examine the different perspectives of the interviewees to explain the findings of the case studies.
Chapter 5: Findings

5.1 Introduction

This section reports on the qualitative data analysis, namely thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 78) stated that thematic analysis is the first qualitative approach that must be understood as ‘it provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other kinds of analysis’. In contrast to various qualitative approaches, it is not connected to a specific theoretical or epistemological perspective and therefore offers an accurate and flexible method for data analysis (Clarke and Braun, 2013). Using thematic analysis, themes or patterns were identified in the qualitative data previously collected (Javadi and Zarea, 2016). The initial and main codes were created until theoretical data saturation (Kuzel, 1992). In addition, the conceptualisation of pattern comparisons was carried out until no new pattern appeared (Creswell, 1994). The objectives of thematic analysis are to identify important or notable themes and interpret the key research findings (Clarke and Braun, 2013). There are several methods of thematic analysis, Yin’s (2011) five-step thematic analysis framework was used in this study. This framework is clear and easy to use to recognise change management and leadership styles in HEIs. Accordingly, seven main themes were generated and assigned to answer the two key research questions and better understand the study. Four themes were related to change management, as follows. (1) New development and transformational change in the department; (2) a new teaching pedagogy and quality; (3) challenge of upscaling research; and (4) resilience and adaptation to market forces. In addition, three themes were related to leadership styles: (1) leadership attribution; (2) communication in the department; and (3) leadership power exertion.

The first theme was change management, which is generally related to how HEIs seek to shift from their current situation to preferred working methods in the future (Auwor and Kamau, 2015). Some management researchers have considered change as continuous and gradual, while others have thought of change as discontinuous and occasional. In the study, the four elements generated, namely new development and transformational change in the department, a new teaching pedagogy and quality, challenge of upscaling research and resilience and adaptation to market forces, accelerated the pace and increased the complexity of change in HEIs. Clearly, HEIs face a variety of problems, tensions, challenges, and gaps (Razzaq and Forde, 2012).
Therefore, change can be described as a nested sequence of events and as unpredictable in the current higher education environment (Shepard and Katzell, 1960). HEIs aim to facilitate change and limit external forces during the change process. Better managerial leadership can ease the pressures. Thus, being sensitive to the problems faced by leaders is a critical area of change management (Woodward and Hendry, 2004).

The second theme was leadership styles. Osseo-Asare et al. (2005) highlighted that leadership plays a key role in the success of educational organisations. Leadership styles in HEIs are an important theme in higher education research. Generally, leadership styles are described by a combination of leadership behaviours. The way a leader behaves is intended to achieve a goal or carry out a function and determines the type of leadership behaviour used by that leader. Thus, leadership styles are strongly affected by the context of higher education and institutional culture. With the increasing number of leadership styles, categorisation is very complex (Alonderiene et al., 2016). In other words, it is difficult to match the right leadership styles to organisational change, as these styles have to take into account the changing environment of higher education. In the study, the three elements generated, namely leadership attribution, communication in the department and leadership power exertion, were most concerned with the formation of leadership styles.

The thematic analysis results are reported in Appendix 6. The themes are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

This chapter is divided into four main parts. After the introduction in Section 5.1, change management and leadership styles are discussed in Sections 5.2 and 5.3, respectively. Finally, in Section 5.4, the key points are addressed in a conclusion.

5.2 Change management

The findings of the in-depth interviews generated the following four interrelated aspects, summarised under change management.
5.2.1 New development and transformational change in the department

In the early 1990s, Kowloon University successfully upgraded its status from that of technical college to that of university. All of the interviewees indicated that various developments had recently taken place at the university, which had radically changed the departments. To align with the university’s vision and mission, different academic departments designed and carried out action plans to develop new tasks and strategically change the current departments. Typical examples included enhancing interdisciplinary collaboration, restructuring academic departments, changing the names of departments, redesigning the curriculum, eliminating sub-degree programmes, eliminating part-time degree programmes, establishing new academic departments, developing new programmes and creating new subjects, to name but a few. This result is consistent with that of McRoy and Gibbs (2009), who argued that the general change in higher education has created a number of outcomes, such as reengineering or redesigning curriculums, closing unprofitable academic departments or merging smaller ones, and reallocating resources.

Although the four academic departments studied are part of the same university, they compete for financial resources and human capital under the budget constraint related to department expansion. It is not surprising that each department strives for superior performance through different types of restructuring. Indeed, all departments currently follow KPIs to measure and conduct a large number of benchmarking exercises. An Education Development Officer from Kowloon University explained that

> all things are related to KPIs. Departments are more attentive. KPIs have a direct effect on the funding they will receive as they are now monitored by a higher level of senior management. You can see the change in dynamics and the way we do things. (Education Development Officer, Kowloon University)

One academic staff member added:

> For the last three to five years, I can see that the budget is pretty tight. There are a lot of competition between the departments of the same university and also between different universities in Hong Kong, which affects the policy of the university. (Programme Leader, Department of Business Communication)
One associate head further indicated:

According to the reports or articles from journals, we are currently ranked among the best publications in terms of shipping area in the world. So, the budget and funding from the government are very important. In keeping with university policy, we must do research to promote our programmes and increase our ranking in the world. (Associate Head and Research Centre Director, Department of Business Communication)

Based on these explanations, each department has made new developments in different areas in response to fierce competition. The Department of Engineering has experienced planned innovation, while the Department of Management has witnessed emergent change. To provide a clearer picture, the viewpoints of different interviewees are presented below.

One department head highlighted the main changes and developments in Department of Business Communication:

Well, other things are more like the expected change in the traditional curriculum. We all know that in 2012, we changed the undergraduate programmes to four years. This has happened all over Hong Kong, not just our department. Over time, we eliminated old programmes and launched new programmes. This is not really unusual because I think it happened in every department. We eliminated higher diploma programmes and we have a new senior year programme. (Department Head, Department of Business Communication)

In 2003, the Department of Business Communication went through a process of emergent change when it shifted from an applied science to a business discipline (Kowloon University, 2005). As a result, the structure, context and culture of the department significantly changed. In addition, somewhat unexpected directions arose during the transition period, such as the transfer of the department from the Faculty of Applied Science to the Faculty of Business. After 2003, the department achieved planned innovation with the appointment of a new department head and was therefore relatively stable. In other words, the new department head stabilised the department’s strategic planning for sustainable development.
Another department head summarised the main changes and developments in the Department of Management:

Some departments were getting too big. Some departments were too small. So, at the time, I think the university wanted to restructure so that the size of the departments would be more or less homogeneous. So, there was some reorganisation of the disciplines within the Faculty of Business. There was also a redistribution of staff from different disciplines to the new department. The main idea was to reduce the size of some departments for better staff management. (Department Head, Department of Management)

Even more importantly, the department head changed frequently in the Department of Management. Compared with other academic departments, only the Department of Management was confronted with such a chaotic phenomenon. Thus, most staff reported being worried and uncomfortable at work. Indeed, people often feel that a loss can lead to a departure from the status quo (Van Dijk and Van Dick, 2009).

For instance, one associate dean explained:

We are currently going through department head number five. So, that is a lot of change in a few years. The department headship is constantly changing. Thus, we are faced with a bit of uncertainty. Number six is coming soon, but we are still looking. So, colleagues are very worried about this constant change in leadership and it is difficult to adopt their leadership styles and cultures. (Associate Dean, Department of Management)

Although the Department of Management has remained within the same faculty, it has experienced emergent change since the early 2000s. The new dean restructured the department by integrating three disciplines (Kowloon University, 1996, 2005). In addition, the frequent change of department heads has led to ever-changing leadership styles and culture for a decade. As a result, the department is currently facing change in an open, continuous and unpredictable process of aligning and realigning its direction with its changing context (Burnes, 2009).
For the Department of Fashion, the department head discussed the main changes and developments:

During my headship, we have made some major changes, for example the curriculum. All programmes have been there for over 10 years. To keep up with industry change and align with student expectations (i.e., job market), we have changed our curriculum. Another change has been to change our Chinese name to better reflect people’s perceptions and what we should do. The name also reflects the change. (Department Head, Department of Fashion)

The Department of Fashion has experienced emergent change since the mid-1990s, starting with its transfer from the Faculty of Design and Commerce to the Faculty of Applied Science. After that, new disciplines appeared in the department (Kowloon University, 2007). The department has been subject to a process of continuous change to adjust and readjust to a new environment. In recent decades, the department has remained stable and demonstrated planned innovation. Similar to their counterparts in the Department of Business Communication, the department heads during this period held the position for four years. It is easy for department heads to design and implement long-term planning for the department without considering the impact of their successors.

For the Department of Engineering, the department head pointed out that the department’s vision and mission must align with those of the university. To this end, the Department of Engineering reflected the key changes that have occurred in recent years:

Normally, our mission and vision must align with the university’s mission and vision. Perhaps we need to refine our mission and vision to better align with the latest vision and mission of the university. One of the strategies in our university is to increase the student-staff ratio. We more or less have to follow this strategy to improve this ratio. This can enhance student learning. Over the last few years, we have eliminated some of our self-financing programmes. (Department Head, Department of Engineering)

The Department of Engineering has shown relatively steady performance over the last few decades. When the logistics discipline was integrated into the department (Kowloon University,
2012), it created a synergistic effect. In addition, the transition between department heads went smoothly, so that the department was able to adopt a planned innovation strategy for some time. Unlike the other three departments, the Department of Engineering has not undergone any dramatic change over the last 40 years.

Regarding these self-financing programmes, one associate dean further explained that there was a significant gap between UGC-funded programmes and self-financing programmes at the university. That is, self-financing programmes seemed to play a less and less important role. It will be difficult to maintain a parallel development between UGC-funded programmes and self-financing programmes in the future.

Self-financing programmes are a bit tricky because we are a UGC-funded university. Thus, many resources are exclusively for UGC-funded programmes, not for self-financing programmes. In addition, the university has recently become more focused on UGC-funded programmes. This means that many policies limit self-financing programmes. They should not take away UGC-funded resources. We must follow these policies very strictly because we do not have enough full-time students. So, we always struggle with our self-financing programmes. (Associate Dean, Department of Management)

Even more importantly, the findings showed that Kowloon University launched a new staffing system to strengthen its research capacity while facing a big retirement wave during the transition period. One academic staff member discussed the long-term effect of the change from technical college to university status in terms of human resources:

I think in particular for my department that we have a tenure track system for our assistant professors, which may put them under pressure. In addition, some of them will retire soon. Thus, with ageing staff, we may have to recruit new academic staff. We need to think of successors. The department try to recruit new staff, but the main problem is that they have high selection criteria for top management. This may slow down the process. The criteria mainly focus on academic records, such as research outputs and research grants. (Programme Leader, Department of Engineering)
Another academic staff member stated:

We have a new staffing system called a tenure system. Most assistant professors have to go through a six-year cycle. Then, they may be promoted to Associate Professor or will be asked to leave. (Programme Leader and Research Centre Deputy Director, Department of Business Communication)

Most of the interviewees, especially front-line staff, mentioned the implications of the new staffing system, such as unemployment under unsatisfactory performance and discomfort with increasing workload and pressure. In this sense, the new environment of HEIs needs educational leaders who can face the challenges of change, encourage their subordinates to learn and innovate and successfully lead departments in the future (Brown, 2001).

In addition to research, Kowloon University pays special attention to professional education. Indeed, Kowloon University has been a practice-based tertiary institution since the late 1930s. To achieve its vision, Kowloon University has reinforced the concept of professional education to integrate theoretical and practical knowledge (Kowloon University, 2012). Moreover, industry practitioners view professional education as an effective and direct way to enhance productivity in today’s dynamic and globalised environment. In recent years, Kowloon University has focused on non-academic learning approaches, such as apprenticeships, to connect ‘practice-based’ and ‘professional’ programmes (Lau et al., 2018c). In addition to establishing a close link between the industry and relevant professional associations, Kowloon University has developed academic departments to create a new professional position called ‘Professor of Practice’ and formed a departmental advisory committee made up of professionals and academics.

One academic staff member indicated that Professors of Practice help connect theory and practice. To a large extent, they are a key element of professional education. The creation of Professor of Practice positions can correct the weaknesses of the teaching approaches and the student learning experience.
Well. In recent years, we have developed a new title called Professor of Practice (PoP). PoP do not need to have a PhD, but they come from different industries and have experience in their respective industries. Our university can pay more to hire these professionals. This policy really benefits our students. A research-oriented professor has no experience in the industry. But with PoP, we really know the dynamics, we really know the industry and we really know how to train our students to meet the demands of employers. Thus, professionals like PoP joining our programmes bring many benefits. First, they bring job opportunities, such as internships, to our students. Second, they may get more donations or sponsorships because they have a good relationship with their companies. They also bring real examples in their teaching. Our programme team strongly supports the recruitment of this type of professionals as teachers. (Discipline Leader and Deputy Programme Leader, Department of Fashion)

One dean responded positively to the creation of a departmental advisory committee to reinforce the importance of professional education.

We have recently had some changes. Kowloon University is known for its close relationships with outside bodies, such as employers, professional bodies, and associations. Thus, we have reinforced or enhanced these relationships. Our departmental advisory committee is made up of professional institutions, professional associations, and their leaders. They are involved in the planning of our curriculum and our department’s vision and mission. (Dean and Research Centre Director, Department of Engineering)

In the process of change, most interviewees indicated that generating theories, models and frameworks was essential to aid adaptation to the pace of change. In doing so, Kowloon University provides clear guidelines, presents success stories, creates a clear and simple organisational structure, and generates a workload model to implement a successful change management process.

One academic staff member stated that:
it was important to promote awareness, encouragement, clear guidelines and to show successful cases and examples. (Research Centre Director, Department of Engineering)

Another academic staff member agreed with the idea of showing success stories to help subordinates understand the key direction and expectations of senior management. As this academic staff member explained:

I think the most effective strategy comes mainly from job promotion cases, such as which colleague should be promoted or which colleague should be recognised. Then, we can know the direction of senior management. (Programme Leader and Research Centre Deputy Director, Department of Business Communication)

One department head and one associate head indicated that they preferred to use an institutional approach and a workload model to communicate and allocate responsibilities between different parties. One department head explained:

I adopted institutionalism. I want to make things clear at the institutional level and do not want to be too arbitrary. (Department Head, Department of Management)

One associate head had a more positive view of the department’s inclination to create a workload model:

Sometimes you have to do some of the work yourself to set an example so that you are not the one who tells others to do things while you do nothing. In addition, it is easier for me to allocate resources and responsibilities between the different parties. (Associate Head, Department of Business Communication)

In addition, Kowloon University provides incentives to convince staff to adapt to the changing environment. According to the employees, the creation of an incentive system motivated them to
support the change in the institution (Woodward and Hendry, 2004). For instance, one academic staff member suggested:

We think that they will understand change when they are motivated. (Research Centre Co-director and Deputy Programme Director, Department of Management)

Following these academic staff, one department head argued that incentives are sometimes necessary to motivate staff to accept the change process:

Of course, overall, most staff members welcome change because my approach is mainly incentive-based. We provide incentives to encourage them to do things. Most staff are more active with this incentive-based approach. Therefore, the change process does not meet much resistance. (Department Head, Department of Management)

5.2.2 A new teaching pedagogy and quality

Research on teaching pedagogy and teaching quality dated back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Korthagen, 2010). Quality teaching is the main driver of high learning outcomes in higher education (Legislative Council, 2019). In this regard, Kowloon University has shown a new direction in teaching pedagogy and teaching quality. In principle, Kowloon University requires all academic departments to comply with the teaching quality assurance system and the quality assurance policy. In other words, all departments are required to increase the quality of students’ performance, teaching and learning, and programmes and to pursue formative assessment objectives.

One department head echoed Kowloon University’s goals of pursuing world-class quality programmes and producing preferred graduates.

I think the main strategy is to turn our programmes into ‘Preferred Programmes’. We want to offer preferred programmes, we want to produce preferred graduates. We do not necessarily want to compete on research and recruit the best students. Instead, we want
our programmes to be attractive to students because they can easily find a job afterwards. (Department Head, Department of Management)

As a discipline leader/scheme leader/programme leader, one of the key objectives is to perform programme management. In terms of programme management, it is important to conduct a loop exercise (i.e., a learning outcome assessment plan). The loop exercise is a formative assessment:

the main purpose of formative observations … is to determine the degree of mastery of a given learning task and to pinpoint the part of the task not mastered … The purpose is not to grade or certify the learner; it is to help both the learner and the teacher focus upon the particular learning necessary for movement towards mastery. (Bloom et al., 1971, p. 61)

Thus, the assessment component must have a set of rubrics.

One discipline leader and deputy programme leader discussed the long-term effects of pursuing formative assessment objectives for Kowloon University:

Regarding the policy for teaching and learning, I guess, the loop exercise is what they want us to use. For example, you cannot just give students a grade, you have to explain what this ‘A’ means. The criteria of reference. Teachers are sometimes very subjective in a group project and give them a certain mark. But now, you have to provide many details and explain the content of each detail. So, we are supposed to think that the policy of enhancing teaching and learning is fair and good for students. I think I will just agree and follow. (Discipline Leader and Deputy Programme Leader, Department of Fashion)

Currently, teachers struggle to integrate pedagogy with teaching and content in the current working conditions (Ball, 2000). The Legislative Council (2019) highlighted that academic staff have limited knowledge of innovative teaching pedagogy or teaching experience. More importantly, there are not enough training programmes or courses for teachers to understand the pedagogy of teaching or how they can deliver the content of the curriculum in class. In response to the urgent need to improve the skills of academic staff in teaching pedagogy and government
policy, one Education Development Officer mentioned that Kowloon University continues to emphasise the importance of teaching and supports a series of learning and teaching training for academic staff.

To train staff and increase the quality of teaching or new elements to teach our programmes, our centre includes different sections to train new teachers and meet the needs of other teachers, such as workshops and seminars. Our number of professional staff is high. (Education Development Officer, Kowloon University)

In response, the four academic departments developed an innovative teaching pedagogy through a variety of means, including teaching and learning in the classroom, service-learning subjects, subject activities and illustrating the results of applied research and consultancy projects in teaching activities, to name but a few. Obviously, the common goal is to increase student exposure. The changes give students more opportunities to learn and present their work. The two elements of industry-level engagement and pedagogical approach to teaching generated a specific analysis of the four academic departments. The main findings of the four academic departments are summarised below.

For the Department of Business Communication:

I received feedback from companies about the graduates of the department. Therefore, I created two subjects in which students have the opportunity to listen to people working in an industry. Another subject is an international study tour, giving them the opportunity to meet senior managers in the field, to enable them to understand the choices they will face after graduation. (Programme Leader, Department of Business Communication)

The Department of Business Communication fully used its strong industry networks to revamp its academic programmes and organise learning activities for students. Thus, its industry-level engagement is high. In addition, the department has adopted an experiential learning approach to teaching. Through an international study tour, students become more independent learners and
are empowered in the process. This can remedy the weaknesses of the traditional classroom approach. For the Department of Management, the Associate Dean stated the following:

It is easier to be part of the business school because we offer applied disciplines. So, first, at the research level, we always use professionals for the data. We work with them to get information and some colleagues work closely with them for advice. In terms of teaching, for the MBA programme and the DBA programme, we involve many professionals. Students like to hear from people in the field. For example, for my undergraduate course, I have occasionally invited professionals to participate. They all like that. MBA students like that, as do my undergraduate students because they can see how what they learn can be related to what they are going to do. So, professionals are important and we engage them proactively. (Associate Dean, Department of Management)

In addition, one executive officer explained:

Some workshops involved academics and sometimes outside people and outside professionals. But, the talk focused on their specialised areas. This was very good because the students who attended benefited both academically and professionally. (Executive Officer, Department of Management)

The department relies heavily on its industry networks to offer technological innovation subjects and student learning activities. The higher the level of its academic programmes, the greater the industry engagement. In addition, the department mainly uses a traditional classroom approach to operate its academic programmes (e.g., lectures or seminars). Clearly, the department does not use a lot of resources to provide more interactive approaches to teaching.

For the Department of Fashion:
They encourage us to give less lectures and to offer more practice, using more online teaching materials. Thus, I do that for my students, so I have a lot of video resources for my new subjects. I also leave more time to visit factories and companies and to invite guest speakers from the industry. Students spend more time in practice than sitting in class. (Discipline Leader, Department of Fashion)

The Department of Fashion has well-established and strong industry networks that have been in place for over 50 years. The department relies on such advantages to organise different types of student activities, offer student internships and design learning materials. In addition, the Department of Fashion adopts a mix of traditional (e.g., lectures and site visits) and innovative teaching pedagogies (i.e., online learning materials). However, the department creates online teaching materials using a simple technique or software and uses traditional student internships to provide practical training for students. To a large extent, the Department of Fashion prefers to use a traditional classroom approach to teaching.

For Department of Engineering:

We use more teaching and learning techniques, such as blended learning, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), to supplement teaching and interactive classroom activities for large classes. I also have projects for the open curriculum, for which I developed the syllabus with my students and graduates. (Research Centre Director, Department of Engineering)

Overall, the Department of Engineering is more concerned with building strong industry networks for research than with teaching activities. In the engineering discipline, they strive to develop technology management to develop teaching activities. Thus, it is obvious that the department prefers to use new innovative technologies to support student learning activities in the ever-changing environment. In contrast with the other three departments, the Department of Engineering expects innovative teaching pedagogy to replace the traditional classroom approach in the coming years.
In addition to changing subject or programme teaching pedagogy, the associate vice president argued that the major change in the curriculum encourages students to broaden their horizons. In this sense, the associate vice president explained the main changes as follows:

Students must complete a three-credit subject in leadership and a three-credit subject in service-learning before graduation. I think the change has been great. (Associate Vice President, Kowloon University)

5.2.3 Challenge of upscaling research

The relationship between teaching and research was elucidated by von Humboldt in the 19th century (Jenkins and Healey, 2005). Indeed, Clark’s (1997) study demonstrated that scholarly activity can offer an important form of teaching pedagogy and a useful approach to student learning. Indeed, student who proactively participate in scholarly activity can be more motivated to learn and eventually become elite performers in society.

All of the interviewees indicated that Kowloon University had shifted from a teaching university to a research university. Many interviewees pointed out that Kowloon University has implemented a series of strategies to enhance the quality of research, such as creating new research centres, producing high-impact research, obtaining competitive research grants, establishing international research collaboration, participating in a range of scholarly activities, publishing in top-tier journals and achieving high rankings in league tables. This is consistent with previous studies highlighting institutional strategies for moving from teaching to research in industry reports (e.g., Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning; The Higher Education Academy) and numerous academic papers (e.g., Sikes, 2006; Currie, 2008; Mohrman et al., 2008; Chadha, 2013; Jawitz and Perez, 2016).

About half of the academic staff reacted positively to the evolution of Kowloon University from a teaching-focused university to a more research-centric university. They perceived that scholarly activities could be considered as ‘research underpinning teaching activities’ (Coate et al., 2001; Holbrook and Devonshire, 2006). One department head and one research centre director explained the idea of ‘research underpinning teaching activities’:
If you do good research, you can use this information in the teaching materials. It can improve teaching. In general, our research underpins or supports teaching. (Department Head, Department of Fashion)

In recent years, I have seen a stronger relationship between teaching and research activities. First, more academics conduct educational research because of increased funding for educational research. Second, more colleagues use research-based teaching. They share their research findings to strengthen their classroom teaching. (Research Centre Director, Department of Engineering)

The interviewees emphasised the importance of putting the research findings into practice and their important implications for teaching. As a result, applied research is preferable for improving the quality of teaching. To a certain extent, part of the research findings can create new knowledge for teaching and learning. Among the interviewees, two academic staff members further elaborated on these points:

We can do good research and use the results for teaching. Kowloon University wants us to emphasise the relationship between teaching and research each year. How can our research outcomes be adopted for practice? As you know, research outcomes can also be used in teaching. As a result, some of our colleagues with good research publications also offer very good teaching. (Associate Head and Research Centre Director, Department of Business Communication)

We strongly emphasise how you can use your research findings in teaching. But we also emphasise their implications. (Research Centre Co-director and Deputy Programme Director, Department of Management)

In contrast, about half of the academic staff had a more negative view of the evolution of Kowloon University from teaching to research. To meet Kowloon University’s requirements, academic staff face psychological problems without significant support from their department. An award coordinator expressed sadness about the change:
During the annual appraisal exercise, the department head also looks at your research and scholarly activities: why do you never attend international conferences? Do you have any research article coming up? Our colleagues are constantly under pressure. So, I think that they understand the requirements, but sometimes they do not have enough support from the department. I think that the negative reaction of some staff comes from the fact that the senior management of the university or that of the department does not understand the pressure faced by teaching staff. (Award Coordinator, Kowloon University)

A research committee chairman also noted that the current requirements and research assessment exercises of Kowloon University limit academic freedom. The idea of academic freedom acts as ‘both a motivation and a necessary condition of the advancement of knowledge and is a power force in academic cultures’ (Henkel, 2005, p. 151). In this regard, some academic staff felt that their professional autonomy and academic freedom were threatened (McRoy and Gibbs, 2009; Martin-Sardesai et al., 2017). The chairman suggested that Kowloon University should reflect on the negative effects of research assessment exercises:

During a research assessment exercise, some colleagues feel that their academic freedom is restricted when they deviate from their field of study or methodology. This leads to staff feeling sad, under pressure and depressed. (Research Committee Chairman, Department of Fashion)

In addition, the associate dean explained the long-term effect of dividing staff into teaching and research tracks and the change in behaviour. This can create a weak culture and discrimination in the workplace in a department. She described the current situation in the department as follows:

The focus is now on research. So, we have researchers coming in and helping others produce more research. They usually take a very light teaching load. This increases the teaching load of colleagues in the teaching track. That’s fine! I think that the division of labour is important: people do what they are trained for and what they are good at. But, first, there is a staffing problem, staff in the teaching track are overworked as there is little communication with the research track. Generally, they are not aware of the situation until they assume an administrative role. Then, they realise “Oh My God! There
is a problem!” This is a permanent problem. People are not aware until they see the issue or try to start a department. There is a growing specialisation between research or teaching. In addition, colleagues in the teaching track are required to conduct research. This explains why these colleagues are overloaded. I am aware that some colleagues see themselves as second-class citizens. There is more and more resentment around. The question is, are they really treated as second class by their research colleagues or is it just a perception? It could only be senior management, but the blame is on all colleagues. (Associate Dean, Department of Management)

Moreover, a majority of academics mentioned that the shift from teaching to research has led to a mismatch between research and teaching. The main reason is that academic staff mainly produce theoretical and technical research articles. Eventually, the quality of the learning environment will be negatively affected. One department head explained that academics often fail to generate new knowledge in their research outputs.

Many outsiders think that we teach the material we research. Most of the time, this is not the case. It is not like we write a research paper and then use it in class. Only a small percentage of our research outputs are used in class. What matters is that we want our teachers to participate in knowledge creation. (Department Head, Department of Business Communication)

One dean tackled the weakness of theoretical research in teaching and its low quality of teaching and learning:

I think that a lot of findings in the management literature are preliminary findings. I do not think that applying multiple contexts is a valid finding. (Dean, Department of Management)

Another department head echoed these arguments and added that some research papers are far from the learning expectations and needs of students:

In our department, some colleagues conduct very mathematical research on modelling. This may not apply to business students. (Department Head, Department of Business Communication)
In general, the four academic departments show an imbalance between teaching and research (Parker, 2008). As previously discussed, the promotion criteria for academic staff are now determined by their research performance in publishing journal articles and obtaining competitive external grants. In addition, at least 70% of all academic staff are recruited to boost the research performance of a department. Based on Kowloon University’s requirements, all four academic departments designed final year projects to give students the opportunity to carry out and experience research (Kowloon University, 2012). Due to the nature of their discipline, the Department of Fashion and the Department of Engineering have created various types of laboratories for students to develop their research skills and exploration. Specifically, the research work of students can contribute to Kowloon University’s research efforts (Department of Engineering, 2020; Department of Fashion, 2020). Therefore, the Department of Engineering and the Department of Fashion have a higher level of research-based learning. Moreover, the Department of Engineering and the Department of Fashion conduct more applied research, which can effectively integrate disciplinary research findings into curricula and courses. Meanwhile, the interviewees felt that research does not really support teaching in the Department of Business Communication and Department of Management. The main reason is that research is mainly about pure research rather than improving pedagogy. It is hoped that eventually, the Department of Engineering and the Department of Fashion can align their teaching and research even if the two departments are part of a research-intensive institution.

5.2.4 Resilience and adaptation to market forces

Most of the respondents noted that resilience and adaptation to market change is an international trend, not only in their department but also at Kowloon University in general. They understood the change in response to the macro-environment. Dennis (2016) and Martin-Sardessai et al. (2017) also highlighted that educational leaders cannot avoid following typical global movements, including internationalisation, marketisation, quality assurance mechanisms with international bodies and government agencies, graduate employability, managerialism,
privatisation, and neoliberalism. To a certain extent, most academics are aware of the change and understand the need for change.

During the interviews, one dean explained that all academic departments must not only align with the strategies of Kowloon University, but also follow the UGC direction in the higher education system of Hong Kong. In general, the UGC defines a direction based on global movements and stakeholder expectations. Thus, most academics understand that they must adapt to different aspects of market forces. The dean addressed this typical phenomenon in Hong Kong’s HEIs:

Now, even the president or deputy president does not have the ultimate power to decide how much resources we have. The rest is in the hand of the UGC. This is the structure of the system in Hong Kong. Many rules are set by the UGC. The problems faced by universities are related to the UGC. Therefore, most universities primarily design the incentive system to encourage their staff to do what the UGC looks at. (Dean, Department of Management)

Moreover, most departments want to both be globally competitive and engage locally. As the Department of Business Communication and the Department of Management are in the same faculty, both are geared towards becoming globally competitive. First, both departments allocate more resources to research activities on a global scale. Global shipping firms have donated a considerable amount of funds to establish different international research centres within the Department of Business Communication (Department of Business Communication, 2020). Similarly, the Department of Management established an Asian research centre to carry out cross-functional and interdisciplinary research in the Asia Pacific region (Department of Management, 2020). Second, Marginson (2006) showed that various business graduates around the world prefer to enter a mobile profession. Accordingly, both departments aim to develop an internationalisation strategy to improve their graduates’ employability. Third, their faculties consider their academic programmes to be aligned with international accreditation systems. One administrative staff member and one department head also stated that academic programmes
must meet the requirements of international accreditation bodies, while matching the
expectations of employers. To do so, many departments have fundamentally changed the
structure of the curriculum and the intended learning outcomes. This allows academic
programmes to meet international standards and the accreditation of professional bodies. Their
perceptions were explained as follows:

We need to meet certain international accreditations (i.e., AACSB and EQUIS) and some
quality assurance. We also need to follow the guidelines and procedures. The challenge is
that the faculty needs us to change the programme curriculum and improve the
programme outcomes so that students can meet expectations. (Executive Officer,
Department of Business Communication)
Over the past 10 years, the department and the faculty have acquired some accreditation
exercises like AMBA, AACSB and EQUIS. That can help structure the governance of the
department. This is what I see as the major changes in the department (Department Head,
Department of Management).

The Department of Fashion and the Department of Engineering show more local engagement. In
terms of research activities, the Department of Fashion prefers further research collaboration
with local manufacturers to obtain patents in Hong Kong (Department of Fashion, 2020). In
addition, one department head emphasised the importance for the Department of Engineering to
establish close collaboration with industry practitioners, government bodies and academic
institutions. The main objectives are to foster scholarly activities and the development of
academic programmes. This department head indicated that collaboration with industry
practitioners will be of great benefit to the department:

We hope that we can contribute to society through knowledge transfer activities, such as
developing a patent and working with firms to license our patent or creating more
technologies that we would like to have. For example, we collaborate with some
companies to conduct R&D activities through different schemes, such as the ITF
(Information and Technology Fund), from the government. (Department Head, Department of Engineering)

In addition, the Department of Fashion and the Department of Engineering want their academic programmes to align with the Hong Kong context and industry change. Accordingly, both departments expressed their viewpoints in the following terms.

Our programmes are designed to cope with industry change because we plan to train and equip students who will work in the industry. Therefore, it is important to review the change and modify our curriculum accordingly. (Scheme Leader and Programme Leader, Department of Fashion)

For my main duty, I have to go through the syllabus base on the latest business environments. I will try to revise the syllabus and talk to the subject coordinator to update some content (Programme Leader, Department of Engineering).

Based on the study by Shiel et al. (2016), the Department of Fashion and the Department of Engineering strongly support local partnerships and activities. One academic staff member mentioned collaborating with several HEIs on different occasions. This led to the creation of the alternative ‘2+2’ articulation pathway (i.e., students complete a two-year associate degree or higher diploma programme and then pursue a Bachelor’s degree programme for two years). Collaboration can increase post-secondary education opportunities and lead to the massification of higher education. This academic staff member summarised the key points of collaboration with different HEIs:

I am responsible for programme promotion, such as admission talk, info day and roadshow for sub-degree students, with various higher education institutions. (Discipline Leader and Deputy Programme Leader, Department of Fashion)

Another academic staff member from the Department of Engineering also explained:
I serve as programme leader for a Bachelor’s degree under the UGC. In terms of administrative work, I also carry out career talks for secondary school students and promote the programme to different colleges. (Programme Leader, Department of Engineering)

5.3 Leadership styles

5.3.1 Leadership attribution

Fritz Heider (1958) introduced the idea of attribution theory in organisational sciences. According to Martinko et al. (2007, p. 562), ‘attributions are the result of the fundamental cognitive processes by which people ascertain cause and effect so that they can solve problems and become more efficacious in their interactions with their environments’. Since the late 1970s, researchers (e.g., Martinko, 2004; Martinko et al., 2006) have discussed the important contribution of attribution theory to leadership.

In general, the interviewees expressed concerns about the attributes of leadership, including strong interpersonal skills, accountability, foresight, flexibility, teamwork, caring and common sense during the interviews. Unsurprisingly, different scholars (e.g., Davis et al., 2001; Martinko et al., 2007; Cheng, 2009; Marshall, 2012, Jones et al., 2015; Tucker et al., 2016) have also mentioned that these attributes are essential to leadership.

One department head felt that strong interpersonal skills and foresight were key leadership qualities to face the challenges of a department. First, foresighted leaders can look at potential futures that are good for the department and the university, model the vision and look at past obstacles. Second, leaders with a multidimensional set of interpersonal skills (i.e., motivate, communicate, coach, and involve others) can drive change smoothly. Indeed, leaders with interpersonal skills can respond to individual needs in the complex process of change (Gilley et al., 2009). He highlighted that leaders need interpersonal skills and foresight during change:
As a department head, you need to have conceptual skills and a vision. Clear direction is very important. In addition, you need to have people skills to handle the executives of the organisation. We implement a lot of rules and regulations. But people may not like these rules and regulations to be implemented. So, you have to explain why you do it. You also need people skills to be able to explain why these rules are important to them. In addition, you need to give them the impression that we consider their special requests. Therefore, people skills are important to communicate with them so that they will find the rules and regulations useful and will not hinder their professional performance. (Department Head, Department of Management)

A scheme leader and programme leader also expressed the view that teamwork could be a main leadership quality to deal with the challenges of a department. Teamwork can create a friendly and loyal environment. In addition, teamwork combines the weaknesses, talents, strengths, and communication skills of different people to achieve common goals in harmony (Ahn et al., 2004). Tichy and Sherman (1993, pp. 232-233) suggested that ‘companies with old-fashioned, control-based organizations will disappear in the dust. And that can only be accomplished through greater employee teamwork’. In other words, teamwork is a key component of leadership for successful change. The scheme leader and programme leader shared a story of successful teamwork:

As a scheme leader, teamwork in a programme is extremely important as we need to work closely together. For example, we do not know how fashion shows work. Each year, we organise three fashion shows. I do not know the details and I just rely on our teammates. They know the specific arrangements. (Scheme Leader and Programme Leader, Department of Fashion)

One department head and one associate vice president suggested that flexibility is also a core leadership quality. Flexibility is similar to the concept of agility. Flexibility can help leaders adjust their plans to align with current situations. Thus, the department supports productivity during transition periods. More importantly, leaders demonstrate that flexibility is essential when
unexpected events interrupt work or create an immediate problem affecting their subordinates’ work (Yukl and Mahsud, 2010). The department head and the associate vice president explained how flexibility is a key leadership quality during the change process.

I try to be as flexible as possible with my colleagues based on the constraints of what they want to do. So, I do not set them a target, what each colleague has to do. Instead, I focus on what they want to do. My hope is that each staff member in the department has potential and does something he/she is really good at and really likes, so that he/she enjoys working here and can perform well. (Department Head, Department of Business Communication)

I am sensitive to their needs. So, if they have problems or difficulties, I am ready to listen and work with them to find solutions. (Associate Vice President, Kowloon University)

Accountability was another key leadership quality identified to face the challenges of a department. Educational leaders are responsible for entrusted property and public money. Thus, they are required to comply with the guidelines and regulations on how to use resources for each activity and to take responsibilities. Thus, educational leaders need to disclose the use of public money and resources in a transparent manner (Levin, 1974). One department head further elaborated on this point.

Kowloon University controls the resources and money used. In particular, we use public money. Thus, we follow the guidelines and regulations governing the use of public money. (Department Head, Department of Engineering)

Even more importantly, accountability ‘covers … a wide range of the philosophies and mechanisms governing the relationship between any public institution, its governing bodies and the whole society’ (Kogan, 1986, p. 19). Thus, educational leaders are accountable for balancing the interests of stakeholders. One programme leader explained:
Leadership qualities become policies executed between stakeholders. Leaders are accountable to the government and the university and must provide a better learning environment for students. I think it is a tough job. (Programme Leader, Department of Business Communication)

Interestingly, one department head and one associate dean mentioned that common sense was very important for educational leaders to lead a department in a difficult environment. ‘Common sense’ refers to leaders’ use of a pragmatic and straightforward method to handle different tasks and demonstrate an unwavering commitment to growth, learning and success in achieving goals (Professional Certified Coach, 2019). Leaders also have common sense in that they have problem-solving skills and rational thinking (Lancaster, 2011). One department head explained the exact meaning of common sense as follows.

First, common sense: you do things that make sense to you. In other words, you use a principle, such as the rationale behind a certain action. (Department Head, Department of Business Communication)

One associate dean supported this viewpoint. She provided more detail on how the concept of common sense is integrated into the quality of leadership.

I think a critical quality, after observing so many heads, is to understand the situation, how resources are allocated and who does what. (Associate Dean, Department of Management)

Furthermore, the respondents considered creating a caring culture as an essential leadership quality to face the challenges of a department. Caring means that leaders show that they are kind, friendly and sympathetic (Tomkins and Simpson, 2015). It also indicates that leaders focus on caring interpersonal relationships (Louis et al., 2016). Thus, one associate vice president identified creating a caring culture in a department as essential.
The importance is to care about people. At least, you must have feelings, see how you can serve people well and how you can collaborate with your colleagues. (Associate Vice President, Kowloon University)

One discipline leader agreed with this point of view. He provided a concrete example of the importance of a caring culture:

My approach is to understand my colleagues’ personal preferences, expertise, schedule, and difficulties. Through these, I can determine the synergies between colleagues. Therefore, if they want to change their subject and fully use their expertise, I am ready to do it for them. (Discipline Leader, Department of Fashion)

In summary, the attributes of leadership, including strong interpersonal skills, accountability, foresight and common sense, can be considered at least of equal importance to the four academic departments. However, teamwork, caring and flexibility help to explain the differences between the four academic departments.

In this study, the Department of Business Communication and the Department of Management mainly focus on social science research, whereas the Department of Fashion and the Department of Engineering focus on science research. As mentioned by Kowloon University, the Department of Fashion and the Department of Engineering established different types of research laboratories, operated by interdisciplinary research teams within their department. In addition, department heads must demonstrate strong teamwork to bring together researchers from various disciplines to generate new possibilities and create new perspectives to deal with a problem in harmony.

In recent studies, researchers (e.g., Singer, 1991; Wang et al., 2013; McClelland and Holland, 2015) have argued that increasing gender diversity in departments poses a challenge for department heads. Women’s potential for childbearing is seen as a barrier to their career development in a department (McClelland and Holland, 2015). As a result, women are expected to get more support from their department to achieve equal status with men. Gender plays an
important role in Chinese culture. Chinese women are expected to be compliant, passive and feminine. These gender role expectations clearly reflect Chinese women in general behaviour. Among the four academic departments, the Department of Management and the Department of Fashion recruited more than 46% of women as academic staff. As a result, department heads can be said to intentionally exhibit a caring culture to deal with situational constraints and improve subordinates’ trust in them as leaders (Wang et al., 2013).

Furthermore, only the Department of Management is now under emergent change. The other three academic departments are currently under planned innovation. Emergent change is driven by frequent and small releases. Under the emergent change process, a department head must be more flexible, adaptive and responsive to strategic contexts and educational demands.

5.3.2 Communication in the department

In the study, a number of interviewees mentioned that leadership capabilities should demonstrate effective communication in different ways. Bowman (2002, p. 161) explained that ‘the real work of academic chairs demands a diverse set of leadership capabilities: well-honed communication skills’. In addition, Bryman (2007a) suggested that educational leadership needs to foster open communication to give a clear direction to a department.

A number of academics suggested that department heads use different communication methods to develop relationships between senior management and front-line staff, including the dissemination of information during formal occasions, face-to-face meetings and social gatherings, to name but a few. Wood (1999) explained that formal and informal communication channels are the key management process during times of change and planning in the organisation.

One associate head indicated that the department head often organised different formal communication channels with subordinates. To a large extent, these formal channels are a useful way to communicate and collect feedback from different colleagues. Therefore, he identified
different types of formal communication channels and their importance for communication in the 
department.

I believe that senior management has many occasions to share their vision or policies or 
strategies with other colleagues, including retreats, department meetings and committee 
meetings. I do not see any big problem in terms of communication. However, it depends 
on the type of information shared with others. (Associate Head, Department of Business 
Communication)

Another department head suggested that informal communication channels are a better method 
than formal channels in some cases. He mentioned different ways of using informal 
communication channels in practice.

In terms of communication, I think we have many opportunities, such as retreats and 
meetings, which are formal. We also have informal channels (i.e., lunch meetings and 
coffee breaks) to talk with people. Sometimes informal channels are a better approach to 
certain issues. (Department Head, Department of Fashion)

In terms of structure, the faculty now controls the academic department. The dean, associate 
dean and department head work closely and communicate well to provide clear direction and 
objectives, help front-line staff better understand their roles, responsibilities and objectives and 
create a positive mindset for change in the department. In general, the interviewees stated that 
the dean was ready to listen and worked well with the department head. One dean explained that 
the department head and the dean are on the ‘same boat’ in the faculty. Both maintain close 
communication by organising regular meetings and forming committees. Hence, the dean 
presented his idea as follows.

In the department, I am a member of the departmental advisory committee. I also work 
closely with department heads on their direction and operations. I approve a lot of their 
issues. All department heads have regular department head meetings and faculty board
meetings to exchange ideas for collective wisdom. Based on the information I get from the department. I think of senior management as a channel for change. (Dean, Department of Engineering)

Wolverton et al. (2005) emphasised that department heads need to have strong people skills, especially for communication and conflict management. Bowman (2002) proposed that conflict resolution skills are important for educational leaders. In the context of Kowloon University, each department head is required to resolve conflicts between new and current academic staff. Basically, new academic staff are more adaptable to change than current staff.

One programme leader explained the reason for this. She indicated that for cultural reasons, new academic staff are more adaptable to change.

The younger generations adopt the reform more easily. This is a cultural problem. Indeed, people aged 40 and over have deep roots in this department. It is not easy to reform. (Programme Leader, Department of Engineering)

For reasons beyond cultural and personality differences, some academics agreed that new staff are often more adaptable to change in a department. Clearly, Kowloon University has done a lot of preparation to explain the new policies and strategies during the recruitment process and a comprehensive teaching package. Prior to joining the university, new staff members have a general awareness of change. Two academic staff members confirmed the main points.

We go through the recruitment process and discuss the new policies and strategies. Before they start, new staff are already aware of the changing environment. (Research Centre Co-director and Deputy Programme Director, Department of Management)

Um … we do have new colleagues every year, such as new assistant professors and some teaching staff. The chance for them to get a clear picture is on the first day. We have a
teaching package, with rules for classrooms and rules for different things, such as guides.
(Scheme Leader and Programme Leader, Department of Fashion)

During the interviews, many front-line staff criticised the annual appraisal exercises, suggesting that they exacerbate conflicts and gaps between current and new staff. They felt that it was difficult to balance individual merit and collective contributions. Sometimes contributions to the workload are excluded from the appraisal system. In other words, academic staff considered individual merit as a top priority and ignored the collective effect on the growth of the department. They described this as a workplace competition, mentioning the 2020 research assessment exercise. Brinn et al. (2001) indicated that competition clearly identifies winners and losers in the workplace.

One academic staff member expressed sadness about this appraisal system, which pushes staff to become individualistic:

I do not see collective contributions getting credits in the current appraisal system. Everything is at the individual level. By working in a research team, you publish top articles. However, if you are not the first author or corresponding author, your contribution to the work is calculated as a percentage divided by the number of authors. It creates competition within a research team and everyone fights for these roles. In fact, it demotivates people to work with colleagues in the department because there is only one first author and one corresponding author. If a research team consists of more than three people, who will have these two roles? Therefore, the department discourages collective contributions because of this appraisal system. I am firmly against that. (Discipline Leader, Department of Fashion)

Another academic staff member observed how this system changed behaviour and agreed with other front-line staff members. This system creates individual thinking and selfish academics in the department.
Our colleagues must decide if a task is related to their immediate role. If so, they will do more. Otherwise, it will be difficult to motivate them, because they must first meet their needs. (Programme Leader, Department of Engineering)

However, department heads and deans expressed an opposing view on the balance between individual merit and collaborative contributions. Obviously, there was a contradiction between front-line staff and senior management. They believed that the combination of individual contributions contributed to the department’s mission and objectives. Ultimately, Kowloon University retains a competitive advantage in the academic world.

One department head and one dean expressed their views on the notion of balance between individual merit and collaborative contributions.

We have a wide range of research, encompassing the main types of research topics or research proposals we need to conduct. We need to combine or use collective knowledge. Individuals cannot do their own things. In terms of the scale of research projects, we need to encourage individuals to work together. (Department Head, Department of Fashion)

Collaboration or individual contributions go to the merit of the department. In turn, this merit goes to the university. (Dean, Department of Engineering)

Similar to other universities, Kowloon University has adopted a top-down organisation for more than eight decades. This top-down management style means that leaders take control of the decision-making process as much as possible. This has been described as a ‘centralised’ style, which relies on the power of the top to perform different tasks (Tsai and Beverton, 2007). One academic staff member explained the main weaknesses of the top-down management approach, making it difficult for front-line staff to share their expectations and concerns about change.

I think that the individualism of a large organisation is difficult, especially the style of Kowloon University. In general, we adopt a top-down approach. Personally, I do not see
many channels of feedback from front-line staff or junior staff to top management. Therefore, it can be difficult to have an effect on the department or the institution. (Programme Leader and Research Centre Deputy Director, Department of Business Communication)

In this top-down management approach, front-line staff reported communication problems with colleagues. Clearly, resistance, conflict and dissatisfaction with change were common among front-line staff. Many academic staff commented on the effect of the mismatch between evaluation and the expectations of front-line staff due to insufficient feedback channels. To reduce conflicts in the workplace, it is necessary to change the communication styles in a department. Therefore, one academic staff member was dissatisfied with senior management.

When there is a lot of change, people are perplexed. They are not sure of the direction or what the next change will be? I think one thing that senior management or leaders do not want to do or have not done enough is to spend time explaining or talking with their colleagues and responding to the needs of some of these colleagues. They think they are experienced and intelligent people, that they can understand all colleagues. But, in fact, they may not be. (Programme Leader, Department of Business Communication)

Specifically, each academic department shows different levels of control. The Department of Management prefers a centralised style, whereas the Department of Business Communication, the Department of Fashion and the Department of Engineering prefer a decentralised style. The choice of style is largely determined by the behaviour of department heads.

Regarding the Department of Management, the department head prefers to use an institutional approach emphasising rules and policies. Due to the department head’s lack of real power within the institution, the decision-making process takes the form of an illiberal democracy.

Liberal in the process, but in the end quite authoritarian when making a decision. A decision has to be made in the academic department. I adopted institutionalism. I want to make
things clear within an institutional base. If there is a way, we need the limit of the rules and we can explore how to be more supportive. (Department Head, Department of Management)

Indeed, the department head often faced various special requests or demands from academic staff. For instance, when they were approaching a sabbatical and needed more time to do research, they sometimes asked whether they could teach less subjects. In addition, staff were sometimes unwilling to teach new subjects or teach during the day. As a result, the department head adopted a centralised decision-making process to improve the quality of work and accelerate the implementation of decisions within the department.

Some staff members always make special requests, for example, if they are approaching a sabbatical and need more time to do research, they may ask whether they can teach less subjects. There are always different types of requests. They know the basic requirements, policies, rules and regulations. But, that doesn’t mean that they will go with that without any special request. (Head of Department, Department of Management)

For the Department of Business Communication, the department head adopted a democratic approach to motivate staff members. As a result, based on the ability and interest of different academic staff members, the department head allocated them an appropriate workload and tasks.

My management style is a very friendly style. I keep my colleagues as flexible as possible within the constraints of their duties. So, I will not set a target for each of them, what they need to do, what each colleague needs to do. But, rather what they want to do. For example, some colleagues may have good performance in building relationships with industry, some may have very good performance in teaching but be relatively weak in research. For these colleagues, I am willing to let them focus on teaching. For colleagues who are strong in research, I will not ask them to teach too much so that they have more time to focus on research. I hope that every member in this department has potential and is doing something they are really good at and really like, so they enjoy staying here and will do well. (Department Head, Department of Business Communication)
Specifically, the department head generally delegated tasks and authority to different team members according to their know-how and skills. This is a crucial step in a decentralised decision-making process.

I try to delegate my work to the person who has official responsibility. We delegate things related to very specific items to certain committees. Sometimes, I make the decision to delegate based on a person’s skills. This is very important! (Department Head, Department of Business Communication)

The Department of Fashion has created five disciplines, managed by discipline team leaders. Clearly, the department head has delegated tasks and authority to different discipline team leaders (Department of Fashion, 2020).

In addition, the department head was concerned with interpersonal communication, teamwork and subordinate participation. In other words, the department head chose to reduce the hierarchical layers in the department structure.

To lead a department, I have to be a listener first. Internally, I have to be very careful with interpersonal communication and to whether staff members are happy in their department. So, the environment is very important. If you have a harmonious environment, people work together and help each other, which is positive. We encourage people to discuss things in meetings. I think an important quality of leadership is that we have to look at things more holistically to solve departmental issues. (Department Head, Department of Fashion)

As for the Department of Engineering, the department head expected more colleagues to participate in the change process and create harmony and a democratic environment in the department.

My leadership approach is not that of a dictator, I am open-minded, try to discuss and motivate my colleagues to come up with directions. More colleagues can be involved in the
process. If I have to talk with my colleagues, I prefer to go to their offices to talk. (Department Head, Department of Engineering)

5.3.3 Leadership power exertion

Most interviewees mentioned that the department head has the power to serve as more than a nominal leader at the departmental level. As a middle-level manager (Pepper and Giles, 2015; Branson et al., 2016), a department head has the power to manage, operate, and oversee at the departmental level, such as staffing and selection, the recruitment of renowned academic staff and resource allocation through a one line budget. One department head discussed these key points as follows:

In our university, department heads have a lot of discretion and flexibility. For example, we can hire one to two chair professors in a certain area or with the strength/profile we want as long as we have the resource. We can hire someone with strong industry experience as long as that person is willing to come. In a budget, department heads have a lot of power. We focus on administration because a department head chairs many committees, such as the staffing committee, so we can control staffing. Having control over staff salary adjustment and contract renewals is very important. (Department Head, Department of Business Communication)

Compared with the past, department heads today now face the problem of reducing the influence of an academic department or institution. The following reasons may explain this phenomenon.

First, a department head can only make the change at a minimal level because of the rotation of department heads. A department head can only be appointed for a maximum of six years. As a result, he/she has less flexibility to use resources in the long term. In other words, a department head only conducts short-term strategies. Therefore, it is difficult for a department head to make a significant change and transformation to a department. As one department head stated:

Change is most likely determined by departmental and faculty strategies. In the short term, it is much easier to make decisions, such as organising conferences, workshops and even
training programmes. Changing programmes in the long term is much more difficult. One of the reasons is that leadership rotates every three years. A department head can only be appointed for a maximum of six years. Therefore, long-term change is the responsibility of the successor. (Department Head, Department of Business Communication)

Second, a number of academic staff mentioned that Kowloon University applies a top-down approach to hierarchical organisational structure in complex networks. In other words, department heads rely on university policy to design their department’s vision and mission. To a certain extent, department heads have relatively limited authority and power within the department and the institution. One department head reflected on this phenomenon:

Kowloon University adopts a top-down hierarchy. You can always say that you do not have enough authority because senior management follows the same hierarchy. At the university and faculty policy levels, senior management are dominant, but at the departmental level, they are less visible. (Department Head, Department of Management)

Third, Kowloon University has changed its system, giving department heads an unfavourable position at the departmental and institutional levels. Since then, faculty deans have had the power to control and influence their departments. Departments must follow faculty policy and have less autonomy to make their own decisions by being supervised by faculty deans. Indeed, one academic staff member pointed out that faculty deans have the power to control the departments, reducing their influence.

In general, the faculty controls our department. Thus, the department always follows faculty policy. For example, when we promote the student exchange programme, we must follow the criteria of the faculty. I think the faculty is very strong, so we always conform to faculty policy (Associate Head and Research Centre Director, Department of Business Communication)
Even more importantly, a change in the university system has created an unfavourable position for department heads. They are now excluded from the academic council meetings. Thus, they have less opportunity to express their ideas and collect information on behalf of their respective departments. Their influence on the institution has also decreased to a minimal level. In the long term, the power distance between academic departments and the institution will widen. One department head described this situation:

At Kowloon University, there is a regular meeting with the senior management committee. Before, all heads, deans and VPs attended this monthly meeting. Therefore, we could try to influence university policy through this channel. Recently, the system has changed and only the deans and the provost are involved. Thus, the council meeting is much smaller. Now, I think that only the provost chairs the academic council with the deans. Now, I think that it is really hard for department heads to convey our ideas to senior management. (Department Head, Department of Management)

To overcome the weakness of the top-down management style of Kowloon University, most of the interviewees wanted to implement a bottom-up approach with distributed leadership. James et al. (2007) indicated that distributed leadership is in high demand in traditionally top-down organisations. The current success of HEIs through systemic change cannot be based solely on individualised leadership development. To this end, the different levels of academic staff are expected to participate in the organisational hierarchy of HEIs (Eyal and Rom, 2015).

One award coordinator discussed the importance of distributed leadership to support the development of Kowloon University in the future.

In terms of leadership qualities, I think that a leader must have good interpersonal skills, be able to define a vision with his/her followers and be able to mobilise his/her subordinates to work as a team to achieve the strategic objectives necessary to realise the vision. (Award Coordinator, Kowloon University)
Following this award coordinator, one educational development officer and one research centre director suggested that it was possible to put in place distributed leadership at Kowloon University in this changing environment.

I think it is important to empower team members. We are not monitored all the time. Thus, close supervision is sometimes not good. (Educational Development Officer, Kowloon University)

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter reports on the use of thematic analysis to identify the seven main themes to answer the two main research questions. The data analysis process provided different perspectives on change management and leadership styles. During the thematic analysis, I classified the seven themes into two main categories. The four themes relevant to change management were as follows. (1) New development and transformational change in the department; (2) a new teaching pedagogy and quality; (3) challenge of upscaling research; and (4) resilience and adaptation to market forces. The three themes relevant to leadership styles were (1) leadership attribution; (2) communication in the department; and (3) leadership power exertion. This chapter presented the main research results to give an overview of the study. In addition, each department is a unique ecosystem with specific human relationships. As a result, I used each departmental characterisation to support the thematic analysis and compare the departments under each theme. In addition, it prepared the discussion in the next chapter. The next chapter links related academic studies with the main research results.
Chapter 6: Discussion – Lessons learned from the case studies

6.1 Introduction

Some academic papers (e.g., Chiu and Walker, 2007; Cheng, 2009; Wan, 2011; Lau and Ng, 2015; Lau et al., 2017; Lau, 2018a, 2018c) and various published industry reports (e.g., *Higher Education in Hong Kong* in 2002; *Hong Kong Higher Education: To Make a Difference, To Move with the Times* in 2004; *Governance in UGC-funded Higher Education Institutions in Hong Kong* in 2015; and *2018 Policy Address Education Bureau’s Policy Initiatives* in 2018) have addressed the key changes in the Hong Kong higher education sector. Nevertheless, change is endemic and unavoidable in Hong Kong (McRoy and Gibbs, 2009).

Kowloon University reflects a process of change over the last 30 years in Hong Kong. According to Sporn (1996), Kowloon University is a complex organisation with a specific set of characteristics. First, its objectives are ambivalent in terms of services, research, and teaching, and it has insufficient guidelines to achieve them, leading to an ambiguous decision-making process. Second, Kowloon University is a people-oriented institution. Different academic staff members have different expectations of cultural diversity, creating a barrier to university management. Third, Kowloon University must provide a wide variety of services, which poses a problem for setting standards for goal achievement. Fourth, its academic staff demands freedom and autonomy. Their varied interests lead to an often long and complex decision-making process. Fifth, Kowloon University is affected by market forces. During the change process, the university must interact significantly with its external environment. Kowloon University has struggled to implement and maintain continuity, from initiation to institutionalisation. Eventually, change will occur because the intended approaches have not been adopted and decision makers have given up (Wong and Cheung, 2009).

Indeed, the relationships between an institution and its academic departments have been identified in a number of academic papers (e.g., Lee, 2004; McRoy and Gibbs, 2009; Marshall, 2012; Bernardo et al., 2014; Branson et al., 2016). However, the strength of the association between departments and HEIs remains unclear (Lee, 2004; Lucas, 2007). In general, institutional leaders want departments to promote the values and priorities of HEIs. At Kowloon
University, the four academic departments with diverse academic fields (i.e., applied science and business; management and marketing; textile technology, retail and marketing, textile and fashion design, appeal science and engineering, and textile chemistry; logistics and engineering) indicated that it was impossible to combine departmental cultures with the general culture of the university (Lee, 2004). Thus, Edwards (1999) identified academic departments as the main barriers to change in HEIs. Nevertheless, department leaders are committed to increasing the competitive advantage of their university under the constraints of internal and external forces.

Indeed, in the study, departmental leadership played a key role in enhancing the development of academic departments and eventually generated a competitive advantage for Kowloon University. Nevertheless, departmental leadership has long been under-researched in the higher education context (Parry and Bryman 2006; Eacott, 2011). The interviews clearly showed that department heads used their limited resources and capabilities to develop their own academic department and implement strategies to gain the first-mover advantage. Eacott (2008, p. 356) defined leadership strategies as ‘strategies and behaviours relating to the initiation, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of strategic actions within an educational institution, taking into consideration the unique context (past, present and future) and availability of resources, physical, financial and human’. In this sense, department heads are now working in the complex and dilemma-ridden environment of HEIs. For instance, department heads must solve complex human issues regarding current and new colleagues in the change process. They also act as the meat in the sandwich’ in negotiating between the demands of their colleagues and the expectations of senior management (Branson et al., 2016). In addition, department heads run on a one line budget and can therefore have staff/human resources constraints. Moreover, the development of universities leads to a lack of space in terms of classrooms and offices in different departments. In practice, department heads do not completely succeed in generating significant change in academic departments. A top-down management style means that department leaders with limited power play a minimal role in influencing HEI strategies (Bush, 2008; Dennis, 2016). It is not surprising that the role of department head is difficult in the academic context. The purpose of this research was to understand the current change in HEIs in Hong Kong and identify the organisational change and leadership needed to cope with the changing environment of higher education. Hallinger et al. (2013) conducted a systematic review
and topographical analysis of educational leadership and management in Hong Kong. This showed that the Asian literature on educational leadership and management in Hong Kong has gained the awareness of a focused review. In this study, two main questions were answered in this context. What are the key challenges for department leaders when dealing with the reform of academic departments? What leadership styles are best suited to solve these challenges? To the best of my knowledge, this study is one of the few to answer such research questions using qualitative evidence of why and how (Wong and Cheung, 2009).

Accordingly, this chapter is divided into four main sections. After the introduction in Section 6.1, Section 6.2 explores the key challenges for department leaders when dealing with the reform of academic departments. Section 6.3 investigates the most suitable leadership styles to solve different challenges. Finally, Section 6.4 concludes the chapter.

6.2 What are the key challenges for department leaders when dealing with the reform of academic departments?

Based on this research study, it is evident that department leaders in HEIs are currently facing many evolving and complex challenges. Ahsan et al. (2012) stated that there is a lack of research on higher education leaders and their challenges. Regarding the key challenges of department leaders when dealing with the reform of academic departments, four main issues must be addressed: (1) new development and transformational change in the department; (2) a new teaching pedagogy and quality; (3) challenge of upscaling research; and (4) resilience and adaptation to market forces.

Oshagbemi (1997, p. 354) pointed out that change in higher education is due to ‘the pressures of demand, the cultural shift in the perception of higher education, financial pressures, structural and managerial diversity, and diversity of university missions or emphases’. For a more specific discussion, the different elements identified in the study could be classified into internal factors and external factors based on the interviews with different respondents. This can help department leaders understand the current change in HEIs at different levels and develop appropriate strategies accordingly. The department leaders participating in the study generally indicated that they had to follow university policy and UGC governance, comply with international
accreditation bodies (e.g., AACSB and EQUIS), implement managerialism and align with various major educational reforms (e.g., the introduction of the 3+3+4 education system, the emergence of self-financing institutions and programmes) at the micro level (i.e., internal factors). In addition, they had to adapt to a number of market forces, such as marketisation, internationalisation, the knowledge economy, technological advances, reducing the number of students and employers’ expectations of graduate employability at the macro level (i.e., external factors). To a certain extent, department leaders acknowledged that external factors were difficult to manage because of uncontrollable elements. This may explain why internal and external factors have led to significant change in the ecosystem of Hong Kong higher education. As Wong and Cheung (2009) explained, micro-level and macro-level factors influence departments in different ways and at different levels. Therefore, the results of the study showed that each department head demonstrated resilience and adaptation to these factors through development and transformational change (e.g., revamping the curriculum, restructuring the academic department, changing the name of the department and eliminating sub-degree and part-time degree programmes). In short, department heads make unpredictable, exciting, and nonlinear changes (Fullan, 2001). Clearly, contextual forces have generated local recognition of top-priority topics for educational research in the Hong Kong community (Hallinger et al., 2013).

The study also showed that department heads work with limited resources and capabilities to cope with the growing demand. This is consistent with the results of Woodward and Hendry (2004). Due to budget constraints, each academic department competes to acquire more resources and improve their capabilities in a university. A resource is defined as ‘an asset or input to production (tangible or intangible) that an organization owns, controls, or has access to on a semi-permanent basis’ (Helfat and Peteraf, 2003, p. 999). Based on the information provided by the interviewees through several in-depth interviews, the departments upgraded their facilities (e.g., research centres, laboratory, resource centre, teaching theatres) and expanded their space (e.g., creating new buildings or expanding to other locations/regions) to enlarge the scope of their operations. To this end, the interviewees suggested that applying for competitive external research grants and inviting industry practitioners to donate was a good way to acquire abundant resources. In addition, they mentioned that it was essential to recruit high quality students for academic departments to get more budget allocation from the UGC. In particular,
academic departments have started to embrace internationalisation and increase programme diversification. Moreover, Henderson and Cockburn (1994) explained that organisations need to upgrade their capabilities to cope with new demands and tasks. Organisational capability is identified as ‘the ability of an organization to perform a coordinated set of tasks, utilizing organizational resources, for the purpose of achieving a particular end result’ (Helfat and Peteraf, 2003, p. 999). Unsurprisingly, the interviewees explained that their academic departments aggressively recruited renowned academic staff from the world’s top 100 universities in the league table and professionals (i.e., PoPs) to manage the different departments and coordinate between academics and industry practitioners. The study revealed that the resources and capacities needed seemed to be in high demand during the change process. This perspective is supported by the argument of McRoy and Gibbs (2009) and Teixeira et al. (2012). It is not surprising that each academic department strives for new development and transformational change in a competitive environment.

Although Kowloon University reached a turning point after changing from a teaching university to a research-oriented university from the 1990s, departments were asked to develop an innovative teaching pedagogy for professional education. The interviewees emphasised that professional education is the result of various factors, such as the technological revolution, complex business models, economic growth and the requirements of international accreditation bodies. As suggested by various researchers (e.g., Becker, 1993; Ng et al., 2009; Pallis and Ng, 2011; Dunn, 2014; Lau and Ng, 2015; Lau et al., 2018c), the interviewees showed that professional education is one of Kowloon University’s educational approaches to deal with the changing demands of employers and enhance competitiveness through human capital. Therefore, the interviewees indicated that professional education has fundamentally changed the traditional teaching pedagogy by enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, encouraging applied research and consultancy projects, changing course design, organising various subject activities, creating specialised or service-learning subjects and creating an interactive learning environment. Indeed, academic staff are expected to be able to transfer job-related skills to students, use a number of innovative teaching methods for effective teaching and integrate academic theories and industrial knowledge. This may explain why more and more universities use PoPs with industry backgrounds to deliver professional education to various students. In addition to
professional education, the interviewees believed that eLearning should be used to develop a new teaching pedagogy. The good news is that Kowloon University supports its academic departments to launch eLearning through different channels and formats, such as video resources, blended learning and MOOCs, to name but a few. In general, the interviewees felt that eLearning was able to support teaching, create interactive classrooms and enhance students’ independent learning in a flexible way. Clearly, eLearning can enhance the development of professional education to advance the strategies of universities in the years to come.

In addition, academic departments face the challenge of upscaling research in different ways. For instance, the interviewees mentioned publishing research papers in top-tier and high-impact journals, obtaining competitive external research grants and boosting the university’s rankings in different league tables. This view has been supported by different educators, such as Sikes (2006), Currie (2008) and Martin-Sardesai et al. (2017). Most department heads investigate different approaches to increase research capacity collectively in a department. However, there is a contradiction between Calma’s (2015) standpoint and the reality of academic departments. This phenomenon may be due to the culture of performativity. In a performatory culture, academic staff favour individualism rather than collective work. The focus on collectivism is less important for academic staff. This creates a challenge for department heads trying to encourage academic staff to expand their research activities or engage in research with other colleagues. To make matters worse, new academic staff and current staff typically have completely different cultures and generations. In the long term, department heads may have difficulty managing research activities and may not be able to create a mentor system to establish a healthy research culture.

As mentioned before, the allocation of limited resources between teaching and scholarly activities is another problem facing department heads. Similar to Skelton’s (2012) perspective, the interviewees reflected that the segregation of teaching from research can lead to de-professionalised teaching. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching and student learning will suffer when resources are gradually transferred from teaching to research. In addition, department heads must manage people and issues that affect them, such as annual appraisal exercises, employee recruitment and promotion, merit, incentive system and organisational culture. More
importantly, the interviewees mentioned that department heads should have good interpersonal or human skills to enhance the culture and spirit of academic departments. However, most department heads are faced with a complex situation in which most front-line staff are overworked and the incentive system is clearly unfair to teaching staff and favourable to research staff. This policy may be related to the emphasis placed on research in a research-led culture. The perception that teaching staff are inferior and that academic staff are eligible for promotion if they are able to obtain research grants and publications persists. Indeed, organisational culture is an obstacle to the development of scholarly activities in a department, as older staff are deeply rooted in a department and unlikely to change their mindset and new staff may feel like second-class citizens in this department. Similarly, Lucas (2007) and Skelton (2012) concluded that there are increasing power differentials between research status and teaching status in all departments of a university. It is clear that there is a significant gap between the perception of front-line staff and that of senior management. It is also evident that departments follow the direction of their university to increase their research productivity through a research policy and a strong research culture. Nevertheless, the recognition of the operation remains ambiguous. Thus, the relationship between teaching and research activities will be obviously fragmented in the years to come.

6.3 What leadership styles are best suited to solve these challenges?

In the higher education sector, it is important to identify the most appropriate leadership styles to meet the challenges of a changing environment (van Ameijde et al., 2009). Leadership style is described as ‘the managerial approach of the recognised leader of the organization and their influence on the organization’ (Wood, 1999, p. 136). Uwazurike (1991) and Alonderiene and Majauskaite (2016) pointed out that research study concerning about leadership styles in the higher education context remains quite limited. In terms of leadership styles best suited to solve challenges, three main issues must be addressed: (1) leadership attribution; (2) communication in the department; (3) leadership power exertion.

In terms of leadership attribution, Howell and Costley (2006) proposed that leadership styles have specific attributes. To carry out a function and achieve a goal, leaders use unique leadership attributes. As shown by the research results, many interviewees stressed that strong interpersonal
skills, accountability, common sense, foresight, caring, flexibility, and teamwork were important leadership attributes. In particular, the interviewees proposed that showing interest in a follower’s personal feelings and providing useful information that encourages a follower to complete a task effectively contributed to the profound change of Kowloon University over the last three decades. Following Robbins and Coulter (2014), the interviewees clearly expected department heads to possess three essential sets of skills: technical skills (i.e., proficiency and knowledge in a particular field), human skills (i.e., ability to work well with others) and conceptual skills (i.e., ability to conceptualise complex and abstract situations within the organisation). Among these skills, the interviewees believed that human relationships were the most important in educational leadership. This view was supported by Heck and Hallinger (2005) and Alonderiene and Majauskaite (2016). However, the respondents pointed out that Kowloon University overlooked the importance of leadership training during the interviews. As a result, one academic department (i.e., the Department of Management) often changed its department head because of insufficient human skills to deal with complex and unique human issues. This situation may be due to internationalisation, a wide variety of people from different cultural backgrounds generating complex human problems. Similar to Dinham et al. (2011), Mok and Yu (2011) and Szeto et al. (2015), the results showed that department heads faced unresolved challenges in a ‘self-managing context’. The management of human capital is an urgent necessity for department heads. As Ocho (1982, p. 39) proposed, educational leaders ‘must be given the knowledge, insight and skills to enable them to perform their jobs effectively and efficiently’. As a result, it is recommended that Kowloon University allocates more resources to the Educational Development Centre or the Human Resources Department to design and implement a tailor-made leadership training programme, workshops, seminars and symposiums for department leaders. This view is corroborated by the fact that leaders can increase their skill level and enrich knowledge in the workplace (Baldwin, 2009; Hallinger, 2011).

Our results showed that communication is an essential element in terms of human skills in leadership. Indeed, through the identified communication channels, staff receive important information and commit to the organisation (Bowman, 2002; Wolverton et al., 2005). As in other organisations, the interviewees identified the formal and informal communication channels commonly used in a department. Wood (1999, p. 136) defined communication channels as ‘the
formal or informal processes by which the message gets from the sender to the receiver’. Based on the interviews, department heads used different communication approaches, both formal (e.g., retreats, department meetings and committee meetings) and informal (e.g., social gatherings and face-to-face meetings), to build strong relationships between senior management and front-line staff. Most front-line staff and department heads indicated that informal communication channels are desirable in a more favourable climate or atmosphere. Similar to White et al. (2010) and Men (2014), the interviewees acknowledged that informal communication is best for conveying complex information to persuade or influence. This can increase the sense of belonging and community among colleagues. This study also indicated that practical face-to-face communication is preferable to purely written communication in a department. They mainly relied on lunch meetings, tea receptions, recreational activities and knocking on doors to discuss, to name but a few. As expected, it is easier for department leaders to create teamwork and high job satisfaction. As mentioned earlier, human skills are very important for department leaders to strengthen their interpersonal relationships with their subordinates. According to the interviews and archives, the representative characteristic of Kowloon University is its top-down approach. In this top-down approach, front-line staff lack feedback channels, consultation sessions and communication channels to discuss their expectations and concerns about change. Similar to Men’s (2014) study, the interviewees suggested that this top-down approach creates asymmetrical communication to control or influence employee behaviour based on management requirements. Studies have shown that ineffective communication creates poor coordination and cooperation, leading to gossip, rumours and tensions (Wood, 1999). Adding to that, the results of this study revealed that department heads face employee resistance and job dissatisfaction. Given the dynamic environment and cultural diversity, they proposed to implement a bottom-up approach as an effective means of communication to coordinate different stakeholders to produce high group productivity (Robbins and Coulter, 2014). Consistent with the interesting results of Men (2014), the experience and observations of the interviewees in the workplace suggested that symmetrical communication can improve employee attitudes in a department. To a large extent, the interviewees did not want to lag behind expectations and reality and assumed that a bottom-up approach would enhance communication and the change process.
As discussed earlier, universities interact with a constantly changing, interdependent and fuzzy environment. In other words, distributed leadership is well suited to the context (Vuori, 2017). Bolden et al. (2009, p. 261) described the concept of distributed leadership as ‘a considerable degree of commonality in the views and perceptions expressed about the idea’. In particular, the interviewees suggested that distributed leadership would be appropriate if Kowloon University considered shifting from a top-down to a bottom-up approach. Despite this, the results showed that Kowloon University adopts a top-down approach. The interviewees felt that senior management lacked a visionary or inspirational leadership style to cultivate distributed leadership. Referring to Starr (2014), this precisely describes how universities remain the sole ‘executive’ leader with ultimate authority. There are obvious tensions between the effects of the top-down process and bottom-up process (Bolden et al., 2009). Previous studies have shown that HEIs cannot rely solely on individualised leadership development in long-term systemic change and that the process of distributed leadership in HEIs requires a division of power among team members across the institution (Shattock, 2003; James et al., 2007). However, the interviewees stated that Kowloon University is unwilling to change its organisational structure, culture and empowerment. In the absence of teamwork, collaborative work culture, openness to leadership boundaries and a promising position in the decision-making process, the PLC cannot be involved in the organisational hierarchy of the university (Bolden et al., 2009; Jones et al., 2015; Eyal and Rom, 2015). This result is very disappointing. It is unclear whether distributed leadership can influence leadership in universities. It is difficult for department heads to share responsibilities and power among members of their academic departments because of communication problems, academic identities and values, the complexity and coexistence of various missions of the higher education community and diverse academic leadership roles (Zepke, 2007; Vuori, 2017). As a result, distributed leadership may not be promising. Ultimately, universities may review their organisational structure, examine the role of new department leaders and refine mechanisms that encourage collective efforts to empower or delegate leadership at the departmental level (Vuori, 2017). This study highlights the urgent need to investigate the mismatch between current leadership styles and change management in universities, leading to a significant gap between senior management and front-line staff.
6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I answer the two main research questions. (1) What are the key challenges for department leaders when dealing with the reform of academic departments? (2) What leadership styles are best suited to solving these challenges? Using the research findings in Chapter 4, I link the literature with the results. This process provides a basis for comparing previous research studies with the results of the thesis. In other words, it allows me to re-interpret the literature in light of further analysis or new findings or to read new studies to highlight emerging ideas or significant results (Boote and Beile, 2005). As a result, the research results are supplemented by previous research work to answer the two research questions of the thesis.
Chapter 7: Concluding remarks

7.1 Introduction

This research study is one of the few studies to explore and analyse departmental leadership in HEIs, particularly in Hong Kong. This chapter consists of four main sections. Following this section, the limitations of the study and directions for future research are presented in Section 7.2. The academic and managerial implications of the study are discussed in Section 7.3. Finally, Section 7.4 concludes the thesis. The main contribution of the study is to identify the specific nature, role and functions of department leaders in the changing environment of higher education. Fullan’s (1989) three-stage change process model (i.e., initiation/mobilisation, institutionalisation and implementation) clearly showed how each academic department has dealt with the internal constraints and various challenges posed by nonlinear and unpredictable external market forces. Thus, the study identified the most appropriate leadership styles for successfully developing academic departments and expanding HEIs in the dynamic environment of higher education. Indeed, this study used Hong Kong as a case study to generate a new area of study for educational leadership research. In addition, this study provides clear direction and guidelines for department leaders on preparing for the future of universities in the 21st century.

7.2 Limitations of the study and future research directions

In the field of educational research, this study is one of the few to investigate and analyse departmental leadership in HEIs, particularly in Hong Kong. However, it is essential to consider the pitfalls and limitations of this study.

First, it focused on a specific phenomenon in Hong Kong, presenting an in-depth and contextualised realisation of human experience through the thorough analysis of specific cases (Polit and Beck, 2010). However, the generalisability of the results is limited as a result of this case study approach (Leung, 2015). The study investigated four academic departments in one UGC-funded institution as a sample. Therefore, it was limited by the small number of study participants (Lu et al., 2018) and a single institutional context. In the future, researchers could conduct comparative studies in other countries or comprehensive studies comparing UGC-
funded and self-financing HEIs in Hong Kong to confirm the results of this study. Polit and Beck (2010, p. 1451) stated that ‘generalization is an act of reasoning that involves drawing broad conclusions from particular instances – that is, making an inference about the unobserved based on the observed’. In educational research, generalisability gives educators confirmation of predetermined concepts (Fendler, 2006). Therefore, it is crucial to adapt the findings to different contexts, times and people instead of focusing on a single study.

Second, the collection of qualitative data based on self-assessment among interviewees may influence the interpretation of the research results (Lau, 2018b). To a certain extent, this study was subject to bias in terms of interviewees’ willingness to respond and report accurately. The interviewees may have been reluctant to discuss the current change in HEIs and the exact leadership needs to deal with the changing environment of higher education due to a lack of leadership knowledge, potential repercussions and potential lawsuit from government bodies. As interpretive researchers, private connotations or feelings are subjective, and personal interpretations, actions or statements generate subjective meanings (Pring, 2004). Future studies should collect data from a large-scale survey to increase generalisability, enhance objective judgement and accurate measures supported by considerable quantitative data (Habermas, 1972). In practice, quantitative data are examined with a set of analytical methods and meticulous steps to support the making of decisions (Cavana et al., 2001). A mixed methods approach with qualitative and quantitative techniques can offset the weaknesses of purely qualitative and purely quantitative research approaches.

Third, this study was exploratory. In other words, it aimed to explore the current change in HEIs and identify the organisational change and leadership needed to cope with the changing context of higher education at the micro level. Macro-level analysis consists of the institutional and geopolitical context, but this level of analysis was excluded from this study. As Buchanan et al. (2013) suggested, the key dimensions of the institutional context (i.e., the role of the media, regulation, finance and governance) affect the role of middle management and distinguish the task environment of an organisation. In addition, the globalisation of higher education is a current trend in the 21st century. This indicates that HEIs are required to legitimise their practices and policies in a geopolitical context. Nevertheless, an increase in political interference
will determine the operations and governance of HEIs in the future. Therefore, future research should incorporate government regimes (Koch, 2014). As a result, illustrating the institutional context and the geopolitical context can identify the interactions between internal and external forces in the changing context of higher education. It can also enable educational leaders to develop new knowledge about change management in HEIs. Future research should focus on a cross-cultural comparative framework to examine the interface between leadership styles and cultures in HEIs, which may have significant effects. It may also be interesting to use BSC as a performance management tool to critically examine the performance of educational leaders in the development of HEIs.

Fourth, the research design framework was based on my previous examination of the relationship between departmental leadership and change in HEIs. However, key aspects of human behaviour and human psychology were excluded from this study due to limitations on time and scope as a single researcher. Future research could adopt a more inclusive approach by analysing the proactive behaviour of department leaders to strengthen the association between departmental leadership and change in HEIs. The proactive behaviour of leaders describes their engagement in future-oriented and self-initiated activities to generate change in the workplace and deal with chaotic situations. This type of behaviour is in high demand in HEIs, because HEIs are gradually decentralising, change is complex, dynamic and rapid and there is a desire for innovation (Ouyang et al., 2019). In the future, an analysis of how the work environment affects the behaviour of leaders and how leaders overcome this constraint would be warranted.

7.3 Academic and managerial implications of the study

This study has two main implications. From a theoretical viewpoint, it confirms that department leaders (i.e., middle managers) play an essential role in successfully developing academic departments and expanding HEIs. Brown and Rutherford (1998) also showed that department heads cannot be ignored in the ever-changing environment of higher education. However, researchers, educators and industry practitioners have not recognised the unique role, nature, and functions of department heads in the changing environment of higher education. So far, different types of leadership styles have emerged. Most studies have failed to study the most appropriate leadership styles of department leaders facing challenges. Moreover, these studies have heavily
relied on Western experiences. As a result, this study fills this research gap in educational leadership research and provides a new area of study in Asia, using Hong Kong as an illustrative example. This fundamental work encourages future studies to conduct a comparative study in other regions to generalise the research findings. Hong Kong HEIs have experienced change and unresolved challenges over the last 40 years. It is urgently necessary to analyse how department heads can prepare for change in the real context of higher education. In addition, this study used Fullan’s (1989) three-stage change process model (i.e., initiation/mobilisation, institutionalisation and implementation) to help HEIs respond to the dynamic environment of higher education in a timely manner and identify appropriate methods to gain the first-mover advantage. The three-stage change process model helps understand what happens during each stage and the behaviour to adopt to succeed. To consolidate its content, this study not only used valuable historical information and previous data from various qualitative documents, such as HEI improvement plans, government reports, archives, newsletters and websites, but also conducted in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with 30 interviewees, from front-line staff to managerial positions in four academic departments. In other words, it performed sophisticated analyses of the four main principles (i.e., clarity, richness, innovation and practicality) of research (Lau et al., 2019).

From a managerial viewpoint, the results help understand the current change in HEIs and predict their development in a transdisciplinary world. Indeed, 30 interviewees provided first-hand information, such as stories, to discuss and reflect on the valuable experience of the transformation process of HEIs in recent decades and the needs of leadership to deal with the changing context of higher education. This provides department heads with a useful reference for overcoming major challenges in terms of changing roles and improving standards. Accordingly, educational research and practices were closely linked (Richard and Patricia, 1995). The interviews reinforced the idea that the role of department heads in HEIs is becoming more managerial than academic. Most of the department heads shared their belief that they performed as administrative managers. They devoted more time to service and administration not only for the department but also for the faculty, university and community. As department leaders, they indicated that they recruited the ‘right people’ to perform the ‘right tasks’ to accomplish the mission of the department. To this end, they had to maximise their success in leading, managing
and operating their respective departments. This type of leadership is crucial for the university. In some cases, the department heads served for relatively short periods, as they preferred to focus on academic research. This makes succession planning very important. In addition, the department heads addressed various issues relating to HEIs at the institutional level, such as programme accreditation, curriculum review and publication policy.

Therefore, this study creates a possible scenario for the ‘feasibility’ of the job of department head by an individual. The relevant issues identified related to department heads included long working hours, commonly reported difficulties with underperforming staff, organising appropriate development or training for academic staff and balancing the roles of manager and academic leader (Smith, 2002). Based on expectations and reality, distributed leadership is best suited to face these challenges. In distributed leadership, individuals belonging to interdependent, interconnected and cooperative school cultures can achieve organisational goals when they assume a developmental role and are perceived as more motivated, committed and valued with a strong sense of institutional belonging (Starr, 2014). Nevertheless, it is unclear whether individual or team work is preferable and should be explored. Clearly, department leaders face the dilemma of balancing the demands of colleagues and the expectations of senior management. However, their role and the exertion of their leadership power in their departments and institutions are gradually diminishing under internal and external conditions. As a result, the transformation of their leadership or the question of whether there is more censorship and control over their leadership remains a concern. Nevertheless, the current situation in HEIs includes micromanagement, high power distance, loss of authority and laissez-faire attitude, weakening the commitment of department heads to distributed leadership. Future research should adopt a more comprehensive investigation of the role of department leaders and the needs of departments and the relationship between senior management and department leaders (Brown and Rutherford, 1998). In addition, governments tend to explore new methods of governance to enable HEIs to improve and adjust to national policies to distinguish between different missions or localities, for example. Therefore, governments will increasingly attempt to empower external stakeholders and students to have more influence over HEIs. HEIs will need to redesign and redeploy their governance structures to become more transparent in the future (Jongbloed et al., 2018). To this end, the changing role of department leaders and the adjustment of the departmental context to
current economic conditions should be explored in future research. Furthermore, the context of individual HEIs is affected by the political challenges of governments. These political factors can add uncertainty to the governance of HEIs and the operations of academic departments. HEIs often fail to control external factors. Therefore, educational leaders should design and implement measures to facilitate the change process and diminish the risk of deteriorating working environments.

7.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I note the limitations of this study, which arose from a lack of resources and time. Nevertheless, this small-scale study could be used to generate a large-scale and comparative study forthcoming future. To achieve this, possible directions for future investigation are proposed to generalise the research results and fill a existing research gap. In addition, I highlight the academic and managerial implications of the study in the higher education sector, particularly in Hong Kong. This study explored the relationship between change in HEIs and departmental leadership, confirming that departmental leadership is essential to the well-being of HEIs. Its findings offer constructive guidance for department leaders seeking to lead change in HEIs through appropriate strategies and plans for moving forward.
Appendix 1: The key developments and the setting for eight UGC-funded institutions in Hong Kong

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of institution</th>
<th>Predecessor College &amp; Year of Establishment</th>
<th>Year of Upgrading to University Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The University of Hong Kong</td>
<td>1887: The Hong Kong College of Medicine for Chinese 1907: Renamed the Hong Kong College of Medicine</td>
<td>1912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Chinese University of Hong Kong</td>
<td>Three colleges merged together: 1949: New Asia College 1951: Chung Chi College 1956: United College of Hong Kong</td>
<td>1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong Baptist University</td>
<td>1956: Hong Kong Baptist College</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hong Kong Polytechnic University</td>
<td>1937: Government Trade School 1947: Hong Kong Technical College 1972: Hong Kong Polytechnic</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The City University of Hong Kong</td>
<td>1984: City Polytechnic of Hong Kong</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lingnan University</td>
<td>1888: Canton Christian College in Guangzhou 1952: Lingnan School was merged into Sun Yat-sen University 1978: Lingnan College</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education University of Hong Kong</td>
<td>Five colleges merged together: 1939: Northcote College of Education 1951: Grantham College of Education</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Sir Robert Black College of Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Hong Kong Technical Teachers’ College</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Institute of Language in Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>The Hong Kong Institute of Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Lo et al (2016)
Appendix 2: List of academic journals containing research articles associated with the development of HEIs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Title of journal*</th>
<th>Editorial Office</th>
<th>Established year</th>
<th>Name of publisher%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>Africa EDU REV</td>
<td>ZAF</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>TANDF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>Asia Pacific EDU REV</td>
<td>KOR</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>SPGR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>Asia Pacific J of EDU</td>
<td>SGP</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>TANDF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.</td>
<td>A&amp;E in HE</td>
<td>GBR</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>TANDF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.</td>
<td>Australian J of EDU</td>
<td>AUS</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>SP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.</td>
<td>British EDUC RES J</td>
<td>GBR</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>WY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.</td>
<td>British J of SOCLY of EDU</td>
<td>GBR</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>TANDF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.</td>
<td>EDU PO ANAL ARCH</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>ASU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>EDUC ADMIN Q</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>SP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.</td>
<td>EDUC MGT, ADMIN and LDSP</td>
<td>GBR</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>SP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K.</td>
<td>EDUC RES for PO&amp;PRA</td>
<td>SGP</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>SPGR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.</td>
<td>GN, SOCs and EDU</td>
<td>GBR</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>TANDF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.</td>
<td>HE</td>
<td>NLD</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>SPGR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.</td>
<td>HE Q</td>
<td>GBR</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>WY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O.</td>
<td>INT J of EDUC MGT</td>
<td>GBR</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>EP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.</td>
<td>INT J of LDSP in EDU</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>TANDF</td>
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<td>-----</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q.</td>
<td>J of Asian PPO</td>
<td>HKG</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>TANDF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.</td>
<td>J of EDU PO</td>
<td>GBR</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>TANDF</td>
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<tr>
<td>S.</td>
<td>J of EDUC ADMIN</td>
<td>HKG</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>EP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.</td>
<td>J of EDUC ADMIN and</td>
<td>AUS</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>TANDF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HIST</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.</td>
<td>J of F&amp;HE</td>
<td>GBR</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>TANDF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>J of HE PO and MGT</td>
<td>AUS</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>TANDF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.</td>
<td>J of RES on LDSP EDU</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>SP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X.</td>
<td>J. of VE&amp;T</td>
<td>GBR</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>TANDF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y.</td>
<td>LDSP and PO in SChs</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>TANDF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z.</td>
<td>Oxford REV of EDU</td>
<td>GBR</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>TANDF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA.</td>
<td>PERSPECT: PO&amp;PRA in</td>
<td>GBR</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>TANDF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BB.</td>
<td>PD in EDU</td>
<td>GBR</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>TANDF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC.</td>
<td>SCH LDSP &amp; MGT</td>
<td>GBR</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>TANDF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DD.</td>
<td>STUD in HE</td>
<td>AUS</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>TANDF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE.</td>
<td>TE and MGT</td>
<td>GBR</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>SPGR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FF.</td>
<td>The J of CHE</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>TANDF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GG.</td>
<td>The J of HE</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td>TANDF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abbreviation:

* ADMIN – Administration; ANAL – Analysis; ARCH – Archives; A&E – Assessment and Evaluation; CHE – Continuing Higher Education; EDU – Education; EDUC – Educational; F&HE – Further and Higher Education; GN – Globalization; HE – Higher Education; HIST – History; INT – International; J – Journal; LDSP – Leadership; MGT – Management; PD – Professional Development; PERSPECT – Perspectives; PO – Policy; PO&PRA – Policy and Practice; PPO – Public Policy; Q – Quarterly; RES – Research; REV – Review; SCH – School; SOCs – Societies; SOCLY – Sociology; STUD – Studies; TE – Tertiary Education; VE&T - Vocational Education & Training

# AUS – Australia; GBR – United Kingdom; HKG – Hong Kong; KOR – South Korea; NLD – Netherlands; SGP – Singapore; USA – United States; ZAF – South Africa

(Source: [https://countrycode.org/](https://countrycode.org/))

% ASU – Arizona State University; EP – Emerald Publishing; SP – SAGE Publishing; SPGR – Springer; TANDF – Taylor and Francis; WY – Wiley Online Library
## Appendix 3: Interview questions

| Section A – Your Background Information | 1. Date of interview: |
|                                          | 2. Your name: |
|                                          | 3. Your email address: |
|                                          | 4. Your job position: |
|                                          | 5. Your working higher education institution: |
|                                          | 6. Your working department: |
|                                          | 7. How many years have you worked in the higher education institution? |

<p>| Section B – Role of Educational Leadership in Higher Education Institutions | 1. Could you explain your role and job duties in the academic department? |
|                                                                            | 2. What are the key changes that have occurred in your academic department in the past 3 – 5 years? Any examples on that? |
|                                                                            | 3. What are the key leadership qualities needed as a leader to meet the challenges your department is facing? |
|                                                                            | 4. How would you describe your leadership approach? |
|                                                                            | 5. What kinds of universities strategies/policies are you following to be cope with? Any examples on that? |
|                                                                            | 6. What has been your experience of people’s reaction to change? |
|                                                                            | 7. In your opinion, how can senior leaders have best communication with their vision, strategies, and ideas? |
|                                                                            | 8. Do you believe that your colleagues possess the clear concepts of their roles, objectives, and responsibilities? How do you think to improve their understanding if necessary? |
|                                                                            | 9. What is your thought on the right balance between individual merit and collective contribution? |
|                                                                            | 10. What is the attitude of most academics to being managed towards reform? |
|                                                                            | 11. Do you agree that your colleagues have well-awareness about the changes? Do you perceive that they comprehend the necessary for change? In addition, what are the influences of not acknowledging/comprehending the necessary for change? |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>How do you see the relationship between teaching and research activities? Have any changes occurred recently in their relationships?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>What is your thought on working well together with academics and professionals? Have any changes occurred recently in their relationships?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Do department heads have enough power to actually serve as more than nominal leaders? What powers do they actually have? Do they have any discretionary budget to do anything creative?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>How do you exert influence in the academic department and institution?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4: List of interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Working Period of HEIs (_years)</th>
<th>Name of Department</th>
<th>Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Department Head</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Department of Business Administration</td>
<td>November 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Department Head</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Department of Business Administration</td>
<td>October 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Associate Head and Research Centre Director</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Department of Business Administration</td>
<td>October 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Associate Head</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Department of Business Administration</td>
<td>November 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Programme Leader and Deputy Research Centre Director</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Department of Business Administration</td>
<td>November 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Programme Leader</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Department of Business Administration</td>
<td>October 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Department of Business</td>
<td>November 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Department</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Department of Management</td>
<td>October 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Associate Dean</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Department of Management</td>
<td>November 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
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<td>30</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Co- Research Centre Director and Deputy Programme Director</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>October 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
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<td>November 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
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<td>Department of Engineering</td>
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<td>October 2018</td>
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**Appendix 5: The three stages of the University improvement process and the outcomes of the academic department of change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initiation Stage</td>
<td>To gain an university status; To pursue impactful research; To encourage high quality, innovative and professional education; To revamp the programme curriculum in order to align with international bodies accreditation, higher educational reform, industry’s expectations and nurture graduates as future leaders in a society; To foster internationalisation; To boost up the number of students</td>
<td>Engaged a number of energetic, young and active researchers; Drafted long-term development plans; Demonstrated aggressive strategies to collaborate with different renowned universities in the world; Created high expectations and shared coherent missions, strategic goals, blueprints, far-sighted visions, educational assessment systems, learning and teaching development strategies; Adopted the innovative pedagogical approach for teaching and learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase</td>
<td>Features</td>
<td>Outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>The leadership position adopted the maximum appointment period. The change of leadership fosters organisational change and encourages employee engagement; The University followed Hong Kong higher educational reform and trends. To this end, the departments used an effective student-centered method, encouraged professional development with industrial practitioners, highlighted a comprehensive-learning platform, revamped educational programmes and adopted cross-disciplinary teaching practices; Providing a sponsorship for an academic staff to obtain a doctoral degree qualification; In order to oversee the development plan and maintain a close communication with colleagues, both formal meetings and social gatherings were organised. Each individual had the potential to</td>
<td>Successful managerial and promotion system; Transform from technical college to university status; Interdisciplinary and professional working teams; Reinforcement of development strategies and action plans; The academic departments supported the university’s visions and missions. The university culture was more expected “managerialism”; Competition between the academic departments became an explosive issue. Indeed, business managerialism and external market forces in the market driven system intensified the phenomenon; The tension between academic freedom and government research evaluation; The conflict between teaching and research track academic staff</td>
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<td>become different committee members to reflect the feedback;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic staff is required to publish top-tier journals, obtain external competitive research grants and collaborate with overseas researchers;</td>
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<td>Different awards like research, teaching and service to appreciate the staff outstanding performance;</td>
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<td>Each individual had the chance to lead a project and programme to achieve extraordinary outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase</td>
<td>Features</td>
<td>Outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutionalisation Stage</td>
<td>Generated an innovative educational environment and culture;</td>
<td>Listed as “Top 50 Under 50” list of world’s top young universities under QS World University Ranking and recognized as “Top 200 in the World” under Times Higher Education’s World University Ranking;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enlarged the campus area and upgraded the campus facilities to create a stimulating environment for learning, teaching and research;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Successfully transformed from teaching-centric to research-centric university;</td>
<td>Created an innovative and interactive student learning environment;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most of the academics obtained doctoral degree qualification and produced impactful research;</td>
<td>Sustain university capacity building;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expanded a range of programmes;</td>
<td>Stakeholders appreciated the academic department demonstrated the betterment of Hong Kong, the nation and the world;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attained internationalisation through the strategic collaboration with renowned universities worldwide;</td>
<td>The academic departments successfully established diversified disciplines and specialised subjects to foster the growth of professional education</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of students grown rapidly and produced a number of professionals (i.e., preferred graduates);</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Restructured the academic</td>
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</table>
departments through the different means like merging, phasing out, creation and renaming
## Appendix 6: Thematic analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Development and Transformational Change in Department</strong></td>
<td>Upgrading to University Level&lt;br&gt;Enhancement of Interdisciplinary Collaboration&lt;br&gt;Restructure of Academic Department&lt;br&gt;The Change of Department Name&lt;br&gt;Frequent Change of Department Heads&lt;br&gt;Implementation of Theories, Models and Frameworks&lt;br&gt;Revamp of the Curriculum&lt;br&gt;Incentives for the Adoption of Changing Environment&lt;br&gt;Adaptation in the Pace of Change&lt;br&gt;A Big Retirement Wave&lt;br&gt;Budget Constraint&lt;br&gt;Distribution between UGC funded Programmes and Self-finance Programmes&lt;br&gt;Phase Out Sub-degree Programmes&lt;br&gt;Phase Out Part Time Degree Programmes&lt;br&gt;Establishment of New Academic Department&lt;br&gt;Development of New Programmes&lt;br&gt;Creation of New Subject&lt;br&gt;Creation of Work Model&lt;br&gt;New Staff System&lt;br&gt;Creation of New Professional Position Jobs&lt;br&gt;Benchmarking Exercise&lt;br&gt;Adoption of Key Performance Indicators&lt;br&gt;Development of Professional Education&lt;br&gt;Tenure Track System for Assistant Professor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Codes</td>
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<tr>
<td>A new teaching pedagogy and quality</td>
<td>Teaching Quality Assurance System</td>
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<td>Quality Assurance Policy</td>
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<td>Enhancement of Teaching and Learning Quality</td>
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<td>Programme Quality</td>
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<td>Quality of Student</td>
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<td>Pursing Formative Assessment Purposes</td>
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<td>Encouragement of Applied Research and Consultancy Projects</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Technology and Learning in the Classroom</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Innovative Teaching Pedagogy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Subject Activities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Creation of Service Learning Subject</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Programme Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Challenge on Upscaling Research</td>
<td>Research Centric University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establishment of New Research Centre</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Enhancement of Research Quality</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Engagement in Scholarly Activities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Research Underpin Teaching Activities</td>
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<td>Weakness of Theoretical Research in Teaching</td>
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<td>Research Pressure</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Misalignment Between Research and Teaching</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Division into Teaching and Research Tracks</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Limitation on Academic Freedom</td>
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<td></td>
<td>High Impact from Research Work</td>
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<td>Research Publication and League Table</td>
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<td>Obtaining the Competitive Research Grants</td>
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<td></td>
<td>International Research Collaboration</td>
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<td>Lower Teaching and Learning Quality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Codes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Resilience and Adaptation to Market Forces** | Global Exposure  
Complying with Academic Governance  
Requirement from International Accreditation Bodies  
Participation with Government and International Institutions  
Marketing and Promotion with External Parties  
Graduate Employability  
Decreasing Number of Students  
Downsizing Academic Staff  
Understanding the Change in Response to Macro-environment |
| **Attribution of Leadership** | Strong Interpersonal Skill  
Accountability  
Common Sense  
Far-sightedness  
Caring  
Flexibility  
Teamwork |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Communication in the Department</em></td>
<td>Effective Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Communication between Department Head and Top Management</td>
</tr>
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<td>Establishment between Senior Management and Frontline</td>
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<td>Adoptable to Change from New Colleagues</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Individuals Contribution to Department</td>
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<td>Importance of Annual Appraisal Exercise</td>
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<td>Understanding the Roles, Responsibilities and Objectives</td>
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<td>Positive Mindset to the Change</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Providing Clear Guidance and Objectives</td>
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<td>Dissemination of Information Through Formal Occasions</td>
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<td>Face-to-Face Meetings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Social Gathering</td>
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<td>Resistance and Dissatisfied with the Change</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A Lack of Clear Explanation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Misalignment between Evaluation and Expectation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Insufficient Feedback Channel</td>
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<td>Excluding from Workload Model Contribution</td>
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<td>Competition in the Workplace</td>
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<td>Theme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Staffing and Selection</td>
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<td>Recruitment of Renowned Academic Staff</td>
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<td>Position Rotation for Department Head</td>
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<td>One-Line Budget</td>
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<td>Resource Allocation</td>
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<td>Less Flexibility in Using Resources</td>
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<td>Implementation of Top Down Approach</td>
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<td>Middle Level Manager</td>
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<td>Distributed Leadership</td>
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<td>Power at the Department Level</td>
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<td>Implementing University Policies</td>
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<td>Oversee Departments Operations</td>
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<td>Hierarchical Organization in Complex Networks</td>
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<td>Limitation in Authorities and Power</td>
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<td>Implementation of Bottom Up Approach</td>
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<td>The Change on a Minimal Level</td>
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<td>Power Exertion</td>
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