Public sector managers of human services - their challenges and strategies

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ABSTRACT

Middle managers of human services in the public sector have a unique role that allows them to be part of the lives of clients and their families by implementing the strategic vision of political leaders. The expectations of middle managers can be complex and contradictory and therefore challenging. This research identifies the challenges middle managers of human services in the public sector encounter and the strategies that they have developed to deal with these. The support that senior managers in public sector organisations can offer to their middle managers in this process is also discussed.

The study is qualitative and placed in a post-modernist position and social constructive perspective. Data is collected through the use of semi-structured interviews and examined using an interpretative thematic approach.

The analysis identified a range of challenges for middle managers in the public sector and strategies these managers use to deal with them. Interestingly a number of identified challenges are also identified as a strategy depending on the support middle managers receive from the senior managers in their organisation.

The findings identify that a strong strategic vision needs to be in place in public sector organisations to develop clear roles and responsibilities for middle managers with allocated resources. Middle managers need access to training, supervision and networking to deal with additional challenges such as changes in funding and information management.

Recommendations are made to public sector organisations to support the development of effective strategies to deal with the challenges identified by their middle managers. Recommendations are made to middle managers in the public sector to prioritise and advocate for their own needs and requirements as they do for their clients and their staff.

This research will support both senior and middle managers in public sector organisations in finding strategies to support middle managers to fulfil their role effectively.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Middle managers are a skilled and resourceful group of professionals and a strategic asset to public sector organisations, providing a critical role between strategic and front-line staff (Buchanan, Denyer, Jaina, Kelliher, Morre, Parry & Pilbeam, 2013; Huy 2002; Maurel & Bergeron, 2007; McGurk, 2011). Middle managers in public sector organisations need to comprehend both the operational and the clinical aspects of the organisation and have access to the top management (Jansen van Rensburg, Davis & Venter, 2014; Richards & Duxbury, 2015). These competing and conflicting external (for example changing funding requirements) and internal (for example dealing with budget costs) pressures on middle managers may cause a great deal of pressure and stress for them (Hyrkäs, Appelqvist-Schmidlechner & Kivimäki, 2005).

This study is a qualitative research project and aims to understand:

- The challenges middle managers of human services in the public sector encounter
- and the strategies that they have developed to deal with these
- and the support that senior managers in public sector organisations can offer to their middle managers in this process.

The findings are placed within the context of changing government ideologies. The study is placed in a post-modernist position and social constructive perspective. Data are collected through the use of semi-structured interviews with nine participants and examined using an interpretative approach.

This chapter explores the interests of the researcher in this topic and the background to the research. It also describes the key terms and concepts and gives an outline to the thesis.

1.1 Researcher's interest in the topic

To make a difference in the world and have a job that means more than just making money is a main motivator for people to work in the public sector (Paine Schofield, Holton, Pegg, Sweeny & Rizello, 2008). I am no exception. I started my Social Work degree straight after high school full of naïve optimism of the influence I could have on societal injustices. Unfortunately I became quickly aware of the lack of resources and strategies that could support me to implement long term change for families. Most social work practice was crisis orientated and not focused on the early intervention of social issues. I decided to undertake a second degree in Applied Management believing that I might be able to change some of the policies and strategies that I had seen in the human services and be more client focused. In the years following I worked as a social worker, moved to three different countries and had three children. My interest in the strategic vision of the public sector never waned and I ensured I was part of steering groups and staff development projects in my former and current role.

I am currently working in New Zealand for a tertiary educational provider. I was originally employed in the student support team before teaching on the Social Work degree. Currently I am the Programme Manager for the Foundation and Youth Guarantee programmes. I started my Master of Social Work while I was teaching the social work degree. When I got promoted to middle management I discovered that this did not change the resource and strategy issues that I experienced as a professional. I seemed to continue with negotiating the funding system, advocating for long term interventions and supporting unsatisfied clients. The main difference was that I also had staff to deal with as well as more paperwork. Nevertheless, I enjoy the challenge and the different facets of the role. To be part of a range of activities like marketing, moderation and strategic planning is stimulating and challenging. In my role I have managed to create some changes in policy, staff development and student support services which I could not have achieved in my previous roles.

I do find the role isolating and miss team work and discussing approaches with a range of professionals. There has been no or very little training or development offered either of the times I changed roles in the same

organisation. I would have greatly benefited from a mentoring system. This made me query what challenges other middle managers of human services in the public sector are experiencing and more importantly, what their strategies are that I can learn from. I can also see that there is an opportunity for public sector organisations to offer support and resources to middle managers in human services to enable them to better fulfil their potential.

As my own role is that of a middle manager of human services in the public sector in New Zealand, I am approaching this research as an insider researcher. Insider research can be defined as the study of one's own social group or society (Naples, 2003, p. 46). Insider research is undertaken by members of the same social group or society, who share the same cultural, biological, occupational or other characteristics (Greene, 2014). An inside-researcher feels that they belong to the group they are researching (Unluer, 2012). There are advantages and disadvantages associated with this approach. One of the advantages is the a priori intimate knowledge of the group researched (Greene, 2014). This could mean a greater understanding of the culture being studied, not altering the flow of social interaction unnaturally and having an established intimacy which promotes both the telling and the judging of truth (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002). The disadvantages are the loss of objectivity (Unluer, 2012) and for the researcher to become too subjective and biased (Greene, 2014). I have found it a privilege to have met a range of interesting, smart and resourceful group of middle managers in my own area.

1.2 Background to the research

In any organisation the balance between central control and individual autonomy is challenging. Senior managers will implement rules, regulations and policies to enforce the strategic plans and govern how work is done. The overall goal in general is to make the organisation more effective (Samuelson, 2009). However, too much central power will lead to passivity and undermines motivation of those not in a position of power. Problems will be moved up in the hierarchy and seen as the responsibility of those in senior positions (Norman, 2003). Individuals in an organisation equipped with skills and expertise want autonomy to create and implement processes (Samuelson, 2009). Having

greater autonomy can encourage initiative, responsibility and innovation. However, too much autonomy and little control can lead to inconsistent services and overspending of budgets (Norman, 2003). This is even more challenging for the public sector that has political leaders setting strategic goals to administrative managers who delegate these to organisational leaders who will pass them to their staff (Norman, 2003). To make the public sector accountable to the public a range of regulations, policies and laws are in place to ensure spending is controlled and strategic goals are met.

The public sector relies heavily on this control and used a bureaucratic model until the late seventies. After the public sector reforms in the late 1980's it was assumed that the public sector would thrive on private sector freedoms. This is based on the new institutional economics of public choice theory, agent/principal theory and transactions cost theory (McKinlay, 2000). These theories are used to find a balance between the incentives for public sector managers and the structural and other measures which should be put in place to manage or change those incentives. Public choice theory argues that people are generally self-interested and if the opportunity arises they will seize that opportunity to serve their own self-interest rather than the interests of the public sector. For example middle managers of human services in the public sector might aim to secure bigger budgets and thereby greater power, larger salaries, and other benefits. Or decisions are made based on career advancement or to make political statements instead of the greater public good (Felkins, 2013). The agent/principal theory recognises that public sector managers (the agent) have better information than the minister or taxpayers (the principals) and have an opportunity to better themselves at the expense of the taxpayers. These theories identify that these risks need to be minimised (McKinlay, 2000). The transactions cost theory recognises that these interventions might have financial implications. Therefore a balance needs to be found between the assumption that managers will prioritise their own interests over that of the taxpayer and the costs of putting minimising measures in place such as structures and regulatory frameworks (McKinlay, 2000). Currently public sector organisations have the freedom to manage their own staff and to vary their range of inputs; however

strict constraints and complex controls are in place to avoid controversy and critical queries about the costs of these services (Norman, 2003).

Public sector managers are not just responsible for implementing the policies set by political leaders but also for giving policy advice to them that may influence policy options (Hayward, 2015). Public servants are invited to give 'free, frank and impartial advice' (p.112) but political questions are raised as to how effective this process is, who is consulted and if all interests of all groups are represented (Shaw & Eichbaum, 2011). Norman (2003) summarised the predicament the public sector is in by stating that 'the system has created a set of paradoxes' (p.76). The managers in the public sector are expected to utilise the freedom gained after the reforms while also being conscious of the limits of these freedoms and the growth of these limits. Managers are expected to implement policies with fewer resources and less staff while giving honest feedback on these policies and the needs of their organisation and clients (Norman, 2003).

This balancing act is complex for all managers at all levels in the public sector but especially for middle managers of human services in the public sector when working with marginalised populations in the community to improve their participation in society and support them to build better lives. Middle managers have the role of connecting all the stakeholders and layers of an organisation (Maurel & Bergeron, 2007). They are also expected to implement the strategic goals set by the senior managers while also supporting innovation and change in the delivery of the service. It can be complex and challenging to meet the diverse needs of marginalised populations while adhering to strategic goals of the organisation (Gatenby, Rees, Truss, Alfes & Soane, 2015). Middle managers in the public sector experience an overall lack of freedom and autonomy in decision making and budgeting processes (Stoker, 2006). They are expected to reduce costs, improve efficiency, do more with less and do so transparently (Dormer, 2015). Investment in staff development and coaching is an added responsibility for middle managers as well as the use and development of new technologies (Stoker, 2006). Middle managers are closer to the coal face of the organisation (Richards & Duxbury, 2015) and are responsible for both the operational and strategic outcomes of the organisation

(Gatenby et al., 2015). Some middle managers are fulfilling hybrid roles and have a professional and a managerial role in their organisation.

The role of middle managers of human services in the public sector is not only challenging but also rewarding and some strong motivators and incentives are identified. Middle managers may enjoy gaining new knowledge and skills and develop strong relationships with teams and clients (Milosavljevic et al., 2015). Middle managers in the public sector also identify the challenge and the 'buzz' of the role; the teamwork; recognition and autonomy as strong motivators (Buchanan et al., 2013).

This thesis will identify the challenges middle managers of human services in the public sector encounter and the strategies that they have developed to deal with these and the support that senior managers in public sector organisations can offer to their middle managers in this process. This research is seeking to benefit middle managers of human services in the public sector who might have similar experiences and the senior managers who could support middle managers more effectively to ensure they can fulfil their role to their potential.

1.3   Key terms and concepts

This research is focused on middle managers of human services (health, education and social services) in the public sector and does not include not-for-profit organisations or charities.

Middle manager:	A manager with access to top management coupled with knowledge of operation (Jansen van Rensburg et al, 2014, p.166)
Senior manager:	Senior leadership is defined as the top three tiers of managers within Public Service departments with Chief Executives being tier one (SSC, 2016, p.8).
Public sector:	The New Zealand public service consists of public service departments whose core function is to serve the government of the day, within the framework of the law, by providing advice and delivering service to the public (Shaw, 2015, p.177).

| Human services: | Human Services involves working with diverse and often marginalised populations in the community to improve their participation in society and support them to build better lives (Auckland University, Faculty of Education and Social work, 2016/17, para. 1). |
| Public sector organisations: | The State Services Commission maintains an up to date list on this page of all the organisations of the State sector on http://www.ssc.govt.nz/state_sector_organisations. |

1.4   Research outline

This thesis is organised in six chapters.

Chapter one: Introduction

This chapter introduces the research and explains the researcher's interest in the topic and the position as insider researcher. The chapter states the research aim and gives background to the research. The key terms and concepts are also described. The research is outlined to provide the thesis structure.

Chapter two: Literature review

The second chapter consists of the literature review. The public sector in New Zealand is described and the definition of a middle manager is set. The changing paradigms of the role of middle manager are discussed and the paradigm used in this research is clarified. To provide a background to the research the dominant management models and the reforms of the public sector are discussed. The challenges and motivators for middle managers after the reforms are identified. The support public sector organisations could provide to ensure the middle manager can fulfil their role effectively are also highlighted.

Chapter three: Research Methodology

In this chapter the research methodology is discussed. The options of both qualitative and quantitative research are explored and the use of qualitative research methodology is explained. The epistemology that informs the research and the theoretical perspective behind the methodology are explained. The methods used are discussed as well as the methodology that governs the use

of these methods. Decisions around the data gathering and recruitment of participants are also discussed. The sorting, coding and generating of themes and the analyses process is also described. Ethical dilemmas are identified as well as the measures that were put in place to eliminate or mitigate against these.

Chapter four: Participants' voices

The fourth chapter gives voice to the participants. Using semi structured interviews they are asked what challenges they have experienced as a middle manager in the public sector, what strategies they have used to deal with these challenges and what support they have received or want to receive from their senior managers or organisation. From the data collected the common themes are identified. Interpretations of the researcher and quotes from the interviews are used to highlight and illustrate the viewpoints and the realities of the participants.

Chapter five: Discussion

In this chapter the findings from the literature review and the voice of the participants are compared. The common themes are identified and the discrepancies between the literature and the participants' voices are highlighted. The findings are critically discussed and interpretations by the researcher are made.

Chapter six: Conclusions and recommendations

The sixth chapter summarises this thesis and reviews the main points from the previous chapters and highlights the key results. It describes the implications of the key findings for a range of stakeholders. It discusses the aims and objective of the research and recommendations are made for further research and for public sector stakeholders. The chapter concludes with a reflection of the researcher.

The literature review in the next chapter discusses the changes within the public sector over the last decades and identifies the challenges, motivators and support required for middle managers in the public sector.

CHAPTER 2:   LITERATURE REVIEW: MIDDLE MANAGERS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Introduction

This chapter discusses the literature used to identify the challenges middle managers of human services in the public sector encounter and the strategies that they have developed to deal with these and how public sector organisations could support this process.

The public sector in New Zealand is discussed and the definition of public sector middle managers is determined. The changing paradigms and roles of middle managers are described. This chapter also explores the changing government ideologies and the effect on managers in the public sector in New Zealand. To place the changing ideologies in context, the reasoning for public sector reform will be discussed and the resulting models of organisational management from these reforms and the subsequent effects on public sector organisations and their culture are explored. The challenges and the motivators for middle managers of human services in the public sector are identified. Also the support required for middle managers by their public sector organisations and senior managers is identified in this chapter. This research is focused on literature since the 1990's to include the changing paradigms and ideologies of the eighties and nineties in New Zealand and internationally.

2.1   The public sector in New Zealand

The New Zealand public sector consists of public service departments whose core function is to serve the government of the day, within the framework of the law, by providing advice and delivering service to the public (Shaw, 2015). The public service departments are listed in the First Schedule to the State Sector Act 1988 (SSC, 2015). The term 'public service' is usually used to refer to core government institutions, for example the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Development or Department of Corrections. The public service departments are headed by a chief executive who has to answer

to a government minister. These government ministers are accountable to Parliament (Shaw, 2015).

The New Zealand public sector employed around 15% of the total New Zealand workforce in 2015. The public sector is separated into the State Sector and Local Government. The education sector (36%) is the largest, followed by the health sector (23%), the public service (16%), state-owned enterprises (11%) and the remaining 15% comprising the police, the defence force and other crown entities (SSC, 2015). In 2015, over 45,000 Public Service staff were employed in New Zealand over 29 departments which provide a wide range of services including social welfare, health, education, employment, business, industry, security, taxation, corrections and transport. One of the largest occupation groups are those working in the human services and classed as 'social, health and education workers'. They account for almost 19% of the Public Service workforce. Around 12% of the workforce is grouped as managers (SSC, 2015). It is unclear from these figures if middle managers of human services in the public sector are grouped under the 'social, health and education workers' or under managers as the report only mentions senior, not middle managers when discussing management and leadership.

2.2   The definition of the role of public sector middle managers

There have been different international definitions of the role of middle manager in the public sector over the years that showcase the development and the changes of the role. The role seems to have changed from a position of 'assistant of authority' in 1956 to a more descriptive definition of the position in the later years (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014). This range of definitions outlined below indicates the different paradigms of the role and position of the middle manager from a supporting role to a more independent and strategic asset to public sector organisations.

A number of descriptive definitions can be found in international literature. Huy (2001) has described a middle manager as 'any manager below the CEO and one level above line workers and professionals' (p.72). Ikävalko (2005) states that middle managers act as both subordinates and superiors. Floyd and

Wooldridge (1992) describe middle managers as the link between activities of vertically related groups and are responsible for at least sub-functional workflow, but not for the workflow of the organisation as a whole. Matheson, Scanlan and Tanner (1997) describe how the role of a public middle manager is to develop efficient interventions to achieve long term outcomes. Fitzgerald (2000) explains that a middle manager is simultaneously a leader, a manager and an administrator who works with and through other people to achieve key tasks and activities like resource management, staff and client management and professional leadership.

These definitions describe specific aspects of the role of middle manager depending on the priority or emphasis of that role in a specific organisation. A middle manager is close to the coal face of the human services but further removed from power and influence than senior managers (Richards & Duxbury, 2015). The definition used in this thesis therefore reflects the operational and clinical knowledge of a middle manager of human services in the public sector in New Zealand. The definition used in this thesis to define the role of middle manager of human services is a manager with 'access to top management coupled with knowledge of operations' (Jansen van Rensburg, et al., 2014, p.166).

2.3   The paradigms of the role of public sector middle managers

The international literature identifies two dominant paradigms concerning the role of the middle manager in the public sector. The first is the bureaucratic paradigm and is based on a role focused on compliance with written rules, avoidance of risk and the absence of corruption (Ayto, 2011). The stereotype of the compliant, risk-averse bureaucrat, as portrayed in Whyte's The Organization Man (1956), is still present in the 21st century public sector in the western world (Buchanan, et al., 2013). This paradigm highlights the trapped position of the middle manager in processes and procedures and concludes that this positioning restricts the flow of knowledge and communication across the organisation. Gatenby et al. (2015) discuss that this can be viewed as an involuntary process or a more purposeful strategy by the organisation to protect

vested interests or minimize operational risk by constraining the influence of the middle manager in the organisation.

The second paradigm sees the middle manager as a strategic asset for mediation and implementation of management strategies. Maurel and Bergeron (2007) state that although the paradigm of compliant, risk-averse bureaucrat exists, their studies indicate that middle managers have a greater role in an organisation than just passing information on from the top management to operations and vice versa. They describe how middle managers analyse and interpret information and add meaning to it. Middle managers are involved in strategic, tactical and operational decision making and act as entrepreneurs, innovators and communicators. They state that middle managers in the public sector are responsible for a range of activities: coordination of physical resources, adhere to legal and policy matters, deal with human recourse matters including recruitment and disciplinary issues, financial resources like budgets and targets, communications for both internal and external stakeholders and with social and community development issues. This is also found by Fitzgerald (2000) who states that the role of the middle manager has become increasingly more complex, varied and demanding. Not only has the role become more multifaceted, the responsibility and accountability has also increased and requires some level of investment in middle management development.

In their United Kingdom based qualitative study, Buchanan et al., (2013) also identify that the role of the middle manager in the public sector has developed significantly and that the picture of a frustrated, powerless and disillusioned manager with dreary jobs in rigid hierarchies is no longer valid. They conclude that middle managers are responding to complex and changing pressures, have a range of responsibilities and workloads, have rising performance expectations, are accountable for a wider range of duties in operational and human resource management, are mediating between the front line and top teams and that they are contributing to strategy, innovation and implementing change. These are also the findings of Huy (2001) who concludes that middle managers make valuable contributions to the implementation of radical change

in organisations. Huy (2001) adds that middle managers often have good entrepreneurial ideas and influence in a range of networks. They look after the employees' emotional needs during organisational change and act as coordinators between continuity and change.

Other indicators that middle managers in the public sector are seen as strategic assets for implementation of management strategies are found in recent international competency frameworks for middle managers. For instance the government of South Australia has developed a middle manager competency framework that sees middle managers as strategic assets. They expect their middle managers to: maintain and enhance confidence in public service, apply government systems, manage compliance with legislation in the public sector, manage resources and establish and maintain strategic networks (Government of South Australia, 2016).

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council in Wales, United Kingdom, (2015) has a competency framework for middle managers in their code of governance that indicate they are seeing the middle manager as a competent and strategic asset. This framework focuses on the underpinning values that shape and define the culture of the organisation. The Council have focused on attitude and behavioural competencies as these historically have not had the same level of attention as the technical skills needed for the job but are crucial for the service provided. They expect their middle managers to be leading people, communicating the vision, facilitating high performance and results, maximising potential, making informed decisions, working together, promoting a citizen centred culture, working with councillors and pushing the boundaries (Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, 2015) .

The Ministry of Education in New Zealand introduced Professional Standards: criteria for quality teaching: secondary teachers and unit holders in 1999. The roles for middle managers in schools are described as resource management, staff and student management and professional leadership. This also confirms the role as middle manager in the public sector is that of a strategic asset to the organisation (Ministry of Education, 1999).

In this thesis the paradigm that a middle manager is a skilled and resourceful professional and a strategic asset to the organisation will be used (Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, 2015; Buchanan et al., 2013; Fitzgerald, 2000; Government of South Australia, 2016; Huy, 2011; Maurel & Bergeron, 2007; Ministry of Education, 1999).

The bureaucratic paradigm and the paradigm that sees the middle manager as a strategic asset for an organisation reflect the changing political and social contexts of organisational management policy regimes. There have been two policies that have been dominant in the New Zealand public sector in the 20th and 21st century: the bureaucratic policy regime followed by the New Public Management reforms which are discussed next. Both of these discourses have shaped definitions and perspectives on the role and utility of middle managers of human services in the public sector.

2.4   Bureaucratic policy regime

In the 20th century the bureaucratic model was the dominant management model in the western world as the most efficient system for the public services. The bureaucratic model of public bureaucracy was largely based on the work of Max Weber (1864-1920). Weber was a German sociologist who described bureaucracies as rational, hierarchical and top down organisations whose decisions are based on logical reasoning and data analysis (Peters, 2009). These bureaucratic organisations rely on hierarchy and rules for coordination and control. This approach aims to ensure equality of services, and political neutrality among public servants. It was believed to be most effective in reducing the patronage and corruption that characterized pre-bureaucratic administrative systems (Gatenby, et al., 2015; Peters, 2009).

This vision resulted in New Zealand's development of the Public Service Act (1912). A set of processes, rules and hierarchies were put in place surrounding staff employment that would largely remain in place for seventy-five years (Yska, 2013). The aim was to ensure merit-based, non-political appointments to civil service jobs. The procedures were set out in manuals and procedural instructions and every department had their own set of manuals. These systems

and procedures laid the foundation for the culture of compliance and control of the public service (Matheson et al., 1997; Stoker, 2006; Yska, 2013). This resulted in tasks and decisions being delayed due to the procedures of individual departments. It also created issues around evaluating decisions, performance, and information strategies as there were no systems in place to identify the systemic issues within an organisation (Matheson, et al., 1997).

New Zealand's public sector was very large and continued to grow yearly until the early seventies (Yska, 2013). Accountability was mainly aimed at compliance with written rules, the absence of corruption, and the avoidance of mistakes. By the early seventies the public sector was perceived as inflexible, unresponsive and unaccountable (Ayto, 2011). Information systems were inefficient and outdated which impacted on the decision making and ability to respond to change by managers. The responsibility for the efficiency of departmental administration was divided between Ministers, Department Heads and the State Services Commission. Departmental staff were employed by one central employing body (the State Services Commission), who had to work within a system that put more emphasis on wage relativities than on recruitment and retention factors (Yska, 2013). The focus of middle managers in the public sector was on planning and control (Stoker, 2006) and their mentality was described as 'passive compliance' (Matheson et al., 1997, p.2) and was not focused on the Government's objectives or responsive to the requirements of clients and their families (Matheson et al., 1997).

New Zealand politics was dominated between 1945 and 1973 by a social democratic Keynesian policy regime, sustained by the long post-war economic boom (Roper, 2015). This regime is based on the paradigm that the state has an active intervening role in managing the economy to ensure full employment and stimulating economic growth. The Keynesian policy regime seemed to be working well when the economy was booming and unemployment was virtually non-existent (Roper, 2015). However, in the mid-seventies New Zealand had to deal with spiralling inflation, oil shocks and growing unemployment. The resentment towards the high number of public servants with secure jobs grew and middle managers were mostly held responsible for the lack of efficiency in

the public sector (Stoker, 2006) The incoming National Party administration under Muldoon started to make restrictions on the perks for public servants, including middle managers, that included 'superannuation schemes, very cheap housing finance, cut rates on purchases ranging from liquor to cars and ample holiday and sick leave' (Yska, 2013, p.19). In contrast, monetarist economists argued that the role of the New Zealand government in managing the economy needed to be restricted and focused on maintaining a low inflation, avoiding of budget deficits, reduction of the welfare state and a reduction in government regulations to increase price flexibility in the market. This view was based on the assumption that a capitalist market economy is self-adjusting if the government adopts a neoliberal policy regime (Roper, 2015).

In the early eighties a neoliberal policy regime was introduced to reform the public services by Labour's incoming Prime Minister David Lange. It was believed this would lead to efficient and effective services and economies that would be more responsive to citizens and government ministers. The introduction of a market economy had major impacts on the middle managers in the public sector. According to neoliberal policy regimes, the ideal organisation would be flat without bureaucratic middle managers, led by a charismatic and transformational leader, guided by science and best practice and driven by staff that can efficiently and competitively offer services to meet the needs of customers (Hughes & Wearing, 2013; Maurel & Bergeron, 2007). New Zealand was, together with the United States and Australia, among the first countries to reform the public service to a neoliberal model (Berg, Barry & Chandler, 2012). The term New Public Management is used internationally to identify these reforms and processes.

2.5   New public management reforms

The election of the fourth Labour government in 1984 started the overhaul of the public service in New Zealand. The New Zealand Treasury Government Management 'Brief to the incoming government' in 1987 proposed a framework that was used as the foundation for the reform of the management structures and processes (Wollmann, 2003). A neoliberal policy regime was implemented and focused on a monetarist approach to manage the economy by maintaining

low inflation, implementation of market liberalisation, public sector reform into corporatisation and privatisation, taxation reform, redesign of the welfare state and reform of the employment legislation (Roper, 2015). The reform in New Zealand was focused on changes in performance management and accountability, financial reporting, budgeting and control, employment matters, and the structure of the public sector (Ayto, 2011). The aim was to cut back on public spending, improve the quality of service delivery and tighten bureaucratic accountability (Shaw, 2015). The two pieces of legislation to enable these changes were the State Sector Act (1988) and the Public Finance Act (1989).

Before the State Sector Act 1988, all public servants were employed by the State Services Commission and managed by permanent heads of government departments. In 1988, chief executives were employed on five year fixed-term contracts to recruit staff in their departments. They also took on the responsibility for the efficient and effective management of their departments. This 1988 Act impacted on the career security of public service employees and also introduced labour relations law into the public sector that had previously applied only in the private sector (Yska, 2013). In 1984 the public service in New Zealand employed just over 66,000 people. By 1999 that number had shrunk to 30,000 (Shaw, 2015). According to Stoker (2006), middle managers were mostly held responsible for the lack of efficiency in the public sector and this level suffered major job losses. In Europe roughly 20 per cent of the job losses since 1988 came from middle management positions (Stoker, 2006). The Public Finance Act 1989 changed the funding mechanisms from covering the costs of the input of public sector organisations, such as overheads and salaries, to a system that focused on outcomes and funded costs of the output of these organisations. This Act is based on the principle that ministers are accountable for outcomes, while departments are accountable for the outputs. However the risk of the focus on outputs, what the department is doing and how they are doing it, can take departments away from the desired outcome; the reason why they are doing it (SSC, 1999).

From the late 1990s the reform process had changed its course in response to the 1996 Schick Report. This report officially evaluated the New Zealand New Public Management reform. It concluded that the public sector was sound and better managed and that managers at all levels were held accountable for their decisions. It did however critique the fragmentation and inflexibility of the responsibility of managers.

> *I wonder whether management-by-checklist unduly narrows managerial perspective and responsibility. Some managers seem to take the view that if it is not on the list, it is not their responsibility* (Schick, 1996, p.81).

The Report also critiqued some of the economic principles used in the reform and stated that reforms had come at too high a cost. Its recommendation was to find a balance between the policies to promote economic development and policies to protect the vulnerable (Scott, 2008; Yska, 2013).

The international effectiveness of the New Public Management reforms has been debated. Curristine, Lonti and Joumard (2007) explain that measuring the effectiveness of the reforms in OECD countries are fraught due to the lack of resources to conduct evaluations as well as the lack of pre-reform evaluations and the added complexities in measuring effectiveness in the public sector. The reforms were coloured by political impatience, shortage of resources and the pressure to produce successful outputs (Robinson, 2012). Despite attempts to make public services more dynamic and adaptable after the reforms, aspects of the bureaucratic forms of the public sector still persists. Gatenby et al., (2015) agree and state that flexible, delayered and decentralized structures are not the reality of the reformed public sector. Hierarchical control and vertical accountability continue, either through re-bureaucratisation or the creation of neo-bureaucratic structures. The culture within the public sector, which is created by social, political and economic settings is so strongly embedded, that there is pressure to conform to existing and established modes of operation. Robinson (2012) summarises this by concluding that even though the new public management reforms have contributed to *structural* changes, a *cultural* change to embed effective and efficient practices has not been as successful.

2.6   Challenges for middle managers in the public sector

Stoker (2006) describes how the changes for middle managers were not only quantitative, as many lost their jobs, but also qualitative as new skills, behaviours and competencies were expected. Middle managers in the public sector are responsible for the day-to-day operations, coping with intensifying levels of work, complying with conflicting and competing tasks, having to negotiate between professional and managerial groups, implement government policies and monitoring performance against targets, mostly without the necessary resources, budgets or access to decision-making processes needed to complete these tasks (Gatenby et al., 2015). The competing and conflicting external and internal pressures are causing a great deal of pressure and stress on middle managers (Hyrkäs et al., 2005). The challenges for middle managers in the public sector following the reforms highlighted in the literature are the lack of autonomy; cutting costs, staff management; use of technologies; the skills and experience of middle managers and the lack of support.

2.6.1 Lack of autonomy

The increase in the roles and responsibilities for middle managers in the public sector while working with bureaucratic systems cultures and values has had an impact on the challenges identified for middle managers. The international literature identifies an overall lack of freedom and autonomy in decision making and budgeting processes for middle managers in the public sector (Stoker, 2006). Gatenby et al., (2015) identified that the institutional power of central government determines the scope, scale, and direction of the public services with little space for middle managers to utilise local solutions or resources. It seems that the balance between central power and individual autonomy is biased towards central control. This leads to passivity and undermines motivation of those not in a position of power and problems are not seen as their responsibility (Norman, 2003). Middle managers equipped with skills and expertise want autonomy to create and implement processes (Samuelson, 2009). Having greater autonomy can encourage the initiative, responsibility and innovation for middle managers in the public sector (Norman, 2003). For this a culture of trust is essential (Rock & Rock, 2016). Unfortunately, middle

managers may not feel they can trust what the organisation tells them and they may feel that senior managers are not transparent in their decisions and actions (Rock & Rock, 2016).

Middle managers in the public sector seem to focus primarily on the daily operational decisions that are mostly short-term and reactionary (Yukl, 2005). These operational decisions can be hindered by conflicting interests of stakeholders and the lack of autonomy of managers to implement local decisions (Yukl, 2005). There seems to be little time and resources available for additional tasks as part of their management and leadership role (Gatenby et al., 2015). This affects reflective planning as decisions are reactive and mostly initiated by other stakeholders (Buchanan et al., 2013). A State Services Commission report (SSC, 2013) on public sector departments states that the emphasis for middle managers seems to be on the short term managing of issues and there is a distinct lack of building core capabilities that adds substantial and enduring value to the public sector in New Zealand.

2.6.2 Cutting costs

Middle managers of human services in the public sector are under pressure to do more work in less time and with fewer resources (Hughes & Wearing, 2013). The public sector reforms were underpinned by institutional economic models and they continue to shape current policies and practice. Public sector success is defined in terms of the efficiency and effectiveness to which goods and services are delivered. The 2011 report of the Better Public Services Advisory Group explained that New Zealand will need to lift the economic performance, and to reduce the cost of the public service whilst sustaining a quality service (SSC, 2011). Middle managers in the public sector are required to reduce costs, improve efficiency, do more for less, and do so transparently (Dormer, 2015). Middle managers expressed concern about these expectations as they fear transparency of information will lead to public criticism or to cut funding and that they are being held accountable for results that are not within their control (Curristine et al., 2007). Gatenby et al., (2015) agree that middle managers seem to lack the control or influence over budgeting, resources and processes

and therefore lack in autonomy in decision making. However, they are being made responsible for the efficiency and effectiveness of the services

2.6.3 Staff management

The new management paradigms expect middle managers to be responsible not only for the performance and measurement of results of their employees but also for coaching and staff development (Stoker, 2006). The bureaucratic paradigm was focused on command and control but after the reform more emphasis was placed on the development and empowerment of staff by their organisation. Investment in employees is seen as a way to sustain competitive advantage. Wages are still important to attract and retain qualified and skilled staff but non-monetary incentives such as flexible work or access to training are also essential (Stoker, 2006). Employee satisfaction and morale are considered to be the most important drivers of performance and part of the responsibility of the middle manager (Curristine et al., 2007). Middle managers in the public sector agree and identified that co-operating, having empathy and developing employees are their main focus. They stated that they are less focused on the performance and measurement of results of their employees (Stoker, 2006). This is also the conclusion of Huy (2001) who concluded that middle managers look after the employees' emotional needs in organisations. However, the staff managed by middle managers do not recognise this and instead state that their middle management is mostly performance oriented (Stoker, 2006). This discrepancy between the perception of middle managers themselves and others is also highlighted by Milosavljevic et al., (2015) who also found that middle managers did not feel their work environment was valuing what they contributed. Stoker (2006) explains that the staff management expectations for middle managers are unclear and although middle managers believe they are meeting the outcomes, their employees disagree. These public sector organisations did not make clear the expected behaviour of their middle managers and left them to act on their own discretion. Stoker (2006) recommends that middle management need support from senior managers to make expectations more explicit and serve as a coach for middle managers.

2.6.4 Use of technologies

Another challenge for middle managers in the public sector is the use and development of new technologies, amplified by the increased importance of information (Stoker, 2006). To be able to make decisions, middle managers need access to relevant, high quality, credible and timely information. This information is essential for performance reporting and for future planning (Curristine et al., 2007). Paine Schofield et al., (2008) state that information and communication technology (ICT) has improved communications over the past three years but that the majority of their respondents working in the public sector feel 'snowed under' with information, e-mails and voicemails. There is a concern that the quantity of information is affecting the quality and the ability to filter out and utilise the relevant and timely information.

Eggers and Bellman (2015) investigated worldwide the readiness of government departments for new technology in several countries, including New Zealand. They concluded that although sixty-four percent of New Zealand respondents reported that while their departments have increased investment in digital initiatives, only fifty-five percent stated that their organisations has a clear and coherent digital strategy. Yukl (2005) identified that middle managers need up-to-date skills to utilise the new technology and the cognitive skills to deal with the influx of information. Eggers and Bellman (2015) concluded that only forty-two percent of the respondents in their research believe that New Zealand's public sector managers and employees have the skills to lead and implement a digital strategy. This means that there might be a skill shortage for middle managers of human services in the public sector to manage the influx of information to ensure they can effectively plan and evaluate their services.

2.6.5 Skillset and expertise

The skills of middle managers will depend largely on their background and qualifications. Some middle managers might be largely employed based on their skills and qualifications in management and not necessarily have the detailed and specialised knowledge of the operational services (Hughes & Wearing, 2013). Other middle managers may come from professional practitioner positions but they may lack formal education and management

experience (Dym & Hutson, 2005). This might cause issues as middle managers are responsible for both operational day-to-day operations, and complying with conflicting and competing tasks, and have to implement government policies and monitor performance against targets (Gatenby et al., 2015).This might mean that some managers are more comfortable and skilful in certain aspects of the role while lacking in other areas.

Some middle managers of human services in the public sector with a professional practitioner background are now fulfilling more hybrid (mixture of professional practitioner and management) roles (Gatenby et al., 2015). Hybrid roles are not clearly distinguishable between the professional and manager roles. These professional practitioners maintain their clinical autonomy and professional identity while at the same time fulfil a managerial role (Gatenby et al., 2015). Hughes and Wearing (2013, p.12) explain that hybrid managers need to be able 'to work critically within the world as it is while seeking change, and to work within organisations as they are while being able to promote positive change'. Hybridisation involves clinical staff undertaking budgeting, human resource management, planning, change and administration, perhaps without adequate preparation or training but with an increase in monitoring and accountability responsibilities (Buchanan et al., 2013). The hybridization of management roles in the public sector is most prolific in health care organisations (Gatenby et al., 2015) but also occur in other human services in the public sector. In the education sector for example hybrid staff is now responsible for staff appraisals, the development of quality assurance mechanisms and the evaluation of teaching programmes while also being expected to participate in school planning and policy development as well as having a teaching load (Fitzgerald, 2000). Hybrid managers have identified issues with balancing clinical and organisational priorities and resource allocations and their sense of identity (Buchanan et al., 2013).

2.6.6 Lack of support

In combination, these challenges seem to have an effect on the perceived position and worth of middle managers in the public sector. Gatenby et al., (2015) suggest that the perception of middle managers by senior managers is

not necessarily as skilled and resourceful professionals and strategic assets to the organisation. Their findings describe unwillingness by senior managers to allow a leadership function for middle managers and initiatives from senior managers make the middle manager 'an unwilling reactionary implementer' (p.15) instead of a leader. Research conducted among more than 1,400 members of the British Chartered Management Institute (CMI) with public and private sector management backgrounds, concluded that middle managers play a vital role in building trust throughout an organisation. It also concluded that although middle managers are mostly responsible for creating a trusting environment and workplace culture, this is often not recognised by senior managers (Rock & Rock, 2016). Milosavljevic et al., (2015) also found that middle managers in their study need to rely on their personal attitudes and belief to find their value. Middle managers had to believe that what they were doing was in the best interest of their profession as they did not feel their senior managers nor their employees was giving them this message. Milosavljevic et al., (2015) identified this as one of the contributing factors as to why middle managers have higher levels of burnout than other health professionals in their study. A burnout is 'a psychological syndrome in response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job' (Milosavljevic & Noble, 2015, p. 101). Paine Schofield et al., (2008) researched the work-life balance of managers in the public sector in the United Kingdom. They concluded that a quarter of respondents report work over 60 hours per week, and over half of respondents frequently take work home. However, overall public sector managers are positive of their work-life balance even though almost three-quarters of respondents say they would sacrifice career opportunities to ensure a better work-life balance and almost half of the respondents feel they have to choose between career and family (Paine Schofield et al., 2008).

Interestingly Paine Schofield et al., (2008) conclude that senior management is not seen as effective by middle managers either and they feel that top managers spend insufficient time communicating with staff. Interestingly Stoker (2006) explains that both middle management and senior management underestimate the other and overestimate themselves. Regardless of the

perception of one another, middle managers do require some level of investment from their senior managers (Fitzgerald, 2000).

2.7 Motivators for middle managers in the public sector

The role of middle managers of human services in the public sector is not only challenging but also rewarding and some strong motivators are identified that make working in the public sector attractive.

An Australian study by Milosavljevic et al., (2015) interviewed professional healthcare workers, ranging from graduates to managers, about their experiences. The study showed that these professionals enjoy structure and processes, are high achievers and strive to meet expectations and tasks. For all respondents, including middle managers, gaining new knowledge and learning is a source of motivation. Another strong outcome was the relationship building within teams and with the clients and their families. The feeling of worth and value was also identified as a motivation.

This corresponds with the research from Buchanan et al., (2013), which compared ten characteristics of 'extreme jobs' (Hewlett & Luce, 2006) with characteristics of working in the public sector. Hewlett and Luce (2006) identified that people working 'extreme jobs' were attracted by the challenge, enjoyed the work and felt fulfilled by it. These respondents worked 60 hours or more in high earning roles in multinational corporations. Their motivation included adrenaline rush, great colleagues, good salary, power and status and recognition for achievement. Buchanan et al., (2013) repeated this research with public sector managers and concluded that six out of these ten characteristics are also applicable to middle managers of human services in the public services, especially in health care. They also conclude that the challenge and the 'buzz' make extreme jobs attractive. They identified teamwork and the recognition and autonomy as other key motivators. However, good salary, power and status and recognition as identified by Hewlett and Luce (2006) do not appear in their research. Buchanan et al. (2013) concluded that the motivator for these managers relies, at least in part, on the professional and public sector values and purpose. Managers want to feel that they are making a difference, that they drive change and innovation, do a good job and that they

are developing others, even though they would have to rely on their personal attributes to find their value (Milosavljevic et al., 2015).

These are also the conclusions of Paine Schofield et al., (2008) who researched a range of public sector organisations in the United Kingdom. They state that 'challenging and interesting work' (p.48) is the main motivator for public sector managers as was 'doing work that is of value to society' (p.48). Contrary to the research of Buchanan et al., (2013) they did identify financial remuneration as a motivator. They also concluded that these public sector managers are proud to work for their organisation and willing to go the extra mile as they feel their organisation is behaving in a socially and environmentally responsible way. Hughes and Wearing (2013) add that the commitment to values and skill-base, that will improve the lives of clients and facilitate change within the organisation, is required for public sector middle managers to feel motivated.

2.8   Support for middle managers in the public sector

Middle managers in the public sector need support from their workplace to minimise their challenges and maximise their motivators in order to be fully engaged (Fitzgerald, 2000). Using the paradigm that middle managers are skilled and resourceful professionals and strategic assets to the organisation, this support is warranted.

2.8.1 Employee benefits package

Milosavljevic et al., (2015) identified that health workers, including the middle managers, need access to learning; healthy relationships with others; respect for their professional autonomy and decision-making and that they receive the appropriate level of recognition for their work. Paine Schofield et al., (2008) agree that middle managers need to be supported by getting clear directions from their senior managers and the autonomy to make decisions. They also identified that public sector organisations should offer middle managers challenging and interesting work, doing work that is of value to society, job security, opportunity to continually learn and develop skills and knowledge and performance related salary and incentive schemes. Cook (2004) agrees that middle managers need intrinsic and extrinsic incentives and sanctions to ensure

full engagement. Rock and Rock (2016) state that middle managers want open communication and understand the motivations and reasons of the decision making of their senior managers and to be part of vision and strategy discussions.

2.8.2   Professional development and training

Fitzgerald (2000) states that professional development and training is also a central factor to ensure middle managers can fully engage in their role. Paine Schofield et al., (2008) add that a strategy for professional development for managers needs to be in place with resources allocated to individual learning and development plans of middle managers. As discussed in section 2.6.3, Stoker (2006) recommends that senior management need to serve as a coach for middle managers. Besides coaching, organisations could also offer mentors and/or supervisors for their middle managers. These support networks can be offered on a one-one basis or in a group and led by a supervisor or mentor or as peers. One of the advantages of a group arrangement is the pool of knowledge and expertise it offers. The support of the group can reduce isolation for middle managers (Hyrkäs et al., 2005). The disadvantages of the group model are the limited time per supervisee and confidentiality issues. It can also be challenging to maintain continuity and slide into superficial conversations (Hyrkäs, et al., 2005).   There are also disadvantages identified with peer supervision. As by definition peers should be at the same level, therefore personal development and challenging ideas could be an issue. Due to the absence of a group leader this process might be difficult to manage. However the benefits of peer supervision can include positive long-term effects on leadership and communication skills, the desire for self-development, self-knowledge and better coping skills (Hyrkäs, Koivula, Lehti, & Paunonen-Ilmonen, 2003). Peer supervision focused on reflection and support with other middle managers can improve the managers' individual development and also the development of their leadership (Hyrkäs, et al., 2003).

2.8.3   Work-life balance

Support for middle managers in the public sector is not just aimed at ensuring full engagement but also at avoiding work related stress. Middle managers are

at a higher risk for burnout (Milosavljevic et al., 2015). A burnout is 'a psychological syndrome in response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job' (Milosavljevic & Noble, 2015, p. 101). Burnout has been associated with working in the human services where practitioners deal with particularly complex cases. Contributing factors to burn out are working long hours, having a higher level of seniority and being over the age of forty. This can explain why middle managers are at high risk for burn out. Interestingly, the number of years in the workforce can be a protective factor against burn out (Milosavljevic & Noble, 2015).

Work related stress needs to be addressed to achieve a healthy work-life balance for middle managers (Paine Schofield et al., 2008; Hughes & Weiner, 2013). Mitchell (2001) concluded that team support; clinical supervision and debriefing can support dealing with stress and pressure. Personal strategies can also beneficial. Spencer (1994) found that in the health sector 78% of the respondents use personal distractions, for example hobbies and activities, and 27.5% talk to family and friends regarding upsetting work issues. The majority of this group, 80%, found their informal network helpful. However, 62.7% of the respondents would also like group supervision lead by a professional to support them.

Technology could also be used by public sector organisations to create a healthy work-life balance by offering more flexible or part-time work structures, including working from home. However, Paine Schofield et al., (2008) states that flexible work can increase the stress when available and accessible 24-7 on technology.

Another concern identified was the staff management when employees are not present in the office to be trained and managed. There were also concerns raised by those who prefer to keep work and life separate. Morse, Salyers, Rollins, Monroe-DeVita and Pfahler (2012) agree that the use of technology can supplement the delivery of burnout reduction methods in public sector organisations. They recommend the use of individual intervention strategies in combination with organisational prevention techniques. Public sector organisations should develop a sense of shared meaning with mission

statements, develop organisational policies and practices that promote staff wellness and train managers in supportive behaviours.

Additional identified support for middle managers from their senior managers is accurate and up to date information that is shared with other departments and agencies (Cook, 2004; Matheson et al., 1997; Robinson, 2012;) and efficient and effective communication systems and openness to new ideas (Hughes & Wearing, 2013; Robinson, 2012).

Summary

In this chapter changing government ideologies and the effect on middle managers in the public sector in New Zealand were explored. This literature review has identified three significant features in public sector management: firstly government ideologies have an effect on public sector organisations and their managers; secondly, the reforms played a big part in the current complex roles of middle managers and the competing demands on these managers. And thirdly, while the public sector has generally successfully implemented structural changes, the changes in behaviour and attitude within the public sector are still in development.

The definition of the role of middle manager in the public sector was explored as well as the paradigms of this role. The description of the role of a middle manager in the public sector used is: someone with access to top management coupled with knowledge of operations. A middle manager is perceived as a skilled and resourceful professional and a strategic asset to the public sector organisation.

There are a number of challenges and motivators identified with working as a middle manager in the public sector. This chapter identified a lack of autonomy, cost cutting in the public sector, staff management expectations, the use of technology, the existing skill set of middle managers and the lack of support as challenging. Reasons why people choose a role in the public sector ranges from gaining new knowledge and learning and relationship building within teams and with the clients and their families. The feeling of worth and value and public sector values and purpose is also identified as a strong motivator.

Senior managers should offer middle managers challenging and interesting work, job security, opportunity to continually learn and develop skills and knowledge and intrinsic and extrinsic incentives and sanctions. Professional development and training is also essential to ensure they can fully engage in their role. Middle managers of human services in the public sector also need support to access accurate and up to date information and efficient and effective communication systems. Due to the high risk level of burnout of middle managers, work related stress needs to be addressed on an organisational as well as an individual level to achieve a healthy work-life balance.

In the next chapter the research project is described including the methodologies and methods and the recruitment of participants. The ethical dilemmas of this research are also included in this chapter.

CHAPTER 3:   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodologies and methods utilised in this research to identify the challenges middle managers of human services in the public sector encounter, the strategies that they have developed to deal with these and how public sector organisations could support their middle managers.

The research methodologies are described along with the core assumptions about the nature of society and the nature of science to develop a philosophical perspective. The use of qualitative research methodology that guides and frames this research is explained. The social constructivist perspective and interpretative approach are also discussed.

The decisions around data gathering and recruitment of participants are described in this chapter. The ethical issues that have arisen are also be explored.

3.1   Quantitative and qualitative research

For this research either quantitative or qualitative research methods, or a combination of both, were available. As the methodologies can explain phenomenon from different perspectives, the use of one over the other depends on the research question and the critical factors of each design (Lowhorn, 2007).

Quantitative research studies a representative sample of an entire group to make statistically significant conclusions about this group. It seeks to validate an hypothesis by conducting an experiment and analysing the results numerically. Quantitative research is therefore deductive in nature (Lowhorn, 2007). Since the 1960's there has been a move to more subjective and interpretative approaches to research (Burns, 2000). Qualitative research is more interested in the 'how and why' instead of the 'how many' as in quantitative research (Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicholls & Ormston, 2014). Qualitative researchers will look for explanations and understanding of social phenomena and their contexts. Qualitative methods are used to examine and

explore complex issues that occur over time (Ritchie et al., 2014) as is the case in this research. Qualitative research does not try to reach statistically significant conclusions about an entire group; instead it seeks to explain their version of reality. It does not start with a theory but seeks to arrive at a theory that explains the behaviour observed. Qualitative research is therefore inductive in nature (Lowhorn, 2007).

Qualitative research takes the perspectives and accounts of research participants as a starting point (Ritchie et al., 2014) and places emphasis on the experience and the world of the participants (Burns, 2000). It is also used to examine organisational, political, and historical contexts (Anastas, 2004) and is therefore appropriate when exploring a subject such as middle managers in the public sector. The key element of qualitative research is 'providing an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world of research participants by learning about their social and material circumstances, their experiences, perspectives and histories' (Ritchie et al., 2014, p.16)

As concluded in the literature review, the perspectives and histories of the changing government ideologies have had a significant impact on both the public service delivery and the role of middle manager. As this research aims to understand the challenges and strategies of a group of middle managers in the public sector, this research will focus on understanding their version of reality. Therefore qualitative research is used as the methodology for this research.

3.2   Research methodology

Creswell (2003) described how the researcher should answer four questions when designing a research project: what epistemology perspective informs the research; what theoretical perspective lies behind the methodology; what methodology governs the use of methods and what methods are being used? The researcher needs to make core assumptions about the nature of society and the nature of science to develop a philosophical perspective to be able to choose the epistemology and theoretical perspective behind the methodology (Holden & Lynch, 2004).

3.2.1 Epistemology and theoretical perspective

There are two contrasting philosophical perspectives about the nature of society: rational or radical change. In a rational view of society, the researcher makes the core assumption that society is unified and cohesive (Holden & Lynch, 2004) which is used as the basis of the modernism school of thought. The modernism school of thought is one of order and truth. This model identifies tension-reduction as the operative force in social structural development. Order is seen as desirable with set standards of acceptable behaviour in society. Society has socialised the individual in accepting the obligations and expectations fitting with their role in society. Individuals are seen as conscious and self-directing and reasonable. Individual desires need to be tamed in line with the expectations of society (Milanovic, 2013).

Radical change views society in constant conflict to get free from the domination of societal structures (Holden and Lynch, 2004). The radical change perspective underlies the post-modernism school of thought. The post-modernism school of thought is one of chaos and the co-existence of multiple and unpredictable determinants. Individuals are seen as having multiple, co-existing roles depending on the situation they are in. Postmodernists prefer to hear local knowledge and sees dominant and global knowledge undermining other voices that need to be heard (Milanovic, 2013). This research is placed in the post-modernist school of thought and it asserts that knowledge, truth and reality is shaped by history, culture, and context and is therefore socially constructed (Sahin, 2006). It gives voice to participants with local knowledge and accepts individuals have multiple roles which middle manager is only one of the many (Milanovic, 2013).

The philosophical perspectives about the nature of science, involves either a subjective or an objective approach to research. The extreme position of an objectivist approach states that the world exists as a concrete reality that can only be discovered through observation and measurement and is independent of the cognitive efforts of individuals to give meaning to it. The extreme subjectivist position is that reality does not exist outside one's mind; hence reality is all imagination (Holden & Lynch, 2004).

This research is located within a social constructionist perspective that is rooted in the philosophy of human experience and is commonly used in the fields of sociology, social psychology, and social work (Sahin, 2006). Social constructionism was developed to understand the nature of reality. Reality exists in this perspective as both objective and subjective. It is concerned with how knowledge is constructed and understood (Andrews, 2012). Hutchison and Charlesworth (2003) describe how realities are created as people interact. People are social beings who interact with each other and with the physical world based on shared meanings and understandings about the world. This explains the existence of multiple social and cultural realities. The socio-political environment and history of any situation play an important role in understanding the dynamic processes of both person and the physical world. Therefore knowledge and truth are created and not discovered by the mind (Andrews, 2012). This perspective acknowledges that widely accepted assumptions reinforce the interests of dominant social groups. People shape their social reality but are also constrained by the pre-existing social and cultural arrangements which are inherently in place (Hutchison & Charlesworth, 2003). Social constructionism emphasises language and its meaning as to how experiences are interpreted. Reality is filtered through human language. This language does not just reflect the world, but rather generates it. The everyday interactions between people and how they use language, is how reality is constructed. It is language that coordinates and regulates social life (Sahin, 2006).

This perspective accepts that researchers cannot be neutral as their own interests and values will be part of the interpretation of data. Researchers themselves construct a social world rather than merely representing some independent reality (Sahin, 2006). It does not make generalised conclusions or assumptions about the results of their data either but accepts that data is conceived of multiple, fragmentary, context-dependent, and local knowledge (Hutchison & Charlesworth, 2003). By using a social constructionist perspective, the different cultural backgrounds, history and social reality and the language used to describe these, are taken into account of both the public sector organisation and of the middle manager.

3.2.2 Methodology

This research will use narrative inquiry as methodology. Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding and inquiring into experience through "collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000, p. 20).The purpose of narrative enquiry is to reveal the meanings of the individuals' experiences as opposed to objective, decontextualized truths (Wang and Geale, 2015, p.196).

Narrative inquirers need to begin with their personal justification in context of their own life experiences and position, a practical justification to shift or change practice and social justification to justify the research in terms of new methodology, knowledge or policy or social action (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). The personal justification is described in section 1.1 which has highlighted the role of inside researcher. Insider research can be defined as the study of one's own social group or society (Naples, 2003, p. 46). Insider research is undertaken by members of the same social group or society, who share the same cultural, biological, occupational or other characteristics (Greene, 2014). The advantages are the a priori intimate knowledge of the group researched (Greene, 2014) and the greater understanding of the culture being studied and having an established intimacy (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002). The disadvantages are the loss of objectivity (Unluer, 2012) and to become too subjective and biased (Greene, 2014). Instead of trying to understand the world of the participant, the insider researcher is part of this and needs to ensure they capture the world of the participant. Therefore the researcher will need to monitor and critically reflect on their own thoughts and expectations. As Greene (2014, p. 6) put it: 'insider researchers need to start by getting into their own heads; recognizing the ways in which they are like and unlike their participants; knowing which of their social identities may advantage and/or complicate the process'. Narrative inquiry allows the researcher to situate themselves with the participant and build a personal relationship during the inquiry (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). The practical justification is described in 1.2. This research is seeking to benefit middle managers of human services in the public sector who might have similar experiences and the senior managers who could support

middle managers more effectively to ensure they can fulfil their role to their potential. The social justification is the knowledge gathered and shared with middle and senior managers in human services in the public sector.

In narrative inquiry, the researcher analyses not just the personal story of the participants but also the interactions with other people. (Clandinin, 2006). The personal story consists of the personal feelings, hopes and desires and the social conditions in which these experiences are taking place (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). This allows researchers to present participants' voices holistically and takes into account the complexity and richness of these experiences which cannot be captured just through empirical methods and statistical figures (Webster & Mertova, 2007). The narrative will combine the views of the participant with the interpretations of the researcher in a collaborative narrative (Creswell, 2003). The researcher will interpret and experience the personal and social world of the participants rather than explaining or predicting their world. This will allow the researcher to gain an insider view into the world of the participant. It does not aim to reveal an objective truth but instead aims for subjective truths for the participants within their social context (Wang and Geale, 2015). Narrative inquiry expects that the interim research texts will be open to both participant and researcher to interpret a multiplicity of possible meanings (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Narrative inquiry is less about the analytical method of deconstructing data into coded piles and common themes and more about creating research texts that represent the complexity of people's experiences (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Even though the researcher has an important role and its own voice, it is crucial that the researcher does not dominate the voices of the participants (Clandinin & Huber, 2010).

This research will place importance on the individual worldview of the participant however to ensure confidentiality is kept the answers are merged into more generic themes. The use of quotes and examples from participants will allow the individual voices of the participants to be heard. To ensure the research has a practical justification, the conclusions and recommendations will also be generalised to ensure a range of middle and senior managers can utilise the information in this research.

3.2.3 Methods

Qualitative researchers will look for explanations and understanding of social phenomena and their contexts (Ritchie et al., 2014). Qualitative research samples are often small in scale and purposively selected on the basis of specific criteria. Data collection methods usually involve close interactive contact between the researcher and the research participants. Main qualitative methods include: observation, in-depth individual interviews, focus groups, biographical methods such as life histories and narratives, and analysis of documents and texts (Ritchie et al., 2014). Some methods of data gathering and analysing in the narrative inquiry field are notes, journal records, interview transcripts, observations, storytelling, letters, autobiographical writing or other documentation (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Qualitative data is detailed, information rich and extensive. The research tends to focus on the interpretation of the social meaning of the data (Ritchie et al., 2014). Therefore interviews and focus groups are appropriate methods to gather data as they place emphasis on the interaction and relationship between researcher and participant. Interviews are discussions, usually one-on-one between an interviewer and participant to gather information on a specific set of topics. Focus groups are 'dynamic group discussions used to collect information' (Harrell & Bradley, 2009, p.6). Focus groups are less appropriate when the emphasis is on the individual voice regarding a specific issue. Also the group dynamics may imply emphasis that is not representative of the group. The sensitivity of the issue can also discourage the use of focus groups as some issues might not be appropriate to discuss in groups (Harrell & Bradley, 2009).

As the literature review shows, the history and background of both the manager and the organisation have an impact on the roles of the middle managers and the challenges and strategies for change. It is therefore important that the focus stays on the individual and explores their perspective and understanding of their personal context as per the social constructivism paradigm (Ritchie et al., 2014). To protect confidentiality and to ensure participants can freely discuss and express their views interviews were chosen over focus groups as the method for this research.

Interviews can be structured, semi structured or unstructured (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). Structured interviews use a list of predetermined questions with little or no variation and with no opportunity for follow-up questions to explore the further. The advantage is that they are relatively quick and easy to administer. They also allow for exact replication of the interview with others (Woods, 2011). The disadvantage is that they do not allow for the participants voice or worldview and are therefore not suitable for this research (Gill et al., 2008). Unstructured interviews start without any preconceived theories or ideas and the lack of predetermined interview questions provides little guidance for participants to give consent for participation (Gill et al., 2008). A semi-structured interview consists has set several key questions that help to define the areas to be explored, but also allows further exploring to clarify responses or to pursue an idea (Gill et al., 2008). It still allows for replication of the interview with others, but these interviews are less controlled. However, the data is not generalizable and prone to possible bias (Woods, 2011).

To ensure the worldview of the participant is heard, the researcher needs the flexibility to explore themes or ask for clarification and therefore structured interviews are not suitable. By taking an interpretative approach this research places value on the significance of the researcher's own interpretations and understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Ritchie et al., 2014). As researchers are instruments and part of the research, the relationship between researcher and participant has an effect on the quality of the interview and that of the data collected (Anastas, 2004). Therefore this research uses individual, semi-structured interviewing of participants.

3.3   Data gathering

Participants in quantitative research are randomly selected to remove any potential external influences (Sargeant, 2012). In qualitative research, the participants are purposefully selected to create greater understanding of the research topic. Decisions regarding selection are based on the research questions, theoretical perspectives, and evidence informing the study (Sargeant, 2012). For this research potential participants were considered based on their role as middle manager, their experience level (minimum of three

year experience as a middle manager), and the location of the organisation they work for.

To reach a range of potential participants information sheets (see Appendix A) and requests for participation were sent out to a number of public sector organisations. To reach middle managers in social work organisations, the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) (see Appendix B) was approached. Information sheets and requests for participation were sent to the local District Health Board (DHB) to approach middle managers in the health sector and also to the middle managers of the local major education organisations (see Appendix D) utilising the researcher's own professional network. The Public Service Association Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi (PSA) is New Zealand's largest union and represents workers in central government, state-owned enterprises, local councils, health boards and community groups and they were also sent information sheets and requests for participation (see Appendix C). These organisations were asked to send out the information sheet and request for participation to their members or staff in middle management positions and to distribute this information via the noticeboard e-newsletters. To ensure that participants has had the opportunity to learn the role of middle manager and reflect on this position, the criteria for participation in the research was to have at least three years' work experience as a middle manager and also to work in a specific region. This had not only a practical reason, as face to face interviews at a participants' work place are easier to organise in a smaller area, but also to acknowledge the demographics and challenges this region brings.

There were no responses from the members of either the ANZASW or the PSA although the ANZASW did send the information sheet and requests for participation to their members via their noticeboards. However, there were responses from the DHB, education and social work organisations. Eight people responded to the invitation to participate in the research. One of these did not meet the criteria and had less than three years work experience as a middle manager. The other seven potential participants met the criteria and were interviewed. After the interviews some participants volunteered other people within their network they believed would be interested in participating. This

snowball sampling method can be used for identifying and contacting hidden populations and difficult to engage groups. In this research snowball strategies were used as a method of contact in a practical sense and not as a method of sampling in more formalised and statistical sense (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). This resulted in another two participants who met all the criteria.

The potential participants were sent the information sheet and request for participation, if they did not already had received this via their organisation, and the questions and structure of the interviews (Appendix E) via email. The participants were invited to make contact if any other queries would arise. Via email and phone an appropriate time and place was set to conduct the interview. Participants had the choice to meet at their place of work, in the private offices of the researcher or at another convenient place. The advantages and disadvantages of each place were discussed with the participants. Six of the nine interviews were held at the participants' place of work. Two were interviewed in the office of the researcher as these participants were concerned the interview would be interrupted if they met at their place of work. One participant preferred to be interviewed after work hours at home to ensure the interview would not be interrupted. Before the interview started the participants were asked if any questions needed clarifying. The consent form (Appendix F) was given out before the interview started and the participants could make the decision to have the interview recorded, with notes being made or just notes being made. Four of the participants had their interview audio recorded with notes being made while the others had detailed notes made during the interview. The interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and the notes and transcripts were sent out to the participants together with the authority for the release of transcript (Appendix J) shortly after. No alterations were requested and all transcripts were released to be used by the researcher.

To gather the experiences from the participants they were asked to identify the challenges in their role, the strategies they use to fulfil their roles and how their organisations are supporting these strategies or should support them (Appendix E). The questions were kept broad and open for interpretation. The participants were asked what challenge or strategy had the most impact on their role when it was unclear what most influenced their performance as a middle manager.

Most of the time this was not needed as the participant clearly stated what challenge they found most impacting and what strategy they might use to deal with this. The participants were asked additional questions to clarify their answers or to ask for examples. This is fitting with the use of semi-structured interviews as this method allows for further exploring or pursuing of ideas (Gill et al., 2008). As most of the participants had a significant amount of experience, they were encouraged to answer these questions based on their years of experience, not just based on their current job. This also assisted in keeping the participants and their organisations confidential.

3.4   Data analysis

According to Thorne (2000), qualitative researchers used to claim that such issues as reliability and validity were irrelevant to the qualitative research. Instead, the proof of the quality of the work rested entirely on the acceptance or rejection of the research outcomes. More recently, qualitative researchers have concluded that systematic, rigorous, and auditable analytical processes are essential to distinguishing good from poor quality research. There are two fundamental approaches to analysing qualitative data: the deductive approach and the inductive approach (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). The deductive approach uses a predetermined framework, set by the researcher, to analyse data. The inductive approach analyses data without a predetermined framework and uses the data itself to develop the structure of analysis. It is up to the researcher to explore and interpret the data and to make sense of them. This research uses an inductive approach as narrative inquirers interpret the personal and social world of the participants rather than explaining or predicting their world (Wang & Geale, 2015). Narrative analysis is a strategy to provide insights about the lived experiences of the participants. These analytic processes are used to detect the main narrative themes within the stories from the participants to understand and make sense of their lives (Thorne, 2000).

After the interviews were transcribed and notes were gathered, the researcher started the analytical process. By using open coding (note taking in the margins), the researcher summarised each paragraph or piece of text. These

notes were collected and grouped in the categories: challenges, strategies and support required. Based on the analytical and theoretical ideas developed during the literature review, the categories were further refined and reduced in number by grouping them together (Burnard et al., 2008). Using the emergent codes, all data from the interviews was ordered into these categories and quotes that highlight the category were highlighted. Great care was taken to ensure the quotes kept the participant and their organisation confidential. This process involved reading and re-reading the data to understand the possible meaning of this data. The emergent codes within the groups had to be refined throughout the research as data showed different meaning was given to challenges and strategies. For example training and workshops were identified as a separate sub-theme until it became clear that training was seen as a tool for networking, rather than an enhancement of skill by the participants. The ongoing process of redefining is appropriate in narrative inquiry as interim research texts will be open to the researcher to interpret a multiplicity of possible meanings (Clandinin & Huber, 2010).

Excel sheets were used to group the final codes from the participants' data. The sheets were used to identify themes arising from more than one source. When a correlation was found, for example between supervision and networking, the codes were linked to each other or combined. The qualitative data from the interviews was analysed before being compared with the literature findings for common themes and contrasting views.

3.5   Ethical issues

There are a number of ethical implications identified for an insider researcher. The disclosure as an insider is essential from an ethical standpoint (Greene, 2014). In the information sheet the position from the researcher is made clear (Appendix A). An insider researcher might become privy to confidential information about the participant or their organisation or someone they know during the interview. This could potentially impact on the relationships between the researcher and the participant or the organisation (Greene, 2014). During the interviews the participants were open and honest and critically reflected on their role and that of their organisation. Participants were encouraged to talk in

generic terms and names from either organisations or persons were avoided by both parties. Another ethical implication identified by Greene (2014) is the risk of bias and the influence the researchers' personal beliefs, experiences, and values influence the study. It is therefore essential for the researcher to understand that even though the researcher is part of the group, there will be significant differences in age, gender and culture with the participants. This bias is also identified by Unluer (2012). Either the researcher or participant might assume the other understand the meaning of the view and not clarify. Using narrative inquiry that encourages looking for possible meanings and viewpoints supported the researcher in critically analysing the data and to actively look for different interpretations of the data. The risk of bias is also present when using snowball sampling as it could narrow the range of participants (Sulaiman-Hill & Thompson, 2011). However, as only two of the participants are recruited via snowball sampling, this risk is relatively small.

Several ethical considerations that had come up when designing the questions or interpreting the data have been discussed with the supervisors from Massey University. An application was made to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (Appendix G) which determined this research to be low risk and placed it on the low risk register. An ethical consideration identified on the application was the possible increase in distress and anxiety of the participant when discussing challenges. Access to professional support and Employment Assisted Programmes was identified as an appropriate resource. These options were discussed during the interviews and one participant has been actively encouraged to engage with additional professional support after the participant described the stress experienced as part of the role as middle manager. This stress was not caused by the interview but identified by the participant as a challenge. The other consideration identified on the application was the respect for privacy and confidentiality. This had to take precedent due to the small size of the region and the limited number of organisations present in this region. The snowball sampling increased this risk as two of the participants were approached by other participants. Confidentiality issues were discussed with these participants and the researcher made sure they were not coerced to take part (Sulaiman-Hill & Thompson, 2011).

To ensure the confidentiality of the participant, the questions were altered slightly. Participants were asked about their challenges and strategies *throughout their career*, not specifically in their current role. Even though, as the region and this sector are small, the chance that information is recognisable is still a risk. Any referral to an organisation or a physical place in the data and quotes has been removed or changed. During the analysis of the data, themes were gathered in large and generic groups and great care has been taken not to identify the participant or their places of work. Even though after these measures were put in place, participants were more guarded and talked less freely when asked about support from the organisations they have worked for. This was respected and participants were not prompted or encouraged to disclose more information.

In this research the participant's voice was central as it is their world and their cultural and social environment. The researcher had cultural support available in case of language and unfamiliar cultural references. Participants were also invited to have support if they would prefer. One participant had a support person present who was able to explain questions and offered confirmation that the participant did well. This was important to the participant as academic language was unfamiliar to the participant and stress provoking.

Overall there were more advantages than disadvantages of being an insider researcher during this research. The participants were made aware of the current middle manager role of the researcher and instead of this hindering the conversation it seemed to encourage participants. They seemed to assume that the researcher understood their situation and would not question their values and beliefs about their roles. Participants talked freely about their challenges and strategies. Sometimes language used needed to be queried during the interviews as the participants used jargon and abbreviations from their field unknown to the researcher. The relationship between the researcher and the participant felt equal and safe. Participants said afterwards that they felt the interview was useful and that they had not spent time previously on reflecting on their challenges and their strategies or the support available. Interviewing, analysing and writing up the experiences and world views of the participants were equally useful and enlightening for the researcher.

Summary

In this chapter the chosen methodology was explored. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were described. As qualitative research takes the perspectives and accounts of research participants as a starting point and places emphasis on the experience and the 'life world' of the participants it was a better fit than a quantitative research methodology for this research.

This research was placed in a post-modernist position and a social constructive perspective. The post-modernist school of thought asserts that knowledge and truth reality is shaped by history, culture, and context and is therefore socially constructed. The social constructive perspective states that realities are created as people interact. This perspective describes how people are social beings who interact with each other and with the physical world based on shared meanings and understandings about the world. This perspective acknowledges the existence of multiple social and cultural realities and therefore acknowledges the history and background of both the participant as the organisation they work for. The data was analysed using an interpretive approach that recognises the role of the researcher in the collection and analysing of data. The position of an insider researcher was also discussed and clarified.

Information sheets and requests for participation were sent to the local District Health Board (DHB) to approach middle managers in the health sector and also to the middle managers of the local major education organisations (see Appendix D) utilising my own professional network. Invitations were also send to the ANZASW and PSA but no potential participants responded. The snowball sampling method was also used to recruit participants.

Due to the geographically small area this research is set in and the ethical dilemmas around using the snowball sampling methods, additional care needed to be taken around confidentiality issues. The questions have been made broader and data has been altered to delete any identifying details. Another ethical consideration was the stress and anxiety the interview could cause. Additional support and Employment Assisted Programmes were in place for

participants if need be. The researcher also had access to additional cultural and linguistic support if needed.

In the next chapter the voices of the participants are heard regarding their challenges, strategies used and support needed in their role as middle manager in the public sector.

CHAPTER 4:   PARTICIPANTS' VOICES

Introduction

In this chapter the data collected from the participants in this research will be described. Using semi structured interviews they were asked: what challenges have you experienced as a middle manager in the public sector, what strategies have you used to deal with these challenges and what support have you received or want to receive from your managers or organisation.

This chapter is divided into the key themes of challenges, strategies and support. From the data collected the common themes of each category are described and the links between the different themes identified. The interpretations from the researcher and quotes from the interviews are used to highlight and illustrate the viewpoints and realities of the participants.

4.1   Introduction to the participants

The interviewed participants were selected on the basis of their role as middle manager, their experience level and the location of their organisation. As described by Sargeant (2012), qualitative research outcomes depend on the selection of participants who can best inform the research question. Selecting participants with depth and breadth of experience enhanced the level of data and understanding of the challenges, strategies and support required of middle managers in human services in the public sector.

Participants were invited through advertisements placed on the noticeboards of the ANZASW and the PSA and requests to managers in the major health, social services and education organisations using my own network organisations. Nine people were interviewed as part of the research. Of the nine managers, two were male and seven female. The pseudonyms given to the participants are not linked to their gender. Two of the participants worked in social services (Ellen and Faith), four in education (Alex, Brooklyn, Gabriel and Hailey) and three in health fields (Charlie, David and Ivan). Of the nine participants, three of these had worked in more than one field, for example health and education (Alex, Brooklyn and David). Five of the participants (Alex, Charlie, Ellen, Faith

and Ivan) fulfilled hybrid type roles (mixture of professional practitioner and management). The participants overall were very experienced; one participant (Ellen) had less than 5 years' experience as a manager, five (Brooklyn, David, Faith, Gabriel and Hailey) had between 10 and 15 years' experience in a number of management positions and three of the participants (Alex, Charlie and Ivan) had over 15 years' experience in management functions.

Three questions were asked of the participants: what challenges have you experienced as a middle manager in the public sector, what strategies have you used to deal with these challenges and how their organisations are supporting these strategies or should support them. Additional questions were asked to clarify answers if needed. The responses to each of these questions are set out next.

4.2 What challenges have you experienced as a middle manager in the public sector?

The participants discussed a range of challenges they identified in their role as middle managers in the public sector. Some of these challenges were linked with the expectations of the role of middle manager, for example the funding and output focus of the role. Other challenges impacted on their ability to fulfil the role, for example the training and support available for middle managers and access to information systems and administrative support. A number of the challenges were interlinked or amplified by other challenges. For instance, unclear strategic planning also impacted on the availability of adequate resources and the ability to utilise these effectively.

The first question to identify challenges of middle managers in the public sector identified the following sub-themes: unclear strategic vision, roles and responsibilities; output focused funding; lack of training, support, resources and information; staff management issues and the feeling of isolation and lack of support.

4.2.1 Unclear strategic vision, roles and responsibilities

The lack of a strong strategic vision that guides the organisation was mentioned by Alex, David, Faith, Gabriel and Hailey. These participants felt that a strong

strategic vision and clear purpose of public sector organisations is needed to contribute to societal change. Participants wanted to use this vision and purpose to justify decisions and as a guide for themselves and their team as illustrated in the following comment:

Is this according to the values and principles of the organisation? That is my benchmark. What is the mission statement, what are the values of the organisation? - Alex

However, participants believed that not all decisions made by the organisation were led by the strategic vision. One participant commented for example:

I work for an organisation that claims to be social services focused but it is business focused in terms of funding. - Faith.

The strategic vision of the organisations were seen as vague by these participants and without clearly defined actions and goals attached to them as illustrated by the following comment:

The vision (of the organisation) is unclear and I have no say over the tasks or outcomes. I am just a conveyer of information that I don't even believe in and is outside the level of my responsibility. - Ivan.

Participants wanted the aims of their organisation to focus on the long term well-being for their clients and families. However, participants stated that their decisions were focused on short term crisis control and were reactive instead of proactive as these comments highlight:

My role is more reducing of damage instead of creating constructive changes. - Ivan

Decisions that were made were usually based on a physical necessity or a physical drive rather than a humanitarian drive. - Alex.

Your strategic programme development goes on the back burner because of your short term priorities pressing and you have people at you with deadlines. - David.

The majority of participants (Alex, Brooklyn, David, Ellen, Faith, Gabriel and Ivan) stated that their roles and responsibilities were unclear and that they were never sure if they were prioritising correctly or if they were working towards the long term strategic goal of the organisation. Ivan explained that the required actions, steps or behaviours of the job were not clarified and both Ivan and Hailey explained they are unclear how to meet the targets and expectations:

> *There are no systems to fulfil the targets and only broad tasks are set without specific actions attached to achieve these targets. - Ivan.*

> *What are the expectations and am I meeting and covering them? - Hailey*

Some of the participants (Alex, Brooklyn, David, Faith and Hailey) believed that the drive for funding explains the discrepancy between their job descriptions and the targets set for middle managers. For example Hailey explained that they were responsible for the academic standards at an educational provider, however, all the targets were funding based and depend on recruitment of student numbers. This participant accepted the role expecting to write academic programmes, not to develop a marketing and recruitment program. Ivan explained that their role was creating awareness in society regarding a social issue but all the targets were aimed at the reduction of this phenomenon. This caused confusion for the participant and also for the other stakeholders who had queries about the role as demonstrated in the following comment:

> *Clarity of role and clarity of purpose would make the communication a lot easier. If I know what I am doing I will be able to communicate it better. - Ivan*

All of the participants except Ellen stated that one of the main challenges they face was the focus and pressure on funding. They believed that this focus was the main reason for the organisation's senior management not using the strategic vision as a guide for decision making which negatively impacted on role clarification for middle managers. As these participants explain:

> *There are always requirements and paperwork to get the funding and that doesn't always give what you are trying to achieve (…) or what the*

client needs. You have to do what to business expects you to do versus what you want to do for your client. - Brooklyn

I get concerned about the direction some of the long term planning is going. The direction I see as totally unrealistic and uninformed. - David.

4.2.2 Output focused funding

I can deal with patient's problems but the funding thing kept me awake at night. - Charlie.

Public service organisations are funded for certain projects or targets, and participants felt these were influenced by the political climate. Organisations were expected to meet certain outputs by offering services and creating societal change as stipulated by their contracts with government departments. Participants explained how the pressure of acquiring funding and to meet the targets and outputs placed pressure on their performance and that of their staff. One of the participants described:

The challenge I find is the increasing pressure to perform and to make everything more efficient and more accountable. - David.

Participants felt that these targets were not always realistic, were often not in the best interest of the client and not what the community has been asking for and not always fitting with the overall purpose and strategic vision of the service as described by one participant:

Most of my time is spend on the external measures and expectations, the different internal and external funding pools while trying to be people orientated. - Faith.

Some of the participants (Alex, Charlie and Ellen) felt that senior managers within the organisation would not necessarily know and understand the needs of the client group as senior managers never worked at grass root level with the client. Alex explains:

You will find that upper management would come as a promotion from the Ministry of Social Development or the funder whereas middle managers come from within the organisation. - Alex.

The communication that comes from the top is challenging and unhelpful. The systems are not working and the staffing (ratios) are not suitable for (name organisation). - Ellen.

People outside of the region just don't get what happens up here. This is like a different world up here. - Brooklyn

Goals set by senior managers do not focus on (name region). - Gabriel

These participants believed that outputs expected by the senior managers do not benefit the clients and that they, in their role as middle manager, advocated for realistic targets and client focused services as is illustrated in the following comments:

The common denominator is the lack of understanding of the nuts and bolts of the needs of the client group. Most of the time I was coming in as an advocate for the people I am working with and for the client base. The middle managers were the ones that went in batting. - Alex

How can I manipulate this regulation that has come down so it doesn't impact on my client group? - Alex

The experience of eight of the nine participants (Alex, Brooklyn, Charlie, David, Faith, Gabriel, Hailey and Ivan) is that the pressure never seemed to stop and new targets were set as soon as others were reached. There did not seem to be a moment to celebrate or reflect on the achievement; develop the next step collaboratively and work towards the overall strategic plan. Instead it seemed a long list of short term crisis interventions that responded to the funding criteria or new initiatives of their ministries as these participants explain:

It almost doesn't pay to be super-efficient because there is a level that you never reach. - David.

You will need to learn how to prioritise. - Faith.

I guess that is one of the challenges: doing more with less. - Alex.

And we are back at the funding again… - Brooklyn.

We have to provide free health care for under 13 year olds, so now we are negotiating for the funding. - Charlie

The participants also believed that their challenges were being increased due to the lack of adequate training, resources or access to systems such as information and communication technology (ICT) systems.

4.2.3 Lack of training, resources and information

The majority of the participants identified at least one area where they are under resourced. Five of the participants identified a lack of training (Alex, Brooklyn, Charlie, David and Ellen), three participants indicated a need for more support in their role (Brooklyn, Ellen and Faith), four of the participants mentioned a lack in resources (Alex, Charlie, Faith and Ivan), time (Ellen and Faith) and information (Alex, Brooklyn and Ivan). These feelings are summed up by the following comments:

I am overworked and under resourced. - Faith

If you are going to do it properly, you need to resource it properly. - Alex

There is a lack of training and a lack of resources. - Ellen

Participants felt they were given very little support and training when they started the role as a middle manager. This appeared to be especially the case when promoted in-house and for managers with hybrid roles. Participants felt that they seemed to be expected to understand the management role as if it was no different to their professional practitioners' role. As Charlie explains:

All of a sudden you are doing a job which is completely different; it's like going from being a dentist to being a shop assistant. - Charlie

Other participants had the same experiences as is demonstrated in the following comments:

We promote from within but we don't necessarily train or support from within. You are good in your job and you get a promotion but they don't necessarily teach you how to become a manager. You just have to find your own way. - Alex

I was just dumped into it and was told to get on with it. Looking back it would have been nice if I had a bit of support and guidance but it didn't happen. - David

The lack of training and support was partly blamed on the overall lack of resources of the organisation. Participants explained that they do not ask for the little resources available or ensure that these are earmarked for their role as Brooklyn explains:

And we are back at funding again. I would rather let my staff get what they need. It is more important that people at grass roots get the support than that I do. - Brooklyn

The lack of training and support was also mentioned when participants explained their challenges regarding administrative and ICT issues. They described how much extra time goes into the administrative and ICT issues as the participants were not trained or familiar with the systems or generally lack ICT related skills. One participant described how the funding depends on the ICT system of the organisation:

My funding is depending on my client numbers but I have no ICT system or support to provide this information to the funder. I am not IT savvy enough to do it myself. - Charlie

Ivan described that no administrative support was given for clinical team meetings. Instead a professional practitioner was made responsible for this. The participant felt this was not a good use of the skills of professional practitioners and not an efficient use of time because:

This is a job that will take an admin a very short time but it takes an expensive professional a very long time while they could use this time

more productively. It might look it cost effective by not having an admin but it isn't. - Ivan

The ICT issues were also challenging when participants needed access to adequate and up to date information to make decisions. Lack of training in ICT and the previously mentioned issues with role clarity impacted on the participants' ability to access the information they need at the time to make informed decisions as mentioned by Alex, Brooklyn and Ivan. Some of the participants were unaware of the existence of this information or did not have the ICT and administrative support to utilise this information effectively. Some participants explained that they did not have access to all the information and did not feel well informed to be able to make decisions.

> *Decisions are made at upper management level but only drip fed to middle managers. There is a lack of consistency and lack of flow. - Alex.*

Eight out of nine participants felt that a key aspect of their role was to manage and support staff but they were not given the tools or training to do this effectively which caused challenges as is demonstrated in the following quote:

> *Middle managers often have the added role for professional development; so they have a disciplinary role, professional development role, staff support role, and the day-day running of the organisation without a lot of support themselves. - Brooklyn*

4.2.4 Staff management issues

Almost all of the participants (Alex, Brooklyn, Charlie, David, Ellen, Faith, Gabriel, and Hailey) explained how they feel like a 'piggy in the middle' as they had to ensure decisions set by senior staff, which were not necessarily decisions the middle manager agreed with, were implemented by their team who often challenged the directives. This is described in the following examples:

> *The hardest challenge is dealing with your staff and staying onside with your staff so you can get the best possible outcome with them but also having to do what the organisation requires you to do. - David*

Being able to walk the fine line and keep both sides happy is a challenge for me. - Brooklyn.

I know what I should be doing but it's not what I want to do or what I know is right and I suppose that's an ethical issue. - Alex

Alex, Brooklyn, Charlie, David and Faith described how they felt that their allegiance was with the grass roots staff and clients of the organisation. They did not feel particularly part of the senior management nor did these participants give the impression they would like to be. However, it seemed to hurt these participants that their own team was challenging them and made them feel they were no longer part of the group but part of the management team. Three of the participants explained:

People should just do their job. And part of that job is being respectful of each other. Having a disagreement and then coming together on common ground rather than all the back biting and manipulating. - Brooklyn

Time and time again I think how disappointing that they reacted like that. And it happens time and time again so it might be me. - Charlie.

Keeping my staff happy takes up most of my time and energy. - David

During the interviews, these participants described how they were challenging a group of senior managers to support their staff and clients, only to be challenged afterwards by their staff. The participants expressed their upset of not being recognised by their staff as being on their side and that they aimed for the same client centred goal. The following comments illustrate this struggle:

How can I meet the targets while maintaining a good staff culture? - David

The loyalty of middle managers is probably closer to the coal face and not to the hierarchy and that caused tension. - Alex

There is usually a group of senior managers and a group of workers but usually only one of you. - Brooklyn

Not only did the participants need to negotiate targets with senior managers, they also needed to negotiate a range of issues with their staff. These ranged from annual leave to personal issues, developing and maintaining professional and personal boundaries and the underperformance of staff. This was not always an easy task as demonstrated below:

> *Staff management is the thing that takes the most out of you and takes the most time. It's the thing that keeps you awake at night trying to figure out because you cannot account for human nature. - Charlie.*

Participants Brooklyn, Charlie, David and Faith explained that part of this challenge was dealing with the different personalities in the team as illustrated in the following quotes:

> *Social services have a lot of big personalities and I think, whether it is the personality type that comes up to social services or it is the training that we do; we train to give people a voice, we train people to stand up. But sometimes I think people have a voice because they want to hear their own voice rather than because they have actually have something to say. - Brooklyn*

> *When you are managing people, you are managing a team as a whole and they are behaving as individuals, it is all about them. - David*

Staff issues were also caused by the difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. Four of the participants, Charlie, David, Gabriel and Hailey, explained that financially they could not compete with bigger organisations in bigger cities and being understaffed in the team was an issue. Another issue can be that the number of applicants is thin and instead of being able to choose the best candidate, they had few options. Two of the participants explained:

> *Attracting and retaining the right staff is always a challenge and mainly because of the salaries. - David*

> *The recruitment and retaining of people is a challenge. We need to invest in good staff but cannot afford the costs to do so. - Gabriel*

David and Gabriel also mentioned that they were concerned about the lack of succession planning.

Staff management was identified as a key part of the middle management role by the participants and one that was one of the most challenging as Charlie explained:

> The hardest thing is separating work and life. You should be able to switch off. I have always been quite good at that but I am not quite as good at it now. It is more a people thing, a staff thing. - Charlie

The participants often felt torn between being part of the team they managed and being responsible to the senior management to fulfil obligations. This often lead to them feeling isolated and not having support, either from their team or from their senior managers.

4.2.5 Feeling of isolation and lack of support

There were two forms of isolation identified by the participants. The first one was the physical isolation when a participant was not based in the same place as the head office as was the case for Alex, Charlie, Ellen and Faith and the other was the feeling of isolation due to the position of being the middle manager (Brooklyn, Charlie, Gabriela and Ivan).

Some of the participants were physically isolated from their senior managers. This was the case when the service and participant were based in a region that was separate from the head office as Alex explained:

> I had my office in one part of the region, the head office in another and my workers throughout. There is this physical isolation. - Alex

There were benefits and challenges identified in being located separately from the head office location. Participants explained how one of the benefits was that they were less likely to be micro managed therefore they had more freedom for decision making and implementation. However a challenge to this was that they felt isolated and that they had very little input in the planning of the service. Participants felt the service was managed by people who did not have the

knowledge about the region or the clients in those regions as is demonstrated with the following quotes:

Freedom is fine but it is unproductive. - Faith

The family who bought the organisation owns a number of them. It is too expensive to get me to go to (name of city removed) so there is no regional input strategy wise. - Charlie

The other form of isolation mentioned by participants was the lonely position of a middle manager. This was especially experienced by participants who were promoted in-house and by those with hybrid roles. They explained how they were no longer part of the professional team but they did not belong with the management team either. The participants expressed that this creates a feeling of isolation for middle managers as the following examples illustrate:

That whole thing that these people were my friends and now they are not. They can't because much as you might trust them as colleagues the minute you become a manager the minute you become the enemy. - Brooklyn

Getting resistance from those who were at the coalface with you. - Alex

So you have to isolate yourself and you cannot be friends. - Charlie

The sense of isolation of the participants was often compounded by the perceived struggle of competing demands between meeting the needs of the organisation and supporting their staff and the clients. They felt that they were compromising their decisions in order to try and meet organisational needs and staff needs and this often resulted in feeling as though they never achieved anything to the complete satisfaction of any stakeholder. This is summarised by David who explained:

Meeting output target while maintaining a positive and rewarding team culture. Sometimes you are the meat in the sandwich. Trying to meet the targets by senior management has a negative impact on the team culture and it becomes all negative. You want it to be positive but sometimes it doesn't. - David

Not only did the participants describe that the interactions with staff could be negative, the relationships with senior management could also be challenging for some. Participants described in the following comments that they felt unsupported by their senior managers:

> *There is a lack of understanding from senior managers of what the role of middle manager is and a lack of desire to know. - Alex*

> *People like to feel they have contributed and that they are valued for their contribution. - Faith*

> *The major challenge is providing support for my staff without my own support. - Brooklyn*

> *The minute you feel pressured, you don't really care about anyone else. All you think about is yourself and the pressure that is on you. I have noticed that I get snappy. - David*

There were a number of participants, Alex, Charlie, David and Faith, who described how they felt they were doing the best that they could and had to make peace with themselves for not doing better or keeping everyone happy. It was also noted that this contributed to the sense of isolation as they did not feel they were doing a 'good enough job' for either their staff or their managers. And although they had developed a number of strategies it was still an ongoing challenge for the majority of them.

> *I got better at the ability to walk in every morning and walk home that afternoon and feel good about what I had accomplished. It might not be top notch but I did the best I could under the circumstances on that day. I cannot do everything for everybody so I just have to do the best I can that day and walk out and realise some things may potentially fall through the cracks. - Alex*

> *Try to achieve what you can and celebrate the achievement that you have met. - Faith*

4.3   What strategies have you used to deal with these challenges?

The participants named a range of strategies depending on what challenge they had identified.   Even though they were varied and were often very personal, they all had in common that the strategy was people-orientated. There were no strategies mentioned that were focused on additional technologies, budgets or other hard material resources like computers or buildings. When participants explained that they had issues around the technology available, the strategy was to make a connection with an ICT staff member, not to ask for access and training in these programmes. The training and workshops were mentioned by Alex and Faith but as tools for networking and to make connections with people, not because of the additional skills or resources the workshop provided. The relationships made with the stakeholders allowed the participants to negotiate and advocate the targets set and the needs of their clients and families. Participants expressed that the role of a middle manager was ensuring the needs of *all* stakeholders were met as much as they can and to campaign actively to achieve this as Faith illustrated:

> *What can you do to get what you want. - Faith*

The following sub-themes were identified when the participants were asked about their strategies to deal with their identified challenges: relationship building; mentoring and supervision and personal strategies.

4.3.1   Relationship building

The majority of the participants used relationship building as a strategy in a number of ways. This was done by way of networking with other external professionals (Brooklyn, David, Faith and Gabriel), creating a support network and collaborative processes with internal colleagues (Alex, Brooklyn, Charlie, David, Faith and Hailey) and relationship building with their staff (Alex, Brooklyn, Charlie, David, Faith and Gabriel). Relationship building was identified when addressing a range of challenges from dealing with staff, to negotiating funding, increase of support network and to deal with the lack of training, resources and information as shown by the participants' comments:

> *The drive is for personal outcomes, not the KPI outcomes. - Faith addressing output focused funding*

> *I have a fantastic admin manager who is supportive of me. - Charlie dealing with lack of ICT support*

> *I have created my own relationships with support people and regularly meet with them. - Hailey describing lack of resources*

> *You justify when you don't meet the targets and negotiate new targets. - Faith created relationships with the funder to negotiate output funding targets*

> *My colleagues and manager support me and I trust them. - Gabriel developed internal relationships for support and advice*

A number of the participants described how they see the relationship building as a tool to increase staff morale and productivity as the following quotes illustrated:

> *If you feel like you being valued for your contribution and if you care about your staff and my managers care about me, I am going to want to do a better job. - David*

> *I make an effort to be good to people and expect that back. - Gabriel*

> *I will reward and acknowledge my staff for their efforts. - Faith*

> *The organisation always comes back to the people in it. - Alex*

> *We don't have supervision but we give it to each other, especially at morning tea. - David*

David and Hailey made conscious efforts to link up with people inside and outside the organisation to increase a support network and combat isolation as is described well in the following comments:

> *I can contact other organisations and ask them about a particular problem. They all come back with something so it's at my fingertips. So*

you don't feel as isolated and gives you confidence about the decisions you are making. - David

I look at what other managers in their departments do. - Hailey

Five of the participants, Brooklyn, Charlie, David, Faith and Gabriel explained that open and honest communication is at the root of these relationships. They stated that being honest to your staff about the targets and honest to your funders about the realities of meeting these, ensures your integrity as manager stays intact as David and Brooklyn describe:

It is a strategy making sure you are open and honest with your staff. I found that if you do talk to them and try them to understand the pressure that is on you to do more with less, they will be more supportive. - David

The other strategy is having real open discussions with people. It is important that I have a team with whom I can be open and honest with. It is not about the person, it is about the issue. - Brooklyn

Another form of relationship building was mentoring and supervision which are more formalised relationships of support and guidance.

4.3.2 Mentoring and supervision

The majority of the participants, all except Ellen and Hailey, mentioned mentoring and/ or supervision as a strategy. This was mentioned as a strategy they would use if possible or have used previously but resources or practicalities stopped them from using this effectively. None of the participants had a current mentor or supervisor. The interest in supervision was expressed in the following comments:

We talk about supervision and I think that would be useful and I would love to have somebody I can have that relationship with. It is a challenge I suppose. In this region everybody knows everybody and so in my current role it is difficult. - Brooklyn

I used to have informal support with a senior nurse who was also part of the management team. We used to have weekly meetings over the phone. She is no longer with the organisation. - David

Group supervision I think is excellent. There were six of us and we rotated as the facilitator. And that worked really well. - Alex

I used to have a mentor who was an HR lawyer and that worked really well. She didn't necessarily know my job but she was very logical and it worked. - Charlie

When asked why the participants did not receive supervision or had a mentor they explained that there was shortage of time and money but also of available mentors and supervisors in the region:

In (name region) everybody knows everybody and so in my current role it is difficult. I know it supposed to be confidential, however I have found in my experience it is difficult to find somebody that is not going to transfer that stuff around. (…) I would really like them to be my supervisor but I think ah no, they know that person and that person. A lot of what I know now is quite confidential information so I can't be talking to anyone about it. - Brooklyn

Money is stopping me from getting clinical supervision. - Charlie

4.3.3 Personal strategies

Personal strategies were identified to internally process the challenges Alex, Charlie, Ellen, Gabriel were dealing with to create a healthy work-life balance.

These personal strategies ranged from walking the dog, sport, talking to their partner, their faith and alcohol as is illustrated in the following examples:

I have a supportive partner. He listens to me and he is good at putting things into perspective. I have my friends and my social life, exercise. And Chardonnay. - Charlie

I would often grab the dog and would go for a walk on the beach. It gave me time to work out in my head where to go from there. - Alex

I would come home and my partner wouldn't have a clue what I am talking about but he is a good listener. - Alex

I have my faith that I always fall back on. - Ellen

My family and my sport are my strategies. - Gabriel

These strategies are used to keep the challenges in perspective and not to get overwhelmed by them.

Focus on the big picture and don't make it personal. - Charlie

It's clearing the garbage that I cannot do anything about, so I can work on the things that I can actually have impact on. - Alex

I have clear boundaries between my work and my life and my own personal investment. - Gabriel

These participants found their personal strategies useful and did not mention discomfort that they spend dealing with work issues after working hours.

4.4 What support have you received or want to receive from your managers or organisation?

To enable middle managers to apply their strategies in dealing with challenges, support might be needed from their managers or organisations. When the participants were asked this question they were less forthcoming. Most were guarded and spoke in generic terms about the availability of resources. The assumption was that this happened to protect the identity and confidentiality of the organisations they work for. Another perspective is that the participants have not actually asked the organisation for these resources or even discussed what it is that they need or want to ensure they can deal with the identified challenges as illustrated in the following quotes:

I am reluctant to go to him (…) I think (my issues) affects his stress levels. - Brooklyn explaining why not to ask for support from senior managers

I kept thinking how am I going to convince him we need more staff and that was what kept me awake. - Charlie preparing for a meeting with senior management

It seemed that the participants assumed, perhaps for solid and factual reasons, that the support requested was not available or realistic. The sub-themes identified that could support the participants in implementing their strategies to deal with their challenges are: clear vision, goals and roles; access to training, resources, information and supervision and salary review and financial remuneration.

4.4.1 Clear vision, goals and roles

The majority of the participants, Alex, Brooklyn, David, Ellen, Faith, Gabriel and Ivan, stated that the vision statements of their organisation are unclear. They explained that the overall vision was not linked in with the targets set or with their role description. These participants felt strongly that their organisation should provide a clear vision statement and that all the organisational decisions should be able to be linked back to this statement. Participants explained that they don't always feel the right priorities are being made within their organisation. By making the vision statement of the organisation the benchmark of the organisation, decisions could be linked straight to this vision. Alex and Gabriel explained this in the following comments:

The organisation should be honest what goal they are achieving. If this is 'financial security' then make your vison statement: to be financially secure and base your decision making on that. - Gabriel

The organisation needs a strong and clear mission; apply it and live it. - Gabriel

The tone of the whole organisation comes down from the top. If the top is working well then the clients will get what they need. - Alex

These participants also explained the need for clear direction, support and targets. By stating clear expectations around targets, behaviour and skills the

participants believed they could prioritise and implement these more efficiently as the following quotes explained:

> *Middle managers need clear goals, understand the reason of these goals and have the freedom to apply them. - Gabriel*

> *Policies need to be more prescriptive and detailed. - Ivan*

> *Clearer expectations and direction is needed to meet the targets. - Hailey*

> *I need clear direction on goals of what we are trying to achieve, how we are going to go about it and when they need to be achieved by. - David*

Other way senior managers could provide support for the participants was by providing access to training, resources and information.

4.4.2 Access to training, resources and information

Six of the participants, Brooklyn, Charlie, David, Ellen, Hailey and Ivan stated that the organisation should provide adequate resources to ensure middle managers can fulfil their tasks. Participants mentioned not only the physical space but also accurate systems and processes and support like administrative support and ICT support as demonstrated in the following comments:

> *I really need admin support. - Ivan*

> *I need to be adequately resourced. - David*

> *We need to have the computer systems and the training how to use them. - Ellen*

Participants explained that the standard of the service was often affected due to the lack of resources. Time and energy needed to be spent to compensate and adjust systems and situations that could have been prevented by adequate resourcing:

> *Maintaining the files are an issue as the computer systems are not updated. - Ellen*

The lack of resources could result in not meeting the expectations or delivering information that the funder required. This was an issue when a new client group was identified by the funder and organisations needed to justify to the funder that they have met the needs of this group. Unfortunately, their systems and technology did not allow access to this information effectively as shown in the comment below:

> *It's not having the clinical hours for the amount of patients but not being able to prove that because you don't have the data. - Charlie*

These participants were aware that financial restraints were the reason for the lack of resources but felt this was a case of prioritising. They stated that resources were not spent on the operational issues to ensure the clients and their families would continue to receive adequate services as David, Ivan and Charlie explain:

> *If you do too much with too little you end up with poor courses that then run into problems because the investment is not put into it in the first place. - David*

> *Systems need to be in place to monitor our practice and our policies and procedures. - Ivan*

> *The patients complain they have to wait too long (…) It would clear a lot of my issues if a nurse can do these things. - Charlie explaining there is a lack of doctors*

The availability of the support services was an issue too. As some participants had their head offices located in the bigger cities, not the region, access to support was limited. This increased the feeling that the needs of the regions were not understood by the head offices as explained by Charlie:

> *New names come up in payroll, HR or IT and because they are Indian, the English is not always very good. We don't talk; we just email. - Charlie*

Other participants mentioned that their team were working flexible hours but the support services were not. This meant there was no support at certain times

and when asked for more flexible approaches this was not implemented as Hailey demonstrates in the following quote:

The courses are run in the evening and weekends. However the library and the computer suite are only open between 9 and 5.

Interestingly, although only two participants mentioned training and workshops as a strategy, five of them, Alex, Brooklyn, Charlie, Faith and Hailey, would have liked access to training and workshops that were relevant to their current job. They stated that the workshops and available training were not always applicable or well linked to their day-day tasks. It had been mentioned by several participants that due to the limited resources they encouraged their staff before themselves to utilise it, a similar trend as supervision and mentoring. The following comments demonstrated the needs of these participants:

> *It is really important that your staff has adequate training to be able to do what they are supposed to do and that they are resourced to do it. - Alex*

> *Nothing is worse than going for training and not utilising the skills you've learned in the training. - David*

> *I hate the limit on PD (personal development). I hate the fact I can't go to conferences. - Brooklyn*

Interestingly none of the participants provided detail about the training or workshops they wanted to receive. Even though the lack of skills and management training was identified as a challenge, none of the participants stated they would like to go on a management course or develop their ICT skills further. Instead, the participants described how the workshops and training have a networking and mentoring function and this was the learning the participant gets out of it. The development of networks outside the organisation was mentioned by a number of participants as a great tool for support and to combat the feeling of isolation.

> *I want timely workshop conferences that can give me stuff that I can run with and to develop relationships with the attendees. - Brooklyn*

> *The organisation should create opportunities to develop professional networks. - Hailey*

Participants explained how connecting with other organisations and creating a network with other managers in organisations offered support and alleviated the feeling of isolation as Brooklyn explained:

> *In my last role I did a lot of networking and it is amazing how affirmative it was sitting around a table with people of similar situations and share experiences but also getting strategies and ideas from others who is either going through it or been through it. It was training, mentoring and supervision all in one I haven't done that in 3 years. - Brooklyn*

Access to supervision and mentoring was mentioned by 6 of the participants. Alex, Brooklyn, Charlie, David, Faith and Hailey stated they expected support from their organisation as demonstrated in the following comments:

> *The organisation must provide and pay for professional supervision, that's the bottom line. - Alex*

> *The organisation should provide you with a mentor. - Hailey*

> *It is critical the organisation pays for supervision. - Charlie*

This illustrated that the participants believed that the barriers to supervision and mentoring were, predominantly, financial.

4.4.3 Salary review and financial remuneration

Three participants (Charlie, Ellen and Faith) mentioned that their organisation should offer a good salary and other financial remuneration. These participants described how they did not get a salary review or financial incentives when they met targets or deadlines. The salary review was also linked with the feeling of being undervalued and not being acknowledged for achievements as Faith puts it:

> *The organisation should be honest regarding the hours and the level of pay. - Faith*

This confirmed the feeling expressed by the participants that their achievements were never good enough. The importance of financial remuneration was demonstrated in the following quotes:

This is not a 9-5 job and you never get paid what you worth. - Faith

It is critical that the organisation should provide you with a yearly appraisal. - Charlie

I expect my organisation to give me decent wages. - Ellen

However, none of the participants mentioned that they tried to re-negotiate their salary or other financial compensation which was turned down. David and Gabriel mentioned the salary range in their organisation as a barrier to attract and keep good staff. Especially when the public sector is trying to attract people coming from the private sector, the difference in financial remuneration becomes apparent. David explained how there were issues with the human resource department in the organisation as described in the following comment:

We will get to the end of the employment process and I've put down what I think the salary should be and HR will say 'no'. - David

It is the battle between getting high quality (staff) and the costs. - Gabriel

Summary

This chapter introduced the nine participants and summarised the participants' voice by describing their challenges, strategies and the required support for their role. The participants explained that the lack of strategic guidance, combined with unclear roles and responsibilities and the focus on output focused funding impacted their ability to fulfil their role effectively. The lack of training, resources and information was also causing challenges. Another challenge for the participants was staff management issues. Participants explained that they feel isolated and unsupported when physically removed from the head office or when they do not feel part of a team. The participants used people- and relationships orientated strategies to deal with these challenges. They mentioned mentoring and supervision and personal strategies

as ways to deal with challenges. The participants required support from their organisation to embed the identified strategies. They stated a need to have a clear vision, goals and roles and access to training, resources, information and supervision. The participants also stated they wanted salary reviews and financial remuneration from their organisation.

The next chapter compares these findings with the findings from the literature review to identify similarities and discrepancies. Both sets of data will then be used to identify what challenges have been experienced, what strategies have been used to deal with these challenges and what support has been received or is needed from their managers or organisation.

CHAPTER 5:   DISCUSSION

Introduction

In this chapter, the data from the literature review and the participants' voices are compared and used to identify the challenges of middle managers of human services in the public sector and the strategies that they have developed to deal effectively with those identified. This data will also identify how senior managers in public sector organisations can support their middle managers.

The findings from the literature review and the participants are summarised under headings and then critically discussed.

5.1   Challenges for middle managers of human services in the public sector

A range of challenges for middle managers in the public sector were identified: unclear strategic vision and roles and responsibilities; output focused funding; lack of training, resources and information; staff management issues; and isolation and lack of support.

5.1.1 Unclear strategic vision and unclear roles and responsibilities

The directions of many public sector organisations might be unclear if the goals and targets set for the organisation do not correlate with the strategic vision. Rock and Rock (2016) stated that 46% of the middle managers in their British research wanted their senior managers to act consistently with the values of the organisation. Participants in this research did not recognise the conclusions of Gatenby et al. (2015) who stated that the institutional power of the central government determined the scope, scale and direction of the public service. Nor did they express concern at the little freedom and autonomy middle managers in the public sector had in decision making and budgeting processes as was identified by Stoker (2006). However, the participants did agree that middle managers did not use their initiative, responsibility and innovation to create and implement processes as identified by Samuelson (2009). They felt that this is caused by unclear processes, not necessarily due to lack of power and autonomy. They explained that as middle managers in the public sector they

seemed to focus primarily on the daily operational decisions that are mostly short-term and reactionary and that little time and resources are available for tasks related to their management and leadership role. This was also identified by Yukl (2005) and Gatenby et al. (2015). Participants explained that the reactionary and short term thinking is caused by the focus of the organisation's senior management on output focused funding.

5.1.2 Output focused funding

Middle managers of human services in the public sector are under pressure to do more work in less time and with fewer resources (Hughes & Wearing, 2013) and are required to reduce costs, improve efficiency, do more for less, and do so transparently (Dormer, 2015). Participants also described how they feel under pressure from the range of conflicting expectations of both internal and external stakeholders to provide a service to the clients, keep their staff happy and meet the funding requirements. Of all these expectations, participants believed that their organisations are output and target focused and prioritised the needs of the funder over the needs of the client, the staff or the overall vision of the organisation. The participants identified more strongly with the professional practitioner staff and their allegiances lay with the clients and their families and less with senior management. Richards and Duxbury (2015) also stated that middle managers are closer to the coal face of the organisation. The participants advocated and negotiated the focus on funding with senior managers on behalf of their staff and clients and saw this as an important part of the role as middle manager.

5.1.3 Lack of training, resources and information

Participants explained they lack training, administrative and ICT support and these systems do not provide the current and accurate information on which to base their decisions. Hughes and Wearing (2013) also identified that middle managers of human services in the public sector are not only under pressure to do more work in less time, but also with fewer resources.

Participants described that they lacked formal education and management experience. This is similar to the findings of Dym and Hutson (2005) who

identified that middle managers are often promoted from within the organisation, therefore having the specialist knowledge but not necessarily the management knowledge. Participants were given very little support and training when they started the role as a middle manager. They explained that they seemed to be expected to understand the management role as if there was no difference to their professional practitioners' role. This especially seemed to be the case when middle managers were promoted within their own organisation or when they were fulfilling more hybrid type roles. These were also the conclusions of Dym and Hutson (2005). These managers often have issues with balancing clinical and organisational priorities and resource allocations and their sense of identity as they feel less connected with their professional peers. These were also the conclusions of Buchanan et al. (2013). Interestingly, participants identified with the issues of hybrid managers, even those not in hybrid roles. This can be explained by the fact that these middle managers were promoted from professional practitioner positions.

Middle managers need to utilise technology, and possess the cognitive skills to deal with the influx of information and to screen and utilise correct and up to date information (Yukl, 2005). This information needs to be relevant, high quality, credible and timely to be able to make decisions, report on performance and for future planning (Curristine et al., 2007). Participants explained that the lack of information was caused by information systems not supporting the targets they needed to achieve or the information they needed to provide. They also believed that there was a lack of information from senior managers regarding decision making processes which is similar to the findings of Rock and Rock (2016). None of the participants stated they felt 'snowed under' or that the quantity of information was affecting the quality of the available information which contrasts with Paine Schofield et al. (2008). Interestingly, participants had not identified their own ICT skill set as a challenge either. They did identify a lack of ICT support as an issue but seemed confident that if this was in place they would be able to utilise the resources if available to them. This is not the conclusion from Eggers and Bellman (2015) who stated that although the New Zealand public sector have increased investment in digital initiatives, only half of these organisations have a clear and coherent digital strategy. They also

identified that less than half of the respondents believe that New Zealand's public sector managers and employees have the skills to lead and implement a digital strategy.

5.1.4 Staff management issues

Middle managers are responsible for both the performance and measurement of results of their employees and for coaching and staff development (Stoker, 2006). Employee satisfaction and morale are considered to be the most important drivers of performance and part of the responsibility of the middle manager (Curristine et al., 2007) who spends a great deal of their time developing and supporting their staff. The participants highlighted staff management as a significant challenge. They need staff to meet the organisational targets and goals, which the participants have tried to negotiate as realistically as possible. However, their staff did not always recognise the input of middle managers and instead may see that their middle management was mostly performance oriented as Stoker suggests (2006). Senior managers did not see the role of middle managers as skilled and resourceful professionals and strategic assets to the organisation either (Gatenby et al., 2015) and the participants stated that they feel criticised by senior managers for not meeting the targets. On the other hand, participants criticised senior management for not being effective, not spending enough time or communicating well with staff. These were also findings of previous research (Paine Schofield et al., 2008; Rock & Rock, 2016).

5.1.5 Isolation and lack of support

The participants felt criticised by senior management for not meeting targets and by staff for implementing these targets, while not meeting the needs of the clients and families. This caused participants to feel isolated and unsupported which resonates with previous research (Hyrkäs et al., 2005). The participants felt that they had to believe that they were doing was in the best interest of their profession as neither their senior managers nor their employees were giving them this message. These were also the findings of Milosavljevic et al. (2015). Participants explained how they were no longer part of the professional team but they did not feel they belonged with the management team either and that

they were not doing a 'good enough job' for either their staff or their managers. They felt that they never achieved anything to the complete satisfaction of any stakeholder. This is also supported by the findings of Gatenby et al. (2015) and Stoker (2006).

The other form of isolation identified by the participants is the physical isolation when a participant was not based in the same place as the head office. Participants explained how one of the benefits was that they felt less micro managed therefore having more freedom for decision making and implementation. However a challenge was that they felt isolated and feel that they have very little input in the planning of the service, which is comparable to the conclusions of Gatenby et al. (2015). Participants felt the service was managed by people who don't have the knowledge about the region or about the clients.

Discussion

Middle managers in the public sector are responsible for the day-to-day operations, coping with intensifying levels of work, complying with conflicting and competing tasks, having to negotiate between professional and managerial groups, implement government policies and monitor performance against targets, mostly without the necessary resources, budgets or access to decision-making processes needed to complete these tasks (Gatenby et al., 2015). This can be motivating and rewarding as the role of middle manager in the public sector often attracts high achievers (Milosavljevic et al., 2015) and people who like the challenge and thrill of extreme jobs (Hewlett & Luce, 2006). They are attracted to the teamwork, recognition and autonomy (Buchanan et al., 2013) as well as learning and gaining new knowledge (Milosavljevic et al., 2015). The professional and public sector values and purpose is also an important motivator. Managers want to feel that they are making a difference, that they drive change and innovation, are doing a good job and that they are developing others and are making a difference to society (Buchanan et al., 2013; Milosavljevic et al., 2015; Paine Schofield et al., 2008).

Unfortunately, these incentives to work in the public sector were identified as challenges by the participants. Participants did not believe they got recognition

for their work or have a degree of autonomy. They did not feel part of a team and staff management was highlighted as a challenge for middle managers. The lack of training, resources and information has impacted on the development of new knowledge and learning. The unclear strategic vision of the public sector organisations affected the belief of middle managers that they were making a difference to society and the output focused funding impeded on the drive for change and innovation. The participants added that they felt isolated and unsupported in their role.

Participants explained that the output focused funding takes priority over the needs of clients and their families, the staff of the organisation and even the strategic vision of the organisation. Hughes and Wearing (2013) also identified that the pressure to do more work in less time and with less resources has increased. Dormer (2015) agrees that there is a focus on cost cutting and on meeting the output focused funding requirements. Participants described how they need to find ways to keep their staff on side while ensuring the funder is getting what it needs, while looking after the clients and the families they are working with. Middle managers seem to be under pressure from all these groups as the constant compromising means no one is getting what they need or want. This is backed up by Yukl (2005) who states that middle managers negotiate conflicting interests of a range of stakeholders. Participants stated that they actively support their staff, who do not seem to recognise this and feel their middle managers are focused on the outcomes and implement the directions of the senior managers. Interestingly, participants felt that their senior managers believe they are not focused enough on the outcomes. These are also the findings of Milosavljevic, et al. (2015) and Gatenby et al. (2015) who identified that the role of middle manager is not always recognised or valued by their staff or their senior managers. Interestingly, Stoker (2006) suggests that both middle management and senior management underestimate the other and overestimate themselves.

Participants explained that these staff management issues were significant challenges that affected them personally and caused a great deal of pressure and stress which resonates with the findings of Hyrkäs et al. (2005). This research did not show how the participants communicate their efforts and

achievements with their staff or in what way they are included in discussions with senior management. Therefore it is unclear if middle managers were not recognised for their work as it is invisible to those around them or if there are other reasons.

A lack of formal education and management experience for middle managers who come from professional practitioner positions (Dym & Hutson, 2005), or are in hybrid roles, is identified and participants stated they had little training and guidance when promoted to middle manager. The literature that focused on hybrid professionals identified similar challenges that the participants identified, even those not working in a hybrid role. This can be explained that middle managers in the public sector seem to have practitioner backgrounds while the skills of the senior managers seem to be financial or business focused (Hughes & Wearing, 2013). There is also a lack in administrative and ICT support and training although the participants were confident that with additional resources this challenge would be solved. The participants did not state they asked for additional training when their role started or that all parties, middle managers included, were confident that this was not necessary. It seemed that the training needs were identified retrospectively.

The literature placed a greater emphasis on the lack of autonomy and freedom of middle managers in the public sector in the decision making processes (Gatenby et al., 2015; Stoker, 2006; Yukl, 2005) while the participants were more concerned about the unclear strategic vision, roles and responsibilities. Participants believed that the unclear vision, roles and responsibilities increased the number of staff management issues, as the role of middle manager is not clearly defined. They stated that a strong strategic vision would balance out the needs of the funder and the information needed would be more straightforward and would not depend on the next funding requirement. A strong strategic vision and a feeling of belonging to this vision can be used to develop strategies to deal with the challenges middle managers of human services in the public sector encounter (Hughes & Wearing, 2013; Paine Schofield et al., 2008).

5.2   Strategies for middle managers of human services in the public sector

The incentives and rewards to work in the public sector were identified as challenges by the participants. Therefore a range of strategies have been developed to increase these motivators and incentives to deal with the challenges of the role of middle manager of human services in the public sector. These strategies were people and relationship focused and useful to the participants due to the networks and connections it created that allowed them to increase resources and negotiate and advocate targets.

One of the reasons why effective strategies are essential is the increased risk for middle managers to suffer from burnout. Work related stress needs to be addressed to achieve a healthy work-life balance for middle managers (Paine Schofield et al., 2008; Hughes & Weiner, 2013). Mitchell (2001) concluded that team support, clinical supervision and debriefing can support dealing with stress and pressure. Personal strategies can also be beneficial (Spencer, 1994) as well as the use of technology as a delivery method (Morse et al., 2012) of strategies.

5.2.1   Relationship building

Relationships with staff and other stakeholders can be used as an effective strategy for mitigating challenges in the middle management role (Milosavljevic et al., 2015). Participants described how they use relationship building with internal and external professionals to connect with others and try to create a position of power and change (Buchanan et al., 2013). They also used these relationships to increase teamwork and to connect them with other professionals and stakeholders (Milosavljevic et al., 2015). This corresponds with Buchanan et al., (2013) and Hewlett and Luce (2006) who identified teamwork and great colleagues as strong motivators for middle managers in the public sector. The relationships made with stakeholders allow the participants to negotiate and advocate the targets set and the needs of their clients and families. Participants expressed that the role of a middle manager is ensuring needs of all stakeholders are met as much as they can and to campaign actively to achieve this. Relationship building was identified as a strategy when

addressing a range of challenges from dealing with staff, to negotiating funding, increase of support network and to deal with the lack of training, resources and information.

An important part of the relationship building for the participants is being honest and straightforward with stakeholders. This is backed up by Rock and Rock (2016) who found that 85% of their British middle managers believed that having trust is critical to the overall organisational performance. Unfortunately only 53% of these middle managers believed that they could trust what their organisation tells them and only 37% of middle managers agreed that their senior managers were transparent in their decisions and actions.

5.2.2 Mentoring and supervision

Mentoring and supervision is a more formalised relationship and can improve the managers' individual development and also the development of their leadership (Hyrkäs et al., 2003) and the support offered can reduce isolation for middle managers (Hyrkäs et al., 2005). The participants explained that the idea of supervision is very appealing but none of the participants had access to a coach, mentor or supervisor. Participants explained that this was due to a lack of resources, a lack of supervisors and the feeling grass roots staff are more deserving of the supervision budget. Other options for middle managers are group peer supervision which can improve personal development and the development of leadership (Hyrkäs et al., 2003).

5.2.3 Personal strategies

Besides relationship building and mentoring and supervision, participants also relied on their own, often very individual, strategies. These strategies, activities and conversations seem to take place in the personal time and space of the middle manager. These are also the findings of Spencer (1994) who found that the research in the health sector showed that 78% of the respondents used personal distractions such as hobbies and activities and 27.5% talk to family and friends regarding upsetting work issues. The majority of this group, 80%, found their informal network helpful. However, 62.7% of the respondents would like access to group supervision led by a professional to deal with their stress.

Discussion

A range of strategies have been developed by the participants to increase motivating factors and incentives to deal with the challenges of the role of middle manager of human services in the public sector. These strategies are people and relationship focused and aimed to increase interpersonal networks and connections. Developing effective strategies is important as middle managers have an increased risk for burnout. Team support; clinical supervision and debriefing can support dealing with stress and pressure (Mitchell, 2001). However, none of the participants had a current coach, mentor or supervisor. Participants explained that the reasons for not engaging in supervision were the lack of supervisors, financial restrictions and confidentiality issues. Engaging in peer supervision would remove the first two barriers. However, confidentiality issues as well as passive and superficial participation are risks when undertaking peer supervision and without a leader or supervisor these can be difficult to control (Hyrkäs, et al., 2005). Personal development and challenging each other's ideas could also be an issue if the peer supervision is not managed properly. However the benefits of peer supervision, for example the improvement in personal development and the development of leadership (Hyrkäs et al., 2003) and reduction in isolation for middle managers (Hyrkäs et al., 2005), might outweigh the disadvantages.

Personal strategies can also be beneficial (Spencer, 1994). It is unclear if these personal strategies are developed to compensate for the lack of more formalised support, like supervision, or if these strategies are meeting an additional need.

5.3   Support for middle managers of human services in the public sector

Middle managers in the public sector will have to find the balance between the push for efficiency and meeting their targets as well as fulfilling the long term goals of the department they work for. They will need support from their workplace to minimise the challenges and maximise their motivators in order to be fully engaged (Fitzgerald, 2000). Middle managers of human services in public sector organisations need a clear vision, goals and roles (Fitzgerald,

2000); access to resources and information (Cook, 2004; Hughes & Wearing, 2013; Matheson et al., 1997; Robinson, 2012), training and supervision; and salary review and financial remuneration (Paine Schofield et al., 2008) from their organisations to effectively implement strategies to deal with their challenges.

5.3.1 Clear vision, goals and roles

Participants described how they felt their organisations were not clear about their vision and strategy and do not use this as a guide when making decisions or setting priorities. The participants believed that a clear vision would guide and support decision making, resource allocation, priority setting, and set clear guidelines around expectations and behaviour. Stoker (2006) agrees that middle managers need to be supported by getting clear directions from their senior managers. When public sector managers are proud to work for their organisation they are willing to go the extra mile if they feel their organisation is behaving in a socially and environmentally responsible way (Buchanan et al., 2013). Hughes and Wearing (2013) add that professionals need to feel committed to the values and skill base that will improve the lives of their clients and facilitate change within the organisation. If this is not met by the organisation it could impact on the feelings of belonging and motivation for middle managers in the public sector. Participants explained that they expect their organisation to make the needs of the clients and staff a priority and to ensure the strategic vision reflects this. By communicating openly and discussing the vision and strategy of the organisation and explained the motivations and reasons behind decisions, senior managers can support their middle managers and keep them involved (Rock & Rock, 2016).

5.3.2 Access to resources, information, training and supervision

Participants explained that their organisation was not guided by a strong strategic vision but was focused on meeting short term goals. As these goals change pending funding criteria, it was difficult to adequately resource them. Participants described how their funding was based on statistics and figures they cannot access as the systems are not geared up to produce these. Accurate and up to date information is essential to implement and review

decisions and resources (Cook, 2004; Matheson et al., 1997: Robinson, 2012). Participants explained that without the accurate resources or information they cannot fulfil their role efficiently.

Another support need the participants identified was access to training and supervision. Participants expected their organisation to offer training and ongoing performance development to enable them to fulfil their role. Fitzgerald (2000) agrees that professional development and training is a central factor to ensure middle managers can fully engage in their role. The participants stated that the lack of training when appointed into the role was a challenge and that little other training has been offered. The main reason for wanting training was the opportunities it presented for networking. Paine Schofield et al., (2008) add that a strategy for professional development for managers needs to be in place with resources allocated to individual learning and development plans of middle managers. Organisations also need to invest in developing a next generation of leaders. None of the participants stated they had a personal development plan or a succession plan or receive supervision.

5.3.3 Salary review and financial remuneration

Middle managers need job security (Pain Schofield et al., 2008) and intrinsic and extrinsic incentives and sanctions to ensure full engagement (Cook, 2004). None of the participants complained about their salary and the research in the UK by Paine Schofield et al., (2008) identified most middle managers were satisfied with their salary. However, participants stated that they want appraisals and salary reviews and financial remuneration attached to their goals and outcomes. None of the participants mentioned that they received performance appraisals or discussed financial rewards with their senior managers.

Discussion

Senior managers should support middle managers to ensure strategies can be utilised to deal with challenges (Stoker, 2006). The participants highlighted the importance of a strong strategic vision as a guide for the organisation, their managers and the staff. Organisational clarity around the goals and priorities and around the roles and expectations will ensure the correct goals are met and

the appropriate resources are in place. Middle managers expect their senior managers to ensure this strong strategic vision is in place. However, it is unclear how much influence the senior managers have in the setting of the strategic vision and the funding requirements as the scope, scale and direction of the public sector is determined by the institutional power of the central government (Gatenby et al., 2015). It seems that middle managers believe senior managers do not advocate for their staff and clients and families. As staff did not recognise that middle managers advocate and negotiate on their behalf, it could be that middle managers do not recognise the efforts of their senior staff either (Stoker, 2006). This can be alleviated by improving the communication between senior management, middle management and staff and to be open and transparent in the decision making processes (Rock & rock, 2016).

Participants stated they want to be properly resourced to enable them to fulfil their role. As the literature clearly identified, public sector organisations have to do more with less (Hughes & Wearing, 2013), and so it is probably realistic for middle managers to feel under-resourced. Participants feel that resources are cut to save costs without a long term strategy on what resources are needed and when and how to resource the organisation more effectively. Participants are confident about their own abilities to deal with the information and communication systems if they had access to them. This is not supported by the literature, which identified skills and knowledge gaps in the public sector especially around the implementation and use of new technology (Eggers & Bellman, 2015).

Participants also expected training, supervision and mentoring from their organisation, mainly due to the networking opportunities that this can bring. However, training was not made a priority by the organisation or the participants themselves. The participants did not identify any outstanding training needs or management courses that they wanted to undertake. It is unclear what needs they specifically have and if they have requested training or supervision that was declined. It seems that these are seen as opportunities to network with other managers, share ideas and receive and give support. If this is indeed the reason, informal networking groups or peer supervision might be able to meet this need (Hyrkäs et al., 2005). This may ensure that middle managers receive

the appropriate support without having to request funding or use supervision resources.

Middle managers need support and recognition from their organisation (Milosavljevic et al., 2015). However, as the conflicting demands mean goals are unclear and probably never meet everyone's needs, this is a difficult requirement to meet. Participants expressed that it does not matter how hard you work as there is no reward attached to the behaviour. It seems that performance reviews and financial remuneration is one of the few ways middle managers expect to feel valued and supported by their organisation as they do not feel valued otherwise (Milosavljevic et al., 2015).

Organisational support for middle managers in the public sector is not just aimed at ensuring full engagement. As this group is at a higher risk for burn-out (Milosavljevic et al., 2015), work related stress needs to be addressed to achieve a healthy work-life balance. The lack of vision and strategy for middle managers and the lack of professional support seemed to increase the stress levels of managers (Hyrkäs et al., 2005) which might impact on the commitment of the middle manager to the organisation.

Summary

This chapter compared the data from the literature review and the participants' responses to identify the challenges of middle managers of human services in the public sector. The strategies that they have developed to deal effectively with these challenges are identified and what support is needed to implement these strategies effectively.

A range of challenges for middle managers of human services in the public sector were identified: staff management issues, increased by unclear roles and expectations, lack of training, lack of ICT and administrative support and lack of information and information systems. These middle managers felt isolated, unsupported and undervalued by having to be funding and output focused. The challenges that middle managers of human services in the public sector encounter seem to be strongly linked with the lack of strong strategic vision and mission statements of the organisation.

There are a number of incentives and motivators identified for middle managers in the public sector. Participants explained how they are using their people focused strategies to increase these motivators and deal with challenges. Participants would like to utilise mentoring and supervision more often but believe there are funding and other practical barriers preventing this. They have developed a range of personal strategies that support them to deal with their challenges.

A number of incentives and motivators for middle managers can turn to challenges if organisational support is not present. Public sector organisations ideally need a strong strategic vision and clarity around the goals and priorities and therefore clarity around the roles and expectations. The resources and information systems need to fit with these goals and priorities. Participants also expected training, supervision and mentoring from their organisation as well as salary and performance reviews.

The last chapter will summarise this thesis, review the main points from the previous chapters and highlight the key results. It will discuss the research aims and objectives and makes recommendations for further research and for the public sector stakeholders.

CHAPTER 6:   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter summarises the thesis, reviews the main points from the previous chapters and highlights the key results. It describes the implications of the key findings for a range of stakeholders. It discusses the aims and objectives of the research and recommendations are made for further research and for the public sector stakeholders. The chapter concludes with a reflection of the researcher.

6.1   Research objectives

This study aimed to understand:

- the challenges middle managers of human services in the public sector encounter;

The current challenges of middle managers in the public sector, the changing government ideologies and the effect on managers in the public sector in New Zealand has been explored. Three significant features in public sector management were highlighted: firstly, that government ideologies had an effect on public sector organisations and their managers; secondly, that the public sector reforms played a big part in the current complex roles of middle managers and the competing demands on these managers. And thirdly, that, while the public sector generally successfully implemented structural changes, the cultural change within the public sector is still in development.

- the strategies that they have developed to deal with these challenges;

The developed strategies enable middle managers to increase the motivating factors and incentives of working in the public sector and to deal with the challenges that are part of this role. The strategies are people and relationship orientated and aimed to increase the networks and connections of middle managers.

- the support that senior managers in public sector organisations can offer to their middle managers in dealing with these challenges.

Senior managers in the public sector need to support their middle managers by setting clear expectations around roles and priorities and ensure resources and information systems are in place.

6.1.1 Methodology

This research was qualitative in nature and aimed to understand the challenges and strategies of a group of middle managers in the public sector, and focused on understanding their version of reality. This research was placed in a post-modernist position and a social constructive perspective. This perspective acknowledged the history and background of both the participant and the organisation they work for and the existence of multiple social and cultural realities. The data was analysed using an interpretive approach that recognised the role of the researcher in the collection and analysing of data.

6.2 Key findings

The competing and conflicting external and internal pressures on middle managers cause a great deal of pressure and stress (Hyrkäs et al., 2005). A range of challenges for middle managers of human services in the public sector have been identified: staff management issues, increased by unclear roles and expectations; lack of training; lack of ICT and administrative support; and lack of information and information systems. In additional middle managers may often feel isolated, unsupported and undervalued by having to be funding and output focused.

People focused strategies, for example networking with internal and external professionals, and relationship building with staff may effectively deal with these challenges. Mentoring and supervision can be desired strategies but funding and other practical barriers may prevent these from being utilised. A range of personal strategies have also been developed by the middle managers participating in this research to deal with challenges.

Senior managers in public sector organisations can support their middle managers by creating a strong strategic vision with clear goals and priorities and clarity around roles and expectations. The resources and information systems need to fit with these goals and priorities. Alternatively, senior

managers should openly and honestly discuss their decision making processes if this vision is affected by the funding requirements. The middle managers in this study also expected training, supervision and mentoring from their organisation as well as salary and performance reviews.

6.3   Implications of the key findings

The challenges middle managers of human services in the public sector encounter are caused and amplified by the lack of vision and long term organisational strategy. The strategies for middle managers are aimed at developing additional professional support utilising personal and professional relationships. Public sector organisations need to develop clear strategic targets to guide their middle managers and offer networking and other relationship building opportunities.

Without clear roles and responsibilities that are based on a strong strategic vision instead of the funding requirements, middle managers will not be able to set priorities, allocate recourses or ensure their staff is focused on the correct priorities (Paine Schofield et al., 2008). However, it is unclear how much power and influence senior management in public sector organisations have over the strategic vision (Gatenby et al., 2015) and what negotiating around targets is currently happening unbeknown to middle managers. By developing open and honest communication between senior and middle managers and between middle managers and staff, some of the tensions between levels might be alleviated (Rock & Rock, 2016). It is important for middle managers to believe their work is of value to society (Buchanan et al., 2013; Hughes & Wearing, 2013; Paine Schofield et al., 2008) as this is one of the main motivators of middle managers to work in the public sector. Senior managers in the public sector should prioritise communicating the implications of their decisions for the clients and families. They should ensure all avenues and options have been explored to create the best possible service provided by the best qualified staff.

The identified challenges can also be motivating factors for middle managers working in the public sector as they are attracted to the role due to its demanding nature. The middle managers in this research were actively trying to increase these motivating features of the role to deal with their challenges. They

focused on teamwork and used their relationships and networks to influence the strategic decision making processes by advocating for clients and their families and their staff. They also used relationships with people as a strategy for the practical challenges. It is unclear how successful these strategies are and if there would be other ways to deal with the challenges that do not rely on relationships and the skills or resources of others. Being dependent on these relationships might undermine the autonomy of middle managers as it is a limited resource depending on a number of variables including relationship building skills and the goodwill of people.

Mentoring and supervision were acknowledged as effective strategies. However, participants explained that they were not utilising these strategies. A number of reasons were mentioned, from lack of resources to lack of suitable supervisors and the feeling of grass-roots staff being more deserving of the supervision budget. Other reasons could be that middle managers are not advocating for their own needs and feel that they can cope better without support than their staff.

The strategies of the participants were focused on increasing support and collaboration. Even the aim of the salary review and financial remuneration seemed to be focused on relationship building and communication. It seems that the participants would benefit from discussing their successes and achievements in a formal capacity to increase the engagement of middle managers in an organisation (Cook, 2004). These discussions could then lead to identifying other rewards or incentives the organisation could offer, for example flexible work or involvement in interesting projects.

The middle managers in this study developed additional professional support utilising personal and professional relationships. As one of the challenges was the feeling of isolation, this need to be the focus of the strategies of middle managers in the public sector. These strategies might decrease the risk for burnout amongst middle managers (Milosavljevic et al., 2015). It is unclear what organisational support is available for middle managers (for example Employment Assistance Programmes, flexible work or annual leave), if participants have requested these or what the reasons are for not engaging with

this support. Instead of engaging in organisational support, participants utilised their own personal strategies of activities and conversations with loved ones that offer support and advice to create a work-life balance. Even though these strategies might enhance a healthy work-life balance, it does not seem to alleviate the isolation. Therefore the strategies utilised might not be the most effective to decrease the risk for burn-out.

Senior managers in public sector organisations need to develop clear targets to guide their middle managers and offer internal and external networking and other relationship building opportunities to ensure they can fulfil their role while feeling supported. Communication between clients, staff, middle and senior managers needs to be increased to ensure decision making processes are transparent and client focused.

6.4   Recommendations

This study identified key recommendations for further research, for senior managers in public sector organisations and for middle managers of human services in public sector organisations.

6.4.1 Further research

As this research is qualitative, and therefore inductive, in nature it seeks to explain the participants' version of reality rather than starting with a theory. The issue seemed initially to be the funding and output demands on public sector organisations, however the influential role of the strategic vision became more apparent throughout the research. The literature review recommends the *development* of a strategic vision. However, participants stated that after the development of a strategic vision it is ignored and not utilised as a guide for benchmarking. Targets, goals and roles and responsibilities have little to do with the strategic vision but are dependent on the funding requirements. This increases the feeling that the organisation is not people focused and that the needs of the clients and their families are not understood. The development of strategic vision in the public sector and the role of this vision in public sector organisations is an area that is recommended for further study.

The literature review also highlighted the different challenges of the senior and middle levels of management in the public sector. Literature that was focused on management in the public sector identified challenges and motivators not always recognised by the participants. However, the literature that focused on hybrid roles in the public sector management highlighted similar themes to the participants. To ensure the voice of middle managers is heard, further research in middle management in the public sector should distinguish between the different levels of management. It seems that there are two groups of managers: those with a management background, generally found in senior roles, and those with a practitioners' background in middle management. This offers a range of interesting opportunities for further research to understand more of the skills, knowledge and roles of senior managers, middle managers and those in hybrid roles.

Another area of interest is the strategies used by middle managers to deal with their challenges. Developing relationships and networks can be effective strategies for some of the challenges. However, it might be useful to develop a range of strategies that do not rely on the goodwill of networks. It is unclear what the barriers are for middle managers to increase their support systems and if they have tried to resolve these barriers. One thought is that middle managers in the public sector do not advocate for their own needs but believe they are the ones coping, or should be able to cope, without the support much needed in other places on the organisation. Another thought is that the middle managers are not utilising the available strategies like workshops or supervision as these do not meet the needs of these middle managers. Further research that explores the needs of middle managers and the possible link with the high level of burnout in this group is recommended.

6.4.2 Recommendations for senior managers in public sector organisations

Senior managers in the public sector need to ensure that their middle managers have clear roles and responsibilities that are based on a strong strategic vision. When targets and goals need to be focused on the funding requirements that might conflict with the overall strategic vision of the organisation, senior

managers should communicate the reasons for their decision making and the link these decisions have with the overall strategic vision. It might be that by adhering to a funding requirement, the organisation safeguards services for clients and their families long term. By communicating these decisions transparently with their middle managers, it might create more commitment and motivation for middle managers and also their staff.

To support their middle managers further, senior managers in the public sector should investigate what strategies can be developed to address challenges. Does the middle manager need additional skills or methods to alleviate isolation? The senior manager should discuss options and opportunities with the middle manager on a regular basis as part of their performance development plans. These options and opportunities can also be offered as an extrinsic reward if appropriate.

Further research is recommended to investigate the viability and implications of these suggestions to senior managers in public sector organisations.

6.4.3 Recommendations for middle managers of human services in public sector organisations

Middle managers need to prioritise their own needs for support and resources as well as they do for their staff and their clients. By asking for a performance plan with set goals they can open up communication regarding their challenges and identify their strategies and the support they might need to implement these successfully. They can also ask for clarification if their goals and targets do not seem to line up with the overall strategic vision of the organisation.

An internal or external peer support network with other middle managers might be useful during this process. These networks can be used to discuss day to day issues but also operational and strategic challenges and strategies to deal with these. They should be structured and organised and make good use of the valuable time of members. These networks could also be utilised to develop further strategies and knowledge.

These suggestions require time and energy and could meet with resistance from both the senior and the middle managers. Further research is

recommended to investigate the viability and implications of these suggestions to middle managers of human services in public sector organisations.

Summary

This study has highlighted the challenges and strategies of middle managers of human service in public sector organisations. It has also highlighted the support senior managers can offer their middle managers in this process.

Middle managers want to be guided by a strong vision and clear roles and have access to appropriate resources and support to develop interpersonal relationships to deal with their challenges. Middle managers need to openly communicate their needs to senior managers who in return need to be open regarding the decision making processes when setting targets and allocating resources. One of the more worrying challenges of middle managers is the feeling of isolation and lack of support. To ensure middle managers are committed, motivated and not at risk of burnout, they need access to support networks.

This study has identified some areas for further research. The development of strategic vision in the public sector and the implementation of this vision is an area that is recommended for further study as well as the different skills, knowledge and roles of senior managers, middle managers and those in hybrid roles in the public sector. Further research that explores the needs of middle managers and the viability and implications of the recommendations is also suggested.

Reflection

This research has been a steep learning curve, both as a researcher and as a middle manager. I found the process challenging as I struggled with the written work, as English is not my first language, and time management as my personal and professional life have not been stable over the last couple of years. However both my writing skills and my organisational skills have greatly improved throughout, which is evident in other pieces of work I have produced.

The outcomes of this research were unexpected as I would have assumed that the cost cutting and output focused funding had the most impact on the role of the middle manager. The strong influence of the strategic vision on the role as middle manager and the need for belonging to a cause was surprising and interesting. Recognising that my colleagues, as well as myself, are not looking after ourselves or each other was another eye opener. I am very thankful to the participants who were able to express clearly and succinctly the issues they were facing which enabled me to look critically and in more depth at the challenges and strategies.

This research has given me a clearer understanding of the developments in my field and has made me more aware of the possibilities available to myself and my peers. I am currently discussing these possibilities with my senior managers.

> *The tone of the whole organisation comes from the top. And if the top is working well then the client gets what they need. - Alex*

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APPENDICES

A.   Information sheet

B.   Letter ANZASW

C.   Letter PSA

D.   Notice Board invitation

E.   Semi-structured interview letter

F.   Consent form

G.   Ethics application and low risk notification

H.   Email to public sector organisations

I.   Email to participant

J.   Authority for release of transcript

K.   Confidentiality agreement transcriber

Appendix A

Information sheet

My name is Kirsten Parker-van Eck. I work as a Programme Manager for NorthTec and I am a qualified Social Worker. I am currently enrolled in the Master of Social Work (MSW) at Massey University and writing my thesis 'Public sector managers of human services- their challenges and strategies'.

Managers in the public sector in human services face many challenges and interact with multiple stakeholders. The purpose of the study is to identify the challenges managers in the public sector encounter and the strategies that they have developed to deal effectively with these.

This research will be informed by a national and international literature review. Semi-structured interviews will be held with 8-12 managers working in the public sector in human services in (name region), New Zealand.

The criteria for selection are: participants have been a public sector manager in New Zealand for at least three years and live and work in the (name region) region. The participants will be identified through the public listing of public services based in (name region), New Zealand and through two professional bodies relevant to this sector: the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers and the Public Service Organisation.

The interviews will last approximately one hour. Participants will be given the opportunity to read their interview transcript and give approval and this may take an additional half an hour. During the interview process an audio-recording device will be used, with your consent. At any time, you can ask for the recording to be turned off. The contracted transcriber will sign a transcriber confidentiality agreement. A draft transcription will be provided for amendments and the original recording along with all other data will be destroyed following examination of the report.

The data will be transcribed and collected not linked to names or organisations. No participants or their organisations will be identified in the research report or any publications arising from it. The data and the device will be stored in a locked cupboard. You are under no obligation to accept this invitation.   If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;

- withdraw from the study until the time that the transcript has been approved

- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;

- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;

- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher named above is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director, Research Ethics, telephone 06 356 9099 x 86015, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz".

Please contact either myself or the supervisors if you have any questions or queries about the research.

Kind regards

Kirsten Parker van Eck   Supervisors:

kparkervaneck@northtec.ac.nz   Lareen Cooper and Dr Kathryn Hay

                                 L.cooper@massey.ac.nz

                                 K.s.hay@massey.ac.nz

Appendix B
Letter ANZASW

Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers, Regional Branch

Re: Research Participant Request

My name is Kirsten Parker van Eck and I am a student at Massey University undertaking a thesis as a requirement for a Master of Social Work (MSW). The purpose of the research is to identify the challenges managers in the public sector encounter and the strategies that they have developed to deal effectively with these.

I am undertaking this research under the supervision of Lareen Cooper and Dr Kathryn Hay.

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees.

I would be very grateful if you could please send out the attached notice and Information Sheet by email to the (name region) ANZASW members. Members who are interested in participating can reply directly to me by email address or phone.

You are welcome to contact either myself or my supervisors if you have any questions or queries about the research.

Kind regards

Kirsten Parker-van Eck   Supervisors:

kparkervaneck@northtec.ac.nz   Lareen Cooper and Dr Kathryn Hay

                                          L.cooper@massey.ac.nz

                                          K.s.hay@massey.ac.nz

Appendix C
Letter PSA

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HEALTH
TE KURA HAUORA TANGATA

PSA House , Wellington

Re: Research Participant Request

My name is Kirsten Parker van Eck and I am a student at Massey University undertaking a thesis as a requirement for a Master of Social Work (MSW). The purpose of the research is to identify the challenges managers in the public sector encounter and the strategies that they have developed to deal effectively with these.

I am undertaking this research under the supervision of Lareen Cooper and Dr Kathryn Hay.

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees.

I would be very grateful if you could please send out the attached notice and Information Sheet by email to the (name region) PSA members. Members who are interested in participating can reply directly to me by email address or phone.

You are welcome to contact either myself or my supervisors if you have any questions or queries about the research.

Kind regards

Kirsten Parker van Eck   Supervisors:

kparkervaneck@northtec.ac.nz   Lareen Cooper and Dr Kathryn Hay

                                                          L.cooper@massey.ac.nz

                                                          K.s.hay@massey.ac.nz

Appendix D

Notice board invitation

My name is Kirsten Parker-van Eck and I am currently undertaking a research project as a requirement for a Master of Social Work degree at Massey University.

I would like to invite you to take part in my research which focuses on the challenges managers in the public sector encounter and the strategies that they have developed to deal effectively with these.

If you are a manager, supervisor or team leader and have worked for a public organisation for a minimum of three years, and would like to participate in my research then I would love to hear from you. Participation would involve an interview of approximately one hour, either face to face or by skype or telephone. Further details about the research are outlined in the attached Information Sheet.

If you are interested in participating please contact me either by phone or email at k.parkervaneck@northtec.ac.nz

Thank you for your time,

Kirsten Parker van Eck

(MSW Thesis Student)

Appendix E

Semi structured interview

MASSEY UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF HEALTH

TE KURA HAUORA TANGATA

The semi structured interview is developed to gain an insight into the challenges you experience as a middle manager in the public sector. The focus will be on the strategies that you will have developed over the years to effectively deal with these challenges and successfully undertake your role.

This research focuses on the individual narrative and experiences of people. The discussion points below are only a guide for the interview.

Please let me know during or after the interview if you have any other comments about the challenges you have as a public manager and the strategies you use to deal with these challenges.

Thank you for your time

Kirsten Parker-van Eck

(MSW Thesis Student)

Background information

Gender:	Male	Female	Other	
Age:	20-35	35-45	45-55	55+
Management experience:	3-5	5-10	10-15	15+
Education:	Diploma	Degree	Postgrad/ Masters	Other
Area:	Whangarei	Kaipara	Far North	
Organisation:	Education -Services	Social	Health	Probation

Discussion Topics

What do you believe are your greatest challenges as a middle manager in the public sector?

Of these challenges, which is the most impacting on your role?

What strategies are you using to effectively deal with these challenges?

Which of these strategies is the most successful for you?

What conditions has your organisation put in place to ensure you can deal with these challenges and successfully implement your strategies?

MASSEY UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF HEALTH

TE KURA HAUORA TANGATA

This consent form will be held until after the examination of the research

I have read the information sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me.

My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being digitally voice recorded.

I wish/do not wish that my digital voice recordings returned to me.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

Signature: …………………………….   Date …………………………

Full Name – Printed ………………………………………………………………………..

![Massey University College of Health logo]

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HEALTH
TE KURA HAUORA TANGATA

FOR APPROVAL OF PROPOSED RESEARCH/TEACHING/EVALUATION INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

(All applications are to be typed and presented using language that is free from jargon and comprehensible to lay people)

SECTION A

---

1   Project Title

	Public sector managers of human services- their challenges and strategies

Projected start date for <u>data collection</u>	September 2015	Projected end date	November 2016

(In no case will approval be given if recruitment and/or data collection has already begun).

---

2   Applicant Details (Select the appropriate box and complete details)

ACADEMIC STAFF APPLICATION (excluding staff who are also students)

Full Name of Staff Applicant/s	
School/Department/Institute	

Campus (mark one only)	Albany		Palmerston North		Wellington	

Telephone	Email Address	

STUDENT APPLICATION

Full Name of Student Applicant	Kirsten Parker van Eck
Employer (if applicable)	

Telephone	Email Address	kparkervaneck@northtec.ac.nz

Postal Address	
Full Name of Supervisor(s)	Lareen Cooper and Dr Kathryn Hay
School/Department/Institute	School of Health and Social Services

Campus (mark one only)	Albany		Palmerston North	x	Wellington	

Telephone Ext 83519	Email Address	L.cooper@massey.ac.nz
Ext 83518		k.s.hay@massey.ac.nz

GENERAL STAFF APPLICATION

Full Name of Applicant	
Section	

Campus (mark one only)	Albany		Palmerston North		Wellington	

Telephone	Email Address	

Full Name of Line Manager	
Section	....
Telephone	Email Address
....	....

---

3   Type of Project (provide detail as appropriate)

Staff Research/Evaluation:		Student Research:		If other, please specify:
Academic Staff	☐	Specify Qualification	MSW	
General Staff	☐	Specify Credit Value of Research	120	
Evaluation	☐	(e.g. 30, 60, 90, 120, 240, 360)		

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4   Summary of Project

Please outline in no more than 200 words in lay language why you have chosen this project, what you intend to do and the methods you will use.

(Note: All the information provided in the application is potentially available if a request is made under the Official Information Act. In the event that a request is made, the University, in the first instance, would endeavour to satisfy that request by providing this summary. Please ensure that the language used is comprehensible to all.)

Managers in the public sector in human services face many challenges and multiple stakeholders. I am interested in identifying the challenges these managers in face and the strategies that they develop to deal effectively with these challenges.

This research will be informed by a national and international literature review. This will allow the researcher to develop a semi-structured interview.

Interviews will be held with 8-12 managers working in the public sector in human services in region in North Island, New Zealand. The criteria for selection will be that participants will have been a public sector manager in New Zealand for at least three years. Participants will be

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identified through the public listing of public services based in region in North Island, New Zealand and through two professional bodies relevant to this sector: the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers and the New Zealand Public Service Association. The researcher will gather their experiences regarding these identified challenges and their own strategies.

The key assumption for this research is that working in the public sector in human services creates challenges to meet the needs and requirements of the different stakeholder groups. After identifying these, the emphasis will be on the strategies managers use in Aotearoa New Zealand and how these compare with the international literature. The recommendations will focus on the enhancement of these strategies. This might support other managers and organisations dealing with similar challenges.

5	List the Attachments to your Application, e.g. Completed "Screening Questionnaire to Determine the Approval Procedure" (compulsory), Information Sheet/s *(indicate how many)*, Translated copies of Information Sheet/s, Consent Form/s *(indicate of how many),* Translated copies of Consent Form/s, Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement, Confidentiality Agreement *(for persons other than the researcher / participants who have access to project data)*, Authority for Release of Tape Transcripts, Advertisement, Health Checklist, Questionnaire, Interview Schedule, Evidence of Consultation, Letter requesting access to an institution, Letter requesting approval for use of database, Other *(please specify).*

Screening Questionnaire to Determine the Approval Procedure" (compulsory),
Information Sheet
Confidentiality agreement
Release tape transcripts
ANZASW letter
ANZASW noticeboard
PSA letter
Participant consent form
Transcriber agreement
Authority for release of transcripts

Applications that are incomplete or lacking the appropriate signatures will not be processed. This will mean delays for the project.
Please refer to the Human Ethics website (http://humanethics.massey.ac.nz **) for details of where to submit your application and the number of copies required.**

SECTION B: PROJECT INFORMATION

General

6   I/We wish the protocol to be heard in a closed meeting (Part   Yes ☐   No ☒

     II).

     (If yes, state the reason in a covering letter.)

7   Does this project have any links to previously submitted   Yes ☐   No ☒

     MUHEC or HDEC application(s)?

     If yes, list the MUHEC or HDEC application   number/s (if assigned) and

     relationship/s.

8   Is approval from other Ethics Committees being sought for   Yes ☐   No ☒

     the project?

     If yes, list the other Ethics Committees.

9   For staff research, is the applicant the only researcher?   Yes ☒   No ☐

     If no, list the names and addresses of all members of the research team.

Project Details

10   State concisely the aims of the project.

     To identify challenges and strategies for managers working in the public sector in
     human services.

11   Give a brief background to the project to place it in perspective and to allow the
     project's significance to be assessed. *(No more than 200 words in lay language)*

I will interview 8-12 managers working in the public sector in human services in region North Island, New Zealand. Using semi structured interviews I will gather their experiences regarding these identified challenges and their own strategies.

Assumptions are being made that working in the public sector in human services create challenges to meet the needs and requirements of the different stakeholder groups. After identifying these, the emphasis will be on the strategies managers use. The recommendations will focus on the enhancement of these strategies. This might support other managers and organisations dealing with similar challenges.

12   Outline the research procedures to be used, including approach/procedures for collecting data. Use a flow chart if necessary.

Using professional networks, managers will be invited to volunteer for the research. Minimum criteria are the region North Tsland base and minimum of 3 years work experience in their current role. Using semi structured interviews, challenges based on literature review are tested and strategies identified.

13   Where will the project be conducted?   Include information about the physical location/setting.

I will interview managers in the public sector in human services in region North Island. I will be able to offer a private office space and I am happy to visit managers in their office or a public setting if mutually agreeable.

14   If the study is based overseas:

i)   Specify which countries are involved;

ii)   Outline how overseas country requirements (if any) have been complied with;

iii)   Have the University's Policy & Procedures for Course Related Student Travel Overseas   been   met?
(Note: Overseas travel undertaken by students – refer to item 5.10 in the document "Additional Information" on the MUHEC website.)

15   Describe the experience of the researcher and/or supervisor to undertake this type of project?

I am currently a manager working for an education provider. I have a social work degree and a management degree. I will undertake this research as part of my Masters in Social Work which is my first piece of research

16   Describe the process that has been used to discuss and analyse the ethical issues present in this project.

During supervision the recruitment, confidentiality and other ethical issues will be discussed.

Participants

17   Describe the intended participants.

Managers working in the public sector in human services in region North Island with a minimum of 3 years' experience in management in the public sector in New Zealand.

18   How many participants will be involved?

8-12

What is the reason for selecting this number?

(Where relevant, attach a copy of the Statistical Justification to the application form)

This research will be qualitative in nature and the interviews will be semi structured and in-depth. Between 8-12 participants is realistic but will ensure sufficient data to analyse.

19   Describe how potential participants will be identified and recruited?

Public sector organisations with a focus on human services will be identified in region North Island. The Managers of these organisations will be formally contacted by letter to invite them to participate and to ask them to pass on this invitation to their management staff and through their networks.

An invitation will also be sent through the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) and the Public Service Association (PSA).

20 Does the project involve recruitment through advertising?   Yes [ ] No [x]

    (If yes, attach a copy of the advertisement to the application form)

21 Does the project require permission of an organisation (e.g. an educational institution, an academic unit of Massey University or a business) to access participants or information?   Yes [x] No [ ]

    If yes: i)   list the organisation(s)

    ii)   attach a copy of the draft request letter(s) to the application form, e.g. letter to Board of Trustees, PVC, HoD/I/S, CEO etc (include this in your list of attachments (Q5).

    (Note that some educational institutions may require the researcher to submit a Police Security Clearance.)

    List here

    ANZASW

    PSA

22 Who will make the initial approach to potential participants?

The researcher will contact the organisations and the professional networks in writing to explain the research and ask for the information and request to be shared among their members and staff.

23 Describe criteria (if used) to select participants from the pool of potential participants.

Managers need to have at least 3 years' experience as a manager in the public sector in the human services in North Island region. The first eight respondents who meet this criteria will be selected.

24 How much time will participants have to give to the project?

Between 1 and 2 hours for the interview and another half hour to read the transcript and give approval.

Data Collection

25 Does the project include the use of participant questionnaire/s? Yes [ ] No [x]

(If yes, attach a copy of the Questionnaire/s to the application form and include this in your list of attachments (Q5))

If yes: i) indicate whether the participants will be anonymous (i.e. their identity unknown to the researcher). Yes [ ] No [x]

ii) Describe how the questionnaire will be distributed and collected.

(If distributing electronically through Massey IT, attach a copy of the draft request letter to the Associate Director Service Delivery, Information Technology Services to the application form. Include this in your list of attachments (Q5) – refer to the policy on "Research Use of IT Infrastructure").

(Note: All requests for IT related aspects of ethics committee approvals can be directed through the IT service desk in the first instance – the request will be registered and on a response timeline, with the Associate Director dealing with the request).

26	Does the project involve observation of participants? If yes, please describe.	Yes		No	x

27	Does the project include the use of focus group/s?	Yes		No	x

(If yes, attach a copy of the Confidentiality Agreement for the focus group to the application form)

If yes, describe the location of the focus group and time length, including whether it will be in work time. *(If the latter, ensure the researcher asks permission for this from the employer).*

28	Does the project include the use of participant interview/s?	Yes	x	No	

(If yes, attach a copy of the Interview Questions/Schedule to the application form)

To be added

If yes, describe the location of the interview and time length, including whether it will be in work time. *(If the latter, ensure the researcher asks permission for this from the employer)*

The option will be given to the participant for the most convenient time and place. A private office during work time is available and is the preferred option.

29	Does the project involve sound recording?	Yes	x	No	
30	Does the project involve image recording, e.g. photo or video?	Yes		No	x

If yes, please describe. (If agreement for recording is optional for participation, ensure there is explicit consent on the Consent Form)

31	If recording is used, will the record be transcribed?	Yes	x	No	

If yes, state who will do the transcribing.

(Name removed)

(If not the researcher, a Transcriber's Confidentiality Agreement is required – attach a copy to the application form. Normally, transcripts of interviews should be provided to participants for editing, therefore an Authority For the Release of Tape Transcripts is required – attach a copy to the application form. However, if the researcher considers that the right of the participant to edit is inappropriate, a justification should be provided below.)

| 32 | Does the project involve any other method of data collection not covered in Qs 25-31? | Yes | | No | x |

If yes, describe the method used.

| 33 | Does the project require permission to access databases? | Yes | | No | x |

(If yes, attach a copy of the draft request letter/s to the application form. Include this in your list of attachments (Q5). <u>Note</u>: If you wish to access the Massey University student database, written permission from Director, National Student Relations should be attached.)

34   Who will carry out the data collection?

Kirsten Parker van Eck, research student

SECTION C: BENEFITS / RISK OF HARM (Refer Code Section 3, Para 10)

35   What are the possible benefits (if any) of the project to individual participants, groups, communities and institutions?

The project will be focused on developing strategies and increasing the ways managers can deal with the challenges they face. This might benefit the managers and their organisations involved to develop further strategies and identify barriers for their managers.

36 What discomfort (physical, psychological, social), incapacity or other risk of harm are individual participants likely to experience as a result of participation?

The interview will discuss challenges for managers and this might increase anxiety around these subjects.

37 Describe the strategies you will use to deal with any of the situations identified in Q36.

I will address this issue in both the invitation letter and the interview. One of the questions will be around the strategies managers and organisations have to offer to support their challenges which does give significance to this situation. If a participant became distressed the researcher will ask them if they would like to stop the interview and seek support. Public services generally have access to EAP programmes and it is likely these managers have their own networks for support also.

38 What is the risk of harm (if any) of the project to the researcher?

Identifying these challenges might increase my own anxieties around these challenges

39 Describe the strategies you will use to deal with any of the situations identified in Q38.

I will continue with my own supervision, both academic and personal and use my own support network

40 What discomfort (physical, psychological, social) incapacity or other risk of harm are groups/communities and institutions likely to experience as a result of this research?

This research is not likely to generate this type of harm as participants and their organisations will not be identified in the research. In addition, public services are often under close scrutiny in the media and it is unlikely that this research will raise issues that will fuel debate.

41 Describe the strategies you will use to deal with any of the situations identified in Q40.

42	Is ethnicity data being collected as part of the project?	Yes		No	x

If yes, please describe how the data will be used.

(Note that harm can be done through an analysis based on insufficient sample or sub-set numbers).

43	If participants are children/students in a pre-school/school/tertiary setting, describe the arrangements you will make for children/students who are present but not taking part in the research.

(Note that no child/student should be disadvantaged through the research)

SECTION D: INFORMED & VOLUNTARY CONSENT (Refer Code Section 3, Para 11)

44	By whom and how, will information about the research be given to potential participants?

The researcher will provide written information to managers of organisations. The researcher will approach ANZASW and the PSA to ask each of these organisations to identify members that would fit the criteria and to send out the letter of invitation and information sheet to them.

45	Will consent to participate be given in writing?	Yes	x	No	

(Attach copies of Consent Form/s to the application form)

If no, justify the use of oral consent.

| 46 | Will participants include persons under the age of 16? | Yes | | No | x |

If yes: i)   indicate the age group and competency for giving consent.

| | ii)   Indicate if the researcher will be obtaining the consent of parent(s)/caregiver(s). | Yes | | No | x |

(Note that parental/caregiver consent for school-based research may be required by the school even when children are competent. Ensure Information Sheets and Consent Forms are in a style and language appropriate for the age group.)

| 47 | Will participants include persons whose capacity to give informed consent may be compromised? | Yes | | No | x |

If yes, describe the consent process you will use.

| 48 | Will the participants be proficient in English? | Yes | x | No | |

If no, all documentation for participants (Information Sheets/Consent Forms/Questionnaire etc.) must be translated into the participants' first-language.

(Attach copies of the translated Information Sheet/Consent Form etc. to the application form)

SECTION E: PRIVACY/CONFIDENTIALITY ISSUES (Refer Code Section 3, Para 12)

| 49 | Will any information be obtained from any source other than the participant? | Yes | | No | x |

If yes, describe how and from whom.

| 50 | Will any information that identifies participants be given to any person outside the research team? | Yes | | No | x |

If yes, indicate why and how.

| 51 | Will the participants be anonymous (i.e. their identity unknown to the researcher?) | Yes | | No | x |

If no, explain how confidentiality of the participants' identities will be maintained in the treatment and use of the data.

The data will be transcribed and collected not linked to names or organisations. No participants or their organisations will be identified in the research report or any publications arising from it.

| 52 | Will an institution (e.g. school) to which participants belong be named or be able to be identified? | Yes | | No | x |

If yes, explain how you have made the institution aware of this?

53 Outline how and where:

i) the data will be stored, and

(Pay particular attention to identifiable data, e.g. tapes, videos and images)

The tapes will stored in a locked cupboard and transcribed by a member of the research team

ii) Consent Forms will be stored.

(Note that Consent Forms should be stored separately from data)

Consent forms will be stored in a different location to the tapes and in a locked cupboard

54 i)   Who will have access to the data/Consent Forms?

Myself and the transcriber

ii)   How will the data/Consent Forms be protected from unauthorised access?

A locked cupboard will be used

55   How long will the data from the study be kept, who will be responsible for its safe keeping and eventual disposal?   (Note that health information relating to an identifiable individual must be retained for at least 10 years, or in the case of a child, 10 years from the age of 16).

(For student research the Massey University HOD Institute/School/Section / Supervisor / or nominee should be responsible for the eventual disposal of data. Note that although destruction is the most common form of disposal, at times, transfer of data to an official archive may be appropriate. Refer to the Code, Section 4, Para 24.)

The researcher is responsible for the safe keeping and disposal of the information. The data will be destroyed by the researcher after the research is examined.

SECTION F: DECEPTION (Refer Code Section 3, Para 13)

56 Is deception involved at any stage of the project?	Yes	No	x

If yes, justify its use and describe the debriefing procedures.

SECTION G: CONFLICT OF ROLE/INTEREST (Refer Code Section 3, Para 14)

57 Is the project to be funded or supported in any way, e.g. supply of products for testing?	Yes	No	x

If yes: i)   state the source of funding or support:

- Massey Academic Unit
- Massey University (e.g. MURF, SIF)
- External Organisation (provide name and detail of funding/support)

ii)   Does the source of the funding present any conflict of interest with regard to the research topic?

iii)   Identify any potential conflict of interest due to the source of funding and explain how this will be managed?

58	Does the researcher/s have a financial interest in the outcome of the project?	Yes		No	x

If yes, explain how the conflict of interest situation will be dealt with.

59   Describe any professional or other relationship between the researcher and the participants? (E.g. employer, employee, work colleague, lecturer/student, practitioner/patient, researcher/family member). Indicate how any resulting conflict of role will be dealt with.

SECTION H: COMPENSATION TO PARTICIPANTS (Refer Code Section 4, Para 23)

60	Will any payments, koha or other form of compensation or acknowledgement be given to participants?	Yes		No	x

If yes, describe what, how and why.

(Note that compensation (if provided) should be given to all participants and not constitute an inducement. Details of any compensation provided must be included in the Information Sheet.)

SECTION I: TREATY OF WAITANGI (Refer Code Section 2)

| 61 | Are Maori the primary focus of the project? | Yes | | No | x |

If yes: Answer Q62 – 65

If no, outline: i)   what Maori involvement there may be, and

Although not specifically targeted, due to the demographics in North Island region Maori involvement can be expected.

ii)   How this will be managed.

The semi structured interview will enable the participant to explain and discuss challenges and strategies unique to that person. This can be based on kaupapa Maori principles and the research will enable the participant to have this acknowledged and recorded.

| 62 | Is the researcher competent in te reo Maori and tikanga Maori? | Yes | | No | x |

If no, outline the processes in place for the provision of cultural advice.

The student has access to fluent Te Reo Maori speakers and cultural advisors and kaumatua for guidance.

| 63 | Identify the group/s with whom consultation has taken place or is planned and describe the consultation process. |

(Where consultation has already taken place, attach a copy of the supporting documentation to the application form, e.g. a letter from an iwi authority)

64   Describe any ongoing involvement of the group/s consulted in the project.

....

65   Describe how information resulting from the project will be shared with the group/s
      consulted?

SECTION J: CULTURAL ISSUES (Refer Code Section 3, Para 15)

66   What ethnic or social group/s (other than Maori) does the project involve?

      Pakeha

67   Are there any aspects of the project that might raise specific   Yes [ ]   No [x]
      cultural issues?

      If yes, explain.   Otherwise, proceed to Section K.

68   Does the researcher speak the language of the target Yes [ ]   No [ ]
      population?

      If no, specify how communication with participants will be managed.

69   Describe the cultural competence of the researcher for carrying out the project.

      (Note that where the researcher is not a member of the cultural group being
      researched, a cultural advisor may be necessary)

70   Identify the group/s with whom consultation has taken place or is planned.

(Where consultation has already taken place, attach a copy of the supporting documentation to the application form)

71   Describe any ongoing involvement of the group/s consulted in the project.

72   Describe how information resulting from the project will be shared with the group/s consulted.

The data and conclusions will be shared with the group before sending the thesis off to the supervisors

73   If the research is to be conducted overseas, describe the arrangements you will make for local participants to express concerns regarding the research.

SECTION K: SHARING RESEARCH FINDINGS (Refer Code Section 4, Para 26)

74   Describe how information resulting from the project will be shared with participants and disseminated in other forums, e.g. peer review, publications, and conferences.

(Note that receipt of a summary is one of the participant rights)

All participants will be provided with a summary of the findings after submission and examination of the Thesis. The results will be used for the thesis as part of my Masters in Social Work.

SECTION L: INVASIVE PROCEDURES/PHYSIOLOGICAL TESTS (Refer Code Section 4, Para 21)

| 75 | Does the project involve the collection of tissue, blood, other | Yes | | No | x |

body fluids; physiological tests or the use of hazardous substances, procedures or equipment?

If yes, are the procedures to be used governed by Standard Operating Procedure(s)? If so, please name the SOP(s). If not, identify the procedure(s) and describe how you will minimise the risks associated with the procedure(s)?

| 76 | Does the project involve the use of radiation (x-ray, CT scan or bone densitometry (DEXA))? | Yes | | No | x |

If yes, has the Massey Licensee been contacted and consulted?   Yes [ ]   No [ ]

(A copy of the supporting documentation must be provided with the ethics application, i.e. relevant SOP, participant dose assessment calculation sheet and approval of the dose assessment from the relevant authority).   NOTE: See "Additional Information for Researchers" (Item 4.2) document for further detail.

(If yes to Q75 and/or Q76, complete Section L; otherwise proceed to Section M)

| 77 | Describe the material to be taken and the method used to obtain it.   Include information about the training of those taking the samples and the safety of all persons involved.   If blood is taken, specify the volume and number of collections. |

| 78 | Will the material be stored? | Yes [ ] | No [ ] |

If yes, describe how, where and for how long.

| 79 | Describe how the material will be disposed of (either after the research is completed or at the end of the storage period). |

(Note that the wishes of relevant cultural groups must be taken into account)

80	Will material collected for another purpose (e.g. diagnostic use) be used?	Yes		No	
	If yes, did the donors give permission for use of their samples in this project? *(Attach evidence of this to the application form).*	Yes		No	

If no, describe how consent will be obtained. Where the samples have been anonymised and consent cannot be obtained, provide justification for the use of these samples.

81	Will any samples be imported into New Zealand?	Yes		No	

If yes, provide evidence of permission of the donors for their material to be used in this research.

82	Will any samples go out of New Zealand?	Yes		No	

If yes, state where.

(Note this information must be included in the Information Sheet)

83	Describe any physiological tests/procedures that will be used.

84	Will participants be given a health-screening test prior to participation? *(If yes, attach a copy of the health checklist)*	Yes		No	

Reminder: Attach the completed Screening Questionnaire and other attachments listed in Q5

SECTION M: DECLARATION (*Complete appropriate box*)

ACADEMIC STAFF RESEARCH
Declaration for Academic Staff Applicant
I have read the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants. I understand my obligations and the rights of the participants. I agree to undertake the research as set out in the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants.   My Head of Department/School/Institute knows that I am undertaking this research.   The information contained in this application is to the very best of my knowledge accurate and not misleading.

Staff   Applicant's   K Parker van Eck   Date: August 2015

Signature

....

STUDENT RESEARCH

Declaration for Student Applicant

I have read the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants and discussed the ethical analysis with my Supervisor. I understand my obligations and the rights of the participants. I agree to undertake the research as set out in the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants.

The information contained in this application is to the very best of my knowledge accurate and not misleading.

Student   Applicant's   K Parker van Eck   Date: August 2015

Signature

....

Declaration for Supervisor

I have assisted the student in the ethical analysis of this project.   As supervisor of this research I will ensure that the research is carried out according to the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants.

Supervisor's Signature   Date:

Print Name

....

....

GENERAL STAFF RESEARCH/EVALUATIONS

Declaration for General Staff Applicant

I have read the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants and discussed the ethical analysis with my Line Manager. I understand my obligations and the rights of the participants. I agree to undertake the research as set out in the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants. The information contained in this application is to the very best of my knowledge accurate and not misleading.

General   Staff   Date:

Applicant's Signature

....

Declaration for Line Manager
I declare that to the best of my knowledge, this application complies with the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants and that I have approved its content and agreed that it can be submitted.

Line   Manager's   Date:

Signature

....

Print Name

....

TEACHING PROGRAMME

Declaration for Paper Controller

I have read the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants. I understand my obligations and the rights of the participants. I agree to undertake the teaching programme as set out in the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants. My Head of Department/School/Institute knows that I am undertaking this teaching programme. The information contained in this application is to the very best of my knowledge accurate and not misleading.

Paper   Controller's   Date:

Signature

....

Declaration for Head of Department/School/Institute
I declare that to the best of my knowledge, this application complies with the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants and that I have approved its content and agreed that it can be submitted.

Head   of   Date:

Dept/School/Inst

Signature

....

Print Name

....

HoU Review Group

Ethics Notification Number: 4000015203

Title: Public sector managers of human services- their challenges and strategies

Thank you for your notification which you have assessed as Low Risk.

Your project has been recorded in our system which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

If situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your ethical analysis, please log on to http://rims.massey.ac.nz and register the changes in order that they be assessed as safe to proceed.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk.

Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director (Research Ethics), email humanethics@massey.ac.nz. "

Please note that if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish require evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to complete the application form again answering yes to the publication question to provide more information to go before one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

You are reminded that staff researchers and supervisors are fully responsible for ensuring that the information in the low risk notification has met the requirements and guidelines for submission of a low risk notification.

If you wish to print an official copy of this letter, please login to the RIMS system, and under the Reporting section, View Reports you will find a link to run the LR Report.

Yours sincerely

Dr Brian Finch

Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and Director (Research Ethics)

Appendix H

Email to public sector organisations

Hi

Thank you for agreeing to forward my invitation to take part in my research project.

Please find attached the information sheet and notice board invitation to be distributed within your organisation.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if there are any further queries.

Kind regards,

Kirsten Parker van Eck

Appendix I

Email to participant

Hi

Thank you very much for your participation in my research project.

Please find the attached information sheet and interview structure. I have also attached the consent form.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries. I will contact you before our meeting to ensure the time is still convenient.

Kind regards

Kirsten Parker van Eck

Appendix J

Authority for the release of transcripts

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HEALTH
TE KURA HAUORA TANGATA

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview/s conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used by the researcher, Kirsten Parker van Eck, in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature: …………………….   Date: ……………………………………………………

Full Name – Printed ………………………………………………………………………………..

Appendix K

Transcriber confidentiality agreement

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HEALTH
TE KURA HAUORA TANGATA

I ………… agree to transcribe the digital voice recorder provided to me.

I agree to keep confidential all the information provided to me.

I will not make any copies of the transcripts or keep any record of them other than those required for the project.

Signature: ……………………….….   Date …………………………

Full Name – Printed …………………………………………………………………………..