Convergence or divergence? Trainees’ and trainers’ perceptions of the customization and effectiveness of public service training

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RESEARCH ARTICLE
Convergence or divergence? Trainees’ and trainers’ perceptions of the customization and effectiveness of public service training
Lina Vyas*

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In many parts of the world, central training agencies have played an important role in formulating training policies. However, due to public management reforms, training in the public sector has been customized and effectiveness emphasized. The drivers for such changes can generally be categorized into individual and institutional levels. Trainers and trainees, as opposite ends of the training programme, should normatively hold different views on these drivers. Trainers, being on the supplier side, should be influenced more by institutional-level drivers; trainees, as recipients, should be affected mainly by individual-level drivers. However, our empirical evidence on training in Hong Kong’s public sector reveals that trainees care about both drivers while trainers are strangely indifferent to both.

Keywords: civil service training; customization; effectiveness; public sector reform; institutional; individual

Introduction
The significance of intellectual research into human resource management (HRM) in the public sector has long been disregarded or given only cursory recognition despite the distinctive context of the public sector (Burns 2004; Burke et al. 2013). Being a crucial part of HRM, training in the public sector has been unreasonably neglected. Central training agencies in many parts of the world have traditionally played an important role in formulating training policies and providing support to departments in training and development matters. When the new public management (NPM) reforms emerged, institutions’ focus in providing training was altered. Such terms as ‘customer-oriented’ and ‘result-oriented’ are highlighted in the NPM vocabulary. Though not all countries and institutions threw themselves into the reforms, many picked something from the NPM menu (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011).

The traditional language of training emphasizes teaching in line with the law. Training interventions were restricted to sporadic programmes oriented to demonstrate the newest management tools available and update individuals’ technological skills (Sanchez 2003, p. 10). As Schmidt (1991) argues, the traditional training model seems inadequate to fulfil the tasks contemporary public administration is required to perform. Rather, it seems to be too ‘generic, slow and tenuous’ (Sanchez 2003). However, influenced by the ideas of NPM, public officials attending training programmes are viewed as ‘customers’ or ‘clients’. ‘Customer focus’ has become a burgeoning theme in public management. The prescriptions of being ‘close to’ and ‘responsive’ to customers originate from theoretical applications of economics as well as from the broad transfer of business practices to

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public management (Paarlberg 2007, p. 201). Increasingly, government training agencies are required to focus on customer satisfaction (Huque and Vyas 2008).

On the other hand, effectiveness rather than process has been emphasized to achieve result-oriented management. Training effectiveness is assessed by considering results or evaluation, trainees’ performance, and their ability to transfer techniques to their jobs (Huque and Vyas 2008). Training in the civil service had been traditionally restricted to standardized routines, until NPM introduced customer-orientated practices. The concept of customer orientation has been developed and modelled on market orientation, which emphasizes responsiveness to customers’ needs, competitiveness, and capacity to disseminate information (Narver and Slater 1990). Customer orientation, also known as customization, is ‘an employee’s tendency or predisposition to meet customer needs in an on-the-job context’ (Brown et al. 2002) and can be divided into three characteristics: prioritization of customer interests, use of customer information, and organizational measures to satisfy the customer (Paarlberg 2007). This study focuses on the customization and effectiveness of civil service training taking the case of the Civil Service Training and Development Institute (CSTDI) in Hong Kong. The factors affecting customization and effectiveness of civil service training, in the researcher’s opinion, can be categorized into institutional-level and individual-level factors. The institutional-level factors here refer to an organization’s strategies for training programmes. The measurement of institutional-level factors is based on learning/training opportunities and the decentralization of decision making on training issues. The individual-level factors indicate individuals’ requests and appeals for training, which are measured by resources and personnel, job-related knowledge and skills, overall performance of trainers, and autonomy of training. This article studies these factors from both trainees’ and trainers’ perspectives.

Trainers and trainees, being the two actors in the process, normatively should hold different views on the above factors. Trainers are supposed to be more sensitive to any institutional changes, inasmuch as they represent the organization in training new recruits or in-service employees. Trainees, though working in the organization, are supposed to be ‘selfish’. They are motivated to attend training only by issues or factors related to their own individual development (Noe 1986). Thus it was assumed in the present study that individual-level drivers are more important from trainees’ perspective. A quantitative method was adopted to test the hypotheses. We received 57 and 154 valid responses to our questionnaires from trainers and trainees, respectively. However, our empirical evidence is inconsistent with our hypotheses. Trainees care about both streams, while trainers are extraordinarily indifferent to both.

Civil service training in Hong Kong

Hong Kong’s current civil service system inherited the generic elite administrative system established during the British colonial period. A number of administrative reforms have taken place to restructure the state machinery, to downsize and streamline the bureaucracy for economy and efficiency, and to redefine state functions compatible with the new marketized economic structure (Cheung 2012). Training and development of Hong Kong’s civil service was recognized as a part of localization policy in 1946, which was formulated in response to the recommendation of the Salaries Commission that the civil service should include local ethnic Chinese as far as possible (Burns 1988). Government departments started to run short-term training programmes, including induction courses and vocational training, for new local recruits. In 1961, the Central Training Unit was established under the Establish Branch (which later became the Civil Service Bureau,
The unit later became the Government Training Division in 1967 to coordinate civil service training for localization functions and efficiency improvement (Burns 1988). It was renamed the Civil Service Training Centre (CSTC) in 1980 and continued offering vocational, language, and management training to the civil service, while another training division, the Senior Staff Course Centre (SSCC), took responsibility for executive development at higher levels.

Following the Sino-British Agreement in 1984, the localization of the Hong Kong civil service escalated. In response to calls to dismiss senior-level expatriates, the government launched an HRM consultation (Scott 2005) and decided against extending the contracts of civil servants employed on agreement terms, including expatriates (Cheek-Milby 1989), while new recruits would be employed on ‘new permanent and pensionable terms’ (Civil Service Branch 1993). Consequently, the CSTC and the SSCC were combined in 1996 and renamed the Civil Service Training and Development Institute (CSTDI). The CSTDI was intended to coordinate all civil service training activities and provide courses in national studies and Putonghua to understand the latest developments in Mainland China (Civil Service Branch 1994). Civil service training during the pre-handover period served not just localization, but also the convergence of differences of administrative practice with China (Huque and Vyas 2008). After the handover in 1997, interaction and cooperation with China became more important in Hong Kong civil service training.

Decentralization of civil service training: a literature review

Traditionally, HRM performs distinct but interrelated human resource (HR) functions: planning, acquisition, development, compensation, integration, maintenance, and separation (Tessema et al. 2009). In the present era, ideological shifts on the part of the government toward a market-based philosophy have embraced the decentralized governmental structure as its preferred vehicle for implementing HR functions (Tessema et al. 2009). Nonetheless, the question of whether these HR functions are best performed by a centralized governmental structure or a decentralized governmental structure is far from being settled, as both approaches have merits and demerits (Tessema et al. 2009, p. 168). For example, the high formalization and centralization of HR functions is the most efficient and effective organizational form if emphasis is on uniformity and equity while the decentralized HR system should be adopted when the emphasis is on innovation, flexibility, and responsiveness (Tessema et al. 2009). As Tessema et al. (2009) argue, the concept of centralization and decentralization of HR functions can best be understood using a diagram indicating a ‘turned U’. According to Tessema et al. (2009), organizations use neither the extreme centralized nor the extreme decentralized organizational form (p.170). Rather, there is a continuum of options between these two extremes in the sense that the either-or approach does not work in reality (Tessema et al. 2009, p. 170). Tessema et al. (2009) argue that these two extremes are poles on a spectrum that passes through centralization and decentralization. Performance increases as organizations strike a balance between centralization and decentralization of HR functions (Tessema et al. 2009, p. 171). This implies that there are some things the centre should influence, primarily the HR strategies and general policies, and some things that it should not try to influence, such as detailed aspects of HR activities (Tessema et al. 2009, p. 171). For example, the study of Tessema et al. (2009) finds that in Singapore, the role of the central management agencies regarding HRM is now seen primarily in terms of ensuring that public expenditure and performance targets are met, and disseminating advice and information about the best
HRM practices. Within looser policy frameworks, guidelines, and definitions of basic standards, ministerial departments have obtained greater freedom to tailor HRM policies to their own unique organizational settings so that higher standards of performance can be attained (Tessema et al. 2009). Tessema et al. (2009) argue that a contingency perspective should be adopted when considering to what extent the HR functions may be decentralized. They argue that it must be determined by a careful consideration of the specific objectives and contexts, implying that each country must devise its own organizational arrangement of HR functions that directly reflects to its unique circumstances (Tessema et al. 2009).

With regard to training, Sanchez (2003) argues that pure centralized or decentralized civil service training systems seem unsustainable. The intention to delegate completely the responsibility of training top managers to the operative units and to line managers, though may increase competition and stimulate a diversity of training policies across government, but reduce the capacity of corporate guidance and debilitate the common spirits and values of the service (Sanchez 2003, p. 40). On the other hand, over-centralized policies tend to generate offer-driven training programmes, often considered irrelevant by the trainees who may show dissatisfaction and cynical attitudes (Sanchez 2003, p. 40). In fact, the need to implement coordinated efforts and guaranteeing the continuity and professionalism of the government’s staff makes the attempts to achieve a total delegation of the training function a self-defeating strategy (Sanchez 2003, p. 41). There is a need for a central organization that sets the parameters and/or quality standards that assures that the training function is carried out in accordance with the long-term interests of the political leadership (Sanchez 2003, p. 41). Therefore, a mixture of centralization of certain aspects of the training combined with delegation of others may provide a more stable solution (Sanchez 2003, p. 40).

While many research findings focus on the customization of civil service training and the option between centralized and decentralized training, very little attention has been paid to the impact of such an arrangement on the effectiveness of training. This study endeavours to bridge the gap by exploring the relationship between decentralization and the effectiveness of training. The research findings of this study will also add value to the literature of civil service training.

**Customization and effectiveness of civil service training**

The concept of customer orientation has developed on the basis of market orientation, which underlines responsiveness to customers’ needs, competitiveness, and capacity to disseminate information (Narver and Slater 1990). Customer orientation, also known as ‘customization’, could be defined as ‘an employee’s tendency or predisposition to meet customer needs in an on-the-job context’ (Brown et al. 2002, p. 111). Paarlberg (2007) further expands the concept by suggesting three characteristics of customization: placing a high priority on customer interests, generating and using customer information, and creating systematic organizational measures for customer satisfaction. Customization in training, therefore, requires an understanding of how to respond effectively to customers’ needs (Paarlberg 2007, p. 202).

However, it is also important to study why emphasis has been placed on customization in public service training from trainers’ perspective. Customer-oriented measures have often been tied with individual appraisal and reward systems, and thus trainers began to be concerned about their changing regulatory roles to seek autonomy and to establish the credibility of their training or training-related services. Trainers are tired of saying no all
the time merely because the regulations require them to do so (Riccucci and Naff 2008, p. 341). The increasing focus on customers’ needs also forced the adoption of a value-added approach in the design of training programmes and involved a comparison of training resources from other service providers, which in turn became a driver to decentralize training systems by contracting out or outsourcing (Riccucci and Naff 2008). Government ministries and departments could compare and choose training programmes according to their needs and budget, so government training agencies had to work and compete with private providers of training programmes and training-related activities, such as advisory and consultancy services (Huque and Vyas 2008). The government in Hong Kong has committed huge resources for personnel expenses (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Civil Service Training and Development Institute – statement of expenditure analysis by head and component.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Personnel expenses $,000</th>
<th>Departmental expenses $,000</th>
<th>Nonrecurrent account $,000</th>
<th>Total expenditure $,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000–2001*</td>
<td>73,822</td>
<td>84,836</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>160,058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>67,141</td>
<td>58,445</td>
<td>1,209</td>
<td>126,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001–2002</td>
<td>74,012</td>
<td>81,302</td>
<td>8,174</td>
<td>155,314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>69,165</td>
<td>64,840</td>
<td></td>
<td>142,179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002–2003*</td>
<td>76,491</td>
<td>79,769</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>170,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>66,775</td>
<td>62,450</td>
<td>9,990</td>
<td>139,215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003–2004*</td>
<td>66,951</td>
<td>65,507</td>
<td>13,711</td>
<td>146,169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>64,892</td>
<td>38,742</td>
<td>10,252</td>
<td>113,886</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Shaded figures represent the original estimate budget, while the unshaded figures represent actual spending.
*For heads with actual expenditure different from original estimates by more than 10%.

Effectiveness is defined as ‘the relationship between a center’s outputs and its objectives’ (Anthony and Govindarajan 1998, p. 17). During training, trainees are supposed to acquire essential knowledge and modify their behaviours in order to comply with working codes. Nonetheless, it is not easy to measure effectiveness, especially since the dearth of training evaluation is more obvious in the public sector, and is possibly the least developed facet of the training process in government training institutes (Huque and Vyas 2008). Even in the absence of sophisticated assessment, the effectiveness of training somehow manifests itself in civil servants’ everyday work. Therefore, as soon as trainees officially start, or resume their work after training, they have insight and perceptions of whether the training has enabled them to improve their performance. Trainers’ estimation of effectiveness is based on trainees’ feedback and changes in behaviour.

**Trainees’ and trainers’ perceptions of training**

The major factors of training design are the incorporation of learning principles (Bass and Vaughan 1966), the sequencing of training material (Gagne 1962, Tracy 1984), and the job relevance of training content (Campbell 1971, Ford and Wroten 1984). Trainee characteristics consist of ability or skill, motivation, and personality factors (Baldwin and Ford 1988), among which motivation is a vital determinant of learning. Trainees are highly motivated to learn under four conditions: the precise assessment of their strengths and weaknesses during the training, the complexity of the content of the training programme is appropriate, trainees
value good job performance, and training provides the necessary resources to perform job tasks and supportive interpersonal relationships (Noe 1986). From trainees’ perspective, what encourages them to actively attend training programmes is inseparably connected to their individual benefits. After all, these public service trainees will remain working in the same system that designed the programme. So any institutional changes to training programmes are likely to be accepted by trainees as signs of changes in public service as a whole. Conversely, if institutional changes in the system as a whole are not reflected in training, trainees would doubt whether programmes are helpful to their future work. We assume that in addition to the design of training and the qualifications of trainers, institutional change in training is the principle factor for consideration when trainees evaluate whether a programme is effective or really customized.

Trainers’ opinions can be totally different. In this article, we exclude programmes provided by any contracting-out institute and discuss only the central training institute. The trainers bear responsibilities that derive from their duties to the whole public service system rather than from any form of contract or agreement. Previous studies have found that modifying the learning style of trainees can lead to improved learning performance (Kolb 1984, Honey and Mumford 1986, Rush and Moore 1991). However, no empirical study has found that improvement can be achieved by modifying trainers’ training style (Hayes and Allinson 1996). Thus, if they are to achieve their training aims, trainers should not pay attention to individual requests but follow the mandate from superior levels. Therefore we believe that trainers are more likely to consider institutional changes to be the driver affecting training effectiveness and customization.

Table 2. Civil Service Bureau – statement of expenditure analysis by head and component.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Personnel expenses $,000</th>
<th>Departmental expenses $,000</th>
<th>Nonrecurrent account $,000</th>
<th>Total expenditure $,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000–2001</td>
<td>174,095</td>
<td>33,105</td>
<td>21,810</td>
<td>229,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>172,575</td>
<td>26,879</td>
<td>15,160</td>
<td>214,614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001–2002</td>
<td>162,119</td>
<td>30,420</td>
<td>14,790</td>
<td>207,329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>172,641</td>
<td>26,902</td>
<td>10,982</td>
<td>210,525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002–2003</td>
<td>171,911</td>
<td>30,970</td>
<td>14,998</td>
<td>217,879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>169,419</td>
<td>23,208</td>
<td>8,120</td>
<td>200,747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003–2004</td>
<td>163,814</td>
<td>34,562</td>
<td>6,968</td>
<td>205,344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>245,763</td>
<td>19,734</td>
<td>4,111</td>
<td>269,608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>310,124</td>
<td>61,654</td>
<td>13,206</td>
<td>384,984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005–2006</td>
<td>300,029</td>
<td>89,207</td>
<td>9,420</td>
<td>398,656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>306,771</td>
<td>95,615</td>
<td>3,597</td>
<td>405,983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006–2007</td>
<td>315,752</td>
<td>81,885</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>397,937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>330,828</td>
<td>82,993</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>413,908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007–2008</td>
<td>333,286</td>
<td>84,265</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>417,851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>326,032</td>
<td>81,505</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>407,594</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Shaded figures represent the original estimate budget, while the unshaded figures represent actual spending.
*For heads with actual expenditure different from original estimates by more than 10%.
Restructuring civil service training in Hong Kong

Training and development of the civil service was part of the localization policy of the colonial government to include local ethnic Chinese as far as possible (Burns 1988). Training programmes were designed as induction courses for government departments and vocational training in administrative procedures within the government, mainly for newly recruited local staff. The CSB formed the central training unit to coordinate all training and development issues and was later restructured as the Government Training Division in 1967. The division was responsible not just for localization but also for efficiency improvement (Burns 1988, p. 20). The training division was later separated into two parts, the CSTC offering general training in vocational, language, and management training to the civil service, and the SSCC providing executive development at higher levels.

The second phase of restructuring civil service training came mainly in response to the Sino-British Agreement in 1984. The localization of the Hong Kong civil service continued at a rapid pace, which made expatriates worry about their future after the handover in 1997. The expatriates tried to defend their case by quoting the Bill of Rights, which originally prohibited discrimination and gave all permanent residents access to all public services. Local civil service unions and the Legislative Council objected to the prospect of expatriates remaining in senior positions and exerted pressure on the colonial government. Finally the government launched a consultation on HRM in 1993, indicating the need for a local civil service and that the appointment of terms procedure would not be changed. Civil servants employed on agreement terms, including expatriates, would leave on the expiry of their contract (Cheek-Milby 1989), while new recruits were employed on ‘new permanent and pensionable terms’ (Civil Service Branch 1993). In this context, the CSTC and SSCC were merged in 1996 to form a centralized unit, the CSTDI, which coordinated all training and development activities, national studies, and Putonghua for civil servants to understand the latest developments in Mainland China (Civil Service Branch 1994). The civil service training served during the pre-handover period not just localization, but also convergence in administrative practice between China and Hong Kong (Huque and Vyas 2008). After the handover in 1997, interaction and cooperation between China and Hong Kong became an important area in Hong Kong civil service training.

After the handover of sovereignty, Chief Executive Tung Chee-Wah launched a consultation on HR reform, which directly affected the structure of training. The consultation document ‘Civil service reform: civil service into the 21st century’ suggested that radical change in civil service recruitment was necessary to ensure that talent would not flow to the private sector and recommended that permanent, pensionable terms of appointment should be changed to contract agreements in recruitment (Civil Service Bureau 1999). The initial impact of these measures was limited because the government decided to freeze civil service recruitment, and all newly recruited civil servants were required to serve an initial probationary contract of 3 years to judge their performance. Recruits acceded to permanent and pensionable terms only if their performance was deemed satisfactory (Scott 2005). There was also growing decentralization of the structure in all HR functions to meet departmental needs and prepared for increasing demand in performance management (Huque and Vyas 2008). Table 3 shows the key changes of structure in 2004 when the CSTDI merged with the CSB.

A trend of putting more investment on civil service training can be concluded as well. Comparing the governmental training expenditure between 2000–2001 and 2009–2010, the latter figure nearly doubles the former one. It indicates the government’s strong supports on training.
Based on our observation of the CSTDI and our assumption of trainee–trainer difference, the independent variables in this study can mainly be distinguished into two types, individual-level and institutional-level factors.

This figure leads to the following hypotheses, and Table 4 summarizes hypothetical relationships predicted by H1–H3:

**H1**: Trainees and trainers have different perceptions of the drivers of customization and the effectiveness of civil service training.

**H2a**: In trainees’ view, the institutional-level drivers are likely to positively affect both the effectiveness and customization of civil service training.

**H2b**: In trainees’ view, the individual-level drivers are likely to positively affect both the effectiveness and customization of civil service training.

**H3**: In trainers’ view, the institutional-level drivers are more likely to positively affect the effectiveness and customization of civil service training.

### Independent variables

**Learning opportunities**

According to Riccucci and Naff (2008), training can contribute to employees’ development and add value to their jobs. However, besides the diversity of training programmes offered, employees receive equal opportunities regardless of their gender, race, or different position in the same rank. Training could be more effective and customized as an institutional arrangement of learning opportunities open to all and match employees’ needs in the workplace. Ongoing learning opportunities are essential for fostering continuous development and improvement of employees’ knowledge and the skills needed.

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**Table 3. Key changes of restructuring CSTDI.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Reducing 30% of staff and streamlining divisions in the central training institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Increasing emphasis on e-learning as distinct from the classroom mode of provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Adopting an ‘account manager’ approach to deal with departmental clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Promoting a ‘managerialized’ and ‘customized’ role of CSTDI to address clients’ needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Shifting direct control of training provision to advisory and consultative service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Vyas and Luk (2010).

**Table 4. Summary of hypotheses.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Institutional level</th>
<th>Individual level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Customization</td>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainee</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainer</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ‘+’ predicts a positive relationship.
for employment and personal fulfilment. At the institutional level, then, learning opportunities can be improved by introducing supplementary measures. The Legislative Council Panel on Public Service recommended computer-based learning (CBT) to offer more flexible training courses to government employees, in terms of time, place, and needs.

Public sector training has also turned to decentralization.

**Decentralization of civil service training**

The primary objectives of decentralization include, but are not limited to, overcoming the indifference of government bureaucrats to satisfying the public’s needs, improving the responsiveness of the government to public concerns, and improving the quality of services provided (Hope and Chikulo 2000, p. 29). Decentralization has the advantage of creating greater diversity of practices, better recruitment and training, increased responsibility and accountability, a sharper focus on efficiency and effectiveness, and the provision of better services. At the operational level, departments or grades have to supplement the aforementioned general direction of training policy with their own departmental training policies to suit their specific needs and operational requirements.

The decentralization of training is defined as the transfer of authority or responsibility for decision-making, planning, management, or resource allocation from any level of government to its field or district administrative units, other levels of government, regional or functional authorities, semi-autonomous public authorities, parastatal organizations, private entities, and nongovernmental private or voluntary organizations (Hope and Chikulo 2000, p. 28). Decentralization can be horizontal, dispersing power among institutions at the same level, and vertical, which allows some of the powers of the government to be delegated downwards to lower tiers of authority (Hope and Chikulo 2000).

Tessema and colleagues have tried to answer the question of whether these HR functions are best performed by a centralized governmental structure or a decentralized governmental structure with a ‘turned U’ model (Tessema et al. 2009, p. 168). The high formalization and centralization of HR functions is the most efficient and effective organizational form if emphasis is on uniformity and equity, while the decentralized HR system should be adopted when the emphasis is on innovation, flexibility, and responsiveness (Tessema et al. 2009). With regard to training, Sanchez (2003) argues that neither pure centralized nor decentralized civil service training systems seem sustainable. The intention to delegate completely the responsibility of training top managers to operative units and line managers, though it may increase competition and stimulate a diversity of training policies across government, will reduce the capacity of corporate guidance and debilitate the team spirit and values of services (Sanchez 2003, p. 40). Over-centralized policies tend to generate offer-driven training programmes often considered irrelevant by trainees, who may show dissatisfaction and cynical attitudes. In fact, the need to implement coordinated efforts and guarantee the continuity and professionalism of government staff makes total delegation of the training function a self-defeating strategy (Sanchez 2003, pp. 40–41). Central organizations need to establish parameters and/or quality standards to assure that the training function is carried out in accordance with the long-term interests of the political leadership. Therefore a combined approach of centralizing certain aspects of training and delegating others may provide a more stable solution.
Resources and personnel

Both resources and personnel are crucial to training and development, and other HR functions such as staffing, placement, advancement, etc. Noe (1986) emphasizes that, in order for training programmes to be effective, attention should be given to ensure that the work group climate is supportive and encourages change and personal development. The development of this type of climate may be stimulated if materials, tools, job-related information, and budgetary support are provided in the work setting prior to employees’ participation in training programmes. According to this analysis, employees’ perception of the availability of situational resources prior to programme participation is likely to influence their motivation to learn. In addition, the advent of the age of multi-organizational, multi-sectorial, multinational networks, alliances, and partnerships, and training and development units across different types of public organizations would be better off pooling training resources together for regional cooperation in the design and delivery of relevant training programmes. The lack of attention and resources devoted to training and development units can negatively affect the overall value, efficiency, and effectiveness of these units and their programmes (Acar and Özgür 2004). Therefore, in the networked world, more attention and energy should be devoted to developing and sustaining civil servants’ skills and values with the support of adequate material and personnel resources (Acar and Özgür 2004).

Job-related knowledge and skills

Job-related knowledge is also an essential element of the design of training programmes for it represents a major source of information to determine training needs. The general theory of career development recognizes the need for an individual to acquire career-relevant knowledge and skills (Khan and Alvi 1984). Designing training programmes relevant to trainees’ job functions and work processes is fundamental to inducing training motivation and thus influencing overall training effectiveness. In addition, Maurer (2001) indicates the key relationships that self-efficacy has with attitudes, intentions, and voluntary participation in training and development activities. But this sort of knowledge may differ from employees’ personal needs (Klingner et al. 2010).

Overall performance of trainers

This variable considers the trainers in the training system as a whole because different types of training for departmental clients are delegated or outsourced to them (i.e. trainers). As Klingner and colleagues (2010) argued, the role of trainer becomes that of service provider rather than part of the centralized training institute. This reflects not just an impression of trainers’ performance perceived by trainees and trainers themselves but also the commitment of trainers to their work. Besides, trainers’ performance can determine whether trainees perceive a programme as worthy of their time and attention. Lim and colleagues (2007) likewise highlight that the success of a training programme is mainly determined by the trainer’s qualifications and attitude. A trainer must have a solid idea of the basic direction of an education programme and possess the knowledge and specific skills required to provide the training (Lim et al. 2007).

Autonomy of training

Autonomy of training should be separated into two different parts. From the trainee side, autonomy means their allocation of time between work and development since training

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may be considered a part of their job. From the trainer side, autonomy implies the creditability of their trade and partly to avoid the regulatory image as the personnel input of training (Riccucci and Naff 2008). While trainees wish to fit training into their schedule, trainers want to organize innovative training. Tripathi and Reddy (2008) consider autonomy of training to be one of the latest approaches to management training, related to the development of the individual’s ability to manage his own training.

**Responsiveness of training**

Responsiveness of training refers to whether training programmes are able to address trainees’ needs and whether they are designed in accordance with the requirements of the work environment. Evaluation, feedback, and follow-up sessions are methods commonly used to collect trainees’ opinions regarding modification of programme details (Riccucci and Naff 2008, p. 427). Positive and negative reactions to the information provided by trainers during or even after training programmes are likely determinants of trainees’ motivation to improve their skills. Organizations must take into account the way in which different training programmes are perceived by trainees (Quiñones 1995). Ensuring trainees’ preferences are respected could go a long way towards increasing their motivation (Hicks and Klimoski 1987, Baldwin et al. 1991, Martocchio and Webster 1992).

**Data and measures**

We conducted a quantitative study, sending two different sets of questionnaires to trainers and civil servants (Trainee Set) to test the hypotheses, and complemented the result with information gathered from follow-up interviews. The questionnaires were distributed to both trainers and trainers immediately after they had attended a training session to ensure that the information and insights received would be reliable. After the initial analysis on the collected date, a follow-up interview was arranged. The questionnaires were distributed to full-time and part-time trainers and trainees because their perceptions of civil service trainings might vary according to the modes they conducted or received training. It is therefore critical to examine the differences among the groups of interviewees. Totally, 125 questionnaires were sent to part-time or invited trainers and current full-time trainers, and 57 valid responses were received, which represented a response rate of 45%. Out of 300 questionnaires distributed, a total of 154 valid responses were received from civil servants (trainees), including civil servants from administrative officer grade (16%), executive officer grade (37%), and clerical secretarial grade (47%) at different government bureaux and departments. This represents a response rate of 52%.

The contents of the two questionnaires were closely related, both containing 16 items measuring the independent and dependent variables. Unless specified, all items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). **Customization of Training** is less straightforward to measure, so trainees’ satisfaction, feedback, and needs were considered in three items: ‘Do you agree that trainees’/your satisfaction is important for the modification and evaluation of training programmes?’; ‘Do you agree that comments and feedback from trainees/you help to modify training programmes? ’; ‘Do you agree that tailor-made training programmes are designed to suit the needs of bureaux or departments?’ **Effectiveness of Training** is measured by three items. The first was a general item rated on a scale from 1 (very useful) to 5 (not useful at all): ‘How would you rate the usefulness of the training programmes (provided to you) in the past three years?’ The second and third items were designed based on the effective performance
measurement model suggested by Anthony and Govindarajan (1998), regarding effectiveness of training as ‘the relationship between a responsibility centre’s outputs and its objectives’. The second and third items therefore concerned objectivity and relevance: ‘Do you agree that the training is adequate for the requirements of trainees’/your present job?’ and ‘Do you agree that you provide/receive sufficient training to handle daily duties?’ The questionnaire also asked which types of training programme are most and least useful from trainees’ and trainers’ perspective.

The independent variables that influence the effectiveness and customization of training derive from our qualitative research: learning opportunity, resources and personnel, job-related knowledge and skills, decentralization of training, responsiveness of training, autonomy of training, overall performance of trainers, and the effect of the handover of sovereignty in 1997. Details of measured items are presented in Appendices A and B, which give details of questionnaire items and their reliability coefficients. The measure of trainees’ and trainers’ perception of the six independent variables are all combined by asking two questions to acquire a more accurate picture. Autonomy of training includes two additional questions to access further information regarding preferences for training mode and reasons. Single-item measurement was applied to the overall performance of trainers and the effect of the handover of sovereignty in 1997. Overall performance of trainers is a general perception or self-evaluation (from trainers’ perspective) rated on a scale from 1 (very useful) to 5 (not useful at all). The effect of the handover of sovereignty, namely the concern over ‘national interest’, is relatively implicit in comparison with other variables. Apart from these independent and dependent variables, the questionnaire also included control variables for the effect of respondents’ gender, age, length of service, and education level.

**Analytical procedure**

The regression analysis is based on Huber-White heteroscedasticity-robust standard errors, because of the limited degree of heteroscedasticity and lack of normality revealed by the residuals of the regression model. Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was conducted for two models explaining how the independent variables affect Customization of Training and Effectiveness of Training.

After examining the effectiveness and customization of training from the perspectives of trainers and trainees, respectively, it is important to determine whether an empirical relationship or causal effect that is estimated within two independent samples is equivalent. We adopt the formulas provided by Paternoster et al. (1998) for the statistical test:

$$z = \frac{b_1 - b_2}{\sqrt{SEb_1^2 + SEb_2^2}}$$

where, $b_1$ and $b_2$ reflect the effect of explanatory variable $x$ within group 1 (say, trainees) and group 2 (trainers), while $SEb_1^2$ and $SEb_2^2$ are the coefficient variances associated with the first and second groups, respectively. A $z$ test of explanatory invariance has consisted of a formal hypothesis test that the difference between $b_1$ and $b_2$ is zero. Table 5 reports the result of inter-group comparison for each independent variable. One would conclude that the perspective on effectiveness and customization of training is similar for trainees and trainers (all $z$ values are not statistically significant).

Factor analysis included all items, and there was no general factor accounting for the majority of variation and followed Harman’s (1996) one-factor test. According to Podsakoff et al. (2003), Harman’s one-factor test is one of the most widely used techniques to address
the issue of common method variance. In any given study, it is possible for several factors to be operative. Therefore, it is important to carefully evaluate the conditions under which the data are obtained to assess the extent to which method biases may be a problem. Table 6 shows how every independent variable is operated by questions in the questionnaire.

To avoid multicollinearity resulting from the multiple regression model, the ‘mean centring method’ suggested by Aiken and West (1991) was adopted in the analytical procedure, and variance inflation factor (VIF) tests showed that multicollinearity was no longer a problem in the two models.

Findings

Table 7 summarizes the descriptive statistics and correlations between variables for both trainee and trainer combined sets. Mean scores for all items are lower than the index mid-value (3). The exception is ‘job-related knowledge’, whose mean value is lower than the mid-value, indicating that both trainee and trainer respondents considered job-related knowledge less important than other variables in training programmes. The correlation matrix shows the
Table 7. Descriptive statistics and correlations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Effectiveness of training</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Customization of training</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.571</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Learning opportunities</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.673</td>
<td>0.556</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Decentralization</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.728</td>
<td>0.514</td>
<td>0.583</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Resource and personnel</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.742</td>
<td>0.464</td>
<td>0.628</td>
<td>0.670</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Job-related knowledge and skills</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.261</td>
<td>0.159</td>
<td>0.113</td>
<td>0.100</td>
<td>0.262</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Overall performance of trainers</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.715</td>
<td>0.514</td>
<td>0.490</td>
<td>0.545</td>
<td>0.616</td>
<td>0.141</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Autonomy of training</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>0.715</td>
<td>0.368</td>
<td>0.440</td>
<td>0.576</td>
<td>0.571</td>
<td>0.149</td>
<td>0.649</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Responsiveness of training</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.725</td>
<td>0.422</td>
<td>0.450</td>
<td>0.597</td>
<td>0.645</td>
<td>0.236</td>
<td>0.688</td>
<td>0.849</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Handover of sovereignty at 1997</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>−0.015</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>−0.034</td>
<td>−0.066</td>
<td>0.081</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>−0.033</td>
<td>0.061</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
possibility of multicollinearity, but this problem is not present in the OLS testing results. The following presents how effectiveness and customization are affected by the variables in the trainee and trainer sets. Table 8 summarizes demographic information of data.

**Trainee Set**

Tables 9 and 10 report the OLS testing results of the trainee set. Most of the variables related to effectiveness of training are statistically significant (ranging from $p < 0.01$ to $p < 0.001$), particularly ‘learning opportunity’, ‘decentralization’, ‘resources and personnel’, and ‘job-related knowledge and skills’ ($p < 0.001$). But in the customization of training, only four variables, ‘learning opportunities’, ‘decentralization’, ‘resources and personnel’, and ‘overall performance of trainers’, are statistically significant (ranging from $p < 0.01$ to $p < 0.001$).

**Trainer Set**

Tables 11 and 12 present the OLS testing results of the trainer set. Unlike the trainee set, only the variable ‘overall performance of trainers’ is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).
for the effectiveness of training. Similarly, only one variable, ‘job-related knowledge’, is statistically significant \((p < 0.001)\) for the customization of training.

Table 13 shows a summary of findings based on the OLS testing results for both trainee and trainer sets and indicates whether the hypotheses are confirmed.

### Discussion

The results of the statistical tests of the impact of institutional-level and individual-level drivers on the effectiveness and customization of civil service training in the trainee’s set appear to differ slightly from our hypotheses. The statistical results are consistent with H2a: the coefficients for ‘learning opportunity’ and ‘decentralization’ are positive and statistically significant. The evidence is partially consistent with H2b: among the individual-level drivers, the coefficients for ‘responsiveness of training’ and ‘job-related skills’ are not statistically significant. There are obvious disagreements with our hypotheses regarding trainers’ perception: the evidence proved to be inconsistent with H3. The coefficients for all ‘institutional-level drivers’ and most ‘individual-level drivers’ are statistically insignificant. One interesting observation is that our respondent trainers

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**Table 10. OLS results for customization of training–trainee set.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional-level factors</th>
<th>Coefficients</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>t-Ratio</th>
<th>p-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning opportunities</td>
<td>1.489</td>
<td>0.311</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>0.00083 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decentralization</td>
<td>0.503</td>
<td>0.139</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>0.001 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual-level factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources and personnel</td>
<td>−0.294</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>−2.27</td>
<td>0.025 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job-related knowledge and skills</td>
<td>−0.027</td>
<td>0.248</td>
<td>−0.11</td>
<td>0.914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall performance of trainers</td>
<td>0.372</td>
<td>0.147</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>0.013 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy of training</td>
<td>−0.59</td>
<td>0.448</td>
<td>−1.32</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness of training</td>
<td>0.232</td>
<td>0.227</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handover of sovereignty at 1997</td>
<td>0.085</td>
<td>0.121</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.484</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: \(R^2 = 0.54; F = 28.07; \) sample size = 154.

***\(p < 0.001); **\(p < 0.01); *\(p < 0.05).
considered ‘overall performance of trainers’ to be positively related to ‘effectiveness’, and ‘job-related knowledge and skills’ to be positively related to ‘customization’.

Civil service training is long established in Hong Kong but is seldom considered as part of organizational strategy. Both Scott (2010) and Burns (2004) agree that Hong Kong civil service training is competency-based in nature. Training assists trainees to adapt, change, or develop better coordination of government activities (Burns 2004). Trainees may consider training programmes as modifications of themselves to fit into the public service system. Therefore, if a training programme is able to keep up with the institutional changes occurring across the system as a whole, it is likely to be considered effective and customized. This can be explained by our statistical results for H2a: trainees are more passive receivers than active participants. So even individuals have high requirements of knowledge providers (i.e. trainers) and knowledge, while flexibility is less important to them. It is thus not difficult to understand why only ‘overall performance of trainers’ is positively related to ‘customization’ by our respondents. The most interesting finding in the trainee set is that ‘resources and personnel’ is negatively related to ‘customization’. One possible explanation is that ‘customers’ or ‘clients’ (i.e. trainees) only perceive a service (i.e. training) as customized when they can actively make their own choices (Kang and Sundar 2013), while trainees are rarely able to select the training content or trainer. Therefore, trainees do not relate ‘resources and personnel’ to ‘customization’. A further reason could be that customization exists prior to the offer of training. This involves great assumptions about receivers’ (i.e. trainees’) preferences, and from our findings, it is very likely that the assumptions of current training materials and trainers are not consistent with the trainees’ preferences.

The results in the trainer set are far from our hypothesis but are not completely irrational. The overall performance of trainers is positively related to effectiveness because it is a kind of self-cognition. Trainers may have an unconscious appreciation of the role they play in training, which results in bias to some extent. Such reflection is conceptually defined as self-perception of image and credibility. ‘Job-related knowledge and skills’ is a de facto primary component of trainers’ work. The ‘tailor-made’ approach, therefore, does not necessarily address clients’ training needs. As for institutional-level drivers, results show no linkage between ‘decentralization’ and the training ‘effectiveness’ as well as ‘customization’ from the trainers’ point of view (Figure 1). A possible reason is that other researchers have found the key to achieve high performance is not only to decentralize but to also align the decentralized decision making with the strategic stance (Andrews et al. 2012). At the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional-level factors</th>
<th>Coefficients</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>t-Ratio</th>
<th>p-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning opportunities</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.407</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decentralization</td>
<td>-0.134</td>
<td>0.224</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
<td>0.553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual-level factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources and personnel</td>
<td>0.237</td>
<td>0.297</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job-related knowledge and skills</td>
<td>1.734</td>
<td>0.464</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.001 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall performance of trainers</td>
<td>-0.038</td>
<td>0.454</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy of training</td>
<td>1.868</td>
<td>1.024</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>0.075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness of training</td>
<td>-0.492</td>
<td>0.467</td>
<td>-1.05</td>
<td>0.298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handover of sovereignty at 1997</td>
<td>-0.069</td>
<td>0.389</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>0.859</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $R^2 = 0.512$; $F$ value = 6.97; sample size = 57.

***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$. 

Table 12. OLS results for customization of training–trainer set.
### Table 13. Summary of variables and findings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>Supposed direction of influence</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>Customization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning opportunities</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning opportunities</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decentralization</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decentralization</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources and personnel</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources and personnel</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job-related knowledge and skills</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job-related knowledge and skills</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall performance of trainers</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall performance of trainers</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy of training</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy of training</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
same time, we assume trainers are more familiar with the strategy of each different government bureaucrats. It is because they are more likely to receive such information when they plan and discuss the training sessions with the bureaucrats’ authorities. They may understand the training in fact does not go with the right strategic direction despite ‘decentralization’ hence representing no relationship with training ‘effectiveness’ and ‘customization’. It also explains why trainees view ‘decentralization’ in another way round. Similarly trainers believe ‘learning opportunities’ is not related to training ‘effectiveness’ and ‘customization’. The explanation is rather direct and simple as the benefits of this factor target trainees instead of trainers. Trainers probably do not feel its impact.

Nevertheless, H1 is supported by the statistical results (see Table 10). Trainees and trainers do have different perceptions of what affects the effectiveness and customization of training. Trainers emphasize their own importance and influence on training programmes.

**Limitations and suggestions**

Several limitations should be noted. The quantitative analysis results are preliminary and exploratory due to the limited sample size. This is mainly because the questionnaires were distributed to trainers and trainees and not to other actors from the private sector and outsourced service providers. Another limitation of this study is the generalizability of the results. This study only focuses on Hong Kong because of its growing decentralization trend in training and other HR-related activities. Longitudinal research concerning changes in civil service training in different Asian regions could provide a more comprehensive view of the decentralization of training.

**Conclusion**

This study explores for the first time the distance between reality and conventional wisdom about trainers’ and trainees’ perceptions in Hong Kong’s civil service system. Through the results we find that in fact trainees are so deeply attached to the system that they put much emphasis on the consistency of training with institutional changes. Trainers, on the contrary, do not care much about institutional changes, instead stressing their own contribution to training.
programmes. We hope our findings will provide the civil service with inspiration in designing or restructuring its training programme. In future research we will include the outsourcing of training in the civil service and examine its effect on effectiveness and customization.

Disclosure statement
No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

References
APPENDIX A  Please take a moment to fill in the survey below. Please mark only one box for each question if not specify or write in the space provided. If any clarifications are needed, please contact Dr. Lina Vyas at ********* for details. Thank you!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Particulars</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Below 25</td>
<td>25–30</td>
<td>31–35</td>
<td>36–40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41–45</td>
<td>46–50</td>
<td>51–55</td>
<td>56 or above</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time/Part-time trainer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year(s) of service as a trainer</td>
<td>Below 2</td>
<td>2–5</td>
<td>6–10</td>
<td>11–15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16 or above</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest education received</td>
<td>High Schools</td>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Do you agree that training materials can be contracted out to other training agencies, such as universities, consulting firms or technology vendors?  
2. Do you agree that the Civil Service Training and Development Institute (CSTDI) should provide more customized or tailor-made training programme targeted for bureau or department?  
3. Do you agree that you provide sufficient training to trainees in handling their daily duties?  
4. Do you agree that the Hong Kong Government values the training opportunity for civil service?  
5. Do you agree that comments and feedbacks from trainees help you to modify training programme?  
6. Do you agree that enough professional training is provided for trainers to provide training?  
7. Do you agree that the CSTDI increases its focus on advisory and consultancy service?  
8. Do you agree that it is necessary for civil servants to receive training in the Basic Law?  
9. Do you agree that it is necessary for civil servants to training in National Studies?
10. Do you agree that training you have provided in the past 3 years is based on trainees’ needs?  □ □ □ □ □
11. Do you agree that training programme outside office hours limits your time arrangement in training? □ □ □ □ □
12. Do you agree that training programme can be contracted out to other training agencies, such as universities, consulting firms or technology vendors? □ □ □ □ □
13. Do you agree that civil servants are provided equal opportunity to training at all levels of their career? □ □ □ □ □
14. Do you agree that training at departmental level could be cost-effective? □ □ □ □ □
15. Do you agree that Civil Service Bureau provides enough resources and budget on training? □ □ □ □ □
16. Do you agree that it is necessary to provide follow-up programme and activities after training? □ □ □ □ □
17. Do you agree that training programme should be arranged outside office hours? □ □ □ □ □
18. Do you agree that the training is adequate to the requirement of trainees’ present job? □ □ □ □ □
19. Do you agree that training you have provided in the past 3 years is based on strategic planning (i.e. goals and objectives) of bureau or department in the future? □ □ □ □ □
20. Do you agree that training at departmental level could focus on individual needs? □ □ □ □ □
21. Do you agree that you can understand what bureau or department needs in training? □ □ □ □ □
22. Do you agree that training should combine technical and conceptual knowledge with trainees’ experience in workplace? □ □ □ □ □
23. Do you agree that training programme provides job-related problem-solving techniques to trainees’ job? □ □ □ □ □
24. Do you agree that training develops trainees’ commitment to continuous learning? □ □ □ □ □

(Continued)
APPENDIX A  (Continued).

25. Do you agree that training helps trainees to update the latest development in their professional fields?

26. Do you agree that tailor-made training programme is designed to suit the needs of bureau or department?

27. Do you agree that the training opportunity enhances the possibility of career advancement?

28. Do you agree that training enhance civil servants’ understanding to the national interest of China?

29. Do you agree that training can help trainees to address their job requirement?

30. Do you agree that trainees’ satisfaction is important for the modification and evaluation of training programme?

31. Which training mode do you think is the best for enhancing trainees’ knowledge?

   Classroom learning
   Workshops, seminars or lectures
   Self-studied materials
   Web-based interactive learning
   Self-financed or subsidized external studies
   Focus group or experience sharing sessions
   Others (please specify):

32. What is the major reason for choosing the training mode selected above?

   Flexibility
   Cost-saving
   Interesting
   Job-related
   Others (please specify):

33. In your opinion, how would you rate the performance of the CSTDI in the past 3 years?

34. How would you rate the overall quality of civil service training?

35. How would you rate the usefulness of training programme in the past 3 years?

36. How would you rate the importance of professional training on job-related knowledge and skills in civil service training?
37. In your opinion, which of the following THREE categories of training programme are the MOST useful to civil servants?

- Leadership development
- Overseas seminars and visits
- Human resources management
- Financial management
- Information technology
- National Studies and Basic Law
- Chinese writing
- Putonghua
- English writing

38. Please comment if possible, why these training programmes are useful?

39. In your opinion, which of the following THREE categories of training programme are the LEAST useful to civil servants?

- Leadership development
- Overseas seminars and visits
- Human resources management
- Financial management
- Information technology
- National Studies and Basic Law
- Chinese writing
- Putonghua
- English writing

40. Please comment if possible, why these training programmes are not useful?

41. In your opinion, what would you suggest to improve civil service training?

42. Please provide any additional comments related to civil service training?

– Thank You –
Please take a moment to fill in the survey below. Please mark only one box for each question if not specify or write in the space provided. If any clarifications are needed, please contact Dr. Lina Vyas at ***** for details. Thank you!

**Personal Particulars**

**Grade**
- ☐ AO
- ☐ EO
- ☐ Clerical and Secretarial
- ☐ Other (please specify)

**Sex**
- ☐ M
- ☐ F

**Age**
- ☐ Below 25
- ☐ 25–30
- ☐ 31–35
- ☐ 36–40
- ☐ 41–45
- ☐ 46–50
- ☐ 51–55
- ☐ 56 or above

**Year(s) of service in the present rank**
- ☐ Below 2
- ☐ 2–5
- ☐ 6–10
- ☐ 11–15
- ☐ 16 or above

**Highest education received**
- ☐ High Schools
- ☐ Bachelor Degree
- ☐ Masters
- ☐ Ph.D.

43. Do you agree that training materials can be contracted out to other training agencies, such as universities, consulting firms or technology vendors?  

44. Do you agree that the Civil Service Training and Development Institute (CSTDI) should provide more customized or tailor-made training programme targeted for bureau or department?

45. Do you agree that you receive sufficient training to handle your daily duties?

46. Do you agree that the Hong Kong Government values the training opportunity for civil service?

47. Do you agree that your comments and feedbacks are important for the modification and evaluation of training programme?

48. Do you agree that enough professional training is provided for trainers to provide training?

49. Have you participated in any training in the Basic Law or National Studies in the past 3 years?
   - ☐ Training in the Basic Law → to question (8)
   - ☐ Training in National Studies → to question (9)
   - ☐ Training in both the Basic Law & National Studies → to question (8) & (9)
50. Do you agree that training in the Basic Law is necessary?  
51. Do you agree that training in National Studies is necessary?  
52. Do you agree that training you have taken in the past 3 years respond to your needs?  
53. Do you agree that training programme outside office hours limits your availability to training?  
54. Do you agree that training programme can be contracted out to other training agencies, such as universities, consulting firms or technology vendors?  
55. Do you agree that civil servants are provided equal opportunity to training at all levels of their career?  
56. Do you agree that training at departmental level could be cost-effective?  
57. Do you agree that your bureau or department provides enough resources and budget on training?  
58. Do you agree that it is necessary to provide follow-up programme and activities after training?  
59. Do you agree that training programme should be arranged outside office hours?  
60. Do you agree that the training is adequate to the requirement of your present job?  
61. Do you agree that training you have taken in the past 3 years respond to strategic planning (i.e. objectives and goals) of your bureau or department in the future?  
62. Do you agree that training at departmental level could focus on individual needs?  
63. Do you agree that trainers can understand what your bureau or department needs in training?  
64. Do you agree that training should combine technical and conceptual knowledge with your experience in workplace?  
65. Do you agree that training programme provides job-related problem-solving techniques to your job?  
66. Do you agree that training develops your commitment to continuous learning?

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<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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(Continued)
67. Do you agree that training helps you to update the latest development in your professional field?  
68. Do you agree that tailor-made training programme suits the needs of your bureau or department?  
69. Do you agree that the training opportunity enhances the possibility of career advancement?  
70. Do you agree that training enhance your understanding to the national interest of China?  
71. Do you agree that training can help you to address your job requirement?  
72. Which training mode do you think is the best for enhancing your knowledge? 
   - Classroom learning  
   - Workshops, seminars or lectures  
   - Self-studied materials  
   - Web-based interactive learning  
   - Self-financed or subsidized external studies  
   - Focus group or experience sharing sessions  
   - Others (please specify):  
73. What is the major reason for choosing the training mode selected above?  
   - Flexibility  
   - Cost-saving  
   - Interesting  
   - Job-related  
   - Others (please specify):  

<table>
<thead>
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<th>74. How would you rate your satisfaction level towards civil service training?</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
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<th>75. In your opinion, how would you rate the performance of the CSTDI in the past 3 years?</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very Poor</th>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>76. How would you rate the overall quality of civil service training?</th>
<th>Very Useful</th>
<th>Useful</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Not Useful</th>
<th>Not Useful At All</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>77. How would you rate the usefulness of training programme provided to you in the past 3 years?</th>
<th>Very Useful</th>
<th>Useful</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Not Useful</th>
<th>Not Useful At All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
78. How would you rate the importance of professional training on job-related knowledge and skills in civil service training?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Not Important At All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

79. In your opinion, which of the following THREE categories of training programme are the MOST useful to civil servants? 

- Leadership development
- Overseas seminars and visits
- Human resources management
- Financial management
- Information technology
- National Studies and Basic Law
- Chinese writing
- Putonghua
- English writing

80. Please comment if possible, why these training programmes are useful?

81. In your opinion, which of the following THREE categories of training programme are the LEAST useful to civil servants? 

- Leadership development
- Overseas seminars and visits
- Human resources management
- Financial management
- Information technology
- National Studies and Basic Law
- Chinese writing
- Putonghua
- English writing

82. Please comment if possible, why these training programmes are not useful?

83. In your opinion, what would you suggest to improve civil service training?

84. Please provide any additional comments related to civil service training?

- Thank You -