



**A Synergy of Formal Position and Personal Power of Middle Leaders in
Hong Kong Primary Schools**

Theodore Lee

School middle leaders are growing in their importance in the management of the school in recent years. The deficiency in the understanding and knowledge of their roles, practices and capacities could hinder the development of quality middle leadership. The paper contributes to the understanding of the exercise of the leadership role and identifies the professional development opportunities for school middle leaders. Among the eight middle leaders and teachers in Hong Kong primary schools interviewed, two middle leaders were shadowed in four occasions in which they performed the leadership role. The findings show that the middle leaders tended to be more reactive in exercising their leadership role in 3 aspects: role aspect, structural aspect and power aspect. In the role aspect, middle leaders were perceived as responsibility takers who often worked to complete the assigned tasks. In a structural aspect, the study found that the middle leaders concerned more about the good personal relationship with colleagues and preferred to use 'soft' approach to lead. Matching their concern of collegial relationship, middle leaders tended to use the soft powers, such as referent power, expert power and reward power rather than hard powers which they thought would create tension with colleagues. The findings illustrate that many middle leaders in the Hong Kong primary schools often stay within the comfort zone with a good collegial relationship and perform their leadership role at a personal level. They would need more professional development to equip and challenge them to see and perform their leadership role from a wider perspective.