THE DYNAMICS OF CONTROL AND RESISTANCE: MICRO-LEVEL THEORISING OF PROFESSIONAL RESISTANCE UNDER NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

How public sectors are managed globally has, over the past three decades, undergone substantial changes, influenced enormously by a perspective now known as new public management (NPM). Core to NPM is the belief that effective private style management answers to the public sector inefficiency challenge. Available research suggests that within the NPM model, managerialism, which subsumes professional autonomy in managerial objectives, tends to generate frictions between professional values and managerial objectives. This friction intensifies particularly in contexts where public service delivery is outsourced to private organisations, where cost containment is a crucial success factor. This paper reports on an investigation into issues arising between professionals and managers, pursuing service quality assurance and cost efficiency respectively, in two health institutions in Ghana where certain functions were outsourced.

*One key issue of professionals' concern is increased managerial control of their work, which they argue has led to substantial truncation of their professional autonomy. Professionals maintain this reduced autonomy does not guarantee the public the quality of service it deserves. Drawing on control and resistance literatures, this paper conceptualises strategies professionals employed in responding to these issues, exploring the implications of their chosen strategies. The findings reveal professionals display substantial unconventionality in their response, employing principally non-confrontational, non-violent, and non-deviant resistance strategies akin to **work to rule**-a famous unionised resistance strategy. They sought resistance through the meticulous compliance with, not violation of the rules.*

Introduction

This paper reports on the outcome of a study of alternative forms of resistance by profes- sionals to managerial control in two corporatized health institutions in Ghana and draws the implications for management practice. Traditional analyses of control tend

to overstate the captivating and over-totalising effect of control resources on the subjects of control. Within the workplace, the subject of managerial control of workers, and the response from the latter group through their projection of self in such light as 'haggard, docile, and weak category (Thomas and David, 2005) has been a dominant perspective in the industrial sociology and management literatures. This conceptuali-sation of the controlled group as weak, and management as the more powerful class has partially underpinned the labour process debate, which resonated principally with Braverman's (1974) Labour and Monopoly Capital. In these accounts, management and employees are conceptualised and treated as separate groups: one controlling, the other resisting.

Against that backdrop, earlier analyses of management and employee relations have remained largely Marxists in approach-a framework that adopts this over-totalising viewpoint on control. From recent analysis of control, however, there is now a burgeoning literature (for instance, Collins and Green, 1999; Thomas and David, 2005; Rosenthal, 2004) pointing out alternative conceptua-lisations of control, clearly distinct from the Marxist framework. Such alternative conceptualisations are derived principally from the study of non-professional groups. Of course, professionals and how they tend to respond to control resources have received some critical analysis with respect to these forms of control conceptualisation (Exworthy and Halford, 1999). However, compared to manual, other skilled and service workers, analysis of professionals' form of resistance has been admittedly minimal.

Recent developments in the public sector bordering on new ways of conducting the public business, which have been referred to as NPM provide the entry point of professionals into this present analysis. Such developments continue to have significant ramifications for how professionals perform their jobs, and the conditions under which they do so. In the context of these developments, much remains to be understood about how professionals respond to managerial control mechanisms. Do they willingly comply? Do they attempt to attain resistance through compliance, coopera-tion, or compromise? How do they manage these? Addressing these and other related questions constitute the subject matter of this paper.

Placed against that backdrop, this article is to build on the literature on these alternative conceptualisations of control and resistance, and to bring to the fore the subtle forms of resistance strategies that professionals employ in response to managerial control. First, however, a brief review of traditional Marxist conceptualisation of control sets the tone, followed by a review of literature on new forms of control, which do not necessarily employ confrontational forms of resistance. An examination and theorising of how subjects of control employ control resources to their own advantage follows. Next, a brief examination of the literature on NPM: its ethos, value system, and philosophies and approaches to public management are discussed to provide the context within which the work of profes-sionals is examined, and for this study.

Control and resistance from Marxist per-spective
Karl Marx (1867, 1874) is credited with Marxism, a theory that addresses the unfair-ness and imbalance of workplace power

between the owners of productive resources (capital) and the sellers of labour power (labour). In Marxism, a clear distinction is drawn between owners of capital (the bourgeoisies) and those who sell their labour in return for wages (proletariats). Moreover, the management group, representing the bourgeoisies is clearly distinct from the workers' or employees' (the proletariat group). Traditional Marxism argues that with the asymmetrical distribution of power between owners of capital and the sellers of labour power in favour of the former, capital has the power to and tends to control labour who tries to resist. By extension, management is viewed as the all-powerful controlling group while labour stands as the docile, haggard, controlled group (Braverman, 1974; Wilmot, 1997; Ezzamel, Worthington and Wilmot, 2001; Thomas and David, 2005). As a solution to this unfair inequality, Marx (1874) envisioned a utopian society of economically equals, in fact of more powerful labour compared to capital, when labour would have overthrown capital.

However, with the propounding of Frederick W Taylor's influential scientific management theory, which gave further impetus to capital, reinforcing its capacity to control labour, it is little likely such utopianism as envisioned by Marx would ever materialise. It is the ramifications of scientific management theory for employees that Braverman's (1974) work, criticising modern technology for deskilling employees' creative skills, fundamentally addresses. In Braverman, as in Marxism, workers are viewed as less powerful, responding to forms of control in confrontational or frictional fashion. In that sense, control or domination has for long been understood as achievable through consent, suggesting that whenever people give their consent they are necessarily submitting themselves to be controlled and dominated (Carlone and Larson, 2006). In effect, consent has, until recently, been little thought of as a means of seeking control. The next section discusses non-Marist conceptualisation of control.

Control and resistance from non-Marxists perspective
In spite of the enduring influence that Marxist analysis of control and resistance has received, recent analyses (see for instance Collinson, 1994, 2003; Rosenthal, 2004) have suggested that consent could and has been employed as a powerful and effective tool in resisting managerial control. This suggests that to maintain that when people give their consent they are necessarily subordinating themselves to be controlled could be viewed as simplistic, failing to take account of the complexities in control/resistance analysis. In this respect, 'the widely accepted conception of hegemony as ideological domination achieved through consent, as Mumby (2000) had earlier on argued, should rather be understood, as suggested by Collinson (2003), as 'a dialectic between control and resistance'. Admittedly, control mechanisms deployed by management were found to be harnessed by employees to their own advantage in separate accounts in call centres (Rosenthal, 2004; Lankshear, 2001). This argument is further supported by Mumby (2000) and Carlone and Larson (2006) who argued that attempts to control may simultaneously represent opportunities for resistance. I use separate concepts to illustrate this conceptualisation of resistance to provide alternative interpretations of situation of apparent compliance by a seemingly less powerful group. These, which I now discuss in turn, are 'work to rule' and 'the weapon of the weak'.

Work to rule

'Work to rule' is a strategic practice whereby employee groups engage in industrial action without losing pay, by following the rules and regulations of their work so strictly to the letter that either nothing gets done at all or only little gets done. It is a disguised form of industrial action in which employees work strictly according to the terms of their contract of employment. This requires working to the rules of the jobs without cutting corners or taking short cuts with the view to slowing down production or the work process without engaging in any illegal or recalcitrant behaviour that might warrant a disciplinary action.

Doran (2007) calls this *responsible rebellion,* typified by Irish nurses' industrial action which they embarked upon without losing public support and their wages. In a modern workplace almost every job is governed by a battery of rules, regulations, standing orders and procedures, many of them practically unworkable, which are often ignored and violated to facilitate the work process. By 'working to rule', disgruntled employees pay attention to each of these unworkable regulations that eventually result in confusion and unnecessary delays.

The weapons of the weak (WOTW)

The WOTW theory was propounded by Scott (1985) whose study focuses on the polemics of peasant resistance. Drawing the distinctions and relationships between 'public action' and 'cognitive objective' of a seemingly marginalised, oppressed, class, Scott showed how apparently suppressed, marginalised groups respond to attempts at controlling them. He examined, from a micro-perspective, the symptoms of the gestation of peasant resistance, and by his thesis, attempted to fill the gap left by macro approaches of Marxist analysts. Unlike Marxists, Scott does not consider revolution, which results in the overthrow of the dominant class, to be inevitable (Nagata, 1987). Scott illustrates how, conscious of their predicament, the dispossessed and marginalised group manage their behaviour and discourse to their own advantage, without engaging in full-blown recalcitrance. Nagata (1987: 1243) vividly articulates the processes and strategies involved in the weapons of the weak, which he argued are both entirely rational and consistent with the context:

...the discontent of the dispossessed is displayed in a pattern of a simmering resistance, of low-key recalcitrance, chicanery, petty pilferage, foot dragging, dissimulation and minor sabotage, all expressed verbally in metaphors quite appropriate to the local social scene; hence in that context, rational.

The central argument of Scott's thesis is that, aware of their condition, suppressed, apparently voiceless people evolve their own [sophisticated] strategies for displaying resistance. Moreover, while they take precautions to hide their intentions from the public, argues Scott, they do expect the effects of their resistance to be felt. Whereas such a class may publicly comply with a regime, their cognitive objectives might stand in stark opposition to their public behaviour.

In summary, Scott accepts the crucial role of the human agency-the tendency of people to shift between various selves-in their resistance to control attempts. In managing attempts by the more powerful to control them, marginalised groups are able to shift between the private self that resists, and the public self that complies to forms of control, real, or imagined. TWOW thesis thus suggests that there are other forms of resistance, which combine apparent consent with non-confrontational

resistance. Professionals' resistance, which this paper attempts to theorise falls within this latter categorisation, and occurred in the context of NPM under which their professional discretion and autonomy has become truncated. I now turn to a brief discussion of NPM.

New Public Management (NPM)

In this section, I provide the basic tenets of the wider context-new public management (NPM)-in which this study was conducted. I begin with a summary of NPM based on Hood's (1991), and later draw its ramifications for professionals' work. According to Aucoin (1990) and Hood (1991), the NPM model is based on seven distinct doctrinal areas, as follows:

Hands on professional management

Under-girded by the catchphrase 'let managers manage', this element recognises the need for management at the very top of the organisation, endued with full substantive responsibility for management-working towards the achievement of clearly specified goals. This is preferred to administrators merely administering rules, and working towards exogenously determined ends (Oluwu, 2002). As a control on their authority, contractual agreements are employed to make managers more accountable to politicians for specified results. The management role here is pre-eminent over the specialised nature of the department and ministry (Oluwu, 2002).

Explicit standards and measure of performance

Central to this element is a clear statement of objectives, goals and performance standards and criteria. From these the allocation of resources for which managers are accountable derives its legitimacy and justification. This focus on results (accountability for outputs) is a clear departure from the focus on inputs (accountability for inputs) inherent in the hitherto traditional public administration. Once given the resources, managers have a great deal of discretion in allocating them, mindful of their accountability for their decisions and the implications of such decisions for whole units, departments and ministries (Hood, 1991; Oluwu, 2002).

Emphasis on output controls and entrepreneurial management

There is great orientation towards such control mechanisms as performance and programme budgeting in contrast to line item budgeting. While strategic management is still pursued, the focus is more on objectives that must be achieved in the shortest possible time in a rapidly changing environment, hence the increase in the application of SWOT analysis (Oluwu, 2002). Here, the emphasis on results means that top management's focus is on meeting, preferably exceeding targets.

Disaggregation of units

Otherwise known as corporatisation, this involves the breaking up of previously large monolithic public organisations into small units designed, built around single products, with separate cost centres. This process both necessitates and facilitates the use of decentralised budgets, and allows personnel processes to be decentralised, making hiring and firing at the local level not only possible but much less cumbersome. In essence, corporatisation attempts to address the agency problem, by giving stake to individuals, groups and communities in the public organisation.

Competition in public service delivery

There is increased belief in market-like competition as a means of ensuring efficiency in the delivery of public services. Such competition includes privatisation, commercialisation and

marketisation (Oluwu, 2002), made possible by the separation of provision (legal authority) from production (the technical transformation of inputs into outputs). This separation means that a public organisation with provision right can delegate (contract out) the production of that service to another organisation in either the public or private sector. The manifestations of this separation include public-private partnerships (PPPs); private finance initiatives (PFIs); franchising; and outsourcing in its various ramifications.

Emphasis on private sector styles of management

There is a conceptual shift away from what Oluwu (2002) referred to as military-style public service ethics towards flexibility with respect to hiring, managing and compensating personnel. For instance, top positions in the public sector are no longer the preserve of longest serving public servants; the appointment process is subject to the rigour of open competition between internal and external applicants from both the public and private sectors. Performance as against long service and seniority becomes central to promotion.

Greater stress on discipline and parsimony in resource use

Oluwu (2002) summarised this as: 'raising labour discipline, resisting union demands, limiting compliance costs to businesses, and application of information and communication technology (ICT). The use of ICT, underpinned by accounting logic (Aucoin, 1990), ensures the making of more informed decisions to avoid waste (Hood, 1995). All this, it is believed would result in achieving more with less.

In effect, the need to minimise cost and to do maximise output is the central consideration of NPM to which all considerations are

subordinated (Christensen and Laegreid, 1999). All other values and considerations, including professional discretion and service quality come to be subordinated to cost consideration, a subject, which has become a source of much tension between professionals and managers under NPM. The foregoing thus provides the backdrop against which the work of professionals under managers would be examined. In the following section, I discuss the essential features of professionals and professionalism.

Professionalism and Professionals under NPM

The concept of professionalism has been shaped significantly under NPM. The work of professionals has been understood to require discretion over a range of issues that fall under their domain of authority. Professionals are believed to privilege public interest over personal interest; while a professional is not required to ignore material considerations, they are expected to subordinate financial gain to higher values of responsibility to clients and the public (Sullivan, 2000). Therefore the belief that the professions will place societal welfare above that of the profession and its members had formed the basis of the society's contract with professions (Cruess et al, 2000). On the basis of their access to privileged knowledge [expert power-Crozier, 1964], professionals tend to demand autonomy over the practice of their profession. But over the years there have been instances that suggested public interest is subordinated to personal gains.

In light of that, there has, in recent times, been an increase in the need for a greater insight from the public into what professionals do in order to forestall likely rent-seeking professional behaviours. This has led to substantial truncation of professionals' autonomy, which

constitutes a serious source of challenge to the professionals and a dilemma to the public for two apparent reasons. One, it protects and guards the public against selfish professionals desiring to profiteer at the expense of the public; two, those professionals with genuine commitment to protecting the public interest may lose their autonomy, which may be detrimental to the public interest.

Under NPM, the juxtaposition of the ideals of managerialism on professionals and the values the latter espouse, and the range of associated issues, which I have discussed in detail elsewhere (Tengey, 2008), is leading to near jettisoning of professional values. This has produced a heightened degree of managerial-professional conflicts. From critical literature, issues emerging as commonplace in managerial-professional conflicts include:

(i)   Senior managers' quest to manage with free hands has resulted in increased control of and substantial restriction on the autonomy and discretion of professionals (Emery and Giauque, 2003; (Noordhoek and Saner, 2004);

(ii)   Breakdown in public service values (Christensen and Laegreid, 1999) due to excessive application of market principles and economic considerations;

(iii)   Conflicts over professional values and managerial objectives (Sehested, 2002; Cheung, 2002).

The Research
Placed against that backdrop, this research investigates the issues professionals do encounter while working under senior managers, whose fundamental concern is to achieve cost-efficiency. The research is also intended to identify and conceptualise the coping devices or the resistance strategies professionals employ in responding to the issues they encounter.

Design and Methodology
The research was conducted on two corporatized health institutions in Ghana. These institutions were left with enormous deficits in technical staffs after a recent public sector employee rationalisation programme had cut off a substantial number of their technical staffs, placing embargo on the recruitment of new staff. Along with this skills shortage was a large number of unproductive unskilled support staff providing ancillary services of various kinds. In response to the deepening skills deficit, the hospitals decided to outsource some functions previously managed b/ technical staff, including some health professionals such as biomedical engineers, along with a large number of unqualified/unskilled staff. Either way cost consideration was to some degree core to the decision to outsource. The investigation focused on professional middle managers working under performance-based contract senior managers. Two research sites (hereafter referred to as AK and BK) were selected. Both institutions have similar departments offering similar services, and enjoyed a relatively higher degree of autonomy, compared to other public health institutions across the country.

The selected cases reflect fundamental differences in skills levels in the functional areas outsourced. The first case [Installation/Maintenance] involves departments performing tasks requiring sophisticated technical skills such as magnetic resonance imagery (MRI), biomedical engineering and the installation of sophisticated medical equipment and machinery. The second case [Cleaning] requires mainly low-value skills and included the Environmental Sanitation and Cleaning departments. Thus variations in skills level constitute the only comparative element that provides the basis for comparative analysis in this research.

Research Questions

Two main research questions were posed to the professionals:

1. What were the major issues professionals working under contract managers encounter?
2. What strategies are used in responding to these issues?

Semi-structured interviews, administered to some 12 senior managers and 28 professionals were used to obtain qualitative data, with interviews taking place during normal office hours, and respondents allowed time off to participate. Interviews time averaged 45-60 and 50-65 minutes for senior managers and professionals respectively. Attempts to access background information such as minutes of meetings, and documents reviewing the outcomes of outsourced projects failed, making the research rely heavily on interview data. That notwithstanding, there was opportunity for some form of observation, which helped make greater sense of the rather very complex issues encountered.

Interview data were digitally-recorded and stored, along with written fieldwork summaries, all meant to ensure every important detail was captured. Interview transcripts were organized into display matrices, taking several forms but based principally on themes emerging from transcripts rather than exogenously imposed. Matrices were developed around research questions with the vertical axis recording detailed research questions and the horizontal axis, responses to the questions, thus mapping research question to respondent.

Findings: issues and challenges encountered by professional managers

Challenges faced by professional managers border on control from senior management; uncritical obsession (by senior managers) with cost-considerations, leading to the marginalisation and jettisoning of public service quality considerations, and little adherence to professional standards; little opportunity for the exercise of professional autonomy, and the by-passing of professionals even in issues in which they have both the expertise and experience.

First, professionals bemoaned the several senior management attempts to exercise control over what they (professionals) do. In any case, both the severity and frequency of such control attempts were seen as varying substantially with the level of skills required in performing a particular function. Admittedly, high skills functional areas tend to be associated with frequent instances of senior management control over what professionals do, while low skills areas attracted the least evidence of senior management control attempts. As one middle manager in Biomedical Engineering department at BK pointed out about senior managers:

They don't listen; when you listen you act. They ask you to present your opinion; you write a beautiful report; they file it and you don't hear anything again. So you sit down and watch them perform…We belong to the same professional associations as some of the consultants they contract to tell them what we have always told them (Estate Manager, BK).

Due to the complexity and sophistication of skills required in the high skills areas in which senior managers are relatively uninformed compared to the professionals, they (senior managers) tend to rely heavily on external consultants, who assist, as it were to 'decode' professionals' technical language. Although most senior managers are health professionals, their disconnection from continuous daily practice, as they spend more time on manage-

rial issues, makes them lag somehow behind in practical issues relating to practice. This means professionals may be more powerful by reason of their access to some form of esoteric knowledge which is practice-based, otherwise known as expert power according to Crozier (1964]. However, one source of professionals' frustration is the constraints they felt on their power. A professional manager had this to say:

Often the main source of conflicts is the difference in knowledge between service managers (managers) and service providers (professionals). Institutional practice is technology; those who do not practice at this level lack that technology, yet they wish to dictate what should be done at the hospitals at any given time. How can you effectively manage something you have been out of touch with for a long time? When it happens that way, they tend to engage a number of consultants to help them make sense of it… (Maintenance Engineer, BK).

This senior management approach, professionals argue, leaves them (professionals) with little opportunity to exercise their professional autonomy. Professionals argued that senior managers are always trying to be personally involved in areas clearly understood as professionals' domain of responsibility, as if senior managers felt some information might be kept from them:

They (senior managers) always want to identify themselves with whatever is going on but they don't need to; we'll give them a report eventually. So the professional element (failing to leave the professionals with little interference) has always been the central issue (Biomedical Engineer, BK).

One other thing professionals resent is senior managers' one-dimension emphasis on cost, often achieved at the sacrifice of quality and professional standards. A professional vividly summarises some of the major issues they face in relating to and working with senior managers:

They're (senior managers) only concerned with cutting costs, and have forgotten our basic objective is to provide a system of quality health service that the public can trust. There's also 'confusion over results and procedures'. When they introduced the changes, we were told to focus on set targets. But … management decided to intensify regulatory procedures. Now, there are too many procedures that lead to delays,…controls everywhere…you're treated like a shop-floor worker…somebody decides what you should do and specify how you should do it…but we're believed to be professionals! (Biomedical Engineer, BK).

Additionally, professionals were concerned that decisions relating outsourcing of functions under their department were made almost exclusively by senior management without reference to their professional advice. Professionals insist that they are the best placed to advise senior management on areas to outsource, as well as on outsourcing service providing firms to contract. They argued that several outsourcing projects failed because outsourcing decisions were made without any reference to them. They are concerned that resources are being wasted in that outsourcing providers are brought in to perform duties they (professionals) have capacity to perform even more efficiently. Their concern is that they are never offered the opportunity to prove their skills before external service providers are brought in:

There's a limit to my authority over what I'm supposed to be doing. That's for somebody else to be brought in, without it being discussed with you, and you haven't been able to assess what you can or can't do. I have not been given the chance to determine my limits because there is some of the equipment I'm not permitted to touch. These relate to issues of autonomy. Until my limit is attained you can't make a decision to bring in someone to help. We're required to give out our best, so you must have the space to work yourself to your limit, then you can look outside. They place impediments in your way to make the work difficult. This puts us off gear. There are a lot of things going wrong. Even if we're over-employing people, nobody knows (Biomedic Engineering Manager, AK).

In effect then, control from senior management; one-dimension emphasis on cost-considerations, leading to the marginalisation and jettisoning of public service quality considerations; little opportunity for the exercise of professional autonomy and discretion, and managers by-passing professionals in issues pertaining to professionals' expertise and experience constitute the main issues that professionals in this study encounter. In the section following, I examine the coping devices and resistance strategies professionals employed in responding to the issues they encountered.

Professionals' coping devices and resistance strategies

For the professionals studied for this project, direct engagement is a less preferred strategy; indirect and less straightforward strategies seemed to have found greater acceptance for a number of reasons. Fig 1 below presents a summary of professionals' coping devices employed in responding to [resisting] managers' control attempts. At first glance, there is

little in these strategies, which suggests attempts to resist control; they look like strategies associated with the weak and the haggard workers (Thomas and David's, 2001). However, upon further scrutiny these can be seen as tools by which the professionals sought to reassert their power. They almost all employ methods other than direct confrontation in registering their disapproval of new managerial governance arrangements, with each employing at least one form of strategy or another that can be described as withdrawal.

Fig 1 *Professionals' Resistance Strategies*

1. Withdrawal and disengagement
2. Avoiding to talk or being verbally engaged;
3. Insisting the right thing be done;
4. Pointing out system shortfalls or weaknesses,
5. Doing exactly as told and not bending rules;
6. Withholding professional expertise

(Derived with slight modification from Tengey, 2008)

Thus by a means akin to 'compliance', professionals sought to display their power and reconstruct their identity. In several other quotes to follow, professionals employed compliance as a means of creating a space for themselves within which to renegotiate, reconstruct and reposition themselves in the organization:

We're on the ground; we know departments where staff doesn't work well. So when you're told at CMB meeting 'we've decided to outsource the cleaning of 'Physio' or say 'OPD', and have decided that Bontu Company should take over; clearly they are not asking for your opinion but are waiting to hear what you'd say, and *everybody would be careful.* So often we say 'ok'! Then along the way, maybe something goes wrong and then they inform

you and you say you can't help. Then they know something has not gone well (Estate Manager, AK).

Professionals also employed strategies such as 'doing as told, not bending rules, avoiding talking, and reasserting their worth through a number of fine-grained negotiations such as pointing out weaknesses in projects after project failure to respond to or cope with issues they encounter. Some quotes would serve a good illustration:

What I've personally done is do my jobs as spelt out; nothing outside that. When things don't go well it's then that they know they need you. So I don't need to be involved in an argument to prove....I just need to concentrate on my work and do it well; I shouldn't allow anybody to come and ask me why haven't you done this or that? I know my job (Nurses' Manager, AK).

I insist the right thing is done. By insisting that goods purchased because they are cheap (against my advice) are not used! It's good to insist because there's a legal backing for you and I can't be sacked because I refuse to do what is ethically or medically unacceptable. You don't need to engage in argument: simply insist on your rights, period (Estate Manager, BK)!

Another subtle strategy employed by the professionals is holding back their expertise in situations when this is most required. They do this in such a clever fashion that they end up going by, rather than, breaking the rules governing their work. They take advantage of weaknesses and lapses in the system, and harness these to their advantage in an intelligent, non-deviant fashion, and by this, succeeded in avoiding any form of recalci-

trance. A professional manager's response to interviews clearly illustrates this:

.......At a time, there was work going on at the theatre at a weekend; we ran out of oxygen; you called the private man (outsourcing contractor), he wasn't there...and what I'm not supposed to touch, I wouldn't touch, and whoever was supposed to touch wasn't around, so the work wasn't done.. (Biomedical Engineering Manager, AK).

Regarding this type of resistance, Hanchard (2004) observes: it is so intelligently executed that it provides little occasion for others to suspect any intention to resist. Moreover, even if the effect of their resistance is not publicly felt, an intrinsic satisfaction does ensue from the realisation of their accomplishment arising from resisting a clearly greater authority.

Discussions: relevance of the study

1. The study has demonstrated that power and its use is not an exclusive preserve of those in possession of positional power in an organisation, thus showing clearly how power can be cast in weakness, and how recalcitrance can be sought [by a seemingly suppressed group] through obedience, compliance and going by the rules rather than flouting them.

2. The study has additionally unearthed a number of areas over which managers and professionals practicing in the same profession can clash, which can potentially hamper their effective cooperation towards meeting organisational objectives. In responding to the encountered issues professionals studied in this project employ various

techniques that can be conceptualised as a form of 'work to rule' strategy. Work to rule is a strategy by which disgruntled employees sabotage the system of work through undue delays by insisting due procedures are followed to the letter, rather than flouted or discarded. Unlike 'work to rule', which occurs collectively as organised, unionised activity, however, professionals' resistance here occurred at the micro level, and so are better conceptualised as 'individualised version of work to rule'. This suggests the intelligence of seemingly marginalised groups to harness to their own advantage, resources employed to control them. It suggests that control does not necessarily occur in a top-down fashion, but that it is well diffused in the organisation.

3. Management control strategies have been said to have intensified in recent times, becoming even more complex with heightened level of sophistication, reinforced by developments in ICT. In the public sector, the increased expectation on managers to perform has meant that professionals working under managers have got to be managed in ways that truncate their professional autonomy and discretion. As the sophistication of control resources intensified, so too have resistance strategies, moving gradually away from open confrontations, attained in unionised work environments (with the marginalisation of unions), towards less deviant strategies attained through obedience and compliance

rather than any form of full-blown recalcitrance. The use of such sophisticated resistance strategies provides greater insight into the complexity of human agency in harnessing situations, including even those that work in their disfavour to their own advantage. Taking cues from Scott's work on the weapons of the weak, our understanding of the capacity of a seemingly powerless group to exert power on a more powerful group can be greatly enhanced.

4. Moreover, and finally, the fact that people seek control and recalcitrance through false compliance, and feigned obedience is an insight worth the notice of those in control in organisations, and in any other capacity, to take pains to engage all relevant stakeholders in decision-making, no matter how perfect they might think their decisions are. These findings suggest that such things as false compliance and feigned obedience are forces at work in superior-subordinate relationships of which superiors need to be constantly wary.

Conclusion
Most governments and public sector organisation have found the prescriptions of NPM useful as panacea for addressing several of the public sector inefficiency challenges. Here, in the era of managerialism, public sector managers' role in addressing these issues cannot be overemphasised. There is almost an explicit assumption that once component managers, able to use NPM prescriptions meticulously are hired and motivated, they can turn public organisations round for the better.

While indeed some public managers have undoubtedly made significant gains in this respect, much of such gain is eroded by the negative impact managers' chosen mode of managing continues to have on professionals, professionalism, and public service quality. By and large, economic efficiency has remained the major concern of managers, and determines their management style. Sadly, as suggested by this paper, most managers have actually eluded cost efficiency due partly to professional resistance arising from the break in their professional autonomy. This suggests that professionals occupy a crucial position in any public sector reform agenda, and should be allowed to contribute to the design, development and delivery of the reform programme. Anything failing of this stands a great risk of apathy and resistance from professionals, who are sophisticated in exercising control and resistance.

Moreover, the study highlights the very fluid nature of resistance-its complicated dimension in general, and the sophisticated nature of professional resistance, which they have sought to attain through obedience and compliance, not open recalcitrance. While they have intension to resist managerial control, professionals' public compliance compensates for any intended resistance, giving them full security. However, underneath their public compliance lurks their unvoiced message to manager: 'you would do yourself a lot of good by listening to and considering our viewpoint'. This non-deviant resistance strategy highlights the very diffused, non-linear, multi-dimensional and multi-directional nature of organisational power, suggesting that current workplace resistance may take on several, non-deviant, non-threatening, forms. Thus besides their technical and managerial functional knowledge, managers need to understand and be guided by these forms of complexity and sophistication in professional resistance in order to contain and manage professionals in the most effective way that intelligibly combines the often conflicting objectives of economic efficiency and professional service quality without sacrificing one for the other.

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