

# Professionals as an Implementation Barrier to Change in Public Organisations: Political and Identity Perspectives

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## Abstract

Professionals are often seen as an implementation barrier to change in public organisations. Although their commitment is judged to be crucial, they often behave rather reservedly and may even oppose change. The power models and micro-political theories of change both conceptualise this resistance as a defence of their professional interests, their benefits and their power status. Acknowledging that political strategies, tactics and games played have a crucial role in the implement of change in public organisations, this paper expands this perspective by dealing with issues related to professional identity. Identity-related conflicts often go beyond the issues of protecting and enhancing benefits and power. Therefore, this paper focuses on the central characteristics of identity and examines the identity-related aspects of the political perspective of change management.

## Key words

change; identity; public-sector organisations; coalition; management

## Introduction

The reform initiatives and programmes in public organisations, which have been introduced in some developed liberal democracies over the last three decades in order to restructure public services, control expenditure, and reduce the size and the scope of the state sector (Hebdon & Kirkpatrick, 2005) – the so-called New Public Management – draw heavily on private-sector practices. Thus, public managers are tasked to concentrate on performance and quality, financial discipline, strategic direction and objectives setting in order to enhance effectiveness of public services (Ferlie *et al.*, 1996; Hebdon & Kirkpatrick, 2005).

However, implementing public-sector change often appears to be less effective than expected. Scepticism, resistance and politics are seen as central reasons for change implementation failures (Townley *et al.*, 2003; Thomas & Davies, 2005), especially when adopted by professionals who often behave rather reservedly or may even be opposed to any change agenda. This active or passive resistance is often seen as a defence of their professional interests, their benefits and their power status. The so-called '*power approaches*' or '*conflict models*' (Larson, 1977; Forsyth & Danisiewics, 1985) and micro-political theories (Buchanan & Badham, 1999) of change both

emphasise this perspective with respect to professionals and organisational change.

First, we will shed light on the political dynamics of change and, in particular, provide insights into the political process of change-coalition formation. A coalitional perspective on change politics is promising because it particularly allows for exploring the critical issue of mobilising support for change initiatives. In addition, the intertwining of structures of gaming (such as micro-political tactics and processes) and structures of domination (such as the hierarchical structure of organisations and legitimate rules) is addressed. In other words, both structure and action are considered (Giddens, 1984).

Second, we focus on actors and, in particular, professionals, where we deal with questions of professional identity and its influence on change processes in public organisations. In our view, professional identity plays a significant role in public-sector change, which is not fully embraced by reference to the political perspective alone. Belonging to a profession and performing in line with professional standards is often a central part of a person's identity. As a consequence, identity-related conflicts often go beyond issues of defending professional interests, benefits and power. Our perspective is that those conflicts have more to do with perceived disregard of, and reciprocal recognition between, organisation members (Mead, 1934; Honneth, 1994). In this context, the purposeful use of political management tools is important but its limited frame of reference is the '*regulation of identity*' (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002).

Third, in line with this, we examine the political perspective of change management with reference to its identity-related implications, including its corresponding limitations. In particular, we focus

on the formation of 'coalitions of change', as a political instrument, which can have desirable impacts and which can suggest strategies for managing professional identities in public organisations.

## **A coalition perspective on the New Public Management implementation barriers**

To begin with, we have to appreciate that change in public organisations is less clear cut than some managerialist portrayals might suggest (see Dopson, 1997). On the contrary, it appears to be useful to conceive of change-related implementation processes as being political processes. In organisation theory, such processes are essentially characterised by power struggles, conflicts of interest, and manoeuvring among actors (see Pfeffer, 1981; Hardy & Clegg, 1996; Buchanan & Badham, 1999). Accordingly, public-sector change processes show typical political characteristics.

- Scepticism and resistance of public managers and professionals against New Public Management initiatives is reported (see Bogumil & Kießler, 1998; Göbel, 1999; Brüggemeier & Röber, 2003; Townley *et al*, 2003; Thomas & Davies, 2005).
- Various managerial techniques (such as accrual accounting, performance measurement, decentralisation and outsourcing) and the general managerial ideology of the New Public Management itself, appears to be contested at managerial and operating levels of public organisations (see Kouzmin & Dixon, 2003; Townley *et al*, 2003; Thomas & Davies, 2005; Ridder *et al*, 2006).
- The winner-loser problem with respect to both middle managers' and professionals' self-interests in connection with decentralisation

initiatives in public organisations is regarded as a major barrier to successful implementation of the New Public Management initiatives (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992; Brüggemeier & Röber, 2003; Ridder *et al*, 2006).

Although these problems are not new to New Public Management scholars and practitioners, a coherent political implementation perspective and appropriate strategies seem to be underdeveloped. Thus, we suggest both learning from private-sector change politics and exploring change-coalition perspectives and strategies as a promising means of implementing contested change initiatives. Regarding politicised change processes, in the related literature it is generally deemed essential to mobilise the co-operation of actors with heterogeneous, partly conflicting interests across traditional departmental boundaries, because their resources (such as time, effort, knowledge and loyalty) are needed in order to make change happen. This holds true for private and public-sector organisations alike. In terms of a general political perspective on organisational change processes, this is well conceived of as a process of 'coalition formation' (Kanter, 1983; Murnighan & Brass, 1991; Bacharach & Lawler, 1998). In organisation theory, such coalitions are usually conceived as temporary political alignments, formed to support change initiators and change initiatives in power struggles and in the face of conflicting interests (Bacharach & Lawler, 1998). According to Kanter *et al* (1992: 381) these coalitions are 'power tools', pooling supporters of change controlling critical resources (such as formal authority, knowledge, information and money) so as to make change happen.

The following example illustrates this point. In order to implement market-based performance management systems in publicly owned hospitals,

it is judged that a strong coalition of change supporters is needed to make this change happen, which would embrace nurses, clinicians, managers and politicians. Their pooled professional and managerial knowledge, legitimate formal and informal authority, and extra time and other resources would be continuously needed to handle any uncertainties or resistance or even counter coalitions that may emerge during the process of change implementation (Doolin, 2002; Jackson & Lapsley, 2003; Pettigrew *et al*, 1992). Hence, a critical issue from a managerial point of view is: how do change coalitions come into being? In theory, three factors appear to be of major importance for the formation of change coalitions:

- compensation of interests
- frames of reference
- communication processes.

According to Bacharach and Lawler (1980, 1998), these factors are closely related to three basic problems of coalition formation:

- whether to act alone or with others
- how to mobilise others and their resources
- how to co-ordinate group actions with the actions of others in the political arena of the organisation.

Hence, in theory, it may also be argued that all three factors are important fields of managerial action – fields of leadership for change – to build up change coalitions. Our own studies of change-coalition formation in contested change processes (strategic decentralisation, downsizing and marketisation of bureaucratic private-sector organisations) shed more light on the details of coalition formation (Schirmer, 2000, 2006, 2007). In summary, the findings suggest that successful coalition formation processes tend to resemble a

bubble expanding outward from a founding centre. Related expansion processes appear to have four stages, eventually leading to change coalitions that are stable enough to foster change processes over contested terrain.

- **Stage 1:** Coalition founders' signalling of dependence, in order to get early support and to form an inner circle of the change coalition (primarily by means of communicating and networking).
- **Stage 2:** Stabilising the inner circle of the change coalition by creating a shared feeling of legitimacy regarding core change ideas (primarily by means of communicating and management of meaning among inner-circle members).
- **Stage 3:** Opening up the inner circle in order to include change opponents and rivals into inner-circle change discourses and to claim legitimacy for change ideas (primarily by means of trust building, communicating and management of meaning).
- **Stage 4:** Fostering co-operation with powerful rivals in the political arena in order to smooth devastating conflicts (primarily by means of negotiating and compromising).

However, successful expansion processes do not appear to be strictly linear. Activities leading to the relevant stages may be performed simultaneously (such as signalling dependence and fostering co-operation with powerful rivals), or repeatedly (for example, several rounds of negotiating with rivals). Related to these stages of coalition formation, three bundles of process drivers – managerial activities – appear to be relevant.

- **Network building, communicating and trust building:** coalition formation is a matter of exclusion and inclusion (Bacharach & Lawler, 1998), requiring the management of

communication to regulate the access of particular actors to change discourses and decision arenas, and to foster feelings of group membership. Our study shows that the inner-circle members manage communication processes accordingly. When an inner circle of change has been formed, major change supporters are given access to informal discourses and key decision arenas, while access is denied for powerful opponents of change. Soon, in processes of successful change-coalition formation, attempts are made to include powerful opponents of change into discourses of inner-circle members. Inner-circle members' activities of communication and trust building are related to attempts of achieving inclusiveness at this stage.

- **Management of meaning:** change-coalition formation is also a matter of the politics of reality, legitimising the claims of supporters and delegitimising the critics of change (Pettigrew, 1977; Gioia *et al*, 1994). Accordingly, the development of frames of reference – management of meaning – appears as an important influencing factor of change-coalition formation. When powerful opponents eventually have to admit that they are unable to find convincing arguments against the reform initiatives advanced by the inner-circle members, then opposition against change is delegitimised and conflicts are smoothed.
- **Negotiating and compromising:** in contested change processes, negotiated exchanges and the compensation of interests are the requisite mechanisms needed to resolve policy disputes, particularly between major adversaries with relatively equal power. Inner-circle members eventually acted as negotiators in each of our cases studied, using their control over resources to turn powerful opponents into change supporters, or at least into neutral non-opponents. This was a process of deal making. Loyalty to inner-circle members and commitment

to the restructuring initiative were primarily exchanged for reduction of change losses, in terms of income, status and career prospects. With regard to the micro-politics of change-coalition formation, negotiating complements the previously examined activities.

The reported process drivers of change-coalition formation may be an effective means in order to mobilise resources and political support in contested change terrains. Regarding contested change processes in public-sector organisations (such as implementation of accrual accounting, output-based performance measurement systems and decentralisation of decision-making), it is to be assumed that deliberate coalition formation among different managerial and professional actors, government at local and state level, may be an effective way to make implementation processes of New Public Management more effective than they currently appear to be (see Jann, 2003). Within these processes the demands of, and constraints imposed by, professionals as both potential change agents and change recipients need particular attention. In our view, professional identity plays a significant role in public-sector change. However, issues of identity often go beyond a political perspective on change, with its focus on interests, defence of benefits and power. Therefore, the purposeful use of political management tools is important but it is limited to the 'identity regulation' of change agents and change recipients (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002).

## Identity, identity-building process and arenas of recognition

We refer to identity as the unit of lifetime events that a person experiences. This identity perspective includes some central characteristics.

- **Self-reflection and social interaction:** these are the core conditions for the constitution of individual identity. Self-reflection, as the capacity to think about self, is necessary to develop self-consciousness, to understand oneself as an individual, and to build a picture about oneself. Furthermore, the development of self-reflection, self-consciousness and identity is necessarily bound to social interaction. Therefore, the social context always has to be taken into account when examining individual identity. As Berger and Luckmann (2000: 54) put it: '*Homo sapiens is always homo socius too.*'
- **The coherence and continuity of experiences:** the constitution of identity implies the synthesis of experiences that a person encounters, which are made in different social contexts and over a whole lifetime. A widely shared assumption is that the constitution of identity is successful when all these experiences get synthesised into a picture that makes sense to the person (see Baumeister, 1986). Therefore, the main characteristics of identity are its subjectively felt coherence and continuity (see **Figure 1**, overleaf).

### Synthesis of experiences made in different social contexts (coherence) and over a whole lifetime (continuity)

The notion of identity as a synthesis of experiences, as well as the corresponding idea of the necessity of the interrelation between identity and social context, was fundamentally discussed in the influential work of Mead (1934, see also Stryker, 1980; Perinbanayagam, 1991; Dunn, 1997; Callero, 2003). He argues that successful social interaction (such as a co-operative working process) depends on the person's knowledge of the intersubjective meaning of certain actions. Only this knowledge enables a person to estimate probable responses to their own actions and to influence the interaction in a purposeful manner (Mead, 1934: 42, 253). This

implies that the interacting partners have to interpret and judge their intended actions through the eye of the other partners. Mead calls this *'taking the role of the other'*, and argues that this is the core mechanism to develop self-consciousness and self-identity. He adopts this idea to describe the process of socialisation, in which a person learns to take the role of an increasing number of interaction partners (for example, in the family, at school and in working life). In this way, the person learns to interpret their own intentions and actions via the social responses to their own behaviour. These experiences about oneself are synthesised and incorporated into the self and constitute individual identity. In doing so, the person experiences how the prevailing social group responds to him or her (Mead, 1934: 152). This process induces the development of the two identity components *'I'* and *'Me'* (Mead 1934: 173).

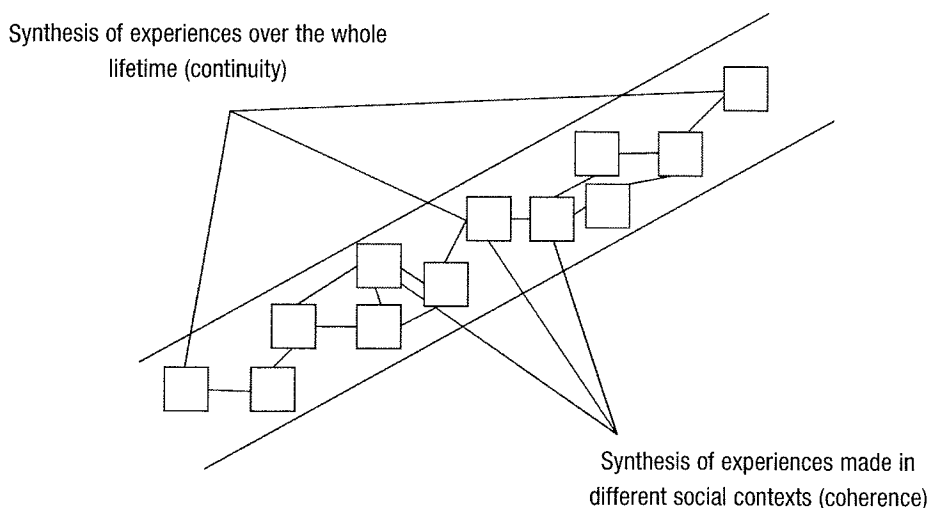
social values and norms, giving rise to an interpretation of self. The *'Me'* entails the long-life experience about self, attained through social interaction. It implies what is appropriate, desirable and valued for that person and offers guidelines for his or her decision-making. It gives security when judging his or her actions and the actions of others (Mead, 1934: 192; Habermas, 1988: 220).

The *'I'* component of individual identity is unpredictable and dynamic. It stands for creativity and spontaneity of behaviour and actions, ideas, wishes and feelings (Mead, 1934: 173; Habermas, 1988: 66). The *'I'* shapes a person's thoughts, behaviour and actions. The social responses to these attitudes are then – as experience about oneself – incorporated into the *'Me'* component of individual identity.

The *'Me'* component of individual identity is progressively constituted out of the experiences gained through the socialisation process. It is the embodiment of the knowledge gained about the

Mead assumes that a positive reference to self-identity, to the *'Me'*, is of elementary importance for a person. He uses the term *'self-respect'* to describe this relation (Mead 1934: 204). Thereby, the process

**Figure 1:** Continuity and coherence of experiences about oneself as characteristics of identity



Source: Lührmann, 2006: 219

of *'taking the role of the other'* implies that judging oneself is exclusively possible by the social response to their own attitudes. That means, in turn, that a positive reference to self depends on the positive social response from at least one significant area of interaction. This implies the necessity of accepting, or adapting to, the norms and values of an interaction group in order to be recognised by this group so as to develop *'self-respect'*. This *'reciprocal recognition'* determines the development of a subjectively satisfying identity (Mead, 1934: 200). Hence, perceived disregard and denied recognition in previous or new subjective significant areas of interaction often constitute a crucial threat to identity. As Alvesson and Willmott (2002: 626) put it:

***'When a familiar feeling tone, associated with the sensation of "being myself", becomes unsettled, feelings of tensions, anxiety, shame or guilt arise. Occasionally a sense of contradiction, disruption and confusion may become pervasive and sustained. Intensive remedial "identity work" is then called for, perhaps even of a therapeutic kind.'***

Such *'identity work'* could find its expression in *'struggles for recognition'* (Honneth, 1994). The content and direction of such *'struggles'* depend on past experiences about self and the corresponding notions about development in the future ('I want to get recognised as who I am.', 'I want to get recognised as who I want to be.'). In this way, significant interaction areas are always *'arenas of struggles for recognition'* too.

### **Professionals and changing arenas of recognition**

Traditionally, professions have been identified as being in distinctive occupational groups, often

contrasted to market-based occupations and bureaucratic organisations. Pondering the basis of this distinctiveness, scholars have developed many different theoretical approaches. Functionalist models, power and interaction-focused models or institutional models are mentioned here by way of example (see Scott, 2005). Following a simple attribution approach, the main characteristics of professionals and their work include:

- complex working tasks with a high task-related uncertainty
- practice based on scientific grounded knowledge (see Abbott, 1988)
- norms espousing a service orientation, reflecting a 'professional ethic' in dealing with clients
- a high degree of autonomy in performing these occupational activities (see Freidson, 1988, 2001).

The recognition for being a professional and for behaving in line with professional standards often has a crucial meaning for building a subjectively satisfying identity (see Henkel, 2000; Doolin, 2002; Hotho *et al*, 2006). Besides the social recognition (such as reputation and status), recognition by other professionals or the professional community is of particular interest for professionals. This is due to the difficulty of non-professionals judging the professionals' performances, which points to the knowledge intensity and non-standardisation of professional performance. In turn, these characteristics go hand-in-hand with claims for autonomy in the conduct of professional work and, thus, for collegial instead of hierarchical control.

Against this background, it should be no surprise that the integration, control and motivation of professionals working in organisations are widely discussed topics in management and organisation theory. Examples are the contributions dealing with the relation between managers and professionals

or professional organisations and managerial-led organisations, emphasising the different working orientations and standards of performance (see Brock *et al*, 1999; Scott, 2005).

The current changes taking place in public organisations seem to unlock this dichotomy between managers and professionals as distinctive characteristics of professionals and their work is subject to central modifications, cursorily adapting it to a more managerial type. Associated with this process were attempts to implement new forms of management and organisation within public service, including the privatisation of services, the adoption of managed forms of service delivery, and the restructuring of public organisations.

The so-called New Public Management covered the shift from the public service administration to managed provision, accompanied by the decentralisation of public organisations into smaller, quasi-autonomous agencies with more managerial and budgetary responsibilities (Hood, 1991, 1995; Ferlie *et al*, 1996). This has brought to the fore a more disciplined and more parsimonious approach to resource use, as well as more explicit and measurable standards of performance. The development of strong executive management roles, with the discretionary powers to challenge the power of professionals employed in public organisations, means that their autonomy and self-regulation must also be recognised as part of this new managerialised context (see Ackroyd, 1995; Ferlie & Fitzgerald, 2000; Hebdon & Kirkpatrick, 2005; Hotho *et al*, 2006).

Thus, these managerialist changes inevitably challenge the distinctive characteristics of professionals and professional performance in the public sector. At the individual working level, professionals are faced with efforts of managerial

strategies to routinise their work, external control by new performance indicators and resource consumption limits (see Llewellyn, 2001; Doolin, 2002; Deem, 2004). In addition to the possible outcome problems generally associated with these managerialist reforms (related, for example, to the quality of service provision), further problems can be anticipated because of the implications of change for professional identity. This is because managerialist changes can crucially change long-standing patterns of recognition for 'being a professional'.

The constrained professional autonomy, the questioning of collegial control and the adoption of control by means of managerial or market-based performance standards, can all change long-standing '*arenas of recognition*' for professionals. On the one hand, this can possibly lead to a perceived disregard and threat to the individual identity, as the coherence and continuity of experiences about self are challenged. It can also elicit different kinds of resistant behaviour (Thomas & Davies, 2005). On the other hand, such changes bring new possibilities or new '*arenas of recognition*', which open new rooms for '*negotiating*' individual identity (see Mueller *et al*, 2003). In both cases we speak about '*struggles for recognition*'. Unless the strategies of '*regulating*' the other's identity are limited, the purposeful use of management tools can be an important factor influencing the direction and the outcomes of these '*struggles*'.

## Change politics, coalition formation and identity

Managerial methods operate, more or less purposely and (in)effectively, to influence the identities of employees. Alvesson and Willmott (2002: 625) term this '*identity regulation*', which



***'... encompasses the more or less intentional effects of social practices upon processes of identity construction and reconstruction. Notably, induction, training and promotion procedures are developed in ways that have implications for the shaping and direction of identity'.***

Following Alvesson and Willmott (2002: 632), attempts of identity regulation can focus on:

- **the employee:** regulations in which the employee is directly defined or implied by reference to the other (for example, employees are formally or informally addressed as 'middle manager' or 'professional')
- **action orientations:** regulations in which the field of activity is constructed, with reference to appropriate work orientations (such as the explicating of morals, and values or the construction of knowledge and skills, for instance, through management education programmes)
- **social relations:** regulations of belongingness and differentiation (for example, group categorisation and affiliations – 'belonging' to a certain team)
- **the scene:** regulations indicating the kind of identity that fits the larger social, organisational and economic terrain in which the subject operates (for example, defining the context by describing a particular version of the conditions in which an organisation operates such as market situations).

In general, identity regulation refers to the process of identity work, as an interpretive activity that reproduces and transforms a person's identity. Attempts at identity regulation can be accepted, as well as resisted, by the affected employees, depending on that person's previous and desired

self-experiences. In other words, management practices offer or deny responsible influence in certain arenas of recognition, which can be adopted or dismissed by the affected employees and can lead to struggles for recognition. Hence, organisational members are not reducible to passive consumers of managerially designed and designated identities. Nor are organisations necessarily the most influential institution in any identity-defining processes (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002: 621).

This is particularly the case for professionals, who identify with the professional community and its values and norms rather than with the managerial-led organisation that is their employer. In this way, well-designed management instruments targeting regulation of identity are an important factor for implementing change, but they do not guarantee successful change.

Management has to balance the demands of desired change contents, necessities of a successful change-coalition formation among change agents and recipients, and the conditions for dealing with professional identity in terms of recognition. On one hand, coalition formation is inherently an appropriate means to deal with issues of identity. Recognition by a significant social group, feelings of belongingness and distinctiveness to others are all fundamental aspects of identity building and self-respect. On the other hand, the attractiveness of joining a coalition depends on its values, norms, goals and vision. In terms of identity, it is a question of reciprocal recognition between a certain coalition and the addressed person. Change agents and recipients have to identify with the goals and visions of the change coalition to become coalition members. Moreover, if the change coalition threatens previous subjective significant arenas of

recognition, then counter coalitions could be encouraged. Hence, change coalitions in the public sector could possibly open new attractive arenas of recognition and further development of professional identities.

In contrast, the formation of a change coalition could function as a source of resistance and counter coalitions supporting and strengthening the distinctiveness and self-assurance of present, professional identities. Taking into account that the managerialised change agenda for public organisations rather undermines the traditional patterns of professional work and corresponding aspects of recognition, a conflict-free identification with the change contents can hardly be expected. Hence, the purposeful and sensitive use of the driving factors of change-coalition formation is necessary to implement the desired change contents in a politically stabilised field. This involves the following.

- **Network building, communication and trust building:** coalition formation is a matter of exclusion and inclusion respectively of distinctiveness and belongingness. This requires regulation of access of particular actors to the discourses of change and decision arenas and the fostering of group membership. In the case of public-sector change, the inclusion of professionals into change coalitions is often crucial to implement change. Responsive communication and trust building are first steps to foster such an inclusion. Only social interaction and communication offer possibilities of reciprocal understanding and definition or redefinition of identity. The individualised communication and the signal to take the experiences of the addressed person seriously are basic elements of those communication processes. Referring to the inclusion of

professionals, it seems supportive to choose coalition members with a professional background to initiate communication processes. This will make it easier to tie in with others' experiences, frames of references and possibly to expand the notions of professional identity (see, Llewellyn, 2001). Studies show that the corresponding adaptation of language (such as 'professional' and 'managerial' language) is an important factor to mediate and smoothen conflicts between interaction partners (Iedema *et al*, 2003).

- **Management of meaning:** management of meaning refers to the issue of sense-making and sense-giving by symbol construction and use of value. In the context of change-coalition formation it aims to create legitimacy and to delegitimise the demands and critics of change opponents. On the one hand, it is necessary to deliver a clear cut and consistent interpretation pattern of the current change to identify with. On the other hand, these interpretation patterns have to leave a certain degree of freedom of interpretation, in order to meet different previous experiences and frames of reference of the addressed persons. In terms of identity, it is generally important to deliver interpretation patterns that allow a positive assurance and further development of identity, hence patterns which can get recognised by the addressed persons and in turn function as a medium for recognition. For instance, the emphasis on modernity, as distinct from old-fashioned, could deliver a platform for the subjective positive development of professional identity in public-sector change. At the same time, the link to professional values has to be considered to tie in with subjective significant self-experiences and identity. The model of the doctor-manager is an example of such a mixture of frames of references to implement change in hospitals

(see Llewellyn, 2001). Generally, the management of meaning appears as a complex balancing act between new and previous interpretation patterns and self-definitions.

- **Negotiating and compromising:** negotiating of exchanges and compensation of interests are necessary to resolve policy disputes, especially between major actors with equal power. This notion of exchange of loyalty and commitment for the compensation of change losses, in terms of income, status and career prospects, originally points to a political perspective on change. With reference to identity-building processes, the compensation of interests is one possible form of recognition, supplementing communication and management of meaning. However, if the compensation of interests is used as the sole instrument for managing change, the sustained change success seems questionable. This is due to the fact that reciprocal recognition between the interacting partners is reduced to the smallest common denominator. A reciprocal recognition of the others' experiences, frames of references and identity, is not obtained. Assuming that the recognition for being a professional plays a significant role for building a subjectively satisfying identity, this is rather critical in public-sector change and for professionals. Moreover, the sole offer of interest compensation and benefits in exchange for loyalty possibly leads to feelings of disregard of ones identity and may encourage intense resistance.

## Summary and conclusion

Implementing public-sector change is a complex process. Professionals employed in the public sector are often seen as an implementation barrier to such changes. Issues of professional identity, as well as politics of change, are helpful perspectives to understand and deal with conflicts and resistance of

professionals. In this paper, we have suggested a mutual enrichment of the political and identity-related notion of change and its management. The management of identity is a management strategy with limitations; the purposeful use of management tools can be an important factor influencing identity-related barriers of change.

Of particular importance are the insights into change politics delivered by studies on change-coalition formation, which offer structured suggestions about how to deal with questions of identity during change processes. In turn, this helpfully expands the traditional political notions about change, which focused mainly on benefits, negotiated exchange and power. Nevertheless, we want to point out that management has to carry out a complex balancing act between the demands of the desired change content, the necessities of a successful change-coalition formation among change agents and recipients and the conditions of dealing with professional identity.

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