

# Contextualising the Management Function: Conflict, Control, Performance and Resistance in the Workplace

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## ABSTRACT

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In this conceptual paper, we examine classical management theory, with focus on the management function and practice. Invariably, most literature of management theory, presents it as rational: pursuance of a common goal, consensus driven, conflict free and apolitical. Yet, in reality, however, the role of management has always been contested, controversial if not problematic. This paper critiques the way management has been and is being conceptualised today, we do this with a view to contributing to the long standing epistemological debate, which nevertheless, is still lacking in African management schools. A realist philosophical analysis is used to illustrate the political role of management practice in the capitalist production system, especially in the control of the labour process. From a Marxist approach of dialectics, we argue that the management function is inherently conflictual by nature because it has to harmonise the contradictions of the political structure from economic ownership and relations of production at shop floor level. Hence the need for management control of labour is an imperative for labour productivity, organizational performance and ultimately profitability.

**Key words:** contextualising management; performance, resistance in the workplace; management control.

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## INTRODUCTION

To understand the role of management, it is essential in order to approach it from a wider perspective. In this context a philosophical paradigm is needed. Our theoretical orientation draws from critical theory (Carr, 2000, Horkheimer, 1976). The foundations of critical theory are found in Marx's political economy, and of particular interest to this paper is his dialectical method of investigation (Salleh, 1997), which sees the development of phenomenon as a contradictory process (Creaven, 2002). According to Carr (2000) the focus of critical theory is not simply to mirror reality but also to explain and change it. This is important because traditional management, which still dominates management education today, describes the management function in a rather compartmentalised, simplistic, swallow manner; Planning, organising, leading and controlling (Dessler, 2004). The role played by management is normally taken as an objective one, devoid of political influence, even though an organisation is by nature a political entity (Cousins, 1986). As a result of this atomisation the primary function of a

manager is erroneously viewed as merely technical, which deals with the efficiency and the coordination of organisational resources for the best interest of everyone in the organisation. In this frame management is assumed to have a professional function hence managers have been referred to as the professional management class.

### **Taylorisation of management and the politics of managerialism**

But this classification was itself a political decision as it is a social differentia based on the separation between two categories of manual and mental labour. Classical management theory, whose roots are traced to Taylorism (Drucker, 1977), relied on the division of work, into these two distinctions to ensure legitimacy of management over the labour process and thus secure surplus value. Management as a privileged class was solely bestowed with the mental execution as opposed to the majority of workers who carry out manual work (Braverman, 1974; Armstrong, 1989). By so doing, management would forever exert enormous power over average workers. Weymes, amply illustrates the link of management to Taylorism and the history of control:

Traditional management theory emerged at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when F.W.Taylor published the *Scientific Approach to Management*, grounded in the theory of bureaucracy (Marx Weber) and based on the philosophical writings of Karl Marx. Karl Marx's work was written at the start of industrial revolution that ushered in the reign of capitalism. A time when the nature of work was changing from the small units of production associated with agrarian society, to one where large institutions and organisations heralded the advent of mass production. Labour was being organised into complex systems requiring rigid controls to manage behaviour (Weymes, 2005:142).

This power relation is necessary because when labour is exchanged for a wage in the market, the contract of employment only secures the right to work but does not necessarily guarantee the labour power (Thompson, 1989), thus the need to mediate through the management function to attain the profit driven motive of ensuring return on investment to the external stakeholder. Today, the management role has not fundamentally changed. This Taylorist traditional management style still, unfortunately, prevails in today's presumably modern organisations. In this regard, Braverman notes that Taylorism was central to structuring of the capitalist labour process. A point also taken by Doray, (1988) when he states that Taylorism was a necessary mechanism for capitalism to achieve two things: workers exploitation and valorisation of capital.

Down the millennium, the spectre of Taylorism still looms large in management practice. For example, in many African countries and Botswana inclusive, the recent public sector reforms being implemented to improve performance and enhance service delivery, are on the main driven by the neoliberal corporate agenda of privatisation (Marobela, 2008) and use Taylorist control practices such as linking performance with pay and work measurement to enforce performance standards. Pollit (2000) refers to the new managerialism, which endeavours to transform the employment relations in public sector into the business management as 'neo-taylorism'. It is worth noting, however, that the public sector and its bureaucratic and rather rigid characteristics is not a prime

environment for employee participation, and thus, it is not surprising that in Pollitt's (2003) discussion of new public management, argues that power will continue to be skewed in favour of management, as opposed to a more participatory governance and equitable distribution of resources. By simply panel beating the old monster does not get rid of its old undesirable habits. The old innate tendencies will pervasively continue to emerge and shape management theory and practice. It is evident from Huges (1998), a new public management proponent, that the exploitative tendencies of traditional public administration have not ceased, in the justification he makes to argue for new public management, "to prevent future expansion of the public sector...to counter the welfare-demanding coalition.." of yesteryear.

The above statement evinces endeavours to further squeeze public employees to produce more, without necessarily reinforcing that with increased employee numbers and more resources a distinctly capitalist approach to work. Huges (1998:61) a seemingly staunch neo-Taylorist, surprisingly presents a dichotomous front where he concedes at one level that public sector management has been predominantly political and hence needs to be 'de-politicised'. It is the view of the authors that this contradictory position, which does not fall far from the Marxist tree, gives further evidence that management has always been contentiously political, and it would be folly to present any other front that contradicts this stark reality.

At issue here is the conceptualisation of management in terms of its agency role in accumulation of wealth on behalf of the capitalists, and in the process, enforcing hierarchical control as well as playing a mediatory conduit role of exploiting employees. Unfortunately, both classical and conventional management ignores this analysis. Mainstream management theorists such as Mitzberg (1973) fail to locate the role of management beyond personal attributes such as charisma and leadership. At best, the conflict which is inherent in the organisation is underplayed. Worst, its source is reduced to communicative relations between the manager and the managed, without taking into account the underlying politics of power and ownership.

Such a perspective is flawed as it fails to take account of wider issues which are interlocked with the management process like politics, power and ideology, which largely influence the nature of managerial work (Knights and Willmott, 1986). Further, as pointed out earlier management is portrayed as a neutral force, while in fact it represents the interests of owners. Their immediate claim might not be clear, as they are in most cases not involved in managing on daily basis rather they are detached from the shop floor where actual production occurs.

By de-linking management from the wider socio-economic context from where it draws its causal powers, conventional management theorists portray the role of management in a reductionist manner. This is a deviation from reality which fortunately is succinctly set straight by Campbell's (1997) illustration of how a business's environment is encompassed immediately by its internal micro environment and the external macro environment. In fact, if one considers the work of Blot *et al* (1996) in totality where they articulate the progression of labour management especially in a changing environment, it becomes clear that an ideal relationship between management and workers is a symbiotic one. This view is compelled by the Employment law and how the bargaining power of Trade Unions *vis a vis* Governmental relations originated. It is mostly associated with microanalysis and this obscures the class character intrinsic to the

labour process. As pointed out the management function is central to co-ordination of the capitalist mode of production. Since it is responsible for work organisation and development of new management practices all of which are an imperative to effect control over the employment relationship.

For this reason the role-played by management warrants it to be scrutinised more closely and critically, particularly so in the era of neoliberal globalisation, where organisations, management and labour are going through radical transformation propelled by the politics of managerialism. More often than not managers with a positivist's orientation tends to ignore politics as is seen as subjective, within time however, they are forced to react to the political indecision. Accordingly, Young (1987:62) advises that managers have to accept the political nature of organisational life and take political responsibility that will encourage appropriate political behaviour like positive organisational outcomes which maximises economic wellbeing of all members. However, it is highly unlikely that Young's prognosis can apply in a capitalist political environment where class interests define corporate ownership and managerial discretion is not the domain of the ordinary employees.

### **The Management Process and Managerial Freedom**

Capitalists need the managerial function because of the indeterminate nature of labour or contract of employment. In other words, workers do not wholly surrender their ability to work. For Marx (1973) it was this class conflict between the bourgeois and the proletariat that caused the differentiation of capitalist functions. Antagonistic interests necessitated the separation of ownership from control. This leads to the creation of management as class to ensure that labour is indeed valorised or realised into surplus value. As Braverman (1974) has observed "the capitalist strives, through management, to control. And control is indeed the central concept of all management systems". According to Wren (1994) this need for control has stayed central throughout the evolution of management from pre-Industrialising, to the classical/ scientific era, and then to the modern era.

Management is therefore an entrenched function, which is vital to the very existence of capitalists thus it can be described as the bedrock of the capitalist mode of production. Hence the notion of managerial freedom, which calls for the right of managers to manage and workers to work (Clarke and Newman, 1997), is critiqued in light of the dialectic of class interests in managing organisations (Benson, 1979). Related to this is the issue of classical management and managerialism. It is argued that the two are linked historically and ideologically, and are designed to further management control of the labour process as well as to enhance accumulation by what is now referred to as "best practices" for instance new work methods such as performance management and other neoliberal reforms such as cost sharing or cost recovery which are now creeping into the public services.

These neoliberal tools sometimes contravene the citizenry right as per constitutional stipulations of the county. For instance in Botswana the Education Act of 1967 provides for free education for all citizens in the first ten (10) years of their study. A recent development in that area unfortunately came about when public admitters decided to revilement cost sharing. What the powers-be fail to realise is that this move leads to

illiteracy and further impoverishment of innocent pupils whose parents cannot afford and/or are unable to pay, and are hence denied access to that free education so neatly packaged in the Bill of Rights. Public administrators, under the auspices of new public management, punitively deny Botswana children access to vital education by only narrowly focusing on cutting costs, thereby failing to look at the broader human developmental picture so well articulated in Botswana's Vision 2016. They become collateral damage in the tug of war between the country's managers and the average working parent. Yet again, neoliberal practices contradict developmental endeavours and social justice.

Clarke and Newman (1997) capture this phenomenon well when they suggest that behind the 'new managerialism' is the notion of 'free market and free manager'. But they argue that such a standpoint is simplistic because managerial freedom assumes a unilateral approach based on the 'right' of managers 'to manage' (Farnham and Pimlott 1995), yet the right to manage can never be a managerial prerogative given that the capitalist mode of production has inherent conflict of class interests. And as has been argued this is the essence which gives rise to contradictions in the labour process. As Braverman (1974) rightly argued, it is the dialectic of interests that necessitates the creation of the management role. Without that it would be difficult to extract surplus value hence management control of labour process is required to produce and reproduce the accumulation process. The in-built class struggle between capital and labour was articulated well by Marx:

Marx's *Das Kapital* illustrates the antagonisms in practice. For example, he shows how the quest for profit or 'surplus value' places the capitalist producer in constant antagonism with labour and competitors in the market place. These basic contradictions then unfold to create many problems. For example, the drive for surplus leads capitalists to reduce labour costs whenever possible. Labour of course resists, creating a continuing struggle in the workplace (Morgan, 1986:288).

It is from the above prognosis that necessity for management was envisioned, from the realisation that workers are bound to resist capitalist exploitation thus the need for an overseer. That's why managerial freedom comes in with more discretion and authority opposition. Managerial freedom is therefore a restriction or an attack on the workers rights.

## **CONTEXTUALISING MANAGEMENT**

As we have seen traditional approaches to management are inadequate to study the dynamics of management. A broader understanding of management must necessarily see its emergence as consequence of capitalist accumulation. A critical realist perspective based on differentiated functions offers a coherent explanation of how management relates to capital and labour. This is because it is informed by a theory of capitalist crisis an example is the competitive pressure and overproduction and closure of firms and retrenchment of workers. Businesses define these inequitable practices by calling them

critical elements of survival in an increasingly competitive world. The globalisation and internationalisation phenomenon is used a trump card to sell these reductionism packages to unsuspecting victims. For instance, a car manufacturing plant may be closed in County A just because production factors are inconveniently higher there, comparatively speaking. The plant is reopened in Country B where labour is cheap to the extent that a factory worker earns less than US\$1.00 a day. It is a growing travesty when Country B embraces this as development.

Euphemism for these inequities come thick and fast from managers; cost leadership, economies of scale, efficiency, effectiveness, productivity, restructuring, right sizing, etc. However one looks at it, this incessant hot pursuit of cheaper labour by businesses owners adversely affects all workers involved; both in the incumbent, and potential host county. This is because incumbent workers anxiously face impoverishment from loss of wages, and the potential waiting unwittingly and expectantly await even worse exploitation as if it is a lifeline out in the middle of dark murky and turbulent water. Following industrial revolution there was realignment of capitalism from transformed cottage industry to factory production which gave rise to the separation of ownership from control by peasants. As agents of capital managers do not have economic ownership, notwithstanding their ability to buy shares. This however is normally not enough to give them economic ownership and effective control (Vroey, 1980).

Rather it is their possession of the means of production and the labour process as private property on behalf of the bourgeois that is central to management function. Relations of possession shape relations of production, which in turn spin the capitalist mode of production to consume surplus labour. Tuelings (1986) suggests that management involve a combination of labour processes that serves four different functions at different levels as shown below.

It is the role that is played by the function (I) that is normally conveniently unmentioned in both practice and conventional management literature. Instead, normally the focus is on the other three, which define management as if it was an independent from the capitalist employment relation. For example, if we put Botswana’s public sector reforms in terms of this framework, it could be said that the levels of management would start at (II) where poor service delivery in the public sector is viewed as a strategic problem. The solution is management strategy through the introduction of performance management system.

**Table 1: Functions and Levels of Management**

| <b>Phase</b> | <b>Functions</b>   | <b>Levels</b>  |
|--------------|--|--|
| I            | The ownership function<br>- accumulation of capital        | Institutional management creation<br>and preservation of legitimations |
| II           | The administrative function -<br>allocation of investments | Strategic management -development<br>of objectives                     |
| III          | The innovative function -<br>product market development    | Structuring management - new<br>combinations of production factors     |
| IV           | The production function                                    | Operational management   |

Source: Tuelings (1986:154)

This is followed by level (III), the transformation of work brought by the decentralisation of the human resources function to ministries and departments respectively. Finally, at (IV) the strategy is operationalized at shopfloor via setting goals, targets and performance measures for staff. Thus far phase (I), which represents the nexus of capital, is untouched, even though these reforms were in the first place legitimated by permanent secretaries who are political appointees to implement the new public service reforms in line with a political programme— set in the National Development Plan. Though managers are not capitalists, similarly they are not the ordinary working class nor the middle class but the top class who are close to capital, even though they may not directly own the means of production, they often have special interests and substantial investments:

These top managers and employers are in every essential way the same as capitalists and cannot be seen— as middle managers might be — as simply the servants of capitalists. They organise the system and share in its spoils'. "Directors and senior managers cannot in real terms be seen to be as deriving their salaries and other rewards primarily from the sale of their labour power in the market. They are able in large part to determine their own remuneration ...because they occupy positions of control" (German, 1996:52)

Therefore any analysis of the management function that ignores this reality is flawed because it separates management from the accumulation process. According to (Hyman, 1989) 'the fundamental weakness of such approaches is that typically they assume or imply an exaggerated autonomy of the managerial strategy from the structural dynamics of commodity production and capital accumulation. One must shrewdly decipher that this strategy in itself is not an end result, but rather a powerful tool in the hands of conniving managers who will fervently brandish it to extract even more sweat from fatigued workers, all in guise of 'common goals'.

To gain broader insight into these issues due consideration also needs to go to the underlying mechanisms that influence the behaviour of both managers and workers. By examining management from the vantage point of agency relationship (Armstrong, 1989) it is possible to trace its genesis to the capitalist mode of production where it is historically located and draws its powers of control.

In this way the management function ceases to be a neutral player charged solely with the efficiency and co-ordination of the enterprise but becomes a political function whose role is to sustain and reproduce the capitalist relations of production. In other words, a manager's allegiance is first and foremost to the business owner since it is the owner who provides his/her livelihood. Such a perspective necessarily links the management function to Marx's analysis of the labour process, which is premised on class and exploitation. But before that, Thompson (1989) points out that irrespective of whether it is state or private sector labour remains a variable commodity when it is purchased. As an appointed agent of capital, management has a claim on work organisation where it draws the managerial prerogative or the right to manage (Farnham and Pimlott, 1995). In part, this is reflected in the ongoing reforms in Botswana,

particularly in the framework of restructuring the state industrial relations where emphasis is on giving the newly decentralised human resources departments wide ranging powers. This includes also outsourcing and contracting out work to the private sector.

Anyone looking at these reforms with an eagle's eye can see that these are not genuinely meant to last as legacies of a revolution, but rather are a fad mantra to continue to accord manager's self-importance by continuing to keep them busy with exercises that will be reversed, and then retracted to keep the vicious cycle of irrelevance turning.

As Knights and Willimott (1986) assert the origins and legitimacy of objectives that are pursued by management as a privileged elite are taken for granted. This comes as no surprise because the classical management ideology deliberately hides ownership from control to hide the political nature of production and thus separating agency from the structure. This again is problematic because the two are intertwined. Yet there is a need to highlight their separation as Tuelings (1986) has suggested.

Divorcing management from the labour process has far reaching implications as it collapses different levels of the capitalist mode of production into one domain hence it can be said to be reductionist. This disoriented premise flow from positivist orientation, which gives less significance to unobservable things. What is neglected however is the contextual domain or deeper level that goes beyond the immediate managerial practices that are observed. The need therefore for linking the managerial with the political sphere where it draws its causal powers is crucial (Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2000).

It is for this reason that management in this context is discussed from a Marxist perspective. As illustrated earlier this perspective suggests that there are inherent contradictions in managing because of the clash of class interests within the labour process. This antagonism is between workers and employers and hence the problem of turning labour power into labour necessitates the management function. Management is therefore needed not just an expertise of ensuring that resources are optimally used. Rather it is a key ally, in the capitalist mode of production charged with maintaining work organisation and exploitative relations (Armstrong, 1989). Ever since the groundbreaking Hawthorne Studies, workers have been seen as more than mere economic entities, but as social beings with complex problems and uniquely unpredictable reactions to different circumstances (Dessler, 2004, Hodgets and Kuratko, 1991). This complexity and uniqueness arising from their conscious organisation as humanity in the workplace gives the ordinary workers the power to resist for instance through industrial strikes.

The nature of capitalist work and control of management was demonstrated by Marx when he used the military analogy to show the need for management role under capitalist work organisation. As he put it, 'an industrial army of workmen, under the command of a capitalist requires, like a real army, officers (managers) and sergeants, (foremen, overlookers) who while the work is being done, command in the name of the capitalists' (Marx, quoted in Hyman, 1989: 29).

This holds true in part according to Dessler (2004) because at any rate the first formal organisations were modelled after the army and the church only because they were the only available example of formalised structures to learn from, having been in existence for a long time.

Today things might be slightly different from above. Marx himself acknowledged this when he rightly argued that compared to feudalism, capitalism was a far progressive

because it has an immense capacity to revolutionise and adapt. The truism of Marx analysis is illustrated today by a plethora of management techniques. Management control is still at the heart of capitalist production. It plays a significant role of quelling increased workers resistance against exploitation. In order to make profits, capital needs this function to ensure that work is done at minimal cost. This can translate into people losing jobs or changing work to make people work fast for long hours:

In purchasing its components, the capitalist must not only provide the right materials, but seek to exert control over the conditions over which the speed, skill and dexterity of the of the worker operates (...) To ensure profitability, it is vital that in the work of transforming the product into a commodity for the market, no more time is wasted than it is necessary under the given social conditions (Thompson, 1989:41).

Hyman (1989) points out that, for Marx the organisation of work was not just technical. Fundamentally, it also entailed the social change and class struggle. Hence the importance of integrating the structure and agency as the two are interwoven. For example, it is difficult to fully explain the new management practices without connecting them with the capitalist industrial structure in which they are grounded. By highlighting the connection between agency and structure, a Marxist approach helps to show how work organisation promotes capital accumulation. Capital does not simply arise from nowhere it is a result of the capitalist relations of production, which are exploitative in nature. Capitalists produce and reproduce capital through the appropriation of surplus value that emanates from unpaid labour. This surplus value obtains from 'cost saving' which press for more output from workers though unaccompanied by increased human numbers and production resources; meaning that either workers should willingly exert themselves more (an unlikely scenario), or managers must use different tools to 'motivate' the (a more probable event). Surplus value therefore is the premise because this income is created by labour, although wrongly appropriated by the capitalists. This then gives rise to the contradictions in the labour process. It gives rise to the creation of management as a special labour charged with policing the relations of production to ensure that profit is secured.

### **Management Control and Consent**

According to Thompson (1989) there seems to be a common ground among labour theorists on the genesis of the labour processes as laid by Marx. However, he goes on to suggest that problems arise related to the nature of control that is exercised by capitalists in the realisation of surplus value. As has been shown Braverman (1974) was influential in regenerating the work done by Marx. His major contribution was to bring back the labour process from the back burner to the frontline:

But perhaps the prime spur to radical analysis of work was Harry Braverman's *Labour and Monopoly Capital* (1974) which restated Marx theories of capitalist development and alienation as central to the study of work. Braverman believed that change in the technical and social

organisation of work, the capitalist 'labour process', was driven by attempts of managers to tighten control over their employees labour (Bradley, 2000:5).

Braverman illumination of the labour process is seen from the critical debates that followed his book. Critics have argued that the main problem with Braverman's work is that he overly concentrated on Taylorism or scientific management control, hence ignoring other forms of capitalist control. For example, Littler and Salaman (1984) have argued that Braverman did not see control, as a relationship that depended on workers will, that is, their ability to resist. He opted, instead, to define and view labour as passive-aggressive in psychological terms, suggesting submission. By so doing this implies that he undermined class struggle. This is a valid point however it must be stated that Braverman did show that workers resisted, though in different ways, for example, staying home and playing sick.

Another concern raised by contemporary labour theorists is that there are other ways besides deskilling that managers can use to control workers. Some of the most noted works is that of Edward's (1976) "bureaucratic control" and Friedman's (1977) "responsive autonomy". However, their proposition has also been criticised. According to Littler and Salaman (1984) such critics fail to make a distinction between the control of work and the organisation of employment. Hence the tendency to focus on the labour process mainly from the sphere of shopfloor, thus ignoring the fact that control might as well come from other spheres than immediately at the point of production.

Looking at the way management reforms are implemented, one can say that some of these initiatives are packed nicely but in fact they are geared at building power relations. For example, viewed closely decentralisation is not really abolishing bureaucracy as such. Instead, rules and procedures are pushed down to the shopfloor as means of giving more power to management. Decentralisation, therefore, is seen here as mere superficial cosmetics attempting to cover up the same old ravenous creature. In this respect, Edwards is correct to say that bureaucratic methods may also be used to control workers.

Burawoy's (1979) opened another caveat to the labour process by suggest that that the labour process is not just built on conflict and resistance. His premise being consent is also intrinsic, precisely because of the contradictory nature of the employment relationship. Chester Barnard, an administrative management, scholar, also attempted to bridge the gap by enunciating this phenomenon as the 'Zone of Acceptance' (Dessler, 2004). That is to say, employees can decide to either extend or withhold their willingness to accept both orders and their legitimacy from supervisors. This caveat assists the argument that ultimately, employees are not passive and submissive, but can decide to recognise and/or accolade the legitimacy of a manager. This gives them a participatory, if not uncooperative characteristic. Therefore co-operation is essential between employers and workers because although there is conflict of interests, there is also some interdependence amongst the parties. In addition, total control is not possible because for people to unlock their creative talent, which the capitalists need for innovation, work has to done at least without rules. Also the very fact that workers depend on the organisation for subsistence binds them to tolerate or consent to some requirements, which subjects them to exploitation. Although Burawoy made an important contribution by reasserting

the primacy of class struggle in capitalist work, his problem however is that in doing so he over emphasized the relations of production at the workplace as if these were isolated from the broader political spectrum. In other words consent cannot be understood on its own, it forms a part of the labour process (Brighton Labour Process Group, 1977, quoted in Thompson, 1989). The premise of which as Cohen (1987) has rightly argued is exploitation.

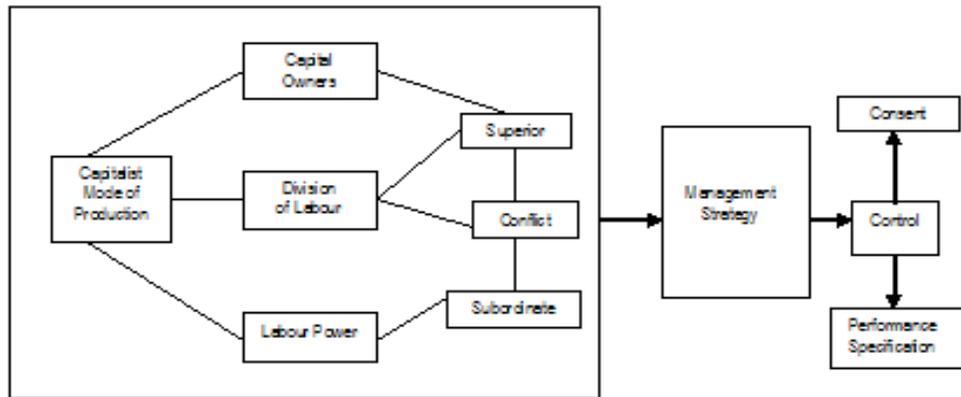
Workers consent needs to be put into context because it depends on a number of factors and varies from one organisation to another. First, consent must be related to the type of industrial relations system used in a country, which defines the working environment. For example, if it is pro union, workers have a space for organising at the point of production, for instance, the organisation of shop stewards. If this right is recognised workers consciousness can be heightened around conditions of work. With coherent structure, workers are more likely to challenge management discretion without fear of being victimised. Resistance is more likely. For example, in the United States of America an extremely capitalist economy, it is due to the fearless endeavours of trade unions that braved the elements and circumvented what would otherwise have been extremely precariously adverse circumstances for workers (Ballot *et al*, 1996). On the other hand, things might be different in a scenario where labour law denies workers the right of bargaining. With minimal job protection it is possible that workers will be inclined to consent, even if they don't agree with management policy. For example, in the past, public sector workers in Botswana were generally viewed as submissive because the state refused them the right to form independent trade unions hence government did not recognise them as collective negotiating bodies. However since, the government's ratification of ILO conventions a few years back, public sector workers are now bargaining legitimately to a point where they have embarked on a strike over lack of salary increment.

Second, alienation is also one aspect that leads some to see workers as consenting to their own predicament. An alienated person, as already shown, has very little confidence as he is not only psychologically emaciated but also impoverished economically. Under capitalism, work divides workers. This increases the propensity for consent, especially with management innovations such as performance related-pay, which require workers to compete instead of co-operating. This suggests that although consent is a general phenomena in work, it is however problematic to blanket it. To do so imply that worker's consciousness is homogenous. But some resist, others may not. This does not mean that they necessarily consent. They may simply have little choice as they depend on wage labour or when the developments in the labour market are characterised by high unemployment. Because there is high demand for few jobs as is the situation in Botswana, the employer has more power in determining the price and conditions under which labour will work.

To understand the management process, it is important to conceptualise the social relationship that exists between managers and workers from both agency and structure. Here management is explained not just at a concrete level where focus is on daily managerial activities but it is also draws from the political structure as well. The linkage between structure and agency is necessary because it explains the mechanisms that are in place in the process of production and reproduction of the relations of production. According to Burawoy (1979) such mechanisms are political structures and must first

exist before the mode of production. By locating the role of management within the mode of production (industrial structure) and the relations of production (management causal powers), we are able to examine the notions of productivity and efficiency not as atomised issues that affect the manager and workers. Rather as enduring factors that underpins the transformative nature capitalist mode of production to secure value. Similarly, the changes that involve new management inventions cannot be sufficiently comprehended if focussed mainly at the enterprise level or the shopfloor. It is necessary to also examine the role played by global institutions like the World Bank in shaping these practices and work organisation in general. As agents of the state, managers are central to the success of any reform process. In Botswana this is demonstrated by the fact that the new reforms are accompanied by restructuring of the human resources in the entire government structure, this is done in order to give more authority to management. It is from this devolution of power that they derive the causal powers of control (Figure 1). But because human beings are not automatons, their consent or cooperation is needed even if this may be to their disadvantage. However, at some point they will resist either overtly through strikes or covertly to what they view as unreasonable and as a way of gaining control over work. Goodrich (1975) called this 'frontier of control'. According to Beynon (1973) this tussle over work control, 'is a direct clash over management's right to manage, a clash of power and ideology'. Both superiors and subordinates therefore resort to mechanisms to sustain relations of production and relations in production through cooperation or choose to constrain them by the way of resistance.

**Figure 1: Capitalist Industrial Structure**



Adopted from Tsoukas 2000, and modified by Marobela, (2006)

Outlined above is a framework for explaining how control and consent are generated with respect to the Botswana reforms, this model was originally developed by Tsoukas (2000) but has been modified to take account of management control as theorised by Little and Salaman (1984). Another dimension introduced to the model is the issue of conflict to show the dialectical nature of the labour process. In addition, the framework has considered Braverman's view that management control is a basic tool used for the capitalist mode of production. Therefore restructuring is primarily aimed at

enhancing this control (Wood, 1989). Littler and Salaman (1984) contend that control takes two forms, performance specifications and consent. They further contend that this is driven by management strategy through policies, such as of job design, structure of control and the nature of employment relationship.

## CONCLUSION

This paper explored traditional management from a critical eye that draws from the political context. It argued that in order to conceptualise and appreciate the political nature of management and its contradictory functional role in the capitalist mode of production, critical philosophical analysis is an imperative. Hence, there is need to depart from positivist philosophy, which view the management theory and practice from a functionalist and reductionist perspective (See, Dixon and Dogan, 2003) as it negates the broad socio economic factors that shape managerial function and its power relations at the workplace. Critical management analysis is proposed as alternative for not only describing the management process but to help explain underlying causal mechanisms which are the driving force for persistent organisational transformation and accompanying contradictions. With this background using critical theory opens up an important caveat in management which is, the management function is a crucial mediation function in the accumulation process. Therefore it has to battle with harmonising inherent organisational conflict between capital and labour from the opposition of interests. Hence the need for the management functions to exercise control over the labour process on behalf of the principal, capital or the owners of the means of production. Understanding this stakeholder interests and dynamics has managerial implication for today's manager. A manager who is conscious of the exploitation and inequities of accumulative political structure and resistance is more likely to be open and embrace a value orientated philosophy that empowers subordinates and prefers compromise as opposed to brute use of her managerial right to manage.

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