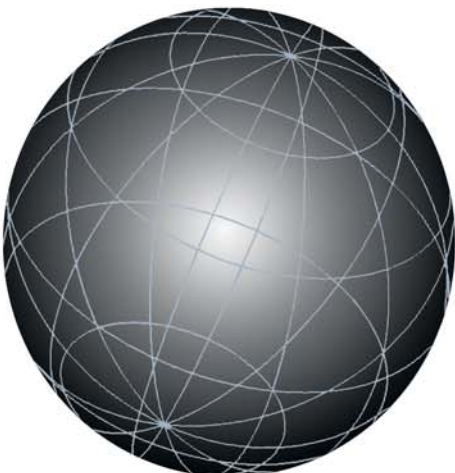


# PROFESSIONALS AND POLICY:

*management strategy in a  
competitive world*



**Mike Bottery**

## PROFESSIONALS AND POLICY

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# Professionals and Policy

Management Strategy in a Competitive World

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Mike Bottery

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# *Introduction*

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The millennium is upon us, and there seems little doubt that we are moving into a new age, regardless of the party in power. If previous generations have seen a world in which the small group or community interacts and contends with the might of the nation state, and nation states vie with one another, we now appear to be moving to a situation where the nation state itself is under threat, both from demands by the smaller group *and* through pressures from larger groupings, even a global society. It is, first, the age of the smaller group, as communities and cultures increasingly attempt to assert their identities by breaking away from the larger historic states. In 1945 the United Nations came into being with a membership of 45; by 1960, it was 100, and in 1996 it was 185, and all the evidence suggests that this number will increase. One can see nationalist movements in Canada, Wales, Scotland, Macedonia, Catalonia, the Basque region, the Kurdish part of Turkey, and Eritrea. Some movements have achieved their aims peacefully, such as the 'velvet divorce' of Czechoslovakia, and some only with horrific bloodshed, as in Yugoslavia. The old Soviet Union was made up of 104 cultural groups, and has begun an uncertain and unpredictable set of smaller-scale cultural reformations; China is composed of 56 different cultural groups, and as it wrestles to embrace the contradictions of free market capitalism and political centralization, may well be the next location for movement towards smaller groupings. Furthermore, the notion of subsidiarity – the assignation of power to the lowest level capable of exerting it – is increasingly gaining ground as a basic principle of political organization. In a technological world where the rate of change continues to increase, and where it is possible to communicate and do business across the globe in seconds, people are increasingly seeking stability and meaning within smaller cultural boundaries and in communities of a size with which they can personally identify. Small is beautiful when it comes to the search for individual meaning.

But it is also the age of the larger grouping, of the global economy, and though many may not realize the full extent of the changes happening around the world, they are increasingly feeling the consequences, as what happens on the other side of the world affects them in terms of culture, the availability of jobs, and money in the pocket. While it is still uncertain whether a global economy, or one based upon continental groupings,

will emerge, the fall of the Soviet Union has, as far as most politicians are concerned, left no genuine contender to the free market as the dominant form of economic organization at the present time, with regard to both relations between states, and relations within the state. This, allied to the expansion in power of multinational corporations, has changed and reduced the role of the nation state. Thus national politicians of all political persuasions increasingly cease to engineer national frameworks, and instead attempt to adapt their countries to cope with these demands, to ride the waves of the global free market and to curry the favour and investment of multinational companies. To do this, they paradoxically see the need to keep a much tighter rein upon what they *can* control within their own countries, and have thus encouraged the adoption of managerialist strategies in the state sector which are very interventionist, directing rather than merely facilitating implementation at the institutional level. Changes of government are now remarkable more for the continuities of policy than the discontinuities; the New Labour government in the UK, for instance, faces much the same pressures, the same competition and the same constraints as did the previous Conservative administration.

Furthermore, policy-makers in the Western democracies see how demographics paint a very clear picture of ageing populations increasingly unable or unwilling to support the taxation burden of the kind of welfare state provision so common in their societies over the last two or three generations. Accepting, as they do, most of the arguments of the economic superiority of the free market, they now see the role of the state as either being the regulator of an internal 'quasi-market', or, more radically, as being the sponsor of particular policies in areas like health, education, policing and the social services, but not necessarily their supplier. Governments are now much more concerned with 'steering' than with 'rowing' the boat of state. The authors of this metaphor, David Osborne and Ted Gaebler (1993), initially directed their advocacy at the Bush and Clinton administration. However, it is not only Bill Clinton, but in the UK John Major and Tony Blair in particular who have taken up and developed the implications of such an approach. Given the apparent superiority of free market logic, they increasingly believe that much provision should not be a state-controlled monopoly, but can and should be left to competition by a variety of providers from both the public and private sectors. Finally, and because of the continued dominance of market strategies when it comes to implementation, management thinking and strategy has also continued to borrow ideas from the private sector, and policy-makers thus have been strengthened in their determination to advocate an aggressive, hands-on management in the running of institutions.

These changes have come hard for many. They have been hard for many of those used to a system in which services were nationally co-ordinated and provided free at the point of delivery, and which cast them in the role of recipient. They have had to see such services as in part directed by the state, but now provided by a variety of institutions, in competition with one another, and in which they need to take a much more active and discriminating role, and for which they increasingly need to contribute not only by taxation but out of their own pocket. Those in favour of such changes may interpret this as greater freedom for the consumer, but it also means greater responsibility for them, and the likelihood of greater differences in access and treatment.

These changes have also been hard for many of those used to providing such services, socialized as they have been into seeing themselves as principal contributors to a co-ordinated system designed for an overarching public good based primarily upon

considerations of justice, equity and care. They are now reduced (as they see it) to being mere functionaries in a larger institutional and managerial scheme, in which notions of public good are increasingly traded for institutional success in a marketplace, and in which the words of management seem predominantly those of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

It is this latter group that this book primarily addresses, particularly in the areas of education and health, but with implications for all professionals, in the public sector and beyond. From being the dominant actors on welfare state stages for the last fifty years, many now see themselves as being reduced to no more than supporting players, and given roles that they find stressful, or even repugnant. This book examines the context of their dilemmas as well as their responses. In so doing, it provides an analysis which suggests that changes need to be made not only at the policy-making level, but also within the practice of the professions themselves.

To deal with a problem, it first needs to be understood. This book suggests that many professionals do not fully understand the changes they are facing, and so as individuals and as members of a professional body their reactions may be inappropriate or even damaging to their cause and to the cause of a welfare state – to provide service to others, on the basis of individual need rather than of institutional competitive advantage or of personal income. By focusing on the role of professionals, the key providers of education, health and other services within the public sector, this book attempts to provide a way forward both for their practice, and for the future of welfare state provision.

This book then argues, as suggested above, that the changes that are happening in professional practice are not primarily due to the policies of any one particular government. These changes are in most cases a function of pressures and issues which transcend any one governmental agenda or political ideology; they would be happening to professionals irrespective of any particular election. So whilst some of the concerns expressed by professionals in this book may have already been replaced by others, the underlying trend is the same – a movement towards greater specification and control of policy by government, greater control of professional practice, and continued or increased pressure for better quality from these same professionals through accountability and competition at the institutional level. Thus, whilst concerns of teachers in the UK over the last few years, for instance, may have moved from the problem of becoming financially literate to that of implementing the National Curriculum, coping with OFSTED inspections, and dealing with problems of funding, teacher supply and retention, this book argues that the underlying reasons for these concerns remain substantially the same. And, crucially, the response by professionals has remained much the same, and is a continuing cause of concern, to this writer at least. It is to this first group, teachers in the public sector, that we now turn.

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## *Chapter 1*

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### The Limiting of Vision

It should not be too surprising if many professionals throughout the Western world see government legislation, institutional functioning and the activities of their own occupations in rather selective terms. This can be explained partly in terms of time pressures, partly in terms of personal interest, and partly in terms of societal culture: in economies predicated upon the creation of highly (and necessarily) differentiated occupations, backed up by value systems which prize specialization, there is little encouragement for the individual to take a view beyond his or her own field. In a world of such differentiation, only when people are occupationally or personally affected are the full implications of such changes likely to be appreciated.

Nevertheless, if individuals fail to see the occupational forest for their individual trees, they fail to realize that the same issues may affect them all. Professionals in particular have much to learn from the experiences of others at the present time, especially by examining changing conceptions of themselves and their work, and also in the way in which they are managed. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, these two aspects are connected: how a particular body of professionals is managed will affect its own and the wider public's conception of what its members do. From this, it inevitably follows that in an era of change like the present, a major issue will be what a professional does or ought to be doing, for there are going to be conflicting views on this, depending upon the standpoint taken. The evidence presented in this book strongly suggests that for many professionals working in the public sector, changes at an institutional and societal level are constraining both their vision and their practice, and ultimately their role within society; they are failing to locate their problems within a wider 'ecological' context which would enable them to understand the causes and effects of such problems more clearly. Moreover, professionals in the state sector who may have conceptualized their work as being primarily for the benefit of the community as a whole are finding that institutional and legislative change make this increasingly difficult. Finally, professionals in all areas of the public sector who have thought of themselves as being entitled to a degree of autonomy in order to exercise professional judgement for the benefit of the community find that this autonomy and decision-making is increasingly being constrained.

If lack of time and interest, as well as aspects of professional culture, all tend to

constrain practitioners' vision, current legislative and institutional changes are exacerbating this situation, and are changing the character of what professionals in the public sector do in ways which are ultimately damaging not only for themselves but for society as a whole. Yet while such constraining of vision may not be noticed by all, other aspects of change *are* being felt, and many professionals are experiencing considerable personal and occupational distress which has major effects upon their life at home, their enjoyment of the job, their health, and their ability to do the job. Another purpose of this book, then, is to describe this, and to suggest potential remedies.

### CHANGING CONCEPTIONS OF THE PROFESSIONAL

Much of the above-mentioned distress comes, it will be argued, directly or indirectly from the legislative and institutional challenges to the way in which many public sector professionals have conceptualized their work. Broadly speaking, many see their work as requiring considerable dedication, commitment and hard work, for much of the time under unique circumstances; all of this, they feel, should entitle them to a considerable amount of autonomy in their working practices. Many would describe their work on this basis as 'professional' work, perhaps never realizing that the debate over the meaning and purpose of 'professionalism' is not new, even if the agonizing today is as acute as it has ever been. Indeed, an examination of the history of the professions over the last hundred years reveals it as a history of differing ideas of occupational purpose in which present debates need to be situated to be fully understood. One must therefore go back at least as far as the convergence of opinion between two intellectual giants, Durkheim and Tawney, if one is to understand this. Both of these seminal thinkers were concerned with what they perceived as a major nineteenth-century problem, the advent of industrialization and the increasing influence in society of the capitalist entrepreneur, who, as far as they could see, was motivated by little else than profit and self-interest. For Durkheim (1957, pp. 11, 12) when social constraints are removed, 'nothing remains but individual appetites, and since they are by nature boundless and insatiable, if there is nothing to control them, they will not be able to control themselves'. Perhaps surprisingly, the solution was to be the promotion of the influence of the professional. For Tawney (1921, pp. 94, 95):

The difference between industry as it exists today, and a profession is, then, simple and unmistakable. The essence of the former is that its only criterion is the financial return which it offers to its shareholders. The essence of the latter is that though men enter it for the sake of livelihood, the measure of their success is the service which they perform, not the gains which they amass.

Both Tawney and Durkheim believed, then, that restraint upon individual excess could come from the increased exposure to the critical gaze of colleagues within a 'profession'. While the virtual professionalization of everyone entailed in such a vision has not happened, there can be little doubt that it placed professionals upon an ethical pedestal, a position occupied for some considerable time. It is not, then, too surprising that before the 1960s the literature on professionals was fairly uncritical, with writers like Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933) and Marshall (1939) painting a fairly generous and optimistic picture of professional practice. By examining the life and work of those at the

top of their respective trees, and by uncritically accepting that these same individuals were motivated primarily by the expert and altruistic nature of the work, they suggested that professionals might be well paid, but that their work was essential, and that the well-being of the client was ensured by the way in which professionals held to clear codes of ethics.

Further, it is not really surprising that such beliefs should then inform attitudes towards professionalism in the development of welfare states in the Western world. These welfare states were initially seen as being successful precisely through being underpinned by the self-sacrificing attitudes of professionals in the treatment of clients (see Bertilsson, 1990). While there may be many today who see this partial, rose-tinted view of professionals as a little naive, it is nevertheless understandable given the cultural assumptions about professionals before and during the creation of welfare states. Indeed, on both sides of the Atlantic the media continued this benign portrayal of professionals: Dr Kildare, Dr Finlay, Joe Friday, Dixon of Dock Green and Sidney Poitier in *To Sir with Love* all had a pristine quality about them which, it was implied, applied to all other professionals, a proposition seldom questioned except at the personal level. Professionals, the media suggested, existed to serve the public, and for many of the public the question of what professionals did or should do seldom went further.

Yet if 'service' was the key concept in the definition of the professions, it was nevertheless only one amongst many which over the years have been suggested as the defining characteristics of 'professionals'. Indeed, if there was a change in the academic literature since the 1950s, it was to a greater interest in attempting to describe the key criteria underpinning the concept of professionalism. Indeed, at least 17 different criteria in this 'trait' approach have been claimed at one time or another as describing professional behaviour (Bottery, 1994), though much of the debate has centred around three concepts:

- that of *expertise* (the possession by an occupational group of exclusive knowledge and practice);
- that of *altruism* (an ethical concern by this group for its clients);
- that of *autonomy* (the profession's need and right to exercise control over entry into, and subsequent practice within, that particular occupation).

It is interesting to note that on the basis of these kinds of analyses, occupations like teaching, the police and nursing were only accorded by writers like Etzioni (1969) the role of 'semi-professionals', for according to this critique, they failed to meet a number of criteria derived from an examination of the 'accepted' professions, such as lawyers, and doctors. Yet, as Torstendahl (1990) points out, there is a considerable degree of undeclared presupposition here, for on what basis are lawyers and doctors accorded such a title, and others excluded, save that this is how one chooses to define 'professionalism'? Similarly, the strategy of describing an occupation as movement towards 'professionalization' has the same problems, the movement being built around an already idealized concept of 'profession', which in turn is derived from an analysis of what individual writers take to be 'proper' professions. It is this kind of arbitrariness which in part led many writers on professionalism (e.g. Freidson, 1984; Lawson, 1990) to declare such soil increasingly exhausted.

## MODERN TIMES: PROFESSIONALS IN THE CONTRACTING WELFARE STATE

This questioning of the usefulness of this 'trait' approach has largely coincided with quite major changes in society, most notably to do with the ability of countries to pay for welfare states, and critiques by right-wing thinkers like Hayek (1944) concerning whether universal welfare states are indeed the right way to organize provision for the major services within society. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, as the role of the welfare state has been questioned, so has the role of the professional, not only within the welfare state but within private practice as well. Writers like Collins (1990), for example, suggest that one needs to look beyond the analysis of the respective traits of occupations, and instead examine how the power exercised by these occupations enables them to exercise 'occupational closure', allowing only those individuals *they* validate to practise, thereby increasing their ability to influence matters in society with regard to the area of their professional practice, and, not unimportantly, to increase their financial remuneration. In so doing, such writers suggest that if the key words used to describe professionalism in an earlier period were expertise and ethics, and the key questions concerned the rights of other occupations to be classified in similar terms to those of medicine and law, and to be granted their status, the more recent key words need to be monopoly and power, and the key questions need to be concerned with the ways in which different occupational groups monopolize access to certain categories of work, and exclude others from such work in order to control the supply of this service to the public, and thus increase its value, its status and their benefit. There is little doubt that this sea change in key words and key questions has affected general public attitudes to professionals, and, unsurprisingly, has challenged professionals' conceptions of themselves.

Now there is, of course, no reason why the two orientations should be incompatible, but it should not be too surprising if not only the public, but also politicians from both the left and right of the political spectrum, have viewed professionals in an increasingly sceptical manner, the left on an agenda concerned with the increased empowerment of citizens (which it is claimed professionals have failed to advance), and the right on an agenda of promoting greater consumer choice through the destruction of entrenched and freedom-reducing monopolies (monopolies which, it is claimed, professionals *have* advanced). The result in many countries has been a rash of legislation which, among other things, has introduced greater competition for the services that professionals provide, begun drives for the accumulation of facts and figures regarding their performance in order to accurately assess their comparative performance, and restricted budgets of professionals in the public sector in order to induce them to become more efficient.

As already suggested, such changes in the orientation of studies of professionalism have not occurred within a vacuum. One spur has been a fundamentally ethical attack upon the notion of the universal welfare state. As long ago as 1944 Friedrich Hayek in *The Road to Serfdom* argued that Communism and Fascism were in fact not that different, as they both sought to centralize power in the hands of the few, and that social democracies were proceeding down that very same road. They had all abandoned, he argued, 'that freedom in economic affairs without which personal and political freedom has never existed in the past' (Hayek, 1944, p. 10). The institution of welfare state legislation, he argued in a later book, in the quest for greater equality, 'necessarily leads

to a greater transformation of the spontaneous order of free society into a totalitarian system conducted in the service of some coalition of organised interests' (Hayek, 1973, p. 2). Few in 1944 were prepared to listen to him, for major recessions and high levels of unemployment in the 1930s, as well as the sacrifices of a World War, followed by an overwhelming Labour victory at the general election of 1945, led even the mainstream of the Conservative party to accept the necessity of an interventionist state.

However, thirty years later the effects of oil price rises in the 1970s, recessions in most Western economies and the apparent inability of Keynesian economics to deal with them led a Labour government in 1976 to the adoption of the monetarist economic remedies prescribed by the International Monetary Fund, and an increasing acceptance of the need for the introduction of competitive systems into the workings of the welfare state to cope with the widely acknowledged bureaucratization, lack of incentives, and provider-led bias. Hayek and other academics advocated a radical liberal, market system instead of state-dominated provision, and such writers (e.g. Friedman, 1962; Graham and Clarke, 1986; Green, 1987) increasingly found themselves the principal guests at the party rather than the uninvited looking in. Their ideas have been increasingly accepted beyond the confines of the political right: the concepts of the internal market (Enthoven, 1985) and market socialism (LeGrand, 1989) are now debated seriously in all the major parties. Indeed, in a celebrated book, Fukuyama (1992) claimed that, with the demise of the Soviet Union, the 'End of History' has occurred, and that the only serious contender for 'legitimate' government in the world today is that of liberal democracy, an integral part of this being the economic necessity of free market capitalism. Whether one subscribes to such views or not, it is a claim that would have been laughed out of court only a few years ago: it is now debated seriously at the highest academic levels.

Yet there is good reason to believe that the adoption of such ideas and the development of a more sceptical attitude to professional practice has been propelled as much by economic problems in society as by any ideology. Much of the history of the UK welfare state, for instance, has been a story with two themes: one theme of limited resources trying to match accelerating demand, and another theme of policy-makers moving from fairly uncritically facilitating the practice of public professionals to attempting to control and shape this practice within a larger design. Aneurin Bevan talked about having 'to stuff the doctors' mouths with gold' to get the NHS off the ground (in Klein, 1989, p. 38); David Eccles talked about the school curriculum as the 'teachers' secret garden' (in Lawton, 1980, p. 22); in a climate of increased financial stringency, such *laissez-faire* attitudes are no longer seen as possible or desirable.

Indeed, Rhodes (1994, p. 144) suggests that the major changes in governmental attitudes to professionals in the UK and beyond have been precisely because of the greater need for the '3 Es', economy, efficiency and effectiveness, a need precipitated by long-term recession and diminished growth in most Western countries. All were affected by the increase in oil prices in the 1970s, and all have felt the effects of increased competition from Pacific Rim countries like Japan, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and, increasingly, China. All have also had to take into account problematic demographic factors: an increasing proportion of their population is elderly, and this has placed increased demands upon welfare services at a time when less of the population are working and paying the taxes to finance the welfare system.

It has, then, become increasingly difficult to sustain previous levels of finance for welfare provision. In such a situation, governments of both left and right have had to

devise ways of reducing demand, of cutting back on services, and of increasing their scrutiny of how financial provision is used at site level. It is therefore not surprising if governments of all persuasions view with decreasing tolerance the autonomy formerly exercised by professionals. This will be particularly so if professionals see their principal commitment as being to the needs of individual clients rather than to the needs of the institution and the service as a whole. Policy-makers and their managers will then view professionals as neglecting to place the financial costs of treating one client or group of clients within a wider organizational and societal perspective (even if this, in some situations, amounts to little more than *their* perspective).

## THE COMING OF THE NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

In these circumstances, questions of cost savings come very high on the agenda of any government of whatever political persuasion, and the effective management of institutions will be seen as a necessary tool in the realization of this wider picture, a management in public institutions which directs policy rather than merely administers professionals' decisions. This is the 'new public management' (NPM) which Hood (1991) describes as having seven elements:

- 'hands-on' professional management in the public sector;
- explicit standards and measures of performance;
- greater emphasis on output controls;
- the break-up of monolithic into smaller, manageable units;
- shifts to greater competition in the public sector;
- the stress on private sector styles of management practice;
- the stress on greater discipline and parsimony in resource use.

Hood (1991) suggests (pp. 5, 6) that the NPM has two different sources. One source, derived from free market theory, is underpinned by the key word 'choice', and is built upon ideas of contestability, user choice, transparency and the greater use of incentive structures. The other, derived largely from US business theory, is underpinned by the key word 'manage', and is built upon a transference of business managerialism into the public sector, undergirded by ideas of the elevated status of 'professional' managers compared to technicians/professionals within the organization, managers with wide discretionary powers, free to manage and to build distinct organizational cultures. Hood is right to draw out the managerial and competitive aspects of the NPM, yet from the foregoing analysis, it seems plausible to suggest that the consideration of costs may have been the dominant influence in the rise of the NPM, and in the more critical approach to professional practice.

An NPM culture, which, as Pollitt (1992) says, sees professionals 'on tap' rather than 'on top', is clearly going to be a strong challenge to existing professional cultures, and a large element of this book is the description of the implementation of this NPM, and of professional reaction to it. Not that the NPM is monolithic: it exhibits different forms in different sectors; for example, teachers and police will be managed differently from doctors and nurses in hospitals because they do not have the same management-doctor/nurse cultural divide with which hospitals operate. Nevertheless, there *are* overarching similarities: the hands-on nature of this managerialist approach,

for example, is a theme running through all sectors, and fits well with an economic imperative, emphasizing as it does a need to know how much is spent, and what can be saved where. It will then be seen as an essential part of delivering a high-quality, effective and efficient service. The influence of a free-market philosophy is also a constant theme, and fits well with economic imperatives: not only has it the (apparent) virtue of generating a greater producer responsiveness to consumer choice, but its advocates also argue that it is the most efficient means of delivery as well. The three sources of NPM – choice, management and efficiency – may then cohere into a very aggressive management philosophy which has quite profound effects upon professional practice. And while this book may concentrate on the experiences of professionals in the health and education sectors in the UK, virtually any occupational group within welfare states in the Western world will recognize all three sources in their day-to-day practice.

### NPM STRATEGIES IN THREE PUBLIC SECTORS

The effects of NPM strategies upon professional practice within three different sectors of the welfare state in the UK are described in Figures 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3. Now, while this book focuses upon just two sectors, a third sector, that of the police, is included in this comparison at this early stage, in order to suggest that similar experiences are no mere coincidence, but may be the reality for the majority of sectors. Each figure takes as its specific focus the issue of a professional body's autonomy, even if concern about the professional body's autonomy may not have been the major reason for the legislation. What is clear from all three, though, is that despite differing cultures, differing values and differing practices, the same three strategies are applicable to each – in terms of management styles, in terms of proposals for competition, and in terms of scrutinies on costs. Perhaps even more interestingly, it is also possible to see the same basic policies in use with each of the three kinds of institutions within which the three professions work.

Thus, in terms of cost scrutinies, all three areas of the welfare state within which these professional groups practise have been the subject of retrenchment, in which reduced budgets have meant that cost savings have had to be made at the unit level. All three have been subject to cost improvement programmes, in which those activities defined as non-core (such as laundry, catering, cleaning and grounds maintenance) have been contracted out or made subject to tender; all three have been the subject of resource management, in which those not previously involved in the planning of budgets are now given such responsibilities. Finally, external audits, either by the Audit Commission, the National Audit Office, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), or local authorities and OFSTED, have all generated increased scrutiny on costs in education, health and policing, while at the same time generating comparative information on their efficiency.

In terms of management approaches, attempts at the imposition of new contracts in all three areas can be seen as policies aimed at redefining the power relationship between professionals and managers in favour of managers. In terms of content control, all three occupations have seen an increased attempt at the usurpation of management either at institutional level, or by civil servants or politicians at the national level, by the definition of what are to count as areas of work. These attempts are most clearly seen with respect to the imposition of a National Curriculum on teachers, the setting of key policing objectives by the Home Office, the specification of areas of treatment by district

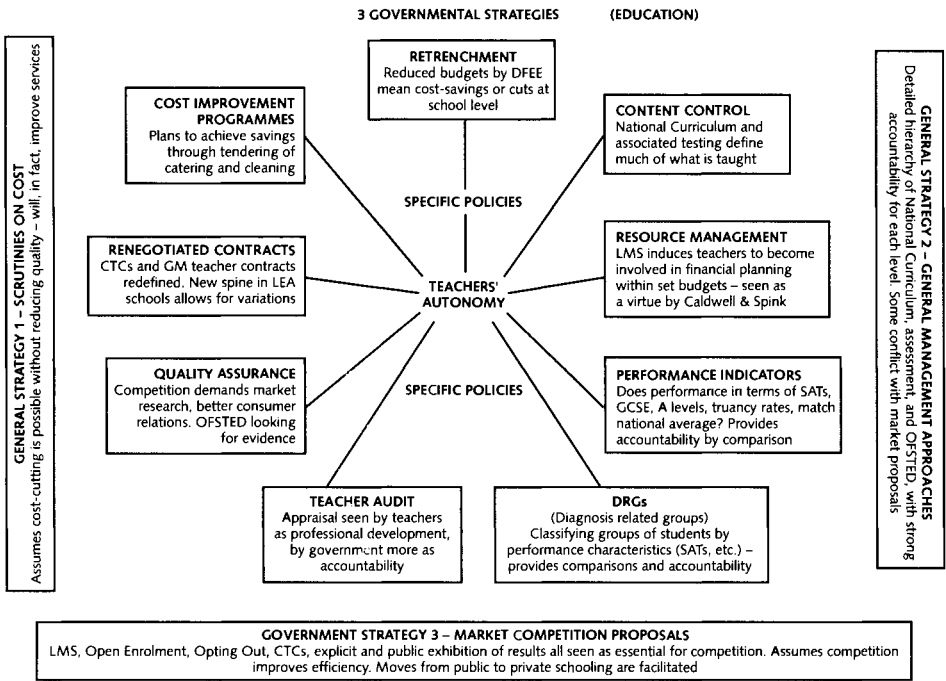


Figure 1.1

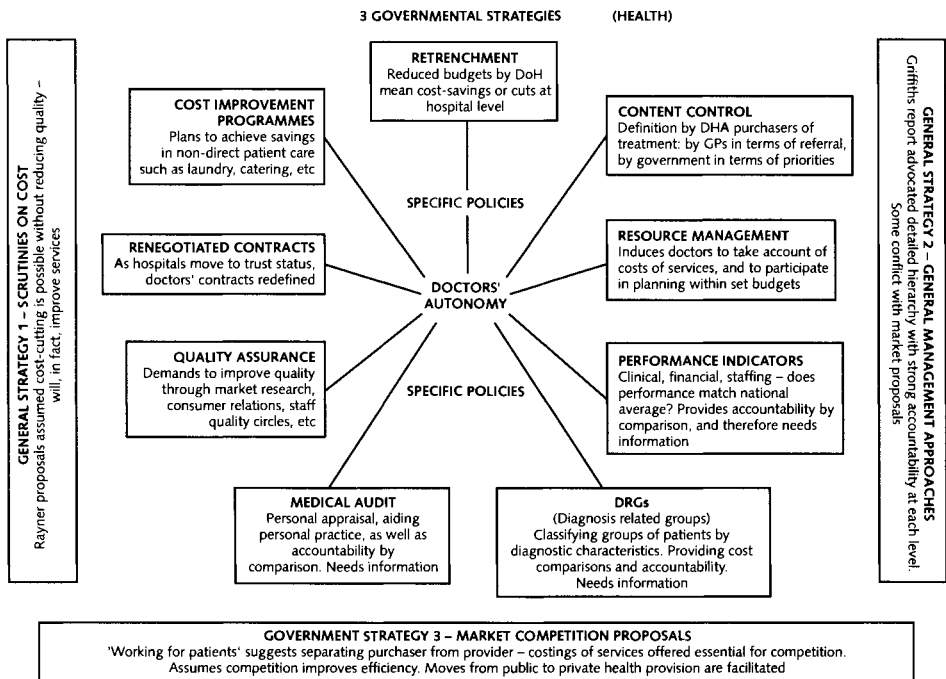


Figure 1.2

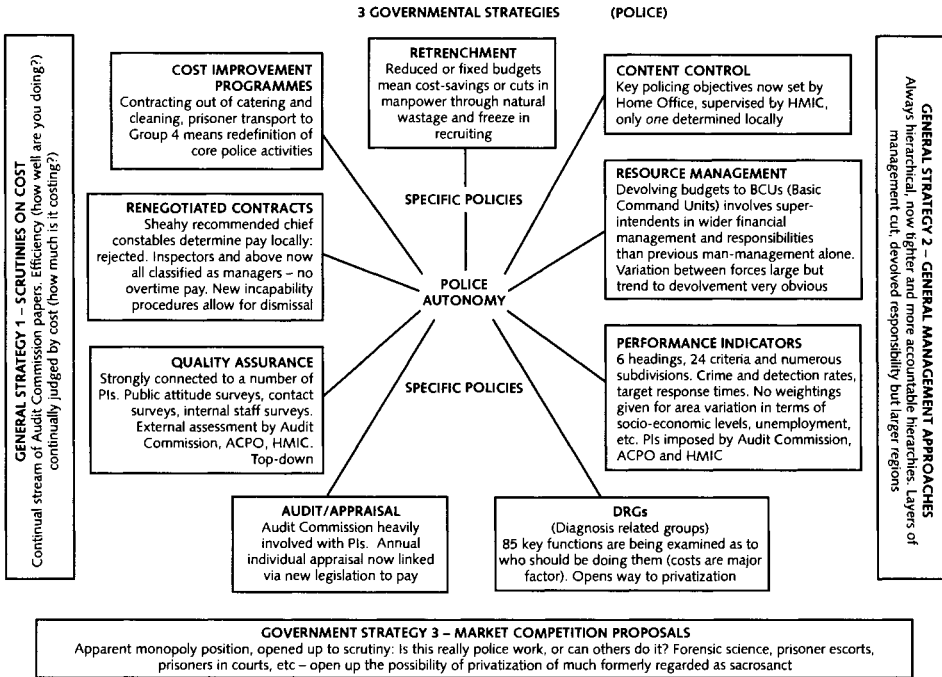


Figure 1.3

health authorities (DHAs), referrals by GPs to hospital doctors, and priorities set by government. Finally, individual appraisal, while varying in the degree to which it is conducted through peer review in all three areas, still has the potential in all areas to act as a stick with which to beat the practitioner.

Other specific policies tend to be generated by a combination of management concerns and issues of competition. The policies invariably are concerned with the generation of facts, essential for both closer managerial control and more informed competition. Managers/politicians cannot control without reference to figures comparing professional performance; and consumers (including managers or other professionals in purchasing institutions) cannot choose without access to figures which provide them with comparative information on the content and quality of the service being offered. Thus, for example, the drive for performance indicators (PIs) is common across all public services, whether it be in terms of examination results and truancy rates in schools, the percentage of files proceeded with by the Crown Prosecution Service, or the numerous clinical, financial and staffing indicators in hospitals. Similarly, diagnosis-related groups (DRGs) – the classification of groups of patients by diagnostic characteristics – is a health exercise designed to provide comparative information on clinical costs and charging and therefore greater accountability. The same kind of exercises, driven by needs for greater information and accountability, are seen with the police, whereby 85 key functions have been categorized for examination as to who should be doing them, and in education with the classification of groups of students by such things as Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs). Finally, increased interest in matters of quality assurance, through such initiatives as total quality management, is in actuality