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Denmark

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Published in:
Leadership and Culture

DOI (link to publication from Publisher):
[10.1057/9781137454133](https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137454133)

Publication date:
2014

Document Version
Early version, also known as pre-print

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Bjørnholt, B., & Hansen, M. B. (2014). Denmark. In M. Van Wart, A. Hondeghem, & E. Schwella (Eds.), *Leadership and Culture: Comparative Models of Top Civil Servant Training* (pp. 153-166). Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137454133>

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Denmark

Bente Bjørnholt and Morten Balle Hansen

Introduction

The Danish civil service is organized into a national administration, five regions (since 2007), and 98 municipalities (since 2007). The primary responsibility of the regions is to manage the healthcare system, especially hospitals, although part of this responsibility has been handed over to the municipalities. The municipalities have become the primary service providers in the Danish welfare state and are responsible for the provision of a number of services such as childcare, primary schools, eldercare, culture, city planning, and road maintenance and construction.

About 30 percent of the Danish workforce of 2.92 million people (2008, Statistics Denmark) work in the public sector, the vast majority in the 98 municipalities (271 before 2007) and in the healthcare system, which is organized in the five regions (14 counties before 2007). Of those working in the public sector, about 131,000 full-time employees work in public administration, of whom about 68,000 work in the central administration of the state (2008, Statistics Denmark).

This chapter analyzes the evolution of the Danish civil service in state administration in general and the collective profile of the top civil servants of the Danish state administration in particular.

The chapter is based on the primary and secondary data sources. In order to describe the training and educational background of top civil servants, the analysis rests on five surveys sent out to top civil servants at the national and local levels. The surveys were initiated by the Forum for Top Executive Management (Forum for offentlig topledelse), which was established by the Danish Ministry of Finance and the interest groups of the Danish municipalities and the Danish regions. Moreover, we have conducted interviews with the former head of the agency for personnel management and with two representatives of the universities offering the most important training programs, and we have had access to an investigation of the education and training of top civil servants in 20 interviews with top executives (Løllike

2012). Finally, the analysis draws on a database¹ on the background and characteristics of agency heads and another database on permanent secretaries.

Comparable with Political Structure

Historical Background

Denmark has developed its civil service system gradually by incorporating a number of European trends into already existing Danish institutions, rather than by abruptly abandoning previous institutions. The history of Denmark is deeply embedded in the history of Europe and the Nordic countries. The history, language, and culture of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden are closely intertwined. The common language and culture, combined with a cultural and political movement called Scandinavianism (or Nordism) in the latter part of the nineteenth century, have provided an important background for the easy diffusion of ideas among the Scandinavian countries, which in turn has contributed to the development of the Danish central administration.

Denmark was constituted as a kingdom in about the year 900 and the evolution of the Danish central administrative system was closely related to the royal institution for centuries. In the medieval ages, after the era of the Vikings, the royal institution gradually evolved from being a weak, semi-elected institution ruling through an influential nobility, into an absolute monarchy with a powerful king. Absolute monarchism was formally institutionalized in 1660 (Jespersen, Petersen, and Tamn 2000). The education of nobles serving the king was not formal, but it was often quite sophisticated, and included years of foreign service in order to get acquainted with administrative practices in other countries (Knudsen 2003).

Although the old nobility retained strong influence in the central administration, other social classes increasingly entered as well, gradually transforming the central administration from a collegial type of rule into a Weberian type of bureaucracy (Weber 1947) with loyalty and strong ties to the king and the state. In 1821, having a degree in jurisprudence became a formal requirement for obtaining a higher civil service position. Thus, when the absolute monarchy became a constitutional monarchy in 1849, the central administration was organized into seven ministries, staffed by members of the legal profession who still tended to have a family background in the old Danish nobility, but with a distinct civil service loyalty to the state and the king.

The latter part of the nineteenth century in Denmark was, as in many other European countries, characterized by a political mobilization of the former lower and middle classes (farmers, workers, etc.) and later, women. The transformation from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy and then later into a parliamentary democracy in 1901 took place in these formative years. Many of the institutions that remain essential to Danish society and the civil service today were formed during these past decades,

including the political parties that were most important and influential throughout the twentieth century (Hansen 2011, 2013). The development of what the Danish people now perceive as obvious rights in a democratic society took decades, as can be seen in the gradual change in voting rights in national and local elections. In the first democratic constitution from 1849, only men over the age of 30 owning property above a certain value were allowed to vote. Women were first allowed to vote in municipal elections in 1908 and in national elections in 1915. The latest change in this aspect of the Danish democratization process took place in 1978, when the voting age was officially lowered from 21 to 18 years. The societal democratization process during this time had a gradual impact on the ethos of the Danish civil service. From 1849, when servants entered the civil service, they swore their loyalty to both the constitution and the king, but gradually the social bond to the royal institution was loosened and replaced by a social bond to parliamentary democracy and to society at large. Durkheim's concept of organic solidarity (Durkheim 1984), which is based on a division of labor, strong social bonds, and administrative and constitutional law, and is concerned with human interests, adequately portrays the type of esprit de corps that gradually replaced the royal institution. Formally speaking, the oath to the king was superseded in 1919 by a written promise by all civil servants in the national administration in order to defend the democratic constitution and fulfill all obligations of civil servants, symbolically stressing the democratization of the civil service (Knudsen 2000).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Denmark could still by and large be characterized as a "night watchman" state, a form of government in which the state's only authentic function is to protect its citizens, and its legal institutions are generally the military, police, and the courts. At that time, Denmark's total public-expenditure share of the total GDP hovered at 10 percent to 12 percent (Christensen 2000). Nonetheless, the seeds were sown for the later universal welfare state that came to fruition during the social reform of the 1890s, heavily inspired by Bismarck's social reform in Germany (Petersen 1985; Ringmose and Hansen 2005). Thus, by extension, it was a relatively small civil service compared to what later came into existence after the Second World War and the growth of the universal welfare state.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the public-expenditure share of GDP gradually rose to 20 percent to 22 percent after the Second World War. Then, in the latter part of the century, the public sector rapidly expanded its scope. For instance, about 10 percent of the Danish workforce was employed in the public sector in 1950, whereas close to 30 percent were public employees 50 years later, at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Again, this trend seems to mirror an almost global phenomenon. The twentieth century, particularly the latter half, became the century of public sector and civil service growth in most countries, including the United

States (Tanzi and Schuknecht 2000), but especially in northwestern Europe and, in particular, Scandinavia (Esping-Andersen 1990).

Changes in the internal organization of the central state administration, from the first democratic constitution in 1849 to the organization as we see it today, can be divided into a number of different periods (Bogason 2008) according to different criteria. However, a four-epoch classification, which is closely related to the overall evolution of the universal Danish welfare state, seems most reasonable:

- 1849–1890: Consolidation of constitutional democracy
- 1891–1945: Democratization and slow expansion of the welfare state
- 1946–1980: Rapid expansion of the welfare state
- 1981–2009: Reorganization and reduction of public sector growth

Besides capturing the broader trend, this subdivision reflects changes in the organization of the central administration reasonably well. Broadly speaking, the expansion of the state into a universal welfare state corresponds to a long-term tendency to increase the number of ministries, from the original seven ministries in 1849 to 20 ministries in the 2013 administration. Many of the new ministries were organized around tasks originally placed in the former Ministry of the Interior, which, because of the increasing activities of the state in society, had become too large and complex to remain as it was originally constituted. Two of the ministries established in 1849, the Ministry of War and the Ministry of the Marines, were merged into the Ministry of Defense in 1950, but otherwise the old ministries from 1849 have survived, although some of their functions have changed over the years.

Political Structure

Denmark is a constitutional monarchy with a democratic, parliamentary one-chamber system of government. It is a homogenous country in religious and ethnic terms.

Denmark is a unitary state and has had a unicameral system with one national parliament since 1953 (the *Folketinget*; Armingeon, Careja, Engler, Potolidis, Gerber, and Leimgruber 2010; Hansen, Steen, and de Jong 2013).

Although the monarch (Margrethe the second) *formally* possesses executive power, this power is strictly ceremonial. Executive authority is exercised by the government, which is led by the prime minister (*statsministeren*), who appoints the other ministers that collectively make up the government. These ministers are responsible to the Parliament.

The Danish Parliament is the national legislature. It has the ultimate legislative authority based on the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty. The Parliament consists of 175 members from Denmark, plus two from

Greenland and two from the Faroe Islands. The Danish political system has traditionally generated coalitions. Most Danish postwar governments have been coalition governments that do not have legislative majority in the Parliament but rely on support from nongovernment parties. Thus, they do not have a majority against them.

Organizational-Administrative Culture

The Danish civil service is fundamentally organized as a Weberian merit bureaucracy (Christensen 2004; Hansen and Salomonsen 2011; Weber 1947), with career civil servants appointed on the basis of their educational, professional, and managerial merits, not on their political affiliation.

In the 1950s, employees had civil service status with lifelong tenure, government-paid pensions, and economic guarantees against being fired or transferred to an inferior position. Although remnants of this system are still present in the contracts of the permanent secretaries, since then, the system for the majority of civil servants has fundamentally changed. In the early 1970s, new legislation opened up fixed-term contracts for managerial positions in the central administration, although this option was rarely exercised until the 1990s. Today, with a few notable exceptions, such as the permanent secretaries, individually negotiated fixed-term contracts with performance-related pay are standard for high-ranking managers in the Danish public sector. This system gradually gained prominence in the 1990s, was formally institutionalized in 1998, and has since then been adopted almost universally but with significant variations in its practical execution and importance (Binderkrantz and Christensen 2012; Bruun 2000; Gregory and Christensen 2004; Hansen and Salomonsen 2011).

Generally speaking, international comparative studies of organizational cultures in the Hofstede tradition (Hofstede 2001) indicate that Danish organizations tend to be characterized as egalitarian, with low acceptance of hierarchical power. This picture was by and large confirmed in our interviews with Danish permanent secretaries in 2009, indicating a strengthening of the egalitarian trend in recent decades (Hansen and Salomonsen 2011).

Expectations of Leaders

The long-term trend in the expectations on Danish top civil servants in the state administration is clearly indicated by the evolution in the basic training and career system. On one hand, there has been a change from a focus on rules and legal competencies to an additional focus on strategy, political competences, and leadership and change management. On the other hand, there is also a stable expectation of learning by doing over years of experience in the state administration.

In general, top civil servants are generalists rather than specialists (e.g., doctors, engineers, etc.). Among the generalists, those with legal training have played a major role in the civil service throughout the twentieth century. As noted earlier, historically, the Danish civil service was characterized by a legalistic culture and inhabited by legal professionals. In the 1930s, economists began entering the central administration, many of them inspired by a Keynesian understanding of the role of the state in society. Beginning in the 1960s, political scientists, and later other types of social scientists, entered the ministerial departments, which to a large extent today employ individuals with one of these three types of educational backgrounds (Hansen and Salomonsen 2011), as indicated by the education backgrounds of the 19 permanent secretaries in 2009: nine had a degree in law, six had a degree in economics, and four held a degree in political science (*ibid.*; see Table 9.1).

The career system in the state administration indicates stable expectations of deep knowledge of the formal and informal rules of the system. Less than ten years of employment in different parts of the Danish state administration is highly unusual (only one of a sample of 165 department heads from 1950 to 2009 had less) and a career track outside state administration is also highly unusual. However, there has been a change from staying on a career track within the same ministry to shifting between ministries, agencies, and departments. Thus, the career system has changed from one supporting unique ministerial cultures, to one supporting a more unified administrative culture of the entire state administration.

Where Do Top Civil Servants Currently Receive Their Training?

Since the early 1990s, the basic education of Denmark's top civil servants has increasingly been supplemented by further education and training, with a focus on administration and leadership. Diplomas and master's degrees along the way have become an important signal of the ambition to climb the career ladder. However, once a top civil servant has entered high office, no additional official program for training has thus far been enacted. As for basic educational background, former top civil servants have typically graduated from universities with a background in law and, increasingly, other social science university degrees (see Tables 9.1 and 9.2). In ministries relating to professional and specialist areas, a few top executives had a specialist background as military officers (Ministry of Defence), agronomists (Ministry of the Environment), and doctors (Ministry of Health), but most of these specialists have worked in the more specialized agencies and rarely in the ministerial departments that have been traditionally inhabited by legal professionals. Candidates from universities had and still have to patiently work their way up the hierarchy in order to apply for any top

Table 9.1 Educational background of department heads, in percents (1979, 1989, 1999, 2009)

| | 1979 | 1989 | 1999 | 2009 |
|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Economics | 30.8 percent | 29.6 percent | 31.6 percent | 31.6 percent |
| Law | 61.5 percent | 59.3 percent | 36.8 percent | 47.4 percent |
| Political science | 0 percent | 0 percent | 15.8 percent | 21.1 percent |
| Specialist | 0 percent | 0 percent | 0 percent | 0 percent |
| Other | 7.7 percent | 11.1 percent | 15.8 percent | 0 percent |
| Number of respondents / | 26 | 27 | 19 | 19 |
| percent | 100 percent | 100 percent | 100 percent | 100 percent |

Source: Yearbooks: Hof- og statskalenderen, Kraks blå bog; various years. Percentages of known responses.

Table 9.2 Educational background of agency CEOs in percents (1995, 2000, 2005, 2008)

| | 1995 | 2000 | 2005 | 2008 |
|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Economics | 0 percent | 17.1 percent | 16.7 percent | 19.5 percent |
| Law | 55.6 percent | 40.0 percent | 40.7 percent | 38.3 percent |
| Political science | 0 percent | 8.6 percent | 13.0 percent | 9.7 percent |
| Specialist | 44.4 percent | 25.7 percent | 22.2 percent | 21.4 percent |
| Other | 0 percent | 8.6 percent | 7.4 percent | 11.0 percent |
| Number of respondents / | 9 | 35 | 56 | 158 |
| percent | 100 percent | 100 percent | 100 percent | 100 percent |

Source: Contract database.

positions. But, again, there has been a significant change from intraministerial career tracks to interministerial career tracks, permanent secretaries' having experience in other departments and in state agencies has increasingly become the rule rather than the exception. These changes in career system are, however, generally limited to the state administration. No permanent secretaries and very few agency CEOs have experience from the local or regional levels (Survey 1). Moreover, only a few top civil servants have leadership experience in private companies, and only a few agency CEOs and no permanent secretaries have international experience in other jobs.

Before the 1990s, further education of top civil servants was rare, both before and after they entered leadership positions. There is still a strong tradition of "learning by doing" (Løllike 2012), and, over time, top civil servants are expected to obtain the relevant skills, knowledge, and attitudes on the job.

Today, some of the older traditions and cultures have fallen by the wayside, while others still persist. Both agency CEOs and permanent secretaries still graduate from universities. Tables 9.1 and 9.2 present the educational background of the top civil servants (permanent secretaries and agency CEOs) for various years. Both tables indicate a shift among top executives from having a background in law and being specialists (for agency CEOs), toward having a generalist educational background in economics or political science. The category "specialist" covers engineers, officers, doctors, and so on.

In Denmark there has been a significant professionalization of leadership in the public sector, and the top civil servants are no exception on this trend. Thus, to a larger extent, top civil servants are promoted on the basis of leadership training and experience rather than on professional skills and knowledge. And despite there being no formalized training requirements of top civil servants, it is increasingly an informal norm that to reach the highest positions, top civil servants must persistently seek training and inspiration (Interview Lollike 2013). For instance, the Ministry of Finance specifies that top civil servants need general experience and relevant leadership development, and has recently developed a document outlining the relevant qualifications of top officials—interministerial experience being one of them. Accordingly, most top civil servants have followed national or international training programs, engaged in professional networks, and so forth. Furthermore, top civil servants tend to ask for, and appreciate, leadership training. Typically, they spend ten days a year in training, but they actually would like to spend more time learning (Survey 2). Cultural changes in the training of top civil servants are confirmed by the fact that young top civil servants in particular express a stronger need for training than their older and more experienced colleagues (Survey 5). To some extent, this may be because the younger top civil servants spend less time in training (Survey 2), but it also reflects differences in the positions of the older and younger top civil servants. Thus, top civil servants at the higher positions tend to be less concerned about training and find they already have the qualifications needed. Permanent secretaries notably spend very little time in training (Survey 2), and, to a larger extent than others, they express a desire to spend more time in further training (Survey 2005). However, civil servants in the higher-ranking positions find it more challenging than their colleagues to find relevant training programs (Lollike 2012).

The Content and Structure for Training Top Civil Servants

Despite the increased emphasis on training and leadership training, it is not mandatory for Denmark's top civil servants. No obligatory systematic and formalized training programs exist. On the contrary, it is an established tradition that training and education is voluntary, and top civil servants

have the freedom to decide whether to pursue more training and what training programs they wish to follow. This means that the training of top civil servants does not follow any regular pattern but tends to be very individualized. Accordingly, the training is to a large extent financed by individual budgets of the various departments, and it is often the top civil servants themselves who plan their individual training programs.

As mentioned earlier, an informal norm of training exists and most top officials participate more or less in their own personalized informal training program. In 2009, 42 percent of the responding top civil servants had created an individual training plan (Survey 5). Top civil servants themselves prefer a broad range of training programs to arrange their own individual training paths (Forum for offentlig topledelse 2007). This means that the institutions offering training programs for top civil servants have to contact the executives individually, which is often difficult since it is hard for top executives to decide whether they have the time for training (Greve 2013). The individual perspective on training programs means that no formal evaluation of these programs can be initiated by the state administration. Individuals do assess and evaluate their training, but often the assessments of the various programs are spread among top executives verbally.

In Denmark, the training of top civil servants is not initiated exclusively for top executives in the state administration. Top servants from the local levels (regions and municipalities) are also included, and training programs are often developed across the three administrative levels of the Danish public sector. Accordingly, a more generic perspective on leadership training is applied. To some extent, this may be due to the relatively small amount of top civil servants in Denmark who influence the possibilities for, and profitability of, developing formalized training programs for top civil servants at the central administration only. Furthermore, the exchange of ideas and inspiration among top executives from different administrative levels is given priority and is considered essential for the development of the Danish public sector in general. The cross-sectional and cross-level training of top civil servants means that, to a greater degree than before, top executives follow career paths across sectors and administrative levels. However, rotation of positions across the various levels is still rare.

The training programs for top executives tend to last only a few weeks, and very few top civil servants would sign up for a training program that was any longer. This may be because top civil servants do not have the time for extensive training programs (Survey 2) and generally feel that they already possess the qualifications needed for their positions (Survey 1). Civil servants do, themselves, ask for more systematic training programs (Lollike 2013), but they still appreciate the possibility and freedom they have to find individual programs. Thus, their requests for training are more a question of getting inspired than improving their professional and technical

skills. Accordingly, their training programs often teach broad perspectives on leadership instead of following narrower and more technical paths.

Despite the appreciation of cross-sectional and cross-level training programs, a number of short, in-government training programs exist at the state level. These are often developed within the individual ministries only, or in cooperation between departments. Lately, study trips to China are a trend (Løllike 2012). For instance, such a trip could be arranged by the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Education. The trip may include visiting Chinese party-affiliated schools, studying how they work with leadership development, and overall, experiencing what is happening in a country of high growth (Løllike 2012). Most in-government programs are, however, attended by civil servants at lower positions.

Top civil servants achieve a large portion of their training through network activities. One such formalized network is the Forum for Top Executive Management, which is probably the strongest and most inspirational network for Danish top civil servants. The forum is a loosely organized cooperation among top civil servants across the state, regional, and municipal levels. It was established in 2003 by the Danish Ministry of Finance, the association of Danish municipalities (Local Government Denmark), and the association of the Danish Regions (Danish Regions). These are also the main financial contributors. Its first activity was to develop a code of conduct for top civil servants to guide the activities and ethics of top officials. The aim of the Forum for Top Executive Management is to further establish working networks of top civil servants and foster ongoing debate about what constitutes good executive-level management among researchers and top civil servants in Denmark in order to inspire and engage top executives (www.publicgovernance.dk). Twice a year, the forum arranges conferences that feature presentations from other top executives, scientists, advisers, and business executives. Most top executives across the three levels of government participate in the conferences, at which they have the opportunity to discuss different issues, both formally and informally. Moreover, the forum facilitates seven networks across top civil servants, each with an interest in a specific topic. Despite the fact that the forum does not offer any formalized training programs, it is an important player in the informal training of top officials (www.publicgovernance.dk) and almost all top civil servants are guided by the code of conduct (Survey 4). Initiation of The Forum for Top Executive Management has meant increased interaction and cooperation among top civil servants across the state, regional, and municipal levels.

In the late 2000s, the Copenhagen Business School (CBS) developed a formalized training program for top civil servants based on the code of conduct. The program consists of an international executive development trip; about 20 top civil servants visit a university in the United States (the past several years, Washington University) for one week, where they receive training and inspiration from a number of international (especially,

American) researchers and top officials and visit various American institutions. Before and after going abroad, the top civil servants receive training in Denmark to prepare for the discussions and ensuing translation and implementation of international perspectives. The top officials are accompanied by two Danish professors who translate the different lectures into a Danish context. The aspect of translating is emphasized by the top civil servants, just as the fact that the program is only for top officials. The program applies a very broad perspective on leadership and in the first of the programs the code of conduct (www.publicgovernance.dk) was the point of departure.

Other programs for the top civil servants in public administration have also been initiated, but none of them, except for the CBS program, has been institutionalized as a permanent program. For instance, a Danish consulting company arranges a recurring trip to New York. The program, however, has a much narrower focus, with an emphasis on performance management, and especially the measuring of effects and public values. The participants include fewer civil servants occupying the highest positions. This is probably because executives at upper levels ask for much broader educational programs that emphasize training, and involve other top civil servants with positions similar to their own. The program is also more popular in some policy areas (especially the Department of Employment), but a number of executives from different sectors have participated in the program. The top executives highlight the networking possibilities, with dialogue between top civil servants and international colleagues being given priority in the program (Løllike 2012).

Most top civil servants have received training abroad and in international training programs and summer schools at international universities. Courses offered at Harvard and Stanford Universities and the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania are especially popular (Løllike 2012). The courses often last from one to three weeks and apply a broad perspective on leadership. Thus, the overarching focus tends to be on strategizing, leadership, human resources, globalizing, and innovation. The combination of a strong focus on empirical cases and highly qualified teachers are the main reasons top civil servants emphasize these programs (Løllike 2012).

Over the last few years, training for civil servants has been increasingly formalized. In the 1990s, Danish universities started offering master's programs for executives and, since then, an increasing number of civil servants have enrolled in a master's degree program for leadership. In 2009, as part of the so-called quality reform, the government put an even stronger emphasis on the leadership training of public servants in top positions. Accordingly, the Danish Ministry of Finance, Local Government Denmark, and Danish Regions, and a number of unions, together with most of the Danish universities, initiated a flexible master's program in leadership for executives (Greve 2013). The program has been an enormous success, and since 2009, more than 1,000 civil servants have participated. For civil servants, an executive

master's degree in leadership (Master of Public Governance, MPG; master of public administration, MPY; and master of public management, MPM) has to some extent become the generally accepted entrance requirement for the higher positions and recently, a number of municipalities began requiring a master's degree for applicants seeking the top positions. In the state administration, a similar formalized demand is not as yet present, but it appears that if preleadership training becomes more important in order to enter the higher grades of civil service, it may well become the standardized prerequisite to reach higher government positions.

Conclusion

Since medieval times, the Danish civil service has changed from a system inhabited by nobility (1100–1700) to a Weberian bureaucracy inhabited by legal professionals (1800 through the 1950s) to a kind of neo-Weberian bureaucracy inhabited by a more heterogeneous group of social science academics (1960–2000s) who increasingly see themselves as both bureaucrats and leaders. In Pollitt and Bouckaert's terms (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011), the current Danish system can be characterized as a Neo-Weberian State, having incorporated important elements from the New Public Management movement.

Top civil servants in the state administration (department heads and agency CEOs) typically have a university degree in social science (law, economics, or political science) and years of experience in the Danish state administration, and few have experience in other contexts. Since the 1990s, diploma (provided by university colleges) and master's level programs (provided by universities) in public management have steadily become part of the career track to the top civil servant positions. Additionally, there has been an increased focus on strategy, political competencies, leadership, and change management. Still, however, there are no formal training requirements, and there is a stable expectation of learning by doing over years of experience within the state administration. This means that most top civil servants receive their training abroad or enter ad hoc programs.

Top civil servants achieve a large portion of their training via networking activities, which include interactions between top civil servants from both the central and local levels. In 2003, the Forum for Top Executive Management in the Danish public sector was established (www.publicgov-ernance.dk) as an important professional network of top civil servants. The forum is made up of top servants from the state, municipalities, and regions, and has formulated the Danish Code for Chief Executive Excellence in public governance. It has had some impact in setting an agenda, organizing public sector CEO networks, and enhancing discourse on good governance. However, formal education programs for top CEOs once they have entered their position have been hard to establish.

Note

1. The database was originally developed for a research project on leadership and contracting.

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10

Finland

Turo Virtanen

Introduction

Finland was part of Sweden 700 hundred years before it came under the rule of Russia, from 1809 to 1917. The historical background of Finnish civil service lies in the strengthening of the Swedish monarchy in the sixteenth century (Tiihonen and Ylikangas 1992). The top positions on the collegial boards were held by aristocrats, with no formal qualifications required.

In the eighteenth century, a hierarchical ranking system of positions was established. After the War of Finland between Sweden and Russia (1808–1809), Finland was made a grand duchy of imperial Russia. This status lasted until 1917, after which Finland became independent. Laws were, to a great extent, prepared and implemented by the Finnish Senate. In 1817, an act specifying the qualifications for state offices was passed, requiring a university education for all but the highest positions. For the highest positions, only the political support of the ruler was needed, and there was no public application for these posts.

The Swedish tradition of a strong and aristocratic central government was a fruitful background for competing with the imperial powers of St. Petersburg. It is often argued that the relatively strong position of central government in the Finnish political system had its genesis in the need to develop an autonomous civil service during the period of Russian rule. Finnish lawyers were favored over Swedish lawyers and soldiers who had been educated in the Russian army. Together with the proliferation of legal norms and the introduction of a system of government based on laws—common features in all European countries of that time—lawyers' influence increased the autonomy of Finland. At its peak, nearly all upper civil servants were lawyers in the agencies organized under the senate.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries during the Russian rule, the tradition of recruiting aristocratic bureaucrats from noble families was challenged by the pressure to make civil service more Russian (Savolainen 1996). It was countered in a political movement aimed at maintaining and