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# **Dutch civil service leadership torn between managerial and policy oriented leadership roles**

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## **ABSTRACT**

NPM-reforms are assumed to have led to a professional managerial, entrepreneurial model of public sector leadership. We discuss the impact of a generic managerial focus of the senior civil service on the original balance in the double role of bureaucratic leadership, namely to act both as the manager of the department and to help shape politics within the departments' sectoral policy field. We use the case of the Dutch senior civil service to examine to what extent public sector leaders are taking up a new role as 'managerialist leaders' and, if so, what are the implications for government. We discuss the danger of stimulating what will be called a 'vicious cycle of managerialisation' that decreases bureaucracy's capacity to take up a (generalist) policy expert and policy advisory role and might also lead to a (new) impetus towards the politicization of part of the administrative summit through increasing the role and size of political and personal advisors to the political executives.

## **Dutch civil service leadership torn between managerial and policy oriented leadership roles**

### **Introduction**

Given the traditionally highly opinionated nature and perhaps also the Calvinist heritage of Dutch society it is sometimes told that every Dutchman envisions him or herself as a chosen leader of a group often consisting of just one person. Leadership is thus not easily perceived and followed. This trend in Dutch society is perhaps a little exaggerated. Even so, discussing Dutch top civil servants in terms of administrative leaders (let alone adding the adjective political-administrative) has long seemed inappropriate in Dutch society. Not only the legal constitutional approach predominant in the past has been responsible for this caution, but also the tainted nature of the concept given European history and the often boasted non-elitist nature of Dutch society. Nevertheless in the slipstream of (public) management literature leadership issues have reached academia in the past decades and from there have spread into government. The latter has been made easy as although leadership theory frequently differentiates between leaders and management executives (e.g. Bennis & Nanus 1985), in public administration literature the terms ‘manager’ and ‘leader’ are often used interchangeably (Jreisat 1999).

NPM-reforms have put a focus on the distinct roles of so-called public sector managers, and are assumed to have led to a professional managerial, entrepreneurial model of public sector leadership taking precedence over both the so-called ‘stewardship perspective’, perceiving public leaders as guardians of public goods and values by deriving legitimacy from conformity to bureaucratic rules and elected politicians (e.g. Denis et al 2005) and the political-advisory role, based on public sector leaders’ professional knowledge of the policy field. What is of central interest in this study, is the extent to which a more generic managerial focus of the senior civil service - outlined in this paper as a distinct civil service mode of leadership- has an impact on the original balance in the double role of bureaucratic leadership, namely to act both as the manager of the department and to help shape politics within the specific departments’ sectoral policy field (cf. Page and Wright 2007: 230). In this paper we use the case of the Dutch senior civil service to examine to what extent public sector leaders are taking up a new role as ‘managerialist leaders’. When this might be true we will have to look into the implications for government. Will this growing managerial capacity in the public service constituting a new kind of senior civil service specialization also contain the danger of stimulating what will be called a ‘vicious cycle of managerialisation’ and thus decrease bureaucracy’s capacity to take up a (generalist) policy expert and policy advisory role? A development in the latter direction might lead to a (new) impetus

towards the politicization of part of the administrative summit through increasing the role and size of political and personal advisors to the political executives.

In order to answer our research questions, we will first look at what is meant by professionalized management or managerialist leadership. We will confront this concept with the concept of the generalist senior civil servant holding leadership capacity. As managerial leadership has been closely associated with NPM, this NPM context is taken in consideration. In addition, we will examine civil service autonomy and professionalism thus leading to a discussion of whether senior civil service is mainly relying on a professional or managerial power base. After this more general discussion, we focus on the case of the Dutch top civil servants and the development of the *Algemene Bestuursdienst* (ABD - the Dutch Senior Civil Service). First, we look into the political-administrative setting of the Dutch (senior) civil service systems. Next, we look into the structural aspects of civil service leadership in central government. Following, we analyse the ABD's influence on Dutch senior civil service leadership styles. Finally, we answer our question regarding implications of managerialism involving the managerial vicious cycle and politicization.

## **Developments in civil service leadership**

### *The nature of professionalized management and leadership in the public sector*

In the study of public management, a number of authors focus on the position of 'professionals' with the public service (e.g. Exworthy and Halford 1999, Fitzgerald and Ferlie 2000, Freidson 2001, Ferlie and Geraghty 2005). Ideal-type characteristics of a profession are defined as application of systematic theoretical knowledge; absence of a 'standardized' product; authority and autonomy based on the application of specific knowledge and skills by the professional; generation of public surplus value leading to public support; and professional culture and ethical code outlined and maintained by the professionals as a group (Trommel 2006 based on Greenwood 1966).<sup>1</sup>

In outlining who are these professionals or what kind of professions one is talking about, often the explicit reference is made to contradictions between 'expert-professionals' and 'non-professional managers'. Flynn outlines the ideal-type contradictory forms of managerialism and professionalism as shown in table 1:

- Insert Table 1 here -

Next to defining managerialism and professionalism as two distinct ideal-types as outlined in the above table, managerialism is also defined by pointing at the management focus on 'process': management as "getting things done through people" (cf. Mary Parker Follet). Defined as such, the managerial role (again) stands directly opposite to the professional policy-advisory role which has a focus on 'content' rather than 'process'.

NPM reforms have further fuelled the debate on professionalization versus managerialization in public service delivery (e.g. du Gay 1996; Exworthy and Halford 1999; Freidson 2001; FitzGerald & Ferlie 2000). Building on the conception that generic management does extent over specific policy borders, in senior civil servant positions managerial competencies are preferred over professionalism based on a knowledge and handling of policy fields.

However, we have to be careful for oversimplifications.

On the one hand, Flynn signals that NPM related reforms such as flexibilization and fragmentation lead to a constant redefinition and re-composition of the public sector and as such, are leading to "constant questioning of the roles of, and boundaries between, managers and professionals in the public sector" (Flynn 1999: 21). Moreover, the case could be made for defining the manager's role itself as a specific profession with the basis of expertise being managerial skills and with managerial authority and autonomy being based on the application of these skills by professional managers. As such, the 'professional manager' or 'managerialist leader' can be seen as a distinct civil service mode of leadership.

On the other hand, there is an older alternative mode. Traditionally, senior civil servants have always de-specialized during their journey through hierarchy, developing into generalist serving in leadership positions. That generalist attitude contained a management aspect in terms of keeping the organization running, but at the same time it also included giving advice to the political officeholders on certain plans; as has been described by Peter Self as an appraisal function relating to policy content, as separated from the mainly procedural management perspective on process (Self, 1972). We then have a leading senior civil service with a generalist orientation mixing content with procedure. In the 1960s and 1970s that generalist perspective was criticized by an emphasis on specific (and often technocratic) knowledge in the policymaking process rationalizing and objectifying decision making and thus faintly reminiscent of the new managerialist approach.

What we question in this paper is to what extent the managerialist leadership conception (focused on process) has gained on the generalist one (focusing both on process and content). We will examine this by taking up a comparative and administrative historical analysis of the contexts of these alternative modes of civil service leadership.

### *The context of alternative modes of civil service leadership*

At the end of the eighteenth century, together with the establishment of the Rechtsstaat or the rule of law in Western-Europe, a legal-rational bureaucracy developed (Page and Wright 1999, Raadschelders and Rutgers 1996). In their historical account of the development of civil service systems, Raadschelders and Rutgers describe how during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, the legal position of civil servants was formalised and standardised, the merit principle was introduced through reform of recruitment and selection procedures, reward structures were regulated and standardised, and rules and regulations relating to the position of civil servants towards the political officeholders were adopted. A protected civil service developed, but also rapid increase in the size and range of government activity gave rise to the civil service increasingly becoming ‘professionalised’ and civil servants, in the later part of the twentieth century, becoming more autonomous players in policymaking processes (Raadschelders and Rutgers 1996). Bekke and VanderMeer point out that the modelling of the civil service as a professional service varies both over time and in different systems. Since the adjectives ‘merit’ and ‘professionalism’ are closely associated, the meaning of ‘professional’ depends on the merit criteria in a certain civil service system for a given period (Bekke and VanderMeer 2000). Also, they point out that the model is a general one, with the Belgian case being an example of how traditional, clientelistic relationships may persist (Bekke and VanderMeer 2000).<sup>ii</sup>

The Dutch civil service system below the senior level has mostly been defined as a decentralized job-specific system, characterized by civil servants being recruited for a job instead of a career and personnel management issues being handled by ministerial departments and decentralised units within these departments and resulting in low interdepartmental mobility (VanderMeer & Roborgh 1993; VanderMeer & Dijkstra 2000). In outlining civil service systems in Western-Europe, Bekke and VanderMeer show that next to this decentralised function-oriented model, two career models can be distinguished (Bekke & VanderMeer 2000).

First, there is the *professional/specialist career system*. In this specialised variant of the career system, civil servants belong to specific professional corps and have entered these corps after specialised education (e.g. from the French *Grandes écoles*; remark however that even the elite French *Ecole Nationale d'Administration* and the *Ecole Polytechnique* provide a rather general basic preparation and training becomes more specialised later on). While the career system characterised by officials trained in specific professions is typically identified with the French and Spanish corps systems, specialised career systems consists in most countries albeit in specific sub-sectors of the public service as for instance the police, the judiciary, the military, and

the Foreign Service and diplomatic corps. The specific nature of the corps makes that, alike in the decentralized job-specific system, interdepartmental mobility is limited, and also that senior civil servants' leadership is not equated with managerialism.

Second, there is the *general career system* consisting of so-called 'amateur' civil servants. The term 'amateur' here is not to denote that civil servants are lacking skills and are not 'up to the job', but rather that as 'amants' of the civil service, a narrow profession or policy field-specific view is avoided. Being a civil servant is seen as holding a general attitude (including a 'public service ethos'), rather than as a specific profession. While the technocratic perspective as deployed in the 1960's looked down on this generalist view of professionalism –criticizing the generalists for having no skills at all-, in the traditional civil service model in the United Kingdom, for instance, the generalist (senior) civil servant was seen as the ideal of a civil service professional.

In focussing on civil service leadership types, we denote a third form of career system - one, however, that could also be depicted as a special form of the previously outlined general career system-, in which professionalism is equated with managerialism. Here, focus is on the generic management orientation of senior civil servants (their managerial skills, rather than policy professionalism). This leadership type can be applied to the Senior Executive Service in the United States. Also, while in the Netherlands the civil service system below the senior level falls under a decentralised function-oriented system, with the introduction of the *Algemene Bestuursdienst* a general, managerial-oriented career system has been implemented for the top-level officials.

### *Civil service leadership and professional autonomy in the public service*

In the traditional generalist civil service leadership mode, as outlined above, the power of senior civil servants derives both from their hierarchical position -a managerial source of power-, and their (access to) institutional expertise -a professional source of power (cf. Page and Wright 2007). Central to the definition of 'professionalism' is the autonomy of the professional (with control being limited to large extent to peer-group control). Claims to autonomy are based on the professionals' knowledge and skills. This inherent discretionary character of professional work is also central to the controversy over professionals exercising too much power and the demand for professionals to be made more accountable to (and as such more easily controlled and regulated by) –depending on the discussion- politicians, managers or the public. At the end of the twentieth century, a high level of trust in policy oriented professionalism and leadership has been replaced by mistrust and doubts as to competence and altruistic nature of professionals (cf. Flynn 1999: 19). This has given way to rigorous performance measurement and output control (Exworthy and

Halford 1999; Ferlie and Geraghty 2005), top-down politicization of the civil service<sup>iii</sup> including the expanded use of alternative sources of advice (political appointees, private consultants, think tanks, etc.), and the locus of control and decision making moving away to an internalized management function (Ferlie and Geraghty, 2005). Not only in countries where the position of senior civil servants has traditionally been rather limited, but also in those countries where the civil service traditionally enjoyed a higher status in policy making, the decline in the social and educational distinctiveness of the higher civil service appears to have led to a fundamental loss of deference and as such undermines the role of the senior civil service, with the only way out being to focus on more 'relevant' forms of expertise, that is managerial skills (Page and Wright 2007: 232-233).

If the hypothesized trend of generic management orientation becoming dominant in administrative leadership and a managerialist leadership taking possession of the senior civil service is true, crucial then is the assessment if this in turn leads to a focus on 'content and process' being replaced by a focus on 'process' solely, resulting in a loss of the valuable policy advice function of the leaders within the service delivering organisations. In order to answer this, we analyse the case of the Dutch senior civil servants, looking into the implications of the development of the *Algemene Bestuursdienst*.

## **Dutch civil service leadership**

### *The political-administrative setting of the Dutch (senior) civil service systems: the wider context*

Before looking at what is to be understood by civil service leadership in Dutch central government and discussing in which direction leadership has developed, we first have to provide insight in the wider context of the Dutch personnel system and management.

Both Dutch society and the political administrative system have been described in terms of fragmentation. Although it is less pregnant, less formalized and fragmented along different lines, Dutch society has been described as a consociational society. In political and administrative terms, the fragmentation in society has been translated in a dominant coalition form of government and, given the relatively central political authority in the executive, in a departmental system with much power vested in the separate departmental organizations. In addition the bureaucratic system was considered inflexible and not able to overcome compartmentalization. Rather fragmentation was reinforced given the dominant departmental cultures and the low rate of inter-departmental mobility. This high level of departmental fragmentation has been a dominant fea-

ture of the political-administrative system since the introduction of the parliamentary system in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Dijkstra & VanderMeer 2000), but came under pressure from the early 1980s on, when the negative side effects of fragmentation were increasingly considered problematic and frustrating public service delivery.

Coinciding and reinforcing this perception of a need for fundamental change in the structure of Dutch central government and in the structure and functioning of the civil service was the slow change from a more all encompassing role of central government in society to a so-called enabling role of the state whilst operating in a multi-level governance context.<sup>iv</sup> This shift put similar demands on the civil service to adapt (VanderMeer 2002; Page & Wright 2007; Raadschelders, Toonen & VanderMeer 2007). Therefore, from the early 1980s onwards, there was a widespread felt need to reform the (senior) civil service and to counter the alleged high level of rigidity in the bureaucratic system. As human resources are at the centre of a civil service system, reforming the public personnel systems was to be one of the priorities. The traditional (classic bureaucratic) system was considered to be responsible for the situation and an alternative was sought and found. In the more business inclined climate of the day the doors were opened to NPM style reforms. Under the heading of Human Resource Management (HRM), reforms aimed to introduce more flexibility in for instance deployment rules, decreasing or even abolishing the specific public law nature of the civil service status, introducing more flexible and performance related remuneration systems and introducing initiatives to limit the terms of office of senior civil servants by separating the duration of posting to a particular job and life long employment (Bekke and VanderMeer 2000; VanderMeer et al 2007). At the start, many of the HRM programs were targeted at the more senior levels of the civil service as the programs initially were considered prestigious and more appropriate to these levels given the early emphasis on management development issues.

Interesting enough, on the longer run HRM had an effect that was countering some essential NPM characteristics. As described above the traditional Dutch central government was based mainly on a job system with a high degree of decentralization of recruitment and other personnel management aspects to individual department units and agencies. This traditional feature is very much in accordance with NPM doctrine given the element of integral and hands on management. The weakness of the job system is that, as most civil servants during their active working life remain within (in this case) central government, there is little incentive in the system toward career development, training and (interdepartmental) mobility. The job system thus can enhance inflexibility in civil service. Therefore elements of a general career system have been introduced from the late 1980s. These have more fully developed in the 1990s through the creation of man-

agement development programs and a full executive career system, the *Algemene Bestuursdienst* (Senior Executive Service, abbreviated in Dutch as ABD). These career aspects might seem to oppose the NPM nature of personnel reform, but the promotion of the reforms was wrapped up in managerial arguments. Managerialism was seen as a way to come to grips with criticism on the inflexibility of the bureaucratic system. By joining the critics room to manoeuvre and partly adapt could be created. Over time that managerial perspective caught on particularly with the civil service leadership as we will see.

### *Civil service leadership in central government: a structural perspective*

Before we can examine the changes in the nature of Dutch civil service leadership and explore to what extent it has changed from a policy orientated to a managerial leadership style, we have to determine who are considered part of Dutch central government civil service leadership. Civil service leadership is used here as a neutral and non charismatic concept. It merely implies the activity of directing or being in charge. Charismatic leadership - be it on a societal, political, let alone a civil service level – is in general widely distrusted in Dutch society.

As argued, of old it has been very difficult to define Dutch civil service leadership (Raadschelders & VanderMeer 1999). Up to recently, an executive class of civil servants did not exist, nor for that matter, were they considered to constitute administrative elite. Popular explanations provided point to a seeming egalitarian nature of society and a Calvinist based culture. Before the mid 1990s there were no reasonable objective criteria to distinguish top civil servants. In practice, the list could include the secretaries-general, the directors-general, directors and some other high ranking civil servants. Not in a legal sense, but very much in standing the first two groups did stand aside. Till 1988 the secretaries-general were not formally named as the highest ranking civil servants in a ministry. There exists no hierarchy among the secretaries-general given the coalition cabinet structure with a prime minister that operates formally as a *primus inter pares*. Several explanations can be provided for this fairly late decision to name the secretary-general as the chief departmental civil servant. The directors-general are the leading policy advisors and (increasingly policy) managers of the larger policy units and they had and have a direct access to the political officeholders. They control large parts of the departmental budget. In practice some director-generals can be more influential than the secretary-general given the policy field, personalities and departmental culture involved. In addition a possible explanation is that during the Second World War the secretaries-general remained in the occupied territories, while the cabinet and Queen went in exile in Britain. The secretaries-general, united in the Council of secretaries-general, became the governing power next to/after the Germans. Their staying in the Netherlands

and holding on to power, particular in the later stage of the War, was heavily criticized after 1945. After the Second World War, the secretaries-general were mainly responsible for running the ministerial organization and for providing general policy advice. In some (personal) cases they could prove to be really in charge.<sup>y</sup> Formally naming the secretaries-general as the highest civil servants was done in order to improve departmental unity and combat compartmentalization. Changes in practice remained limited at first and depended on both the personal qualities of the secretary-general involved and the administrative culture and history. An important structural change came in the 1990s when the ABD was established and the Council of secretaries-general became more influential as an advisory committee (to the Cabinet).

When discussing the ABD two distinct institutional levels are often confused. There is the ABD itself, which originally consisted of senior civil servants of grades s17-s19. With civil servants from the level of director of policy advisory units up (grades s15-s16) also being included, within the ABD a so-called Top Management Group (TMG) was established consisting only of secretaries-general and directors-general (and their functional equivalents). The ABD numbers in total around 800 senior civil servants, of which around 70 belong to the Top Management Group. Before the founding of the ABD, senior civil servants were employed by individual ministries under a (public law) job system. The main purpose of the ABD, to serve as an instrument to combat compartmentalization, was to be achieved by stimulating interdepartmental mobility and promoting a (service wide) civil service professionalism. Members of the Top Management Group have to change positions each seven years at the most. They can change either horizontally or vertically, although very rarely a secretary-general will take a director-general position.

Next to this, there is the Bureau ABD, led by a director-general and formally located in but fairly independent from the Ministry of the Interior. The Bureau ABD serves as a personnel agency for the members of the ABD. It plays an important role in the deployment procedure and (inter)departmental transfers and is developing and implementing new HRM instruments and procedures. Lately it also serves in organizing capacity for mobilizing ABD members for senior interim management positions in central government.

In addition, and also since the 1990s, the secretaries-general have materially reasserted their position mainly through the Council of secretaries-general. Through this council they have, first, a central role in the ABD promotion system, and second, an important advisory role towards conceptualizing proposals to reform central government bureaucracy. This role has been reinforced as in the 2007 government coalition discussion the Council of secretaries-general presented the

coalition partners a White Paper on how to cut central government staff; a suggestion that was readily accepted by the political parties involved.

### *The ABD's influence on Dutch senior civil service leadership styles*

In order to assess the effect of the ABD on the Dutch senior civil service's leadership style we have to go into both the traditional role features of the senior civil servants, as well as the major reasons behind the creation of the ABD in the 1990s.

As discussed earlier, the central purpose for setting up the ABD in 1995 was to provide a service-wide structure for top level civil servants in an attempt to reduce the high degree of departmental fragmentation in policy-making. Policy compartmentalization was already recognized in the 1970s (cf. the External Committee Van Veen) and 1980s (cf. the External Committee Vonhoff) as a fundamental flaw in central government organization. As an interdepartmental dimension of policy making was believed to become more important, fragmentation was seen as hampering both the effectiveness and efficiency of government. In this context a civil service oriented primary on a (specific) policy field could implicitly be equated with stimulating compartmentalization in central government.

In a 1999-note, Peper, at that time Minister of Internal Affairs, discusses the relationship between politics and administration in the Dutch central government and focuses on the administrative accountability of the secretaries-general and directors-general. Their role is described as including not only managerial responsibility, but also end-responsibility as to civil service's task to support political leaders through providing information and policy advice. As such, the generalist civil service leadership role is confirmed (Peper 1999: 37-40). The activities of the Bureau ABD, in particular its management development initiatives and its promotion of HRM management tools, however, can be understood in the context of a dominant managerial attitude existing within the ABD. An example set here are the development programs for senior staff, e.g. the competency framework for senior civil servants. The competency framework seems to have the advantage of enhancing civil service professionalism by creating a distinct civil service identity that combines a managerial and public service ethos (VanderMeer & Toonen 2005: 850). The framework outlines general competencies, since it aims at defining the competencies needed by all top levels in the administration. However, it not only stresses the importance of general managerial competencies, but also it explicitly denotes the specific political-administrative contexts in which senior civil servants operate.<sup>vi</sup> The so-called 'Profieltest persoonlijk leiderschap' (*Profile test personal leadership*) differentiates between managerial competencies and leader-

ship, that is steering for results versus steering based on values and norms. The Bureau ABD produces a differentiated set of instruments aimed at helping (aspirant) senior civil servants to develop their leadership qualities. However, a point of concern remains whether the increased attention for ‘leadership development’ does not go at the expense of attention given to more traditional qualifications, as e.g. professional technical knowledge and expertise (Breed 2005: 22). While trying to enhance civil service wide professionalism by combining a managerial and public leadership ethos, concern has been expressed that interdepartmental mobility/promotion might have helped enhance an (external and internal) managerial orientation that might overrule policy expertise and ‘traditional’ professionalism among Dutch public sector leaders.

But one should be careful not to put too much blame on the ABD. Apart from the ABD and its role in developing civil service (management) professionalism, an important issue has been the progress of a managerial attitude since the early 1980s. The Dutch government reform program started in the 1980 by the Lubbers’ cabinet reoriented reform towards cutbacks and efficiency improvements. Slowly the welfare state was reformed into the direction of an enabling (framework) state. At the same time, the dominant steering approach could be described as gradually being dominated by new public management concepts. Output orientation, product definition and performance management became, at least in official language, dominant conceptions. Thus ‘process’ has become more important than ‘content’. Whereas in the older days top civil servants were describing themselves as ‘leading civil servants’, nowadays the word ‘manager’ is more and more used. When the ABD was created, it was fitted in this context by redirecting senior civil servants’ focus on content to a focus on managing (controlling) processes. To be a manager sounds more appealing than just being a senior civil servant. Using the more private sector feel of the manager concept and seemingly clear and sharp management tools, a certain kind of security against societal and political criticism can be found. In addition, a managerial approach gives the impression of being based on solid facts and has the tinge of a technical (perhaps) technocratic approach in contrast with the messiness of every political and administrative life plagued by ambiguous goals, values and conflicting political ambitions.

### *Managerialism and politicization*

And yet, political ambitions have to be translated into policy visions and those into policy actions that lead to meaningful action and results in society. The new Balkenende III government has argued the number of policy advisory civil servants has to be reduced because of need for “more action and less plans”. However, we argue that the real problem is one of shortage of policy vision, on the one hand, and too much management control procedures, on the other hand. The dis-

satisfaction with government among the public is about failing public service delivery and about all kind of procedures; the majority of those latter related to an excessive performance management system. With the increasing supremacy of the managerial perspective less attention is focused on the policy dimensions of the senior civil servants' work. As such, contrasting with the increasing awareness of the political context of public service delivery and the increasing tendency for civil servants to be party members (VanderMeer et al 2007), the managerialization of the senior civil service causes a bottom up style of de-politicization through its focus on technical rationality.

In one of its advisory reports, the Dutch Council for Public Administration (*Raad voor Openbaar Bestuur*) discusses the administrative culture in central government (Rob 2004). In the report attention is paid to the tension between top civil servants' role as advisors to the political officeholders and their role as leaders with an own societal responsibility. The latter includes focussing not solely on functional responsibility, but also on authenticity and integrity. Opponents of a pure managerialist civil service leadership model emphasize the distinctiveness of the public sector (cf. Noordegraaf & Teeuw 2003). Likewise, while trying to define 'excellent civil service leadership', Korsten assesses that in the Dutch context a entrepreneurial civil service leadership model is preferred over a technocratic leadership model, but also that the rise of the managerialist model leads to redefining the need for administrative integrity (Korsten 2005: 10-11).

Despite the above described awareness of the differences between managerial competencies and civil service leadership (steering for results versus steering based on values and norms), these tendencies are in accordance with managerialisation provoking a concern about public service ethos (Steen 2006). In this context an additional point of concern is that managerialization of the senior civil service can lead to a new politicization of the civil service function: While in the formal NPM doctrine the classical 'politico-administrative' dichotomy is emphasized, absence of general policy advice, the so-called appraisal function, provokes political officeholders to look for alternative sources through the means of political or personal advisors.

## **Conclusion**

The question that was put forward here is whether the managerial conception of civil service leadership has down-graded senior civil servants' policy advisory activities. The creation and development of the ABD went hand in hand with a generic management orientation becoming dominant in administrative leadership and (generic) managers taking possession of the senior civil service. However, it is difficult to unravel in how far the 'managerialisation' should be as-

signed primarily to the establishment and functioning of the ABD, or rather if the ABD has merely been a vehicle for convening an at least on the surface dominant ideology of managerialism in the civil service.

This managerialization of the senior civil service causes a bottom up style of depoliticization, through focussing on technical rationality and civil servants' ability to make policies work (i.e. focus on 'process') rather than their policy advisory role (a focus on 'content'). However, at the same time, managerialization of the senior civil service can lead to new top-down politicization since absence of the appraisal function provokes political officeholders to look for alternative sources through the means of political or personal advisors. Overall, the consequence of the dominant managerial perspective of Dutch senior leadership would be a serious reduction of function in terms of Mrs Thatcher's so-called 'can-do' civil servants losing their critical advisory role.

Finally, it is important to notice that the emphasis on technical procedural rationality within the managerial approach can endanger not only the policy advisory role's focus on content, but also the importance attached to what Hood (1991) calls the theta values embedded in the Rechtsstaat norms. The de-professionalization of public administration in terms of non-managerial skills provokes a concern about public service ethos.

A 'managerial vicious circle' could come into existence when in most systems further managerial solutions are seen as the way out of the problems posed by the conflicts discussed above. The demand for a civil service professionalism incorporating ethics and political sensitivity show the limits of the managerial approach. The overall conclusion might well be that we should look for reappraising the uniqueness of civil service, rather than blindly trust in ongoing managerialisation.

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Table 1:

	Managerialism	Professionalism
Source of legitimacy	Hierarchical authority	Expertise
Goals/objectives	Efficiency/profit maximization	Effectiveness/technical competence
Mode of control	Rules/compliance	Trust/dependency
Clients	Corporate	Individuals
Reference group	Bureaucratic superiors	Professional peers
Regulation	Hierarchical	Collegial/self-regulation

Source: Flynn 1999, p.25

<sup>i</sup> While the literature on professionals often refers to specific functions as doctors or teachers, in this paper the concept of professionalism is used as a broader concept, e.g. the policy-advisor as a professional role of the civil servant, or –as explained in the paper- even the concept of the ‘professional manager’ denoting then the professional expertise and autonomy of the management-oriented civil servant.

<sup>ii</sup> Moreover, the Belgian case also is an example of a traditionally very weak position of top civil servants (cf. Brans & Steen 2007).

<sup>iii</sup> Following Peters and Pierre (2004) we distinguish between bottom-up and top-down politicization. Bottom up politicization pertains to the increase of political activity by civil servants (e.g. party-political allegiance and behavior, a policy-oriented attitude and the awareness of the political context of public service delivery); while top-down politicization involves an increased level of control exerted by government over bureaucrats, when political office-holders try to ensure that opinions and behavior of public servants are made compatible with their own preferences. There’s an extensive repertoire for this (cf. VanderMeer 2002), including political appointment of public officials, use of alternative sources of advise and expertise, deconstruction of a monolithic and integrated ‘bureaucracy’ and changing administrative values.

<sup>iv</sup> The enabling state concept refers to a state that supplies the necessary conditions for the operations of the market society and civil society. This implies an active government that takes up ‘classic tasks’ as looking after a high quality legal and financial system, initiating the necessary -physical, communication and human- infrastructure and serving as a last resort for those that are not able to look after their own. The enabling state concept starts from the premise that a healthy and viable private sector is dependent on an active government. From this perspective the title of the 2007 Page & Wright volume from the active to the enabling state could be criticized.

<sup>v</sup> For instance, a secretary-general of the Justice department in the 1970s was nick-named the viceroy of the department as he was dominant over the junior minister and even the minister himself as some suppose. When a junior minister came in conflict with this secretary-general the minister dropped support for this junior minister and the latter had to resign.

<sup>vi</sup> In this it explicitly contrasts for example with the competency framework for senior civil servants in the UK.