

Administrative Reforms and Competence in Central Government Organizations

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Preface

This paper is written as part of the project «Norwegian central government administration in a 30 years perspective», funded by the Meltzer Foundation. A previous version of the paper was presented at the workshop «Administrative Reform, Democratic Governance and the Quality of Government». ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops, Rennes April 11.–16., 2008. We wish to thank the participants at the workshop and Paul G. Roness for valuable comments on an earlier version of the paper.

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Per Lægreid, project leader

Summary

This paper focuses on administrative competence in the Norwegian central government and its relationship to administrative reforms. Four different types of competence are addressed: *Fachkompetenz*, policy advice skills, managerial competence and boundary-spanning competence. Based on surveys to civil servants in the ministries and central agencies we describe how widespread these areas of competence are in Norwegian central government and how they overlap. The variation in the use of the different areas of competence are analysed from a reform perspective, a structural and a demographic perspective. We find a multiple, partly cumulative and complex competence profile. The variation in competences are first of all related to structural features such as administrative level and structural position, but also reforms elements such as performance management make a difference; and demographic features (education and gender) also have some effect.

Sammendrag

Dette notatet fokuserer på administrativ kompetanse i norsk sentralforvaltning og hvordan denne er knyttet til administrative reformer. Det blir fokusert på fire ulike typer kompetanse: fagkompetanse, policy rådgivning, management kompetanse og grenseoverskridende kompetanse. Basert på spørreundersøkelser til ansatte i departementer og direktorater beskriver vi hvor utbredt disse kompetansetyperne er i norsk sentralforvaltning og hvordan de overlapper. Variasjonene i kompetanse blir analysert med utgangspunkt i et reformperspektiv, et strukturelt og et demografisk perspektiv. Vi finner sammensatte delvis kumulative og komplekse kompetanseprofiler. Variasjonen i kompetanser er først og fremst knyttet til strukturelle faktorer slik som forvaltningsnivå og stillingsnivå, men også reformelementer slik som omfanget av mål- og resultatstyring spiller en rolle, Demografiske faktorer, for eksempel kjønn, har også en viss betydning.

Introduction

Over the past two or three decades the central civil service in many countries has experienced much change and turbulence. Three different phases of development are discernible – the «old» Weberian public administration, the NPM era and, more recently, what has come to be labelled the post-NPM phase (Christensen, Lie and Læg Reid 2007). Some see these as phases of dominance, whereby each new reform wave pushes aside the main features of the former generation and installs its own administrative principles. Another view, and the one we address here, is that each phase involves a rebalancing of existing and new features, including changes in the professional competence of civil servants, so that previous features continue to exist but sometimes in new or hybrid forms (Light 1997, Pierson 2004, Streeck and Thelen 2005). Thus one might face a 'Neo-Weberian Bureaucracy' (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004) or 'the ups and down of bureaucracy' (Olsen 2007). The result is an increase in the complexity of administrative organizations and cultures. When studying the history of the civil service it therefore seems appropriate to take an «archaeological» approach (Læg Reid et al. 2003).

This paper focuses on administrative competence and its relationship to administrative reforms. We ask what the connection is between administrative reforms and the competence profile of civil servants, or whether changes in this profile are dependent on other factors. To what extent will administrative reform influence professional competence? Will new reform ideas and measures primarily supplement the competence profile of civil servants rather than replace it?

We will describe and analyze four different types of competence: a) *Fachkompetenz* – technical knowledge and judgements; b) policy advice competence – policy advice skills, intellectual and moral insights; c) managerial competence – executive and service delivery skills; and d) boundary-spanning competence – boundary-spanning skills, networks. While the first type of competence can be related to traditional public administration, the second and third are more NPM-related, and the fourth has post-NPM features.¹ Thus we will distinguish between a traditional Weberian model of competence, an NPM model and a governance model related to post-NPM (see Peters and Pierre 2006). These categories are inspired by the work of Christopher Hood and Martin Lodge (2006) and used as a basis for the questions asked in a survey of civil servants in Norwegian ministries and central agencies, conducted in 2006–07.

In this paper we will first describe how widespread these areas of competence are in Norwegian central government and how they overlap. Second, we will try to explain variation in the use of the different areas of competence, based on the use of NPM and post-NPM reform tools, and contrast these with structural features (such as tasks, administrative level and position) and demographic features (such as gender, age and education). But before we address those questions we will elaborate on the central

¹ The second type could also possibly be connected to the 'old Weberian public administration'. In 1955 a new doctrine on the relationship between ministries and agencies was formulated in Norway, built on the principle that technical tasks should be moved to agencies and the administrative part of the ministries should give the political leadership policy advice and help with planning, to give the political executive a more strategic profile. This doctrine reemerged under NPM, but with a clearer division between politics and administration (Christensen 2003).

concepts of competence; give a brief outline of the competence reforms and the Norwegian context; and present our theoretical perspectives which are a reform perspective, a structural and a demographic perspective.

Central concepts – competence

Competence is a complex concept. A traditional meaning of competence is the formal and legal authority of a civil servant or a public body. But the term can also be understood as the theoretically and practically based ability of individual civil servants to perform specific tasks (Hood and Lodge 2004, Lodge and Hood 2003). It is this latter meaning of the term that will be applied in this paper. Competencies are about what civil servants are expected to be able to know or do (Hood and Lodge 2006). The skills, expertise and abilities of civil servants are important features and core issues of modern bureaucracies.

Competence is a central theme in contemporary reforms in public administration. Over the last twenty years there has been a renewed debate about what types of competence are most important for senior civil servants and whether administrative reforms presuppose a change in competence to meet new challenges. A central debate has been about neutral versus responsive competence (Aberbach and Rockman 1994). Traditionally the Weberian bureaucracy focused on *Fachkompetenz*, which stressed expertise in a subject as the basis for providing effective policy advice to politicians and public decision-making processes. Subject expertise and technical skills form the core of the traditional bureaucratic approach to competence, but they will, of course, be important in any period or context.

The New Public Management movement, which focused on managerialism, applying business management ideas in the public sector and a customer-focused approach, is associated with changes in emphasis regarding the competence of civil servants. Contemporary approaches to competence are heavily influenced by private-sector models (Page, Hood and Lodge 2005). The NPM reforms thus pay more attention to strategic and managerial capacity and the ability to lead and deliver services. There is, however, some disagreement about how strong this link is, how it converges across countries and how much it is constrained by the historical-institutional context of the different public administration systems (Hood and Lodge 2004). A comparison of England and Germany concludes that the changes brought about in competence frameworks tended to reinforce established ideas rather than go in radically different directions (Hood and Lodge 2005). New competence policy tended to be filtered by the senior civil service to avoid making overly radical changes to the traditional model.

Changes in the environment of the bureaucracy are tending to change the role of the state from an active state towards an 'enabling' state (Page and Wright 2007) in which services and regulation are provided by a mixture of different kinds of organizations with a range of control regimes and areas of competence (Hood et al. 2004). It is claimed that senior civil servants are tending to become network managers and that the civil service as a source of policy advice is declining (Page and Wright 2007).

In this paper we will distinguish between four forms of competence defined by Hood and Lodge (2006).

Fachkompetenz: Specific skills and technical knowledge

The German term *Fachkompetenz* refers to civil servants' substantive specific skills and technical knowledge. It is a core feature of a Weberian bureaucracy and is linked to the idea of neutral competence in the *Rechtstaat* tradition (Kaufman 1956). In a bureaucracy dominated by *Fachkompetenz* subject experts run the state, and their knowledge and skills are not transferable across policy areas (Hood and Lodge 2006, 94). Their specialist expertise or technical ability can be linked to specific policy areas or to specific elements of the policy process, defined, respectively, by Gulick (1937) as the purpose or process principle in organizing the civil service. The new regulatory policy, which focuses on expert knowledge in semi-independent regulatory agencies, represents a shift in the way this kind of competence is viewed (Christensen and Lægreid 2006). *Fachkompetenz* skills are closely connected to different types of higher education, i.e. the different groups recruited into the civil service represent different models of thought, related to both value and factual premises (Simon 1944).

The critique of this kind of competence is that it tends to enhance vertical, sector-oriented specialization in public administration and thus increase the fragmentation of the public sector. Some responses to this critique have been to recruit more generalist-oriented professions into the civil service, introduce a generalist training of civil servants and to introduce senior executive service structures in central government. Another tool has been to introduce NPM-based features inspired by private-sector human resource management, such as an increased focus on leadership and corporate management techniques.

Policy advice competence: Intellectual and moral insight

This is about intuitive skills and the ability to give good policy advice in an unpredictable and ambiguous world. The main organizational form is central government bodies as a secretariat for the political leadership, and the role of high-level civil servants is to provide robust and reliable political judgement and policy advice. The main qualities of this kind of competence are the ability to read and assess political positions, to identify and evaluate political risks, and to find points of leverage in different situations (Hood and Lodge 2006, 101). It is about the ability to see and build new political coalitions and to enhance support and legitimacy for political decisions and new policy initiatives.

A basic challenge of this type of competence is not to make it too political, so that it remains expert-based and does not cross the line to a more purely political role (Christensen and Lægreid 2002). Traditionally the division between politics and administration has had grey zones, without the political and administrative roles overlapping too much (Aberbach and Rockman 1988, Campbell and Peters 1988), but in the past this was not a major problem because of shared norms and values based on trust. NPM tends to see this division as a must, but in practice it is probably more problematic than in the good old days, because NPM often brings more politicization of administrative leadership positions (Rhodes and Weller 2001, Peters and Pierre 2004).

The challenges of balancing different considerations were shown in a seminal article by Jacobsen (1960), who asserts that a primary task of an administrative leader is to

balance political loyalty and neutrality. When a new political leadership takes over in a ministry, the administrative leaders have to be loyal to the new political executive, so they put their mark on policy. But if civil servants are too loyal, they will have problems adjusting and committing themselves to a new political executive, so they must also be neutral, either in a broad political or party-political sense. The other challenge is the balance between political loyalty and professional expertise implying that decisions should be based on expertise and professional knowledge but also that they have to be balanced against political signals and political goals.

Managerial competence: delivery and result-orientation

This is about individual executive competence and the ability to run organizations in an efficient way (Hood and Lodge 2006). The NPM slogan 'let the managers manage' is related to this kind of competence and managers are given enhanced leeway and discretion in order to increase an organization's performance (Kettl 1997). Managerial leadership skills are essential in order to meet goals, objectives and targets. Performance management skills, result orientation and the ability to get things done are more important than following rules and procedures, so it is better to 'do the right things' than to 'do things in the right way', which traditionally has been important for legitimacy in the public sector. Civil servants are supposed to be 'change agents' or strategic entrepreneurs with enhanced 'freedom to manage'.

It is not easy to tell what kind of competence managerial competence really is. One way to look at it is as a greater focus on systemic expertise than on technical expertise. That means that administrative leaders are more concerned with organizing structural systems, budget and financial systems, reward systems, recruitment systems, implementation systems, etc. than with specific policies. They can be seen as design specialists formulating instruments to achieve goals and obtain results. This has some similarity to a professional management model – if you can manage one type of organization you can manage any organization. This is a generic type of leadership argument. Another way of looking at this type of competence is to say it has something to do with economic expertise, particularly because of the result orientation.

Boundary-spanning competence: go-betweens and brokers

This is about networking and boundary-spanning and the ability to work across organizational boundaries both vertically and horizontally. It is connected to governance approaches and post-NPM reforms and is about the ability to bring together civil servants from different policy areas and to trump hierarchy (Hood and Lodge 2006, 92). Here civil servants act as facilitators, brokers, negotiators, diplomats and go-betweens rather than exercising hierarchical authority. Individual people-oriented skills rather than technical skills are central to this kind of competence, which is especially important when facing 'wicked issues' that cross traditional sectors and policy areas. The ability to further cooperation is also valued.

This type of competence may be defined in both a structural and cultural way, as when Bardach (1998) talks about smart practice in interaction between public organizations. In structural terms it means new ways of organizing interaction inside and

between public entities. Culturally it may deal with 'value-based management' and the ability of leaders to create common cultures (Christensen, Lie and Læg Reid 2007).

Interacting forms of competence

These four types represent different dimensions of competence but they can also overlap and supplement each other. Scoring high on one dimension of competence may also further other types of competence (Hood and Lodge 2006). Having good technical skills and expert knowledge may be a precondition for being able to give good policy advice or to operate as a broker between different sectors or policy areas. In the real world possessing combinations of different kinds of competence is more common than having just one type of competence. So we will look at the correlations between the different types of competence.

The rhetoric of NPM tends to state that the old *Fachkompetenz* has been replaced by delivery or managerial competence. This is something we will analyze. The post NPM-reforms tend to give priority to boundary-spanning competence. Whether this is also the case in practice is another question which will be addressed in this paper.

Competence reforms

The traditional central government based on the Weberian model has a unitary personnel system with service-wide remuneration and conditions. Status is based on job or position with limited performance-based variations. The recruitment system, reward structure, promotion ladders and mobility pattern are strongly regulated, rule-based, and standardized, representing a distinct labor-market system (Bekke and van de Meer 2000; DiPrete 1989; Wise 1996).

Introducing private-sector management techniques into the public sector challenges the notions of a career service and lifelong employment. There has been a move towards decentralization of responsibility for hiring, firing and promotion and from collective bargaining to site or individual wage bargaining and growing use of contractual arrangements. At the same time there are demands for greater inclusiveness in the composition of the civil service. Studies demonstrate that the diversity that matters may pertain to different factors, including gender and education (Wise 2003).

New Public Management embraced market-based reforms and hence represents a shift in the employment relationship to favour management and promote greater flexibility. NPM challenged two main doctrines in traditional public administration (Dunleavy and Hood 1994). The first is the doctrine that managers should be controlled by a detailed set of rules and procedures to enhance neutrality, impartiality and political loyalty. The second is the idea that the public sector is very different from the private sector and requires special arrangements for personnel procedures and practices. In contrast, the NPM approach is «to let the managers manage» by giving them more leeway and discretion and to underline the similarities between public and private employment rather than the differences. NPM-inspired human resource management reforms represent challenges to the tenets and principles of Weberian bureaucracy. The threat to some principles, however, may be greater than it is to others. Anonymity and

permanence are more vulnerable to these efficiency-based reforms than the concepts of merit and neutrality (Lægreid and Wise 2007).

Human Resource Management was a key field for the application of contemporary public management reforms. The idea of a unified and distinct civil service was challenged by efforts to blur the borders between public and private employment systems (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004). The pace of these reforms and the means by which they have been carried out have, however, differed from country to country. It seems that each country adapts the instruments available to its own institutional structure and economic and social constraints.

The general picture is a parallel process of robustness and flexibility. On the one hand, only a few countries have made drastic moves away from their traditional civil service systems. On the other hand, most of the countries have tried to reform and adapt their systems to provide flexibility. We face parallel processes of NPM-inspired reforms, introducing private-sector management tools to increase efficiency, and normative oriented reforms enhancing social equity and equality (Lægreid and Wise 2007). Both these trends promote individualization, but the change processes are heavily constrained by traditional civil service systems and historical-institutional contexts

In many countries the traditional tenured public service has been replaced with a contractual regime, but the system of contracts and its application differs from country to country (Lægreid 2001, Gregory and Christensen 2004, Putsey and Hondegheem 2004). Some reform measures, like short-term contracts and performance-related pay, are thought to be more common among senior managers than among other public service staff (OECD 2004b).

One trend is to put more emphasis on recruiting executives with management and leadership capabilities. Recruitment has changed from closed to more open competition and marked-based systems in many countries, but generally the number of outside recruits remains a minority (OECD 2003). Active efforts to recruit women and minorities in some countries, however, have expanded diversity and representativeness. Within this context, the importance of seniority as a criterion has decreased and promotions are now more likely to be linked to performance and personal competence.

The classical distinction between a closed «career-based» civil service system with centralized recruitment, promotion and training and an open «position-based» civil service system with decentralized management of appointment, promotion and training is still relevant. But both the traditional career-based system and the position-based system have been subject to reform pressures: the former because it lacks adaptability and the latter because it lacks collectivity (OECD 2005). Career-based systems introduce external competition for open positions, performance management systems and the delegation of responsibility for human resource management. Position-based systems introduce more competitive processes and transparent procedures.

There is still great diversity among OECD countries in how the political-administrative interface is managed when it comes to recruitment and mobility. In some countries each change of government is accompanied by the appointment of new executive officers and senior officials (Weller, Bakvis and Rhodes 1997). In others party membership for civil servants is well known and important for the appointment process; in others still civil servants are not allowed to align themselves with political

parties. We can see a pattern of ministers using more personal political staff and an increasing tendency to make new senior appointments with an incoming government (OECD 2004a).

Clearly there is no convergence towards a single model of civil service systems (Lægreid and Wise 2007). Most governments still share the main elements of the traditional system of public administration. However, some strong common trends towards modernizing public service are emerging across groups of countries. These include reducing the differences between the public and private sector concerning the status of civil servants, recruitment practices and promotion and mobility systems. A desire to increase managerial autonomy and flexibility by deregulating human resource management, delegating authority and individualizing accountability and performance is apparent (OECD 2005). The pace and comprehensiveness of these trends varies significantly from one country to another and reform activity embraces a wide spectrum. It is far too early to conclude that tenured merit bureaucracy is unsustainable. Traditional, centrally controlled bureaucracy has proven more enduring in countries where the existence of a strong and all-embracing concept of the state is an important part of the national culture.

What we might see for senior services is two trajectories. One represented by senior services that have been modernized but within state traditions and that are rather closed and resistant to external pressure. The second type is more venerable to external pressure, and more open to new management and personnel concepts (Halligan 2003). The first family of countries has their roots in the *Rechtsstaat* tradition of Continental Europe and the second in the Anglo-American public interest systems of the United Kingdom and its former colonies. Norway belongs more to the former trajectory than to the latter.

The Norwegian context

The 'old Weberian public administration' or civil service, built on centralization and the educational homogeneity of civil servants (jurists), dates back to the Norwegian constitution of 1814 and the establishment of the first hierarchical ministries (Christensen 2003). The gradual development of the institutional fabric through the cultural integration of different social groups over the next 140 years reinforced the centralized state. After World War II corporatist features were added, also as an integrative feature (Christensen and Peters 1999, Olsen 1983). The Labour Party's term in office from 1946 until 1965, when for most of that time it formed majority and single-party governments, labelled the 'one-party state', was in some ways the peak period of the 'old public administration', when there was still homogeneity among leaders and mutual trust. This form of public administration remained very strong into the 1970s, but was modified somewhat by decentralizing elements (Christensen and Lægreid 2008b).

Until the mid-1990s, Norway was a reluctant reformer (Olsen 1996), but later it became more enthusiastic about reforms (Christensen and Lægreid 2008b). During the 1980s there was a moderate move to the right in the political landscape, partly

supported by a modernized and more right-leaning Labour Party, and this gradually changed administrative policy (Christensen and Lægveid 1998a). Nevertheless, when NPM was introduced, Norway did not jump on the band-wagon but remained a reluctant reformer for the next 10–15 years (Olsen 1996). In 1986 the Centre-Right government introduced a modernization program, and the following year the Labour Party proposed a renewal program for the civil service. Both programs were inspired by NPM, but reflected primarily NPM rhetoric and did not result in much action. Starting in the 1990s the corporative system became weaker and Norway gradually introduced some NPM features. Management by Objectives and Results (MBOR) was introduced in all government organizations, followed by the gradual structural devolution of state-owned enterprises and agencies. The most marked NPM-oriented period was during the Conservative-Centre government's term in office from 2001 to 2005. The Red–Green government that came to power in 2005 was elected on an anti-NPM ticket, but it has been slow to reverse or even modify NPM measures (Christensen and Lie 2007).

The Norwegian government has a decentralized tradition when it comes to personnel management. Responsibility for recruitment is delegated to the individual ministry and agency. Recruitment is based on merit and professional background, and political affiliation plays a minor or insignificant role. There is no civil service college, no senior executive service or senior civil service, and no central recruitment unit, something that potentially may create a lot of diversity concerning cultural norms and values, but societal homogeneity has been reflected in cultural homogeneity in the civil service. Norway has been using modest gender quotas for positions in public administration over the past 25 years (Lægveid 1995).

Prior to 1990, the salaries of top civil servants in Norway were determined through negotiations between civil service unions and the state as employer in a system characterized by an egalitarian wage policy, central control, standardization, permanent positions and salaries based on position and seniority. In combination with the strong egalitarian norms of Norwegian society, this tradition means that the salaries of top civil servants were low compared with other countries (Hood and Peters 1994, Lægveid 1994). In 1990 a separate wage system was designed for top civil servants, based on individual contracts. Today some 300 executives are part of the top civil servant pay system. In practice this system has enhanced more flexible pay for top civil servants, but the pay gap between public- and private-sector managers has not decreased. The system is also weak on performance pay, which has been difficult to implement owing to cultural resistance (Lægveid and Roness 2006).

In the Norwegian ministries there have been significant changes in tasks and along demographic dimensions such as gender and education over the past 30 years (Christensen and Lægveid 2008a). There has been a radical increase in the proportion of women in the ministries from 15% in 1976 to 48% in 2006. The educational structure has also changed quite a lot. While the proportion of jurists in ministries was reduced from 38% in 1976 to 22% in 2006, the social scientists, dominated by political scientists, increased their share in the same period from 4% to 24%, thereby taking over as the largest educational group. The proportion of economists has remained relatively stable.

On the other hand there has also been a stable pattern over time regarding rule-orientation and role considerations. From 1976 to 2006 there was no general decline in

rule-orientation. And the importance of signals from political executives and professional considerations remained strong and stable from 1986 to 2006. Thus, the administrative culture seems to have been quite resistant to the reform ideas advanced by the NPM movement. The NPM movement does not represent a decisive move away from a rule-based approach.

One structural change is that more civil servants in the ministries now work on planning and coordination tasks and fewer on single cases. While the percentage of civil servants in the ministries having single cases as their main task decreased from 28% in 1976 to 7% in 2006, the proportion having coordination as their main task increased from 8% to 19% (Christensen and Læg Reid 2008a). This reflects a major principle of NPM, namely that the ministry should be a secretariat for the political leadership (Christensen and Læg Reid 1998a). This means that a ministry should take care of planning and coordinative and strategic tasks and also have the capacity to serve the political leadership on an ad hoc basis when needed, while single cases should be moved to the agencies. This is an old doctrine, which became established in 1955 because of capacity problems in the political leadership, but was revived with the NPM reforms (Christensen 2003).

The main picture is increased complexity. New reform tools have been added to existing measures. What we see are reforms with a supplementary function rather than a process in which post-NPM reforms have replaced NPM reforms. New measures have been added without a substantial reduction in the old ones. We do not see a general trend towards a deregulated and entrepreneurial government, as suggested by the contemporary reform movement, but rather the emergence of some reshaped and new reform tools often emerging in hybrid forms (Læg Reid, Roness and Rubecksen 2007). Traditional Weberian administrative features, post-Weberian reform tools, NPM features and post-NPM measures are being combined in a complex way (Christensen and Læg Reid 2008a). The current reform of the welfare administration in Norway, merging the employment and national insurance administrations into a new agency and forming a partnership with social services on the local level, is the most comprehensive administrative reform ever and typically informed by post-NPM ideas (Christensen, Fimreite and Læg Reid 2007).

Theoretical approaches

We will use three perspectives to examine variety in competence in the Norwegian central civil service. The first perspective is the reform perspective. This perspective proceeds from the notion that there is a connection between the organization and content of administrative reform and the competence needed in the civil service, and that reform influences this competence. This perspective contains both structural and cultural elements. Structurally, different reform waves will entail different methods of organization and will therefore also influence the civil servants' competencies in different ways, because the structural context they operate in will change.

We will distinguish between four types of reform tools (see Appendix). They are *performance management tools*, *structural devolution tools*, *market tools* and *cultural management tools*.

While the first three types have strong NPM features, the last one has more typical post-NPM features (Christensen and Læg Reid 2008a).

What relationship can we expect between administrative reforms and the types of competence emphasized? The main thought is that it will vary according to how relevant reforms are for different civil servants, and that different reforms will have differentiated effects on the four types of competence. If we first take NPM reform elements, we would expect that civil servants scoring high on the importance they attach to NPM reforms will also score high on policy advice and managerial competence, which are typical elements of such reforms, but low on boundary-spanning competence. Concerning *Fachkompetenz* skills the expectation is less clear. On the one hand, NPM is preoccupied with devolution and professional autonomy, and potentially also therefore with *Fachkompetenz*, but whether this will further enhance the traditionally strong emphasis on *Fachkompetenz* in the civil service is not that obvious.

Post-NPM reforms are more characterized by vertical and horizontal coordination and structural de-specialization (like mergers), but also increased collaboration, and the development of more common cultural norms and value-based management (Christensen, Lie and Læg Reid 2007). We would expect civil servants mainly experiencing post-NPM measures to score highest on boundary-spanning competence, because that is the most typical post-NPM feature. They will probably score somewhat lower than civil servants experiencing more NPM reforms on the three other types of competence, particularly on managerial competence.

The second perspective is a *structural perspective* (Christensen et al. 2007, Egeberg 2003, Simon 1957). The point of departure is that the structural context of civil servants will influence how they think and act, regardless of whether there are administrative reforms or not, i.e. there are some structural factors that work more generally. The first variable, *administrative level*, differentiates between civil servants working in ministries and subordinate agencies. Traditionally in Norway ministries are supposed to attend more to law-making, planning, coordination and general policies than agencies, which are more concerned with the implementation of policy, single cases and technical aspects in a specific sector (Christensen and Roness 1999). There has been a strong policy doctrine over the past 50 years that the ministries should be secretariats for political executives and have policy advice as their main task. One could argue about whether this distinction is all that clear in practice, but it is obvious that there are some differences in this direction. Concerning the relevance of administrative level related to competence, we would expect civil servants in ministries to score highest on policy advice competence, because they are closer to the political leadership; and high on boundary-spanning competence, because the ministries formally are meant to have broader contacts and collaboration than agencies, which are more narrowly sector-oriented. On the other hand, we would expect civil servants working in agencies to score highest on *Fachkompetenz*, because they are supposed to have 'purer' roles concerning such competence, and high on managerial skills, since agencies are more in the service delivery and goal-fulfilment business.

The second structural variable is *formal position* in the civil service hierarchy. The general assumption is that the hierarchical level on which civil servants work will differentiate the obligations and competencies they have (Egeberg 2003). We would

expect leaders on a higher level to score highest on policy advice and boundary-spanning competence, because they are closest to the political leadership and have the most comprehensive obligations regarding collaboration and coordination with other actors and organizations, both public and private. On the other hand, we would expect executive officers to score highest on managerial competence and executive officers lowest down in the hierarchy highest on *Fachkompetenz* skills.

The third structural variable used is formal *tasks*, and we divided this into two types – coordination and single cases. We would expect civil servants formally working with coordinative tasks to score highest on boundary-spanning competence and policy advice, but lower on *Fachkompetenz* and managerial competence. Civil servants working with single cases are expected to score highest on *Fachkompetenz* and managerial competence, and lower on policy advice and boundary-spanning competence.

We will also apply a *demographic perspective* (Lægreid and Olsen 1978, Pfeffer 1983). The logic behind such a perspective is that the background of civil servants is of relevance for how they think and act. This may either be related to social background, like gender or education, or to the experience people have gathered during their career in the civil service – i.e., tenure. Demography can either be individually oriented, as it is here, or more relational or contextual involving such things as the analysis of cohorts or the relative importance of the educational composition of certain administrative units.

The first demographic variable we use is type of *education*. Different educational groups may have different normative and content features, and traditionally also different positions and tasks in the civil service. We use four categories of educational background – jurists, social scientists, economists and a more mixed group of other types which we label specialists, such as scientists, engineers, architects, agronomists, physicians, dentists and military officers. Concerning *Fachkompetenz* skills, we would expect the group of specialists to score highest, because this group contains many strong professions. Social scientists and economists will probably score highest on policy advice competence, partly because of the content of their education and partly because of the tasks and positions they have. We would expect jurists to score high on managerial competence, not so much because of their educational background, but because many of them spent a lot of time working with single cases, while we would also expect economists to score high on this variable, mostly because of the cultural compatibility between their education and the focus on results. We would expect the social scientists to score highest on boundary-spanning competence, primarily because of the content of their education and the kind of tasks they work with.

The second demographic variable is *gender*. We would expect women to score higher than men on *Fachkompetenz*, both because they see this type of competence as crucial for an administrative career, but also because they are overrepresented among executive officers. Further, we would expect women to score lower on policy advice competence, because they are less represented on the administrative leadership levels. We would expect women to score higher on managerial competence, because they are overrepresented among the executive officers, and lower than men on boundary-spanning competence because of being underrepresented among leaders and having a less developed contact network than men.

The last demographic variable is *tenure* which reflects the experience of different positions and tasks civil servants gather at different stages in an administrative career. We would expect civil servants with a long tenure to score lowest on *Fachkompetenz*, because they have more varied experience than people with short tenure, who will focus more on what they have learned in the higher education they have completed fairly recently.² Civil servants with long tenure might also score low on managerial competence, because they will be underrepresented among executive officers. But they would be expected to score high on policy advice and boundary-spanning competence, because they are overrepresented among the leaders and have broad networks of contacts. Our different hypotheses are summed up in table 1.

² Alternatively, one could argue, based more on a generational perspective, that people with long tenure would attend more to *Fachkompetenz* (Christensen and Læg Reid 2007b).

Table 1: *Expectations on the correlations of reform, structural and demographic factors and different types of competence.*

	Fachkompetenz	Policy advice competence	Managerial competence	Boundary-spanning competence
Reform perspective:				
New Public Management measures	High relevance gives high score	High relevance gives high score	High relevance gives high score	High relevance gives low score
Post-NPM measures	High relevance gives medium score	High relevance gives medium score	High relevance gives low score	High relevance gives high score
Structural perspective:				
Administrative level	Agencies score higher	Ministries score higher	Agencies score higher	Ministries score higher
Formal position in hierarchy	Executive officers score highest	Top-level leaders score highest	Medium-level leaders and executive officers score highest	Top-level leaders score highest
Tasks – coordination	Score lowest	Score high/medium	Score lowest	Score highest
Tasks – single cases	Score highest	Score lowest	Score highest	Score lowest
Demographic perspective:				
Type of higher education	Jurists and specialists score highest	Social scientists and economists score highest	Jurist and economists score highest	Social scientists score highest
Gender	Woman more than men	Men more than woman	Women more than men	Men more than women
Tenure	Long tenure scores low	Long tenure scores high	Long tenure scores low	Long tenure scores low

Data sources

Our method of studying reforms and competence is based on three main elements (Christensen and Lægveid 1999). First, we focus on the response of individual civil servants in ministries and agencies by focusing on their reported competence profile. How the individual civil servants experience competence demands in their daily work along different dimensions is the core of our approach. Second, we choose an extensive

method to cover a lot of ground. In 2006 we conducted a large survey of all civil servants with at least one year of tenure from executive officers to top civil servants in Norwegian ministries and of every third civil servant in the central agencies. 1516 persons in 49 central agencies answered and the response rate was 59 percent. On average there were 31 respondents from each agency, ranging from 112 in the biggest agency to 1 in the smallest. The response rate in the ministries was 67 percent. 1846 responded in the 17 ministries, ranging from 57 in the Ministry of Oil and Energy to 284 in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Third, we took a broad empirical approach to the question of competence, asking the executives the following question: «How important are the following forms of competence in your position?» We then listed four different forms of competence:

- *Fachkompetenz*, technical knowledge;
- Policy advice competence – political judgement and ability to give policy advice;
- Managerial competence – ability to get things done. Executive and implementation skills.
- Boundary-spanning competence – ability to work across professional boundaries, administrative levels, organizations and policy sectors

For each of these forms of competence, we asked the civil servants to state how important they were on a scale from 1 (*very important*) to 5 (*very unimportant*). We will now first describe the general competence profile of civil servants in ministries and central agencies along these dimensions. Second, we will analyze how we might explain the variation in the different forms of competence according to reform, structural and demographic features.

The dependent variables: the competence profile

Table 2 shows how important civil servants in Norwegian ministries and agencies thought different kinds of competence were in their own position.

Table 2: *The competence profile of civil servants in Norwegian central government administration 2006. Percentage.*

	Very important	Important	Less important	Un-important	N=100%
Managerial competence	53	35	9	3	3185
<i>Fachkompetenz</i>	50	33	12	5	3190
Boundary-spanning competence	45	39	11	5	3185
Policy advice competence	34	31	17	11	3175

'Unimportant' includes the values 'unimportant' and 'very unimportant'

Generally the civil servants report a multiple competence profile. Half the civil servants in the ministries and central agencies say that all four kinds of competence are important or very important in their own position. Very few focus on only one type of

competence. Table 2 reveals that the most commonly valued area of competence is managerial competence – i.e., execution, delivery and implementation skills, requiring knowledge and the energy and ability to get things done. 88% report that this is important or very important in their own position. This indicates that NPM-based competence has a relatively strong footing in central government administration. But it is also important to remember that the ability to get things done is a central feature of a functioning bureaucracy that has a far longer history than the NPM movement.

Fachkompetenz or technical competence is also widespread in the civil service. 8 out of 10 civil servants reported that such knowledge was important or very important in their own position. The same is the case with boundary-spanning skills. The ability to work across organizational boundaries, vertically as well as horizontally, is a core competence in the central government administration. This illustrates that areas of competence connected to the old public administration, NPM and post-NPM reforms exist side by side in the central government administration.

Generally, these four types of competence are not seen as alternatives, but rather as complementary or supplementary. There is a strong positive correlation between boundary-spanning skills, skills of execution and implementation and the ability to give policy advice (Table 3). *Fachkompetenz* or technical competence is more loosely coupled to the three other types of competence. A high level of technical skill does not seem go together with a high level of boundary-spanning skills or the ability to give policy advice. This might indicate that *Fachkompetenz* as a traditional Weberian competence is seen as different from reform-related competence, meaning that the latter type of competence has added new layers of competence to the civil service.

Table 3: Correlations between different forms of competence. Pearson R.

	Policy advice competence	Managerial competence	Boundary-spanning competence
Fachkompetenz	.01	.05*	.00
Policy advice competence		.32**	.42**
Managerial competence			.41**

*: Significant at .05 level; **: Significant at .01-level

Table 4: *Different kinds of competence in ministries and central agencies. Percentage reporting that this competence is very important.*

	Ministries	Central agencies
Managerial competence	54	51
<i>Fachkompetenz</i>	47	55
Boundary-spanning competence	47	43
Policy advice competence	46	16
N (average)	1842	1344

Political judgement or the ability to give good and reliable policy advice, the most hierarchy-related feature, is less widespread in the civil service. 65 percent report that this is an important or very important type of competence in their position. Table 4 reveals that this competence is far more common in ministries than in central agencies. While 46 percent of civil servants in the ministries report that this is a very important type of competence, only 16 percent of their colleagues in central agencies have the same opinion.

Variations in competence: reforms, structure and demography.

We now turn to the question of how to explain the variety in type of competence. This section focuses on how the scores on the different independent variables, i.e. our indicators of reforms, structural and democratic features, correlate with the different types of competence. First, we present the bi-variate correlations between each of the independent variables and the dependent variables, and then do a multivariate analysis of the relative importance of the various independent variables for the different types of coordination.

Bivariate analyses

Reform features. Use of performance management tools tends to affect all four types of competence (Table 5). There is a positive correlation between this most popular NPM measure and the NPM-related competence of execution skills and policy advice, but also with the more post-NPM skill of boundary-spanning. There is also a negative correlation between such NPM reforms and the more traditional *Fachkompetenz* or technical skills. Structural devolution, another NPM feature, is positively correlated with boundary-spanning skills and execution skills. As expected, this is also the case for market tools. Cultural management tools, more related to post-NPM, score high on boundary-spanning skills, but also on execution skills. And such tools have a negative effect on *Fachkompetenz*. Generally, we see a negative correlation between NPM and

post-NPM tools and *Fachkompetenz* and a positive correlation with the three other types of competence.

Structural features. There is a strong positive effect of administrative level on policy advice competence, as indicated in Table 4. Regarding *Fachkompetenz* the relationship is negative, indicating that this kind of ability is more widespread in agencies than in ministries. We also see a strong effect of position on policy advice competence, but also on boundary-spanning skills and to a somewhat lesser extent on execution skills. Tasks also seem to make a difference. Having coordination as a main task tends to enhance boundary-spanning skills, but also execution skills and policy advice; and weaken the importance of *Fachkompetenz*. For civil servants mainly working on single cases the competence profile is the other way around.

Table 5. *Bivariate correlations between dependent and independent variables. Pearson R.*

	<i>Fachkompetenz</i>	Policy advice competence	Managerial competence	Boundary-spanning competence
Reform tools:				
Performance management tools	-.08**	.10**	.15**	.12**
Cultural managerial tools	-.05**	.03	.13**	.09**
Structural devolution tools	-.03	.04*	.08**	.08**
Market tools	-.03	.00	.09**	.04
Structural variables:				
Administrative level	-.08**	.36**	.02	.06**
Position	-.01	.33**	.14**	.20**
Main task – coordination	-.13**	.09**	.08**	.14**
Main task – single cases	.08**	-.09**	-.11**	-.11**
Demographic variables:				
Jurist	.12**	.10**	-.03	-.06**
Economist	-.02	.06**	-.05	-.05**
Social scientist	-.11**	.17**	.07**	.12**
Specialist	.06**	.03	.00	.07**
Tenure	-.03	-.06**	-.02	-.07**
Gender	.00	.05**	-.11**	.01**

*: Significant at .05 level; **: Significant at .01-level; For values on the dependent and independent variables, see appendix.

Demographic features. Table 5 reveals that there is a pretty clear effect of education. Social scientists score high on policy advice, boundary-spanning skills and execution competence, but low on *Fachkompetenz*. Jurists score high on *Fachkompetenz* and policy advice, but low on boundary-spanning skills. There is also a positive effect of being an economist and having policy advice knowledge, but they score low on boundary-spanning skills. Specialists tend to have good *Fachkompetenz* but not boundary-spanning skills. There is also an effect of tenure: Civil servants with long tenure tend to score higher on policy advice and boundary-spanning skills than those with short tenure. Men score higher on execution skills, but lower on policy advice than women.

Multivariate analyses

We now turn to the question of the relative explanatory power of the different independent variables. The multivariate analyses, summed up in Table 6, generally confirm the pattern revealed in the bivariate analyses.

First, the independent variables can only explain a minor part of the variation in the different types of competence. This is especially the case when it comes to *Fachkompetenz*, boundary-spanning skills and execution skills. Regarding ability to give policy advice, our independent variables can explain quite a lot of the variation.

Table 6: *Summary of regression analyses by structural, cultural and demographic features. Linear regression. Beta coefficients.*

	<i>Fachkompetenz</i>	Policy advice competence	Managerial competence	Boundary spanning competence
Reform tools:				
Performance-management tools	-.07**	.10**	.08**	.09**
Cultural managerial tools	-.01	-	.07*	.00
Structural devolution tools	-	.04	.00	.07**
Market tools	-	-	.00	-
Structural variables:				
Administrative level	-.06**	.31**	-	.05**
Position	-	.24**	.12**	.14**
Main task – coordination	-.11**	.04*	.06**	.10**
Main task – single cases	.03	-.01	-.08**	-.07**
Demographic variables:				
Jurist	.12**	.11**	-	-
Economist	-	.06**	-	-.03*
Social scientist	-.05*	.15**	.06**	.11**
Specialist	.07**	-	-	.07**
Tenure	-	-.02	-	-.03
Gender	-	.03*	-.14**	-
R	.22	.50	.27	.30
R2	.05	.25	.07	.09
Adjusted R2	.05	.25	-.07	.08
F statistics	18.764	86.139	24.670	25.117
Significance of F	.000	.000	.000	.000
N	2929	2849	2859	2887

*: Significant at .05 level; **: Significant at .01 level. —: Not included. Only variables that have a significant bivariate correlation are included in the analyses.³

³ Jurists are excluded from the analyses of boundary spanning competences to avoid too many dichotomous variables based on the same variable at nominal level. A separate analyses including jurists but excluding economists show that there is no significant effect of jurists.

Second, the most important explanatory variables are structural features related to administrative level, position and tasks. Administrative level has a strong effect on competence related to policy advice. Political judgement and knowledge related to policy advice are much more common in ministries than in central agencies. This reflects the NPM reforms, but is also related to an old administrative doctrine in Norway going back to the 1950s, stating that the ministries should operate as a secretariat for the political leadership. It is, however, interesting to see that there is no effect of administrative level on execution skills. This is a bit surprising given the split between policy-implementing central agencies and policy-formulating ministries. That said, *Fachkompetenz* is more common in agencies, while boundary-spanning skills are stronger in the ministries.

There is also a strong effect of formal position on policy advice. It is primarily civil servants in higher positions who agree that policy advice is a main competence component of their position. Higher civil servants also tend to have stronger boundary-spanning skills and execution and implementation skills. Tasks also make a difference. Civil servants who have coordination as a main task tend less towards *Fachkompetenz* and more towards boundary-spanning skills, but also towards execution competence and policy advice. In contrast, civil servants mainly occupied with single cases are less linked to boundary-spanning skills and execution competence.

Third, administrative reforms also make a difference. The strongest effects are related to use of performance-management tools. Use of performance-management tools such as steering systems for subordinate bodies, goal formulation and operationalization, performance reporting, evaluation, performance steering, quality management systems and yearly operational planning systems, tend to enhance policy advice competence, boundary-spanning competence and execution skills, but not *Fachkompetenz* and technical skills. There is also a positive effect of structural devolution tools on boundary-spanning skills and of post-NPM tools, related to cultural managerial features, on execution skills. When controlling for other factors there is no effect of market-related tools. A separate analysis of the number of overall reform tools used (not documented here) indicates that civil servants who are exposed to many reform tools tend to score high on execution competence and also on boundary-spanning tools, but not on policy advice. For *Fachkompetenz* it is the other way around, meaning that civil servants exposed to few reform tools score high on this area of competence.

Fourth, demographic variables also make a difference. There are significant differences in areas of competence between civil servants with different professional backgrounds. People trained in law tend more to *Fachkompetenz* and policy advice. This reflects the fact that traditionally the Norwegian central government administration was staffed by jurists. Traditionally, legal expertise has dominated *Fachkompetenz* in the central government, and jurists tended to fill central policy advice positions. This seems still to be the case to some extent. Social scientists score high on policy advice and boundary-spanning skills but also to some extent on execution skills. The effect of economists on different kinds of competence is weaker, but there is a significant positive effect on policy advice. Specialists tend to score high on *Fachkompetenz* and also to some extent on boundary-spanning skills. There is one significant and rather strong effect of gender – men score higher than women on execution skills, the ability to get

things done and implementation skills. When other variables are controlled for, there are no significant effects of tenure.

Discussion

The first question focused on how widespread the different kinds of competence are. We showed that all of the four types of competence, from the different development phases, were rather widespread, showing a complex and multi-layered competence profile. Policy advice competence scores somewhat lower than the other three, primarily because civil servants in ministries score much higher on this measure than civil servants in agencies, who are far removed from the political executive.

A correlation of the different kinds of competence shows that *Fachkompetenz* does not correlate with the other three measures, while the other three kinds of competence, combining NPM and post-NPM measures, strongly inter-correlate. This may show first that there are clearly hybrids of different kinds of competence combining policy advice, managerial competence and boundary-spanning skills, (Hood and Lodge 2006) – i.e. areas of competence from two reform phases coexist. Boundary-spanning competence is probably not as distinctly post-NPM as we thought, but has more of a general hierarchy component built in that could also be relevant for NPM. We face a creative mix of different kinds of competence. Second, it also indicates that *Fachkompetenz* is a traditional basic form of competence that will exist regardless of what type of reform occurs. The second and main question posed was related to explaining variety in the four competence measures, based on three sets of independent variables operationalizing the reform, the structural and the demographic perspectives. Overall, the independent variables connected to the structural perspective seem to explain more of the variety in the competence measures than the demographic and especially the reform perspective. This result seems to support the notion that some of the structural-hierarchical factors, related to basic Weberian features, are more robust and important for the competence profile than the demands of reforms and the background of civil servants.

Looking at the four sets of dependent variables, *Fachkompetenz* stands out because more of the significant correlations with the independent variables are negative than positive, while quite the opposite is true for the three other competence variables. Civil servants working with performance management tools, in ministries, with coordination or who are social scientists all score low on *Fachkompetenz*, while jurists and specialists with a science background score high, indicating a rather narrow definition of the concept of *Fachkompetenz*. Interestingly enough jurists and various types of specialists were the basic groups that constituted the central civil service in Norway for the first 30–40 years after the Constitution of 1814 and the start of the union with Sweden (Christensen 2003). The economists, who emerged as a different higher educational group in the civil service after World War II (national economists from the 1950s and business economists from the 1980s show no significant correlation with *Fachkompetenz*, while the social scientists, who began entering the civil service in the 1970s, score low on *Fachkompetenz*.

The strongest single positive correlations are: the one between administrative level and policy advice competence, showing that civil servants in ministries are rather closer to the political executive than the ones in the agencies and therefore need this competence. A similarly strong correlation is the one between position and policy advice competence, showing that inside both the ministries and the agencies administrative leaders need this competence more as part of their formal obligations. For the same variable, the social scientists score highest, probably reflecting the relevance of their education and their expertise in means-end or consequential thinking (Christensen, Læg Reid and Zuna 2001).

If we look at each perspective and the connecting independent variables, there are both systematic similarities which accord with our expectations, but also some variety and deviation. According to the reform perspective, we expected to find quite a different profile of competence between the NPM and the post-NPM measures. This is not the case overall, even though there are some features of this. Of the 16 expectations, four were fulfilled, two pointed in the opposite direction and 10 showed no result. Performance management tools are positively correlated with two of the competences related to NPM, but also to the one post-NPM measure. Cultural management tools, related to post-NPM, only correlate positively with managerial competence, an NPM-related area of competence.

If we move on to the structural variables, the ones that overall explain the most variety in the dependent variables, of the 16 expectations 10 were fulfilled, two of the correlations pointed in the opposite direction and four showed no result. The main result here is that the three NPM and post-NPM types of competence correlate positively, in some cases strongly – i.e., with working in the ministries, being a leader and having coordinative tasks. The same dependent variables correlate negatively with having single cases as a main task. This result shows clearly that reform activities are very hierarchically oriented, partly because of formal obligations, partly because of the advantage of having a broader perspective at the top of the hierarchy. Civil servants in ministries who perform coordinative tasks score lower on *Fachkompetenz*. This result illustrates that civil servants concerned with coordination and single cases, respectively, are a different breed, because the two types demand different kinds of competence and orientation.

Among the 24 expectations related to the demographic variables, 7 showed the expected correlations, three showed opposite results and 14 showed no result. Among civil servants with different educational backgrounds the jurists scored highest on *Fachkompetenz*, as expected, but also high on policy advice competence, contrary to our expectations, something that may have to do with them being overrepresented among leaders. Social scientists scored low on *Fachkompetenz*, high on both policy advice competence and boundary-spanning competence, as expected, but also high on managerial competence, contrary to our expectations, which may reflect that this group has become more enthusiastic about NPM than is often thought. Contrary to our expectations, which were based on the fact that women are overrepresented among executive officers, men scored much higher on managerial competence than women, which may reflect the fact that this kind of competence is more related to leadership positions in which men are overrepresented.

Conclusion

First, we have shown that there exists a multiple, partly cumulative and complex competence profile in the central civil service in Norway. It is multiple in the sense that all the four types of competence that characterized the different phases the civil service has gone through over the last 30 years are important, although policy advice competence, the most hierarchy-related variable scores lowest. It is cumulative in the sense that the three reform-related types of competence are strongly positively correlated. Civil servants use a mixture of competencies in their work that makes them an integrative force in the multi-level governance of the enabling state (Raadschelders et al. 2007). In contrast to the rhetoric about moving central government organizations towards a more streamlined managerialism, we see a practice that is more complex. Old Weberian types of competence exist side by side with NPM-related and post-NPM types of competence, thus producing a hybrid Neo-Weberian bureaucracy (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004). We see a sedimentation process resulting in a more pluralistic competence profile. This confirms the argument of institutional overlap through piecemeal development as opposed to radical shifts from one model to another (Hood and Lodge 2006, Skowronek 1982). The civil servants' competence profile is, however, also complex in the sense that different perspectives related to different independent variables show a lot of variety.

Second, *Fachkompetenz* shows quite different features from the three reform-related dependent variables. It is primarily associated with jurists and science specialists, but definitely not with performance-management tools, working in ministries and coordinative tasks. By contrast, the three reform-related areas of competence are positively correlated with hierarchy-related independent variables like administrative level (working in ministries), position (being a leader) and having coordinative tasks. Among those three dependent variables, policy advice competence, the variable assumed to be most hierarchy-related, shows the strongest positive correlation with the independent structural variables. Overall social scientists score highest on reform-related areas of competence, but low on *Fachkompetenz*, which probably means their educational background is more conducive to developing this kind competence, but also that it is more related to the design and development of different aspects of administrative policy than to the technical content of policies. Overall, these results indicate that there is a certain amount of competence fragmentation, meaning that some educational groups have stronger *Fachkompetenz*, while other, more modern ones, like economists and social scientists, have more reform competence.

Third, of the three sets of independent variables, related to the perspectives, the structural variables go furthest in explaining the variety in the dependent variables. This accords with several other studies of the attitudes and behaviour of central civil servants, and shows that Weber is alive and kicking (Egeberg 2003). This in spite of a lot of talk about network-related governance and more structural flexibility. Structural position definitely plays a key role in decision-making behaviour and competencies.

The main result for the set of demographic variables is that social scientists have a different competence profile from the jurists and the specialists, reflecting the distinction between traditionalists and modernists (Christensen and Læg Reid 1998b).

Concerning the third group of independent variables, the reform tools, the only independent variable showing significant correlations for all four areas of competence is performance-management tools. It is interesting that this variable is an NPM feature that is very common but seen as quite moderate, while the other two NPM-oriented independent variables – structural devolution and market tools – are both less common and more controversial in Norway. So reform-related competence is obviously connected to the frequency of certain tasks.

Our findings do not comply with a general thesis of de-professionalization of the civil service (Suleiman 2003) or a decline in a public bureaucracy with expert civil servants at its core (Goetz 2007). Civil servants in central government bodies are still carriers of institutional expertise that give them a solid power basis (Page and Wright 2007). Our conclusion is rather that the kinds of competence required in the civil service have become more complex (Hood and Lodge 2006). There are a number of areas of competence that score high among civil servants. Civil servants in central agencies and ministries are not only technical specialists; they are also policy advisers, efficient implementers and have boundary-spanning skills. They both act as senior managers and help to shape policies and need to maintain a delicate balance between different competencies. Most of them are highly interrelated and the variation in the competence among civil servants cannot be traced back to a single factor but is related to reform efforts as well as structural and demographic features. What we see are areas of competence that overlap, compete and supplement one another and thus produce organizational complexity rather than the dominance of one specific kind of competence.

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Table A1: *Different families of reform tools. 2006. Factor analyses. Rotated Component Matrix. Principal component analyses. Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization. N=1874*

	Component			
	Performance management	Cultural managerial tools	Structural devolution	Market tools
Change in form of affiliation	.28	.00	.59	.20
Delegation of tasks to lower levels	.20	.03	.74	.09
Privatization	.05	.08	.69	.31
Public-private partnerships	.12	.16	.69	.21
User participation	.18	.37	.59	.18
Deregulation, rule simplification	.12	.36	.63	.00
Pay and personnel flexibility/autonomy	.15	.41	.37	.22
Steering systems for subordinate agencies	.57	.14	.40	.12
Development dialogue, leadership training	.47	.56	.17	.03
Budgeting flexibility/autonomy	.45	.25	.22	.39
Goal formulation and operationalization	.77	.28	.16	.18
Performance reporting, evaluation	.82	.22	.18	.20
Performance steering	.81	.28	.17	.18
Quality management systems	.66	.33	.17	.18
Internal markets, internal pricing	.08	.14	.21	.77
Contract systems	.17	.15	.20	.72
Yearly operational planning	.60	.43	.14	.15
Balanced scorecard	.44	.44	.15	.36
Value-based management	.26	.71	.14	.26
Ethical guidelines	.33	.67	.16	.08
Service charter	.19	.60	.21	.23
Team-based management	.21	.70	.10	.25
Knowledge-based management	.24	.76	.09	.13
Benchmarking	.25	.38	.09	.58
Purchaser/provider systems	.23	.21	.25	.63
More autonomous regulatory agencies	.26	.16	.40	.45

Performance management tools: Additive index based on variables in table A1 with factor loading on .50 and over on factor 1 (bold): 0 (no tool important) to 6 (all 6 tools important).

Cultural management tools: Additive index based on variables in table A1 with factor loading on .50 and over on factor 2 (bold): 6 (all tools important) to 0 (no tool important).

Structural devolution tools: Additive index based on variables in table A1 with factor loading on .50 and over on factor 3 (bold): 6 (all tools important) to 0 (no tool important)

Market tools: Additive index based on variables in table A1 with factor loading on .50 and over on factor 4 (bold): 4 (all tools important) to 0 (no tool important),.

Administrative level:

1: Ministries; 2: Central agencies

Position:

1: Administrative leaders; 2: Executive officers

Main task – coordination:

1: Yes; 2 No

Main task – single cases

1: Yes; 2 No

Jurist:

1: Yes; 2 No

Economist:

1: Yes; 2: No

Social science

1: Yes; 2: No

Specialist (natural science, engineer, architect, agronomist, physician, dentist, military academy) 1:

1: Yes; 2: No

Gender:

1: man; 2: woman

Tenure in central government:

1: 5 years or less; 2: More than 5 years

Dependent variables:

1(very important) to 5 (very unimportant).

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