

Visibility, Accountability and Politicisation of Top Civil Servants

A comparative research on the role of the top civil servants in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom

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Abstract

This thesis compares the role of top civil servants in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom. It explores the differences and similarities of the governmental systems, the civil service and top civil servants of both countries. Furthermore, it discusses recent technological, social and political-administrative developments and their impacts on the civil services and the top civil servants in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom. The thesis is based on qualitative research and data in the form of semi-structured interviews with (former) top civil servants in both countries to make comparisons between the top civil servants in the two countries in terms of visibility, accountability and politicisation. The main findings of this research are:

- Top civil servants are currently more concerned about their public visibility, due to the increased role of the media, including the scrutinizing of the government, the focus on incidents and the culture of blame;
- In both countries top civil servants feel very accountable and do not want to increase this;
- And, according to the top civil servants, their work has become more political.

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Foreword

During the autumn semester of 2016 I took the elective course “Politicians and Civil Servants: a complicated relationship” taught by former top civil servant Roel Bekker. It was definitely the most interesting course of the entire programme. The course was based on the experiences of Roel Bekker and some guest speakers. It included practical assignments, including writing a memo to a Secretary General of a ministry, writing a speech for a minister and designing a new ministry. Before this course, I knew little about the civil service, the role of top civil servants and the relationship between politicians and civil servants. I wanted to explore this topic further and therefore I asked Roel Bekker to be my thesis supervisor. This was a good choice and the start of an interesting research project.

The comparative research on the role of top civil servants in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom based on qualitative interviews allowed me to speak to the most senior civil servants in these countries. I would like to thank all the (former) top civil servants for spending some of their valuable time on answering my questions.

As part of the research, I stayed in London for two weeks to conduct the interviews. My stay in London was made possible because of the grants I have received from ICTU/Ministry of Interior, The Leiden University Trustee Fund and the LUF International Study Fund. I would like to thank the Embassy of the Netherlands in London for offering desk space and interesting conversations. In particular, I really appreciated that I could be part of the Embassy interns group for two weeks. In addition, I am grateful for the researchers at the Institute for Government in London for giving me new insights, providing me with useful documents and helping me in my research. Furthermore, I would like to thank the ABD for the interesting conversations and the useful information on the Dutch civil service.

Foremost, I would like to thank Roel Bekker for being my supervisor, giving critical feedback, encouraging me to go to London and supporting me in order to finish my research project. Furthermore, I would like to show my gratefulness to my second supervisor Toon Kerkhoff for providing some feedback along the thesis writing process already. I am very grateful to Adája Stoetman, Amanda Schultz, James Hewitt, Jelle Kuiper and Rafaëlle Kwakkel for reading my thesis and giving feedback. I would like to thank my friends for spending so many hours in the university library, meeting up for coffee breaks and listening to my complaints. I would like to thank my parents for supporting me, believing in me and always being there for me. In addition, finally yet importantly, I would like to thank my boyfriend Koen for always standing by my side.

1. Introduction

1.1. General

“At the heart of the practice of public administration is the relationship between administrators, on one hand, and political leaders and the public on the other hand” (Svara, 2001, p.176). Top civil servants and ministers cannot work without each other. As Bekker (2009) describes: “it takes two to tango” (p.32). However, the top civil servants and politicians have different roles and characteristics. Bekker (2012) describes top civil servants as marathon runners. He compares politicians to sprinters, who move fast, run a short distance, preferably in a full stadium and aim for immediate success. Top civil servants on the other hand run long distances, mostly without publicity, they usually start slow and have to build up their race carefully. They have a long breath and sometimes come across the man with the hammer (Bekker, 2012, p.10).

The main topic of this thesis is the role of top civil servants in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom. I make a comparison between Secretary Generals and Director Generals in the Netherlands and Permanent (under) Secretaries in the United Kingdom.

Why top civil servants? Because they form the link between the civil service and the political top, and their position is influenced from both sides.

Why the Netherlands and the United Kingdom? Because the countries share many similarities, but also have some differences and therefore it is interesting to look at how these differences affect the top civil servants.

Moreover, the Civil Service in the United Kingdom has always been an example to the Dutch. In the United Kingdom, the civil servants were employed by the British Civil Service, rather than by independent departments. Lemstra (1993) argued that the Netherlands should move towards this British model (p.205). In addition, visa versa, the British are looking to the Netherlands. The 1980s British political satire

television-series *Yes, Minister* on the relationship between the Minister and the Permanent Secretary was as popular in the Netherlands as in the United Kingdom.

Finally, the choice for the top civil service and these two countries has been a practical one; it provides a demarcated unit of analysis. Thus, what are the interesting similarities and differences between top civil servants in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom? The goal of the thesis is to see if there are distinctions in the role of the top civil servant in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, what are the reasons behind the differences, and what can we learn from them.

1.2. Methodology

The goal of this thesis is to make a comparison of the role of the top civil servants in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom. To achieve this, I will first describe the framework of this thesis by looking at the similarities and the differences between the Netherlands and the United Kingdom in general, some recent developments and the impact of these developments on the civil service and the top civil servants in both countries.

The research project is explorative and comparative. This type of research is positive (neutral and empirical) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews). The data are collected through conducting semi-structured interviews with several (former) top civil servants in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom, in order to get an insight into their experiences and opinions on the role of top civil servants. The questions are related to the characteristics of top civil servants, their relations to the minister, ministerial responsibility and civil servant loyalty; and the visibility, accountability and politicisation of the top civil servants.

The second part of the thesis is the feedback from the practice of government based on the interviews with the (former) top civil servants. In this section, I analyse the differences and similarities between the two countries with respect to the role of the top civil servants. The analysis is based on qualitative data. Since the research is based on a small number of respondents, the internal validity is high. However, having a small number of respondents also has some limitations, primarily that it is

difficult to draw general conclusions. Therefore, the reader must take into consideration that this is an explorative piece of research. In order to maintain readability this is just a brief explanation of the methodology used for this thesis. A more detailed version of the methodology can be found in the appendix.

Due to the limited space of the thesis, the analysis will be focused on the following topics: visibility, accountability and politicisation, because these three topics affect the role of top civil servants, the work of the top civil servants and the required skills and characteristics for top civil servants. The three focus points, visibility, accountability and politicisation, are briefly discussed below.

1.3. Main themes

1.3.1. Visibility

The traditional perception of a civil servant is “calm, business-like, distant and with a passion for anonymity” (‘t Hart & Wille, 2002, p.36). The guiding principle for visibility of top civil servants in both countries is more about the invisibility of the top civil servant, rather than the visibility. For politicians, visibility is a precondition for authority. “Politicians without press, without public opinion, without demonstrators” – those are civil servants” (Van Middelaar, 2017, p.225). With the visibility of top civil servants I mean that they are visible, for example because they participate in public debates, write opinion pieces, appear on television, use social media and when they are heard parliament.

Some scholars (Verhey, 2001; Visser, 2008) argue that top civil servants are more visible today. As an example of the increased visibility, these scholars refer to the parliamentary inquiries. The top civil servants became not only more visible to parliament, but also to the public, since the hearings in parliament are broadcasted, top civil servants are visible to the public (Visser, 2008, p.211).

However, in practice, the public does not know top civil servants from these hearings in parliaments. Appearances of top civil servants in the media and in public lectures are a better way to define visibility. Some others argue that top civil servants are less

visible today, since they tend to speak less in public or participate less in public debates as they used to do in the past (Van den Berg, 2011; Bekker, 2012).

1.3.2. Accountability

Accountability is “the fact or condition of being accountable” (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.). Then, accountable, can be defined as “required or expected to justify actions or decisions” (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.). Accountability presupposes responsibility, but in order to be accountable, more is required. In general, accountability is two-fold: it includes the obligation to provide factual information (answerability) and the obligation to motivate, justify and defend action or negligence (Tuurenhout, 1992, p.25).

Top civil servants work for the government of the day and they are accountable to their minister. Due to the system of ministerial responsibility, the minister is responsible for the ministry and is accountable to parliament. Ministerial responsibility is often seen as the foundation of the parliamentary democratic system. Accountability follows from ministerial responsibility and forms the “heart of democratic government”, and it is therefore essential for “good governance”, and can lead to “trustworthiness and legitimacy” of the government (Guerin, McCrae and Shephard, 2018, p.3).

In the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom top civil servants are accountable to their bosses: the ministers. However, in the United Kingdom civil servants are also accountable to the Public Accounts Committee in their role as Accounting Officers. This makes them “directly accountable to Parliament for the money their departments are spending” (Guerin et al., 2018, p.17).

1.3.3. Politicisation

Politicisation can be defined as “the action of causing an activity or event to become political in character” (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.). In this thesis, I will focus on the possible politicisation of the civil service. There are two important elements in the politicisation of the civil service:

- The selection of top civil servants because of political preferences rather than merit (expertise).
- The instructions to work along the political lines rather than based on craftsmanship.

In the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom core values of the civil service are the impartiality and neutrality of civil servants. In both countries it is absolutely forbidden that civil servants do party-politics related work. In both countries, civil servants are selected based on merit, which means that quality prevails over political colour. The civil service in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom serve the government of the day, and this means that civil servants do not necessarily change when a new government arrives.

However, the political top has different and higher demands, because they do not want only factual advice, but also based on political achievability. Therefore, there is a need for civil servants who understand politics. Thus, political-administrative sensitivity and political-strategic insight have become qualities that are more important for top civil servants (Van den Berg, 2011, p.298). Yet, this does not necessarily have to mean that the appointed top civil servant belongs to the same political party.

The politicisation of the civil service in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom is subtler than an increase in political appointments and party-politics in the civil service. In the United Kingdom, the increase in the political advisors to the ministers satisfies the need for more political advice. Politicisation can be a difficult issue for top civil servants. They have to move along with the political top a bit, but not too much. This might lead to a subtle change in the values and quality of top civil servants.

2. Framework

2.1. Comparing the Netherlands and the United Kingdom

In order to do a comparative and qualitative research on the role of the top civil servants in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom, I will first discuss the Netherlands and the United Kingdom on four levels:

- Countries;
- Governmental systems;
- Civil services;
- Top civil servants.

This chapter builds a framework, which provides the context for the interviews with the (former) top civil servants in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. It will compare the two countries and highlight some differences and similarities in a funnel structure – the comparison becomes more specific in each subsection. The framework starts with a brief and general comparison of the countries, then a comparison of the governmental systems and the civil service, and focuses finally, more specifically, on the role of the top civil servants.

2.1.1. The two countries

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, usually called the United Kingdom, is a large country of 242,500km² (Nations Online, 2018) and with approximately 66,5 million inhabitants (World Population Review, 2018). The country is made up of four parts: England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The United Kingdom “was once the centre of a global empire” (Hood, James, Peters & Scott, 2004, p.171). The British Empire “was the largest territorial empire in world history” (Samson, 2001: 1). The current British international status and the class system that is a characteristic of British society originate in the British colonial era. The United Kingdom has a “deeply elitist society” (Ridley, 2014). Most people in top positions went to private schools or Oxbridge. Despite the elitist character of the

British society, the National Health Service (NHS) is very prominent. The NHS was implemented in 1948 and based on the idea “that good healthcare should be available to all, regardless of wealth”(NHS, 2018). The NHS is in the eyes of the British a success, “it provides high-quality health care and is extraordinary cheap to run compared with health services in other countries” (King & Crewe, 2014, p.9).

As the United Kingdom is an island, it has always been somewhat apart from continental Europe. In addition, within the European Union, which they joined in 1973 (then called the European Communities), the United Kingdom had “an ambiguous position: a non-founding member with a highly Euro-sceptical political class and public, but nevertheless a leading member state in political and economic terms” (Van den Berg, 2011, p.201). The United Kingdom has never been part of the Schengen area or the monetary union (Van Middelaar, 2017, p.313). On June 23, 2016, the majority of the British voters voted in favour of leaving the European Union, colloquially known as “Brexit” (Van Middelaar, 2017, p.311). The United Kingdom leaving the European Union will create a different situation for them, the European Union and their international relations, but also for the work of the government, the civil service and the civil servants.

The Netherlands

The Kingdom of the Netherlands, often just referred to as the Netherlands, is a small country of 42,437 km² (Nations Online, 2018) with over 17 million inhabitants. The Kingdom of the Netherlands is made up of four countries: the Netherlands and the three Caribbean islands: Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao. Together with three special municipalities – Saba, St Eustacius and St Maarten – they form the Caribbean Netherlands (Rijksoverheid, n.d.-b). The European Netherlands is the largest part of the Kingdom with the majority of the inhabitants, economics and politics. The Netherlands had large colonies, including the current Caribbean Netherlands, but also Surinam, Indonesia and other parts in Southeast Asia. Moreover, the Netherlands is one of the founding members of the European Union (Van den Berg, 2011, p.265).

The Netherlands is a rather egalitarian society. The word 'elite' is hardly ever used. In addition, the nobility and monarchy are not very strong. Equality is the "main feature of Dutch society" (Raadschelders & Van der Meer, 2014, p.727). Since the Second World War, as in many other European countries, the Netherlands became a so-called welfare state. However, the health service in the Netherlands has been partly privatized. Since 2006, all Dutch people have an obligatory insurance for a basic benefit package. The execution of the health care is in the hands of private and competing health insurance companies and health care providers (Ministerie van VWS, 2016).

Similarities

The location in Western Europe is one of the similarities between the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. Both countries have been seafaring nations with histories of military, political and economic power, including multiple colonies. Moreover, both countries are kingdoms, or more specifically constitutional monarchies. Finally, both countries are full democracies (The Economist, 2017), very pragmatic, efficient and effective. The next sections will elaborate on the effectiveness of the government and civil service in both countries.

Differences

Although there are some similarities, many differences exist between the countries. The United Kingdom is approximately six times larger than the Netherlands. The British population is around four times larger than the Dutch is. Although both countries share a history of overseas territorial expansion, the British Empire was larger than the area covered by the Dutch colonies. The British society is more a class society, while the Dutch is more egalitarian. The National Health system is a determining factor in the United Kingdom. In the Netherlands, the health care system is partly public and partly private. The Netherlands is one of the founding members of the European Union and is part of the Eurozone, whereas the United Kingdom will soon leave the European Union.

2.1.2. Governmental systems¹

The United Kingdom

Political system and culture

The United Kingdom is considered unitary centralized state, but the country is divided in relatively autonomous regions. The unitary governmental system, based on the idea that sovereignty resides at the central level, emerged in societies with “with a history of sovereign monarchy or empire, such as Britain” (Van den Berg, 2011, p.95). The governmental system in the United Kingdom is called the Westminster/Whitehall tradition. The political system is called the Westminster Model named after the houses of parliament, which are located in Westminster Palace (Hood *et al.*, 2004, p.170). One of the important features of the Westminster Model of public administration is that the civil service is selected based on merit independently from the ministers (Aucoin, 2012, p.177).

The United Kingdom has a majoritarian electoral system. This means that the country is divided into electoral districts and “each district knows one winner at each election” (Van den Berg, 2011, p.97). The electoral voting system, which is based on a district system, results in territorial representation at the national level (Van den Berg, 2011, p.203). Moreover, a majoritarian electoral system logically leads to a majority government.

In the United Kingdom, two major parties dominate the political arena: the Labour party and the Conservative party (Van den Berg, 2011, p.203), because of the district system winner takes all. Usually the government is either Labour or Conservative. There has been a “majority-party government in the UK Westminster Parliament for most of the period since the Second World War” (Hood *et al.* 2004, p.171). To illustrate, between 1945 and 2009 there have been six government changes from Labour (1945-1951) to Conservatives (1951-1964) to Labour (1964-1970) to

¹ In the context of this thesis I use government to refer to national governments, regional or local governments are not included.

Conservatives (1970-1974) to Labour (1974-1979) to Conservatives (1979-1997) to Labour (1997-2009) (Riddell and Haddon, 2009). The advantage of a single-party cabinet is stable and effective policy-making (Lijphart, 2012, p.38). With only one party in the government, it is easier to make big decisions and to pass major reforms. However, the current government is a coalition government, similar to the 2010-2015 government.

The United Kingdom does not have a written constitution. It would be more accurate to describe it as “a non-codified constitution with substantial written elements” (Van den Berg, 2011, p. 202), including conventions, practices and precedents.

Ministries and ministers

Every ministry has a political head, the Secretary of State or minister. In addition, every ministry has a Permanent Secretary, who is heading the civil service and is responsible for the management of the department. The political system of The United Kingdom has many ministers. There is 1 Prime Minister, 22 cabinet ministers and 98 other ministers, which make a total of 121 ministers (GOV.UK, n.d.-b). The Cabinet is made up of the Prime Minister and the most senior members of the government (GOV.UK, n.d.-b). There are different types of ministers. The most important ministers are the Secretaries of State, who are a “cabinet minister[s] in charge of a government department” (Kuperus & Rode, 2016, p.15). The Secretary of State is responsible for an entire government department. This position is a political post, which means that “the person in this position is elected or appointed based on political affiliation and leaves the position when the government changes” (Kuperus & Rode, 2016, p.15). The other ministers, all political executives, have a variety of job titles, for example Minister of State or Parliamentary (Under) Secretary of State. In theory, ministers do not have to be members of parliament, but it is the convention that all ministers must be members of either the House of Commons or the House of Lords (Maer, 2017, p.3).

Often ministers leave their position earlier than the government changes. The turnover of ministers is high in the United Kingdom. In January 2018, 71% of all government

ministers were new in their posts since June 2017 (Guerin et al., 2018, p.13). The British Prime Minister has the power to hire and fire ministers, which is one of the explanations of the high turnover rate. It is used more in the United Kingdom in comparison to other countries. This can explain the high turnover rate of ministers before the change of government (Guerin et al., 2018, p.13). According to King & Crewe (2014), the rapid turnover of minister in the United Kingdom is “taken for granted” (p. 322). People expect ministers to come and go.

Ministerial Responsibility

The concept of ministerial responsibility in The United Kingdom was developed in the nineteenth century. At that time “the role of the government was limited and a competent minister could be assumed to have personal control of a department. The growth of mass parties, and the welfare state have changed the nature of the convention, but it remains an important aspect of the UK political system and the uncodified constitution” (Gay & Powell, 2004, p.7). Although ministerial responsibility dates back to the nineteenth century, the first official guidance note for ministers was only published in 1992: *Questions of procedure for ministers (QPM)* (Gay & Powell, 2004, p.9). In 1997, under the new Prime Minister Tony Blair *QPM* was revised and reissued as the *Ministerial Code* (Gay & Powell, 2004, p.10).

In the United Kingdom, ministers have the “duty to Parliament to account, and to be held to account, for all the policies, decisions and actions of the department” (HM Treasury and Cabinet Office, 2017, p.11). According to the ministerial responsibility doctrine, the minister is accountable to the parliament for the actions of its department (Van den Berg, 2011; Paun & Harris, 2013). This accountability “involves *accounting* in detail for actions as a Minister” (Gay & Powell, 2004, p.7). Besides individual ministerial responsibility, all ministers share collective responsibility. This means that ministers should “promote and defend government policy” (Hughes, 2017, p.9).

Political Advisors

Today, there are many political advisors in the United Kingdom. Most ministries have two or three political advisors (OECD, 2007, p.64), but the Prime Minister’s Office

employs many more. The number of political advisors has increased over the years. John Major (Prime Minister from 1990-1997) had eight political advisors, whereas Tony Blair (Prime Minister from 1997-2007) employed 20 (Van den Berg, 2011, p.235). The current Prime Minister, Theresa May, deploys 32 political advisors (Adam, 2017). The number of political advisors deployed by the PM's is an illustration of the politicisation of the British governmental system. The political advisors often have a high status and important role in government. The political advisors earn between £53,000 and £70,000, significantly more than the national average (Adam, 2017). The Prime Minister's political advisors earn even more, up to £14,000 (Adam, 2017).

The importance of the political advisor to ministers has increased in recent decades, "to the detriment of the advisory role of the permanent senior civil servants" (Van den Berg, 2011, p.359). The political advisors are "mostly recruited from outside of the civil service, either from the party apparatus, think tanks, the academic world or the private sector" (Van den Berg, 2011, p.359). In the past, civil servants were more hesitant about the political advisors, but today top civil servants and political advisor work closely together (OECD, 2007, p.64).

The Netherlands

Political system and culture

The Netherlands is a representative parliamentary democracy and a decentralized unitary state. This entails that subnational government units, mainly municipalities, are involved in the policy-making and implementation processes (Van den Berg, 2011, p.95). The division of power is illustrated by the fact that the capital city is Amsterdam, however the government is located in The Hague. The Netherlands has a proportional electoral system, where all the votes contribute to the result of the election. The percentage of the seats in parliament a political party receives reflects the percentage of the votes it has won. This leads to multi-party coalition governments (Van den Berg, 2011, p.98). Coalition governments are necessary for government stability, since no party ever had an absolute majority in parliament (Van

den Berg, 2011, p.267). Consequently, the formation process as well as the decision-processes might take more time, since many different interests are on the table.

Moreover, this creates a “political context with a strong institutional necessity for mutual consent” (Hood *et al.*, 2004, p.162). This compromising culture is called *polderen* in Dutch, which is part of national identity (Te Velde, 2007, p.9). The *Poldermodel* is the institutional structure of *polderen*, which entails peaceful deliberation, focused on consensus where all stakeholders are equally involved and where the rule of might is excluded (Te Velde, 2007, p.10). The practice of *polderen* is not only about the deliberation within parliament, but also keeping the dialogue with the society. This interactive governance is deeply embedded in the Dutch culture (Hood *et al.*, 2004, p.163).

In a decentralised governmental system with many political parties, different political colours and a *Poldermodel*, nobody is really in total control. Consequently, “there is no central figure or body that can easily push through drastic policy shifts” (Van den Berg, 2011, p.268). Moreover, in the Netherlands, “government intervention in society has traditionally been relatively high” and “citizens generally place high demands on their public institutions” (Van den Berg, 2011, p.271).

Ministries and ministers

Every ministry has a minister, who is politically responsible (GW, 1986 art. 44) and a top civil servant, the Secretary General, who is responsible for the administrative organisation (Besluit regeling functie en verantwoordelijkheid van de secretaris-generaal, 1988, art.1). The current Dutch cabinet has sixteen ministers in total, of which four ministers without portfolio (Rijksoverheid, n.d.-a). The ministers without portfolio are responsible for a particular policy area or programme, however they are not in charge of leading a department. Besides ministers, there are also state secretaries who are comparable to junior ministers in the United Kingdom. The state secretaries are responsible for a specific part of the ministry’s portfolio. There are eight state secretaries in the current Dutch cabinet (Rijksoverheid, n.d.-a).

The minister is responsible for the department, but eventually ministers without portfolio and state secretaries are politically responsible for their respective policy areas and also for the performance of civil servants working in that area (Secretariaat Ministerraad, 2017, p.57). All the ministers are members the Council of Ministers, which the Minister President presides. The state secretaries are not part of this council, but they are part of the cabinet (Secretariaat Ministerraad, 2017, p.17). Once a person has become a minister or a state secretary he or she can no longer be member of the Parliament, because of the separation of power.

Ministerial responsibility

In the Netherlands, ministerial responsibility includes that:

- The government consists of the King and the ministers;
- The King can do no wrong; the ministers are responsible (GW, 1986, art. 42).

The ministers are accountable to parliament, the elected representation of the country (Visser, 2008, p.15). The 1840 and 1848 constitutional reforms are the foundation for the current ministerial responsibility in the Netherlands. The ministerial responsibility system derives from the desire to have more power and control for politicians. Until then, the king was the most powerful and influential person in governing the country. The king used to be the embodiment of the government (Visser, 2008, p.41). The reforms of 1840 already limited the independent role of the king.

Thorbecke was an important statesman in the Netherlands. He was a professor in diplomatic and political history and he entered parliament in 1840 (Boogman, 1974, p.123). He is known as the most influential architect of the 1848 reforms (Visser, 2008, p.50). With these constitutional reforms in 1848, the King became immune and the ministers became fully responsible for the King's actions (Van den Berg, 2011). Consequently, the implementation of ministerial responsibility provided the ministers with greater authority.

Moreover, all ministers are responsible for the government as a whole, this is known as 'collective responsibility'. After the Second World War, collective ministerial

responsibility became more important, but the individual ministerial responsibility remained (Visser, 2008, p.53-54). Ministerial responsibility divides the tasks between ministers and parliament. Within the system of ministerial responsibility, parliament has the task of controlling ministers.

Political advisors

In the Netherlands, every minister is allowed to appoint one political assistant. The title 'assistant' has been purposefully chosen instead of 'advisor' to demonstrate their relatively minor policy role. In practice, the two words are used interchangeably. These political assistants are often junior civil servants, who are classified in scale 11 to 14, but mostly part of scale 13 (Secretariaat Ministerraad, 2017, p.35). The role of political assistants in the Netherlands has also increased, but "their influence has remained more confined to their role as political liaisons rather than policy shapers" (Van den Berg, 2011, p.359). Moreover, the majority of top civil servants regard this relationship with the political advisors to be constructive (Van den Berg, 2011, p.311). The increasing importance of political assistants is an indication of greater politicisation of the government. It shows that politicians do not only want expert advice from the civil servants, but also more political advice.

Similarities

When looking at the similarities between the governmental systems in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, both countries have high government effectiveness (The Global Economy, 2016). This Government Effectiveness Index is based on "the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies" (The Global Economy, 2016). The Netherlands has a score of 1,84 and the United Kingdom scored 1,61 on a scale from -2,5 (weak) to 2,5 (strong). The Netherlands is the ninth country on the list and the United Kingdom is the 16th country (The Global Economy, 2016).

Moreover, in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom every ministerial department has a political head (minister) and a civil servant head (respectively Secretary General and Permanent Secretary). In both countries, there is one minister responsible for one department.

The ministerial responsibility doctrine is essential in both governmental systems, since it forms the foundation of the parliamentary democracy (Visser, 2008). In both countries, the ministerial responsibility was established during the nineteenth century. The ministerial responsibility includes the responsibility for the minister's own performance, the monarch's operation and the civil service apparatus. In addition, the monarch has the right to be informed and the right to be consulted by government. Besides the responsibility for their own department, ministers in both countries also have collective responsibility, which means the responsibility for the policy of the government as a whole. Ministerial responsibility functions also as a controlling mechanism for the parliaments.

The politicisation of the civil service is also visible in both countries due to the increasing role of the political advisors. However, in both countries top civil servants regard their relationship with the political advisors to be positive and constructive.

Differences

There are many differences between the British and the Dutch governmental systems: a centralised versus a decentralised organisation, a district electoral system versus a proportional electoral system, a two-party system versus a multi-party system, and a usually one-party government versus coalition governments. These differences in governmental systems have several consequences for the civil service, for example whether civil servants have to deal with one or more political parties and whether the policies change often due to government changes or whether they stay relatively constant due to the fact that one political party is in charge for a long period. Moreover, in the Netherlands there is a tradition of interactive policy-making, based in the political culture of consensus and compromise. Therefore, the decision-making

process in the multi-party landscape of the Netherlands often takes more time than in the one-party government system in the United Kingdom.

Even though, in both countries there is formally one minister responsible per ministerial department, there are overall many more ministers (defined as political executives, with different job titles) in the United Kingdom than in the Netherlands, respectively 121 versus 22. In the Netherlands, the ministers are part of the government, but not members of parliament. In The United Kingdom, there are different types of ministers: cabinet ministers and junior ministers. The ministers are also members of parliament. The one-party government and the fact that the Prime Minister can hire and fire ministers are explanations of this. The role of the political assistants in the Netherlands is not comparable to the United Kingdom, where there are more political advisors and they have a more senior and influential position than the political assistants do in the Netherlands do.

2.1.3. Civil service

The United Kingdom

The British political system is called Westminster; the administrative system is “referred to as ‘Whitehall’, after the road in central London along which many of the ministerial departments were historically accommodated” (Van den Berg, 2011, p.204). “The Civil Service does the practical and administrative work of government. It is coordinated and managed by the Prime Minister, in his or her role as Minister for the Civil Service” (GOV.UK, n.d.-b). The core values of the Civil Service are integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality (GOV.UK, 2015). These core values are also part of the Civil Service Competency Framework, which sets out how people in the Civil Service should work (Kuperus & Rode, 2016, p.43).

The Civil Service is based on a hierarchical structure with generalist and politically neutral civil servants. First, generalist civil servants with “general intelligence rather than specialized education or training” are considered most suitable to advise ministers and lead departments (Van den Berg, 2011, p.47). Second, the political neutrality of civil servants is fundamental (Van den Berg, 2011, p.235). Since, this

divides the political and administrative responsibility and power. Third, hierarchy is still the dominant organizing principle (Van den Berg, 2011, p.206). The hierarchy has been formalised in a classification system of the civil service. The Senior Civil Service consists of the permanent secretary (grade 1), the second permanent secretary (grade 1A), the deputy secretary (grade 2) and the under secretary (grade 3). The executive directing bands (grade 4), the assistant secretaries (grade 5), the senior principals (grade 6) and the principals (grade 7) form the Mainstream Civil Service (Van den Berg, 2011, p.215).

The recruitment is based on a merit system, which means based on qualifications (Hood *et al.*, 2004, p.170). Furthermore, there is the “tradition of elite recruitment for its top civil service” (Hood *et al.*, 2004, p.171). The elitist and generalist civil service mainly derives from the recruitment amongst Oxbridge² graduates and private schools. The British civil servants mainly hold a degree in arts and humanities (Van den Berg, 2011, p.47), which reflects the generalist approach of the civil service. The British class system is apparent in the civil service, since there is a discrepancy between the social background of the civil servants and the people (Van der Meer & Roborgh, 1993, p.36). King & Crewe (2014) refer to this as “cultural disconnect” between the decision-makers and the majority of the people in the United Kingdom.

After years of cutbacks to a post-Second World War low of around 384,000 civil servants in June 2016, the staff numbers have risen by 8,000 to just over 392,000 in September 2017 (Whitehall Monitor, 2018, p.25). This is approximately 0,6% of the Dutch population. This increase in staff is partly related to Brexit, as departments are hiring more staff to do preparation work for Brexit (Whitehall Monitor, 2018, p.8). In the Senior Civil Service 34% of the staff was female in 2010 and this has increased to 41% in 2017 (Whitehall Monitor, 2018, p.25). Therefore, the gender balance of the civil service has improved, but women are still underrepresented at the top.

² Contraction of Oxford and Cambridge; the two most prestigious universities in the United Kingdom.

The Netherlands

The Dutch national service employs around 116,000 civil servants, this is approximately 0,7% of the population. The civil servants at one of the twelve ministries prepare policy and legislation. In the executive agencies, the civil servants implement the policy (Rijksoverheid, n.d.-c). The Dutch culture is known for a high degree of egalitarianism, however the civil service has “a clear formal hierarchical structure” (Van den Berg, 2011, p.344). The civil servant positions are divided into scales from 1 to 18. The scales 1 to 6 are the lower civil servants, then scale 7 to 9 are middle civil servants and 10 to 18 higher civil servants (Van der Meer & Roborgh, 1993, p.215-217). The highest level is scale 19, which is the level of the Secretary Generals, Director Generals and Inspector Generals.

Up until the end of the Second World War and the years after the war, the majority of the Dutch civil servants held a law degree. However, Law was not seen as a specialist discipline but in most cases as a rather generalist education. Nowadays most civil servants have a background in social sciences, economics or technical sciences (Van der Meer & Roborgh, 1993, p.324). Thus, the civil servants in the Netherlands had a change from a generalistic to a more diversified background like in the United Kingdom.

Similarities

The Netherlands and the United Kingdom both have a high quality civil service. Both countries score above average in The International Civil Service Effectiveness Index 2017 (InCiSe, 2017). Moreover, both systems have a hierarchical structure where the positions are divided into grades or scales. In addition, in both countries the civil service employment systems are mainly position-based (Kuperus & Rode, 2016, p.13) for general civil servants as well as top civil servants. This means that civil servants are recruited for a special position. The civil service have a similar size in both countries, based on the total population.

Differences

There are also some differences between the civil service in The Netherlands and in The United Kingdom. The civil servants in the United Kingdom always had a more generalist educational background. In the Netherlands top civil servants used to have a law educational background in general, however nowadays there is a more generalist and diversified civil service. Although, both countries possess a hierarchical civil service, different grading systems for civil servants are used. Despite the fact that the countries share the position-based employment system, there are some differences in the appointment of civil servants. In the Netherlands, the Ministry of Interior is responsible for the civil service (ARAR, 1988, §1 art.4a), while in the United Kingdom the Prime Minister's Office is responsible for the appointments of top civil servants (Kuperus & Rode, 2016, p.19). The appointment process is discussed in more detail in the next section on top civil servants.

2.1.4. Top civil servants³

The governmental systems in the United Kingdom and in the Netherlands have a “dual nature of leadership” (Paun & Harris, 2013, p.10). This dual leadership means that every ministerial department has a political leader and a civil servant leader. The civil servant leader is the Secretary General in the Netherlands and the Permanent Secretary in the United Kingdom. As mentioned before, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom have hierarchical governmental systems. The general structure of a ministry is illustrated in graph 1.

³ With top civil servants I refer to the highest civil servants in the department (level 1 or 1+ in the graph 1. This refers to the Secretary General or Director General (scale 19) in the Netherlands, and Permanent (under) Secretary (grade 1) in the United Kingdom

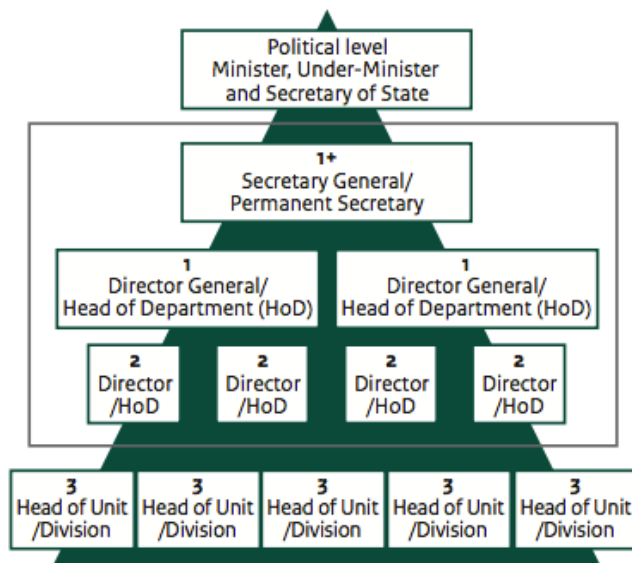


Figure 1. Hierarchical Structure Top of Department/Ministry (Kuperus & Rode, 2016, p.15)

The United Kingdom

Who

In the United Kingdom, the Permanent Secretary is the most senior civil servant of a government department and is responsible for the civil servants and policy within this department. The Permanent Secretary is the primary adviser to the Secretary of State (Kuperus & Rode, 2016, p.15). The Permanent Secretary is classified as Grade 1 in the British civil service system. The top civil servants in The United Kingdom form the Top 200 in the Senior Civil Service (SCS). The Cabinet Office is responsible for “developing expertise and promoting cohesion across the Senior Civil Service” (Kuperus & Rode, 2016, p.18). The British society and the government are, as mentioned before, often regarded as elitist. The senior civil service has an “elitist character” (Van den Berg, 2011, p.208), mainly because the majority of the top civil servants comes from the traditional upper class and has been privately educated.

Visibility

During the 1980s the position of the Permanent Secretary became more visible to the public through the BBC television series *Yes, Minister* and *Yes, Prime Minister*.

However, the series was satirical, therefore it provided a fun, but wrong impression of the role of the Permanent Secretary and the relation with the minister. This series shaped the people's idea of the top civil servants (Bekker, 2012, p.39). These were very popular series in the 1980s on the most senior positions in government and administration (Granville, 2009, p.332). According to Granville (2009), "*Yes, Minister* gave a distinctive voice to the Civil Service, the otherwise silent half of the government-administration partnership" (p.318). Today, the series *The Thick Of It* is a very popular and influential show, which is often seen as the 21st century's version of *Yes, Minister*.

However, top civil servants are not only visible in a fictional television series. In addition, in real-life Permanent Secretaries can appear in the media, for example when they appear in front of the Public Accounts Committee or the Select Committee. These hearings to parliament are public and broadcasted.

Recruitment and selection

In the United Kingdom, the Civil Service Commission is responsible for the recruitment and selection process of top civil servants. The cabinet minister is, to a certain extent, involved in this process. The minister is informed on the selection and appointment process of the top civil servant. He or she may meet the shortlisted candidates, however a representative of the civil service commission should be present at these meetings. The minister is not allowed to be a member of the selection panel or to add or remove candidates from the selection. Then, the selection panel must recommend the best candidate for appointment based on the merits of the candidates. If the minister is not satisfied with the panel's recommended candidate, the minister may ask them to reconsider the appointment and choose another candidate from the shortlist (Civil Service Commission, 2018).

Politicisation

In relation to politicisation, ministers have a bit more influence in the appointment process of civil servants "than the official story allows" (Paun, Harris and Magee, 2013, p.7). Prime Minister Thatcher had influence on the selection of the most top

civil servants and she wanted the top civil servants to be “one of us” (Foster, 2005: 210). However, during her career Margaret Thatcher found out that civil servants are usually more “reliable, loyal and useful” than political appointees (Foster, 2005: 211). In relation to ministerial responsibility and accountability, the extent of ministerial involvement in the appointment of top civil servants remains a topic of discussion. According to Paun *et al.* (2013) this is not necessarily problematic and does not have to lead to politicisation as long as the appointed candidates are selected on merit-based assessment and bound by civil service code and values (p.7).

Neutrality and impartiality are core values of the civil service. However, this does not mean that top civil servants do not possess political party memberships. The research of Van den Berg (2011) shows that in the conducted survey, 8% of the 224 British respondents answered yes to the question about whether they were members of a political party, 87% answered no and 6% did not wish to answer this question (p.256).

Profile of a Top Civil Servant

The Civil Service Leadership Model briefly outlines the role of a top civil servant in The United Kingdom: “Set Direction, Engage People and Deliver Results” (Kuperus & Rode, 2016: p.43). From this model, key characteristics that top civil servants are expected to have are “inspiring – about their work and its future; confident – in their engagement; and empowering – their teams to deliver” (Kuperus & Rode, 2016, p.43).

The Institute for Government describes seven roles of the Permanent Secretary:

- Policy adviser to their Secretary of State;
- Implementer of change and policy;
- Manager’ of the department’s day-to-day business;
- Guardian of propriety;
- Controller of public money;
- Steward’ of the department’s long-term capability;
- And part of the ‘collective leadership’ of the Civil Service as a whole (Paun & Harris, 2013, p.4).

Accountability

In the United Kingdom, top civil servants are not directly accountable to parliament. Top civil servants can be asked to explain policy and answer questions in front of Select Committees. Top civil servants and minister have the obligation to appear in front of a Select Committee when requested (Verhey, 2001, p.33). The Select Committees are committees of the House of Commons; most of the committees are related to one department (Verhey, 2001, p.32). Top civil servants will always act as the representative of the minister when talking to Select Committees (Horne, 2015, p.14). In the United Kingdom, Select Committees often hear top civil servants without the presence of the minister (Bekker, 2012, p.53).

Yet, in the United Kingdom there is one exception in which top civil servants are directly accountable to parliament. Permanent Secretaries also have the role of Accounting Officer. The Accounting Officers are accountable to the Public Accounts Committee “for the stewardship of the department’s resources” (Horne, 2015, p.14). This committee was created in 1861 to ensure “systematic parliamentary controls of public money” (Guerin *et al.*, 2018, p.17). By 1872, it was decided that the Permanent Secretary should carry the responsibility of the Accounting Officer (Paun & Harris, 2013, p.26).

Thus, in the United Kingdom top civil servants, instead of ministers, have the responsibility for “safeguarding propriety, regularity and value for public expenditure” (Foster, 2005: 133). This is part of the task of the top civil servants, because ministers are usually more temporary (Guerin *et al.*, 2018, p.18). The job title of the Permanent Secretary already indicates that the position is supposed to be permanent. The Permanent Secretary is also responsible for the longer-term functioning of the department (Paun & Harris, 2013, p.8). Moreover, it is difficult to separate the accountability for the budget from the accountability for the policy implementation and execution; therefore, it was easier and better to unify both elements of accountability into the position of the Permanent Secretary (Lemstra 1992, p.188).

The Accounting Officer is accountable to parliament for:

- “Propriety and regularity;
- Prudent and economical administration;
- Avoidance of waste and extravagance;
- Ensuring value for money, judged for the Exchequer as a whole, not just for the department;
- Efficient and effective use of available resources;
- The organisation, staffing and management of the department” (HM Treasury and Cabinet Office, 2017, p.11).

Ministerial expenditures have to meet four tests: “regularity, propriety, value for money, and feasibility” (Paun & Harris, 2013, p.26). When a minister wants to spend money and the Permanent Secretary does not believe that it passes all the tests and therefore is not willing to take responsibility for this, the minister should write a ministerial direction. In this manner, the accountability shifts from the Permanent Secretary to the minister. Thus, in a sense, the ministerial responsibility remains in the form of ministerial directives. As a result of the role of Accounting Officers, Permanent Secretaries know about the policies and the execution and are also able to explain that well (Bekker, 2009, p.28). Moreover, this gives a face to the administrative side of the governmental system. In addition, it is a good way to inform parliament (Bekker, 2012, p.53).

Relationship with minister

The British system is based on the “The Westminster/Whitehall model”, which indicates a strict separation between politics and administration, where ministers take executive decisions and civil servants implement them (Van den Berg, 2011, p.207). Ministers and top civil servants have different roles, also because of the ministerial responsibility convention. Riddell (2013) and Hughes (2017) argue that the relationship between ministers and top civil servants can be complicated or tense, however research by Van den Berg (2011) shows that 90% of the British top civil servants regard their relationship with the minister as constructive (p.254). Mutual trust between the top civil servant and the minister is the most important ingredient for the department to be led well and for the political system as a whole to function in

a proper way (Verhey 2001; Verhey 2013; Paun & Harris, 2013; Kakabadse, 2018). Kakabadse refers to this as the “chemistry” between the minister and the top civil servant (Kakabadse, 2018, p.3). This requires personal sensitivity from the minister as well as from the top civil servants. The personal chemistry between these two is essential to proper functioning of the entire government department.

The Netherlands

Who

The Secretaries General and Directors General are the top civil servants in the Netherlands. The top civil servants are of high quality and politically neutral (Bekker, 2012: p.34). The Secretary General is the highest-ranking civil servant in any ministry and is mainly responsible for the management of the department (Raadschelders & Van der Meer, 2014, p.730). The Dutch civil service consist of a scale system that ranges from scale 1 to scale 18 (Van den Berg, 2011, p.278). There is an additional scale for Secretaries General and Directors General, which is scale 19 (Bekker, 2012, p.17). Since the 1960s university education became accessible to students from all social classes, hence positions in the senior civil service became also open to the middle class (the same also happened in the private sector) (Raadschelders & Van der Meer, 2014, p.731).

The Top Management Group (TMG) is a special group of around 80 top civil servants within the ABD, which consists of Secretaries General, Directors General, Inspectors General and some other equal functions (ABD, n.d.). In the Netherlands, the appointment of top civil servants is defined in the *Algemeen Rijksambtenarenreglement* (Civil Servant Regulation). The Minister of Interior submits the appointment of a top civil servant to the Cabinet together with the corresponding minister (ARAR 1931, §1, art.7), then the Cabinet decides. Top civil servants are appointed for a maximum of seven years. The staff rotation in the Netherlands is based on the idea of decreasing compartmentalisation of government departments (Raadschelders & Van der Meer, 2014, p.726). Furthermore, the seven years maximum encourages personal development of the top civil servant, because it will enable him or her to work in a different environment and function (ABD, 2017b).

Moreover, after five to seven years the inspiration and motivation tends to decline, therefore it is also better for the organisation when a top civil servant makes a career step (ABD, 2017b).

Visibility

According to the Dutch constitution, everybody, including top civil servants, has the Freedom of Speech. However, for civil servants some guidelines exist. In 1998, the new directive on external contact of top civil servants with the press and the members of parliament was put in place (Bekker, 2009, p.16). The directive is known as 'Oekaze-Kok' (after the Prime Minister in those days: Wim Kok). This directive combined the previous guidelines for civil servants. The new directive was somewhat stricter than the previous ones. However, the guidelines are not as strict as the term 'Oekaze' might suggest (Bekker, 2009, p.17).

Some examples of top civil servants who appear in the media are present in the Netherlands (Bekker, 2012). The *NCTV* (The national coordinator for counterterrorism and security) often appears in the media to explain or elaborate on the threat of terrorism in the Netherlands. Recently, the Director of the *AIVD* (The Dutch Intelligence Agency) appeared in the media and public debates to explain about the referendum on the *Nieuwe Wet op de inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten* (New Law on the intelligence and security services) also known as *Sleepwet* in The Netherlands. When top civil servants appear in public, they have to stay away from politics (Bekker, 2012). Especially in the case of the *NCTV*, publicity is part of the job. It can be functional to let the top civil servant give the factual explanation, which also buys the minister some time to come with a political statement. In practice, it is more common to see a Director General or Inspector General in public, than a Secretary General. This is related to the different nature of the position; the first ones are more concerned with concrete, factual issues, whereas a Secretary General operates closer to politics.

Sometimes top civil servants write about their experiences and publish articles and books containing their visions. It is generally accepted that they are authorized to do

so without prior approval, even when dealing with policy issues. However, they are supposed to be careful not to bother the minister and/or government policy in general. That is why publications remain scarce. Director General Mark Frequin has published three books on the role of top civil servants based on his own experiences and often participates in public debates.

Recruitment and selection

The Netherlands has the most centralized top management group organisation in Europe (Kuperus & Rode, 2016, p.17). This central organisation is the *Algemene Bestuursdienst* (The Office for the Senior Civil Service), abbreviated as ABD (Kuperus & Rode, 2016, p.17). The ABD was founded in 1995 (Staatscourant, 1995). The foundation of the ABD was the first step towards a Dutch ‘civil service’ (‘t Hart & Wille, 2002, p.302). The ABD functions as the single employer for all top civil servants (scale 16 or higher), in which they create a “cadre of senior managers” (Hood *et al.*, 2004, p.167). The ABD “facilitates and monitors the whole recruitment process” (Kuperus & Rode, 2016: 17). The goals of the ABD are enhancing flexibility, mobility and professionalism of top civil servants. Moreover, they focus on the competences and personal development of the top civil servants. The most senior civil servants are part of the Top Management Group (TMG) of the ABD. The Ministry of Interior is formally responsible for the top civil servants, but in practice, the responsible minister takes care of the substantive matters and the ABD covers the executive employer tasks (ABD, n.d.).

Politicisation

As mentioned before, civil servants in The Netherlands are politically independent, serving the government of the day and are mainly selected on merit. However, traditionally, membership of political parties has been high among top civil servants. According to the research of Van den Berg (2011), to the questions whether they were member of a political party, 35 per cent of the survey respondents answered yes, 64 per cent answered no and 1 per cent indicated they did not wish to answer this question (p.335). Every Dutch citizen has the right to be a member of a political party, but the civil service is formally politically neutral.

Profile Top of a Civil Servant

In the Netherlands, the ABD has defined the three core qualities every top civil servant should possess: cooperation, integrity and reflection. According to the ABD (2017a), a top civil servant should fulfil the following seven criteria:

- **Management sensitivity:** give advice to politicians, focus on consistency and long-term policymaking, and be aware of the role of technological and digital developments
- **Environmentally aware:** understand the department and other departments, be aware of developments within society, understand cultural differences, be political sensitive
- **Conceptual flexibility:** be analytical, take decisions, deal with insecurities, and have a vision
- **Shared leadership:** cooperation with others within and outside the department, use different perspectives, initiates and stimulate networking and co-creation to reach goals
- **Leading organization:** manage the organisation with vision, integrity and transparency, be courageous, and be a role model for the organisation
- **Reflection:** take time to reflect on functioning of the self, of the organisation, of the domain; create a life-long learning climate; provide and ask for feedback; be a good example.
- **Stress-resistant:** despite pressure from outside keep functioning, set priorities, make decisions, also in times of crisis and despite disappointments or resistance (ABD, 2017a).

Accountability

In the Netherlands, the Secretary General is accountable to the minister on the performance and actions of the civil servants working in the ministry. Moreover, the Secretary General is responsible for the staffing, the policy implementation and informing or advising the minister. Dutch top civil servants cannot be directly called to parliament and they cannot defend their actions in parliament (Van den Berg, 2011, p.299).

Parliament has several possibilities to monitor the government. First, the government has the obligation to inform parliament. Second, members of parliament can request information from the government ('t Hart & Wille, 2002, p.124). When the

government does not provide the information the parliament wants, they have other and more stringent powers including hearings, expert advice, The *Algemene Rekenkamer* (The Court of Audit) or an investigation, led by a special committee ('t Hart & Wille, 2002, p.129). The final and most far-reaching option for parliament is to start a formal parliament inquiry. The inquiry committees are temporary committees, which parliament can impose to investigate a certain topic when that is desirable. A parliamentary inquiry committee is independent and can do research without involvement of the government (Tuurenhout, 1992, p.48). They can conduct hearings under oath. The use of parliamentary inquiries is, apart from some cases in the past, relatively new and frequently used. The Law of the Parliamentary Inquiry authorises the parliamentary inquiry committee to hear politicians, civil servants and citizens; and they are obliged to appear in front of the committee (Tweede Kamercommissie, n.d.). The top civil servants do not need the consent of their minister to adhere to the request of the parliamentary inquiry committee. In addition, the top civil servant's statements are not part of the ministerial responsibility (Tuurenhout, 1992, p.49).

Relationship with minister

There is a division of tasks and consequently in responsibility of ministers and top civil servants, which can be derived from the doctrine of ministerial responsibility (Van den Berg, 2011, p.270). The relationship between ministers and top civil servants is mostly based on personal influences (Bekker, 2009, p.26). The three "R"s: respect, room and reciprocity are important for a good relationship between top civil servants and ministers ('t Hart, 2000, p.66). Civil servant loyalty also supposes integrity, which means that the top civil servant will avoid actions that can harm the interest or policy of the minister and government, and objectivity, which means that the top civil servant provides objective information and executes policies impartially (Lemstra, 1993, p.64). Sometimes this can lead to a complicated or tense relationship. For example, politicians usually want to respond quickly to events, whereas top civil servants often want to take some time to find out what is necessary before taking ad hoc measures (Bekker, 2009, p.24).

However, the different roles of the minister and the top civil servant can also lead to a complementary relationship, when the qualities and skills complement each other in teamwork to achieve common goals ('t Hart & Wille, 2002). Svava (2011) acknowledges that ministers and top civil servants have distinct roles, which provides them with a certain amount of independence, however there is also interdependence between the two. When ministers and top civil servants work in “tandems”, they share the leadership and thus work most effectively ('t Hart, 2014b, p.29). In addition, the research of Van den Berg (2011) shows that 89% of the Dutch respondents regard their relationship with the minister as constructive (p.331).

Similarities

There are similarities in the role of top civil servants in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom. In both countries, the top civil servant is the manager or leader of the department, who is responsible for the day-to-day business. Moreover, the “principle of continuity” forms the basis of the role of the top civil servants (Lemstra, 1993, p.207). This means that the top civil servants have a more permanent, long-term position within the governmental system. The top civil servants are working for the government of the day and do not necessarily change when a new government takes over. Furthermore, both countries place emphasis on the importance of similar norms. For example, the ABD and the Civil Service Code both emphasise integrity and neutrality as core values for top civil servants. Furthermore, both countries have a central office for top civil servants. The Top 200 of the Senior Civil Service in The United Kingdom and the Top Management Group of the ABD in the Netherlands are similar centralised bodies of top civil servants. The centralised offices focus on the recruitment, assessment, training and developments of the top civil servant group (Kuperus & Rode, 2016, p.18).

Giving policy advice, managing the organisation and collective/shared leadership are part of the top civil servant profile in both countries. Furthermore, talent groups for well-performing top civil servants are active in both countries, which is quite exceptional in comparison to other European examples (Kuperus & Rode, 2016, p.62). Ministers and top civil servants have distinct roles. In terms of visibility and

accountability, top civil servants in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom often appear in front of parliamentary inquiry committees without the minister. With respect to the minister-top civil servant relationships, trust, chemistry and personal relationships are essential in both countries. Moreover, the results of research conducted by Van den Berg (2011) actually show that the majority of the top civil servants in both countries regard their relationship with the minister as constructive. All of this, results in the high quality of the top civil service in both countries.

Differences

Even though the appointment process of top civil servants contains some similarities, some differences exist in terms of political influence (Kuperus & Rode, 2016, p.23). In the United Kingdom, the Civil Service Commission selects the candidate for the position of Permanent Secretary. Then, this candidate is presented to the minister, who then has the possibility to accept or reject the candidate. However, in the Netherlands the minister has the possibility to indicate which candidate from the long list would not be acceptable (Kuperus & Rode, 2016, p.25). This gives the Dutch minister more influence in the selection process than his or her British colleague. When top civil servants are appointed in the Netherlands, this is for a maximum of seven years, while there is no time limit in the United Kingdom (Kuperus & Rode, 2016, p.29). Furthermore, the Dutch top civil servants have a higher percentage of political-party membership than their British colleagues. According to research of Van den Berg (2011) 35% of Dutch respondents and 8% of the British respondents are members of a political party.

Furthermore, there are also differences in the profile of the top civil servant in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. When looking at the core values, cooperation and reflection are important in the Netherlands according to the ABD. Honesty, objectivity and impartially are core values for British top civil servants according to the Civil Service Code. In the Netherlands, there is a stronger emphasis on personal characteristics such as being stress-resistant, reflective and flexible. These qualities are probably also important in the United Kingdom, but they are not mentioned explicitly. In the United Kingdom, there is a greater focus on tasks and skills, rather

than personal characteristics. One explanation for this might be that the structure in the United Kingdom is more hierarchical than in the Netherlands (Hopman, 2015, p.26). Furthermore, British Permanent Secretaries also fulfil the role of Accounting Officer, in which they are accountable to parliament about responsible and sensible spending of the budget. The Dutch Secretaries General are not held accountable to parliament in such a way.

2.2. Description of relevant developments

In this framework, I have outlined differences and similarities between the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. I have compared the two countries on four levels, from more abstract to more specific, moving from the national level to the governmental system, diving into the civil service and finally looking into the role of top civil servants. This section outlines relevant developments that affect the two latter levels, the civil service and the top civil service, which will be outlined in section 2.3. The developments can be grouped in three categories:

- Technological developments;
- Social developments;
- Political-administrative developments.

The technological developments include the emergence of the Internet and ICT. The social developments are the increase in the role of the media, and globalisation in society. The section on the political-administrative developments discusses the following issues: internationalisation and Europeanisation of politics, the increase of the politics of incidents, and the trust in government.

2.2.1. Technological developments

The relevant technological developments include the emergence of the Internet and ICT-communication. The invention of the World Wide Web happened in 1991 (Van Dijck, 2012, p.10). However, the modernisation of communication started already in the early 1970s. The two initial technological developments were telecommunications and computers (Cantoni and Danowski, 2015, p.4). The prices of computers decreased

enormously during the 1980s (Margetts, 1999: 15). The technological developments led to automation in manufacturing and services (Margetts, 1999, p.15).

The emergence of the ICT and the Internet has created an “information revolution” (Van den Berg, 2011, p.58). The technological developments, Internet and ICT has changed and affected society. It changed the way we work, interact, communicate and behave. The digitalisation or Informatisation of society also transforms organisation, including the government (WRR, 2011, p.29). Therefore, the digitalisation of government does not occur in a vacuum, but as a part of the developing information society (WWR, 2011, p.31). The information technologies have become integrated in government, as in all organisations and companies today. All the social, political and economic government processes are dependent on ICT-systems (WWR, 2011, p.25). Finally, the technological developments are also a way to innovate government, for example in providing service that is more efficient to citizens and to interact with citizens (WWR, 2011, p.33-36, p.71).

2.2.2. Social developments

Media

The developments in the area of Internet and ICT have changed the influence of the media in our society. The Internet changed the media landscape significantly: the role of the media has increased in different ways. First, media are now available 24/7 (Aucoin, 2012, p.181). Second, media are faster now. The intervals of the media news cycle “have shrunk from daily, during the broadcast media dominance of the industrial era, to a virtually real-time cycle with a time interval of seconds in contemporary post-industrial information societies” (Cantoni & Danowski, 2015, p. 6). Third, the media are more fragmented, consequently people have more choice in what newspaper they read, which programme they watch or which social media platform they use. All of this resulted in the non-stop availability of news, information and communication. This increases the pressure on society in general, but also on journalists and politicians.

However, the media are not something new. They have always been there and have always had an influence on politics. What is new, is the media landscape, which is transforming constantly. The mass media started with newspapers, and then during the start of the twentieth century, radio and television entered (Adriaansen & Van Praag, 2010, p.243). Until the 1980s people did not have many options, however this changed with commercial television in the 1980s and Internet in the 1990s (Adriaansen & Van Praag, 2010, p.243).

The two most recent developments are mobile telephony and social media. Mobile telephony is “the most widespread mediation technology in the world” (Chen & Ling, 2015: 323). Especially with the access to wireless Internet, the smartphones have changed from a “voice or text- based communication to multimedia communication” (Chen & Ling, 2015, p.323). The mobile devices also increased the use of social media. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn, try to create a participatory culture. “Within less than a decade, a new infrastructure for online sociality and creativity has emerged, penetrating every fibre of culture today” (Van Dijck, 2013, p.4).

The media can function as a tool for visibility for the government. When it comes to visibility, the political face is the only face of the administration that people see in the media (Bekker, 2012: 38). Politicians have a “love-hate relationship” with the media: “they cannot do without, they do not want with” (Van Middelaar, 2017, p.30-231). The media can have a positive or a negative impact on politicians and their public image. Therefore, politicians are aware of their media-reputation. Consequently, politicians experience higher media pressure and therefore are forced to give quick responses. Hence, it is in their political interest to build a good relationship with the media. Also to get public support for reforms, it is important for politicians to engage with the media (Hughes, 2017). In this sense, the media can also function as an important tool to the benefit of a minister.

However, the media can also have some unfavourable effects for a minister. The media can partly control the government by drawing public attention to malpractices, scandals or mistakes for which the minister are held accountable. This can in turn

contribute to the emergence of an incentive for politicians to function properly and try to avoid malpractices. Therefore, on the one hand the media provides politicians with authority, while on the other hand it can also break them (Van Middelaar, 2017, p.231). In this manner, the media can function as a forum for accountability (Schillemans, 2010, p.314).

In conclusion, due to technological changes, the media have become more competitive and fragmented. This increases the pressure on the media, but also on the politicians. The media are in need for sensational stories to appeal to the public. Consequently, the media have become more assertive, and sometimes even more aggressive (Adriaansen & Van Praag, 2010, p.245). Since media organisations focus on sensational stories, because sensation sells, they tend to emphasise governmental blunders rather than governmental successes. Since the media form the primary source of information on government for citizens (Schillemans, 2010, p.315), this feeds public cynicism and gives the people the impression that there is no accountability (Guerin *et al.*, 2018, p.12).

Globalisation

Globalisation is a worldwide social development. Nowadays, many international flows of money, goods, information and people exist (De Beer & Koster, 2009, p.101). As previously discussed, the information revolution or the increased use of Internet and ICT made it easier to communicate with people, to get information and to trade across borders. Although it is a worldwide process, countries participate in the interconnected world to different extents (De Beer & Koster, 2009, p.101). The term globalisation is a 1990s “buzzword” (De Beer & Koster, 2009, p.121). Globalisation is used very often, however there is not just one definition. Yesilkagit & Princen (2010) define globalisation as “the process of increased interconnectedness of national economies, culture, technological developments and migration” (p.121). De Beer & Koster (2009) describe globalisation as “increasing cross-border interactions” (p.13), which can be economic, social or political. Thus, globalisation refers to interconnectivity or interactions, across borders and in different dimensions.

Globalisation is an umbrella term, which can refer to different types of processes: economic, social or political. Economic globalisation is related to the increase in international trade, cross-border market and international trade treaties. Social globalisation is about the movement of people, culture and customs, but about immigration and integration. Political globalisation refers to the cross-border political interactions and international cooperation, which leads to internationalisation and europeanisation.

Furthermore, globalisation is a continuous process. Globalisation refers to the worldwide process of interconnectivity. Therefore, a country is not necessarily globalised, but a country can have a certain degree of openness. De Beer & Koster (2009) state that the Netherlands and the United Kingdom are open countries. Both the Netherlands and the United Kingdom have a socially open position to the rest of the world. This means that there is a lot of interaction with and migration between other countries. The Netherlands scores high on economic openness, which is mainly because it has an export economy and functions as a transit country. The United Kingdom, on the other hand, has a high rate of political openness according to this research in the period from 1970 until 2005. However, Brexit might decrease the political openness of the United Kingdom vis-à-vis the European countries.

2.2.3. Political-administrative developments

Internationalisation and Europeanisation

The social development of globalisation has led to the internationalisation and Europeanisation of politics and policy. Internationalisation refers to the deepening of international institutions, for example the GATT or the WTO ('t Hart & Wille, 2002, p.34), but also the OECD, the World Bank and the IMF (Van den Berg, 2011, p.10). Internationalisation creates intergovernmental and supranational connections between nation-states ('t Hart & Wille, 2002, p.34). Europeanisation means the deepening of the European integration and intergovernmental and supranational cooperation between the member states of the European Union. According to Van den Berg (2011), Europeanisation is “the reorientation or reshaping of politics and administration in the domestic arena in ways that reflect structures, policies, and

practices advanced through the EU system of governance” (p.25). The internationalisation or Europeanisation of policy means that policy-making is not only taking place on a national level, but also at a global or European level (Yesilkagit & Princen, 2010, p.107).

Different causes lead to both Internationalisation and Europeanisation: markets have become interdependent and international trade has increased, risks (for example global warming or diseases) are transnational and there is an increase in joined consensus on norms and values (for example the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) (Yesilkagit & Princen, 2010, p.105). In order to address these transboundary issues, international cooperation, policy-making and legislation is required.

Often, many people regard the European Union as a “super state”, which leaves no room for nation-states’ own policies (Yesilkagit & Princen, 2010, p.110). However, it is not just Brussels deciding: all member states together make the decisions (Yesilkagit & Princen, 2010, p.16). In the United Kingdom, dissatisfaction and lack of trust in the European Union eventually led to Brexit (Van Middelaar, 2017, p.312). The slogan used during the Brexit campaign was “Take Back Control” (Van Middelaar, 2017, p.312), referring to taking back control from Brussels.

Thus, the internationalisation and Europeanisation of social problems affects the international and national policy processes, which then affect the structure and functioning of public administration. The next section (2.3) discusses the effects of Internationalisation and Europeanisation on the civil service and top civil servants in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

Politics of Regulations versus Politics of Incidents

Van Middelaar (2017) discusses European politics in the period 2010-2015, mainly focusing on the crises that have occurred. He argues that the increase in events, such as the financial and migration crisis, led to “new politics” in Europe. The events require improvisation from the European leaders. They had to come up with ideas that were not yet present in the European framework. In his book, Van Middelaar (2017) distinguishes between the politics of regulations and the politics of incidents.

The politics of regulations can be described as the systematic side of the political field, where laws and policies are being made, where rules are executed and where public services are being organized (Van Middelaar, 2017, p.18). This is part of the day-to-day business of the government, parliament and civil service. The politics of regulations is based on honesty, expertise and trustworthiness, useful in terms of pacification and de-politicisation.

The politics of incidents works to get a grip on unforeseen events or incidents (Van Middelaar, 2017, p.18). It is the task of the politicians to deal with these contingencies. Since these are new, delicate and sensitive situations, politicians cannot always fall back on rules, laws or a coalition agreement, therefore they need to improvise and try (Van Middelaar, 2017, pp.18-19). Emotion usually controls this kind of crisis politics. Yet, innovative and courageous politicians are required to assess the situation in the right manner and act accordingly.

Thus, politics of regulations regulates, and politics of incidents decides and acts (Van Middelaar, 2017). In the European Union, the politics of regulations is the domain of civil servants and the politics of incidents is the domain of politicians. However, in national politics these two domains are more intertwined. The distinction between politics of regulations and politics of incidents is blurry. Nevertheless, in general, civil servants are still more concerned with the systematic or legal side of politics. Politicians are more concerned with incidents, because politicians have a more short-term perspective; they want to see quick results, whereas top civil servants have a more long-term view. It is also their responsibility to act when there is in a specific situation a need for decisions but not yet a well-defined policy, let alone a legally based system.

The importance of events and incidents has grown over the last years, which is the result of the growing role of the media and the increased speed of political and social processes ('t Hart & Wille, 2002, p.65). The increase of the media scrutinizing incidents is referred to as “incidentalism” (Van den Berg, 2011, p.59). This “incidentalism” drives politicians to give an immediate response. Politicians often

have a more short-term perspective and, as aforementioned, they want to maintain a good relationship with the media.

Trust in Government

Public trust in government is essential for the legitimacy of the government. According to Visser (2008), “without public trust democratic governance is not possible” (p.19). However, the average level of trust in government is relatively low. The Edelman Trust Barometer annually publishes the levels of trust in institutions in 28 countries in different parts of the world. The Edelman Trust Barometer 2018 shows that trust in institutions in general is 59% globally. In the Netherlands trust in institutions is higher (67%), but in the United Kingdom this is lower than average (52%). The issue of reliability and truth of information, for example with the increase in ‘fake news’, is one of the causes of the low levels of trust in institutions. The people do not know what or whom to believe. Consequently, this makes them more suspicious of the media, government, businesses and NGOs.

The government is one of the institutions included in the Edelman Trust Barometer. The trust in government is lower compared to the trust in institutions in general in both countries. In the Netherlands 54% of the people, trust the government, while in the United Kingdom this is only 36%.

The trust levels in the Netherlands are quite high and consistent (Edelman, 2018). The Dutch people have concerns about the truth and reliability of information, however this does not directly affects the levels of trust in the Dutch institutions (Edelman, 2018). In most other Western European, countries the levels of trust are lower. Especially, in the United Kingdom the trust levels are below the global average. The trust in government is particularly low in the United Kingdom. British people believe “government is failing to deliver and does not operate transparently” (Guerin et al., 2018, p.12).

2.3. Influence of the developments

2.3.1. Civil service

This section discusses the effects of the relevant technological, social and political-administrative developments on the civil service in the United Kingdom and in the Netherlands.

Technological Developments

The United Kingdom

The technological developments change the structure and the culture of all organisations, including the government. The information technology affects the civil service as organisation, for example because due to the automatisisation and digitalisation less staff is required. Moreover, it also affects the way of working, for example, IT-communication enables people working together while being in physical different places (Margetts, 1999, p.25). These are some examples of the benefits of the “information age” (Margetts, 1999, p.34). As in all companies and organisations today, the information systems are key tools of the government (Margetts, 1999, p.30).

However, there are some downsides too. First, technological developments are expensive. The IT forms a significant part of the department’s budget (Margetts, 1999, p.37). Secondly, increased misunderstandings, depersonalisation and organisational conflicts caused by the use of technology have negative impacts at work, such as stress, burnouts and job satisfactions (Wright, 2015, p.397). Furthermore, since most civil servants are no IT-experts many “gross failures of IT systems” have been generated (King & Crewe, 2014, p.183). Especially during 1990s, the British governments had problems with storing, integrating, transmitting and analysing data (King & Crewe, 2014, p.186).

In order to tackle some of these issues the British government has set up the Government Digital Service (GDS) and the Major Projects Authority (MPA), both part of the Efficiency Reform Group (ERG) (Tweede Kamer, 2014-2015, p.140). The

main aim of the ERG is to make government more effectively and as cheap as possible (Tweede Kamer, 2014-2015, p.140). The GDS acknowledges that ICT is everywhere and supports the departments to digitise their services (Tweede Kamer, 2014-2015, p.140). The priorities of GDS include “supporting the ongoing digital transformation of government”, “redesigning whole services across government to meet user needs”, “improving the availability, quality and use of government data” and “improving skills, capability and leadership across government” (GOV.UK, n.d.-a). One of the problems is the lack of government employees with skills in and knowledge of ICT. Outsourcing can be a solution to this. GDS has a special ‘people and skills team’ to find high-quality skilled ICT employees (Tweede Kamer, 2014-2015, p.143).

The Netherlands

Today, the use of technology in the Dutch government apparatus is obvious (WRR, 2011, p.11). The informatisation has become a part of the civil service. Service to citizens as well as government tasks and processes have been digitalised. Digitalisation is assumed to enhance efficiency and effectiveness (Broeders, Cuijpers and Prins, 2011, p.20).

In general, politicians and civil servants are enthusiastic about technology, based on the ideas of effectiveness, efficiency and security (WWR, 2011, p.95). For example, health care, safety, and social security make use of ICT applications (Broeders *et al.*, 2011, p.15). However, this also makes government responsible for the use of IT in government services and processes (Broeders *et al.*, 2011, p.15). The government is responsible for avoiding harm caused by the use of IT for the citizens (WWR, 2011, p.191).

Moreover, digitalisation changes the character of the government (WWR, 2011, p.13) as well as the internal work processes of the government (WRR, 2011, p.71). In addition, the government is very dependent on the ICT-systems. However, not all civil servants have the right IT-knowledge, therefore external consultants, developers and providers are necessary (WWR, 2011, p.30). Finally, accountability for IT-

related issues remains a challenge for the government. At the moment, this is not a top-priority (WWR, 2011, p.108).

In order to make ICT a top priority and to see how it can be improved, parliament imposed a temporary parliamentary committee on ICT projects. Ton Elias, a Dutch politician and member of the VVD (conservative liberal party), chaired the committee, therefore it is also known as the “Committee Elias” (Tweede Kamer, n.d.). This committee started in 2012 and presented their report in October 2014 (Tweede Kamer, n.d.). Usually politicians are ambitious and enthusiastic about ICT-projects, which is a good thing according to the committee. However, it is important to stay focused on the main duties of governments and to keep in mind what is possible and impossible (Tweede Kamer, 2014-2015, p.97). Often, ICT is seen as a goal rather than a way to achieve a goal (Tweede Kamer, 2014-2015, p.97).

Social Developments

The United Kingdom

The media landscape in the United Kingdom is more aggressive and present. Positive visibility in the media has become the top priority for politicians (Van den Berg, 2011, p.245). Consequently, policy priorities are partly based on the “potential degree of positive media coverage” (Van den Berg, 2011, p.363). When the media partly shape the policies, “the degree of expected positive media exposure” (Van den Berg, 2011, p.245) also determines the work and activities of civil servants. However, the media hardly ever publish positive news, since “good news is no news” (King & Crewe, 2014, p.9). Usually, government blunders frequently “make the headlines” (King & Crewe, 2014, p.9). People are more interested in reading what is going wrong rather than reading what is going right.

Moreover, the research of Van den Berg (2011) shows that the media are regarded as the most intensified and important factor in their work by 65% of the British top civil servants. The media have become one of the main drivers for policy-making and thus, also, for the civil service. Furthermore, the increased speed of media also requires the civil servants to respond quickly in order to help their minister to have a positive

visibility in the media or at least minimizes the risks. In the United Kingdom, 59% of the top civil servants consider the relationship with the media as prone to conflict (Van den Berg, 2011, p.252).

The Netherlands

As the previous section outlined, due to the technological developments and transformations of the media landscape, non-stop news is available. The media landscape is faster; more fragmented and became a bigger part of our society. In relation to the government, the media put more emphasises on events, incidents, crises and blunders. To a certain extent, the media influence the subject of debates in parliament. Consequently, due to this media pressure, the politicians and civil servants are guided by the “issues of the day” (‘t Hart & Wille, 2002, p.65). This results into an increased focus on incidents and short-term solutions.

According to the research of Van den Berg (2011), 66% of the Dutch top civil servants regard the media as the most intensified and important factor in their work. For example, civil servants assist politicians with quickly responding to the media and parliament and to appear in the media in a positive way. The increase of the role of the media in society has led to an increase of the media-driven work in the civil service. In Netherlands 49% of the top civil servants, consider the relationship with the media as conflictuous (Van den Berg, 2011, p.319). Thus, the media are usually not constructive for the functioning of government.

Political-Administrative Developments

The United Kingdom

Following the processes of globalization, internationalization and in particular Europeanisation, in combination with a decreasing trust rate in the government, a Eurosceptic sentiment emerged in the United Kingdom, which eventually led to Brexit. A new department has been created: The Department for Exiting the European Union (DExEU) (Whitehall Monitor, 2018, p.15). As mentioned before, the civil service has also increased in size in order to deal with all the extra Brexit-related work. The civil service experiences and will continue to experience during the

upcoming year a “higher legislative workload due to Brexit” (Whitehall Monitor, 2018, p.74), especially the Home Office and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). The Home Office has to develop new legislation regarding new customs and immigration laws. Currently, around 80% of Defra legislation is European legislation, which requires a lot of legal work in order to develop new British laws (Whitehall Monitor, 2018, p.74).

The Netherlands

The previous section outlined the social development of globalisation, in which the world is more interconnected. In the political sphere, this translates into the process of internationalisation. The Netherlands is part of many international institutions, of which the European Union is the most important one. One of the consequences of this so-called Europeanisation is that between 50 to 80% of the legislation originates from the European level (Van den Berg, 2011, p.60). Consequently, EU legislation affects the civil service at all departments. It is not just the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is concerned with international relations. Due to internationalisation, this has become increasingly important in all government departments (Dijstelbloem, Den Hoed, Holtslag and Schouten, 2010, p.121). On the one hand, the increase of international and European legislation, cooperation and integration determines the work of the civil service. On the other hand, the civil servants should actively work to reach out to other departments, countries or organisation to cooperate.

Similarities

In both countries, the increasing and changing role of the media has an effect on the civil service. The focus on incidents made the media even a larger priority than it already was. It requires civil servants to work quickly and to be well informed. The Netherlands and the United Kingdom are both open countries and largely involved in the globalising, internationalising and Europeanising world, which affects the daily work of the civil service.

Differences

However, some fundamental differences exist between the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The main differences are the low level of trust in government in the United Kingdom and, of course, Brexit: one of the main concerns of the British civil servants. It has caused a lot of work for the civil service. As no nation has left the European Union before, Brexit is a completely new situation. Therefore, there are no clear rules available yet. Moreover, the media landscape in the United Kingdom differs from that in the Netherlands. The media are more aggressive and the role of the commercial media is larger. Especially the tabloids determine the media landscape in the United Kingdom, where “millions of people see only the Sun, the Daily Mirror or the Daily Record” (King & Crewe, 2014, p.249).

2.3.2. Top civil servants

This section describes the influences of the relevant technological, social, and political-administrative developments on the role of top civil servants in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

Technological Developments

The United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, politicians and top civil servants did not manage to “develop the use of IT adequately” (Foster, 2005: 212). There are many problems with filing systems and archives, resulting in a loss of collective memory and weakened authority and knowledge of civil servants (Foster, 2005: 212). Top civil servants must be aware of this and try to cooperate with ICT-experts in order to maintain the collective memory and authority.

Most top civil servants lack ICT-knowledge and do not master the ICT-jargon. Therefore, in order to support top civil servants in the United Kingdom in ICT related issues, the GDS and MPA make sure that conversations with top civil servants are held in plain language and that goals are formulated in order to be clear for everyone (Tweede Kamer, 2014-2015, p.136).

The Netherlands

The technological developments, in particular information technology (IT), provide the government with innovations and benefits, but also with challenges and risks. Consequently, this also affects the role of top civil servants.

According to the parliamentary research to ICT-projects in government, top civil servants in general show little interest in ICT-project within their department, which is partly caused by too little knowledge (Tweede Kamer, 2014-2015, p.132). It is important that top civil servants are more engaged and concerned with the ICT-projects. Therefore, it is important that ICT-related reports and discussions are not full of overly complicated jargon (Tweede Kamer, 2014-2015, p.133). Thus, current top civil servants should be interested in ICT and more willing to learn and understand more about ICT. Since ICT is not a separate goal, but a way to achieve other goals (Tweede Kamer, 2014-2015, p.133), it can be used strategically and therefore top civil servants should be aware of it. Thus, top civil servants should integrate ICT in the strategy and be aware of the role and impact of ICT on all the projects they are managing. Top civil servants with little interest in ICT form a risk. For example, they will rely too much on external technical experts and not be able to have a realistic image of costs, time and quality of a project (Tweede Kamer, 2014-2015, p.134).

Moreover, it can be difficult to employ skilled ICT personnel within the government, due to a lack of skilled ICT people in general and the fact that the majority prefers working in private sector (Tweede Kamer, 2014-2015, p.143). Therefore, it is important for top civil servants to motivate staff to do ICT trainings as well as being able to cooperate well with external ICT.

Social Developments

The United Kingdom

Media are usually critical on the government. They are looking for incidents and focusing on blame. There is no incentive for the media to highlight the successes of government (Guerin *et al.*, 2018, p.32). However, according to the Institute for Government Accountability paper also the parliamentary select committees have “a

combative attitude with focus on blame” (Guerin *et al.*, 2018, p.33). As a result, civil servants become defensive, rather than providing information and being transparent. This is an “unproductive accountability system” (Guerin *et al.*, 2018, p.33). Thus, impact of the developments of the Internet, media and incidents has resulted in a culture of blame, which affects the top civil servants and their work.

Moreover, the media focus on incidents and the short-term view of minister can lead to an increased work-speed. Consequently, this results into a higher workload for top civil servants. However, the high work-speed and the tendency to respond quickly might also lead to higher risk for government blunders (King & Crewe, 2014, p.339).

The Netherlands

The 24/7 media and “incidentalism” affect the task of the top civil servant. Since the role of the media has increased, there is non-stop news available and more attention to incidents. This is what Paul ‘t Hart (2014a) describes as temporal turbulence (p.33). Due to communication via email and social media the pace of the work has increased (Hopman, 2015). The responses of top civil servants should not only be good, but also fast. The increased operational speed of top civil servants is adapted to the “real-time politics” (‘t Hart, 2014a, p.23). As a result, this puts more pressure on top civil servants. One of the qualities that a top civil servant should have is “dealing with this turbulence” (‘t Hart, 2014a, p.33). Therefore, there is a “growing demand for ‘can-do’ civil servants (Raadschelders & Van der Meer, 2014, p.743), in order to deal with the increased pressure from parliament, media and citizens.

Political-Administrative Developments

The United Kingdom

According to Kakabadse (2018), top civil servants have always been “very good about their wider relationships” and their “connections in the field” (p.20). With the increase of the cooperation outside the own department and with the decrease of trust in governments, cooperative and interactive skills have become quality that is even more important for top civil servants.

The Netherlands

It is the role of top civil servant to connect politics, policy and execution and to connect people, politics and policy (Bekker, 2009). With the developments of internationalisation and Europeanisation, the cooperation outside the own department becomes more important for top civil servants. Therefore, it requires top civil servants to focus on decompartmentalisation and thinking internationally ('t Hart, 2014a). In the Netherlands, the ABD describes 'cooperation' as one of the main qualities for modern top civil servants. Top civil servants have to focus on interaction. The ideas of cooperative, collective, shared, distributed or collaborative leadership (Hopman, 2015) move away from the traditional notion of a leader, which used to be strong, powerful, stand-alone and hierarchical.

Similarities

When looking at the impacts of the technological, social and political-administrative developments on top civil servants some similarities between the United Kingdom and the Netherlands can be found.

First, the ICT development forms a great opportunity to innovate government and to become more effective in both countries. However, ICT in government is also problematic: it is expensive and there is a lack of knowledge and skills. The top civil servants are not properly skilled and interested enough in ICT. Moreover, it is difficult to employ enough and high-quality ICT personnel.

Secondly, the media put more pressure on top civil servants. The workload is higher and this requires flexibility, calmness and can-do mentality of the current top civil servants.

Finally, cooperative skills and maintaining relationships are seen as main qualities for current top civil servants, because of the processes of internationalisation, Europeanisation and decompartmentalisation.

Differences

Yet, some differences between the United Kingdom and the Netherlands exist when it comes to the impact of the relevant and recent development on the top civil service. The Dutch parliamentary committee on ICT in government sees the United Kingdom as an example, because of the Government Digital Service (GDS) and the Major Projects Authority (MPA). The top civil servants in the United Kingdom should still be aware of the problematic side of the ICT-projects, however they are offered support from the GDS and the MPA. Furthermore, the media in the United Kingdom is more aggressive than in the Netherlands. This results in a more prominent culture of blame. The current British top civil servants need to be more aware of this and arm themselves against this.

3. Feedback from the practice of government

In the framework, I have described the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, their political systems, their civil service and their top civil servants. In all these categories, I have indicated some differences and similarities. Furthermore, I have outlined some relevant technological, social and political-administrative developments and how these have affected the civil service and the role of top civil servants in the United Kingdom and in the Netherlands. In order to see how all of this works in practice, I have conducted semi-structured focused interviews with (former) top civil servants in the United Kingdom and in the Netherlands. I have spoken to the following people:

British respondents:

- Clare Moriarty. Permanent Secretary, Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).
- Jill Rutter. Senior Researcher at Institute for Government (and former Director Communications, HM Treasury and former Director Strategy, Defra).
- Lord Jay of Ewelme. Former Permanent-Under Secretary, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.
- Robert Devereux. Former Permanent Secretary, Department Work and Pensions and Department for Transport.
- Sir Simon McDonald. Permanent Under-Secretary, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.
- Sue Owen. Permanent Secretary, Department for Culture, Media and Sport.
- Tom Scholar. Permanent Secretary, HM Treasury.

Dutch respondents:

- Chris Kalden. Former Secretary General, Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality.
- Dick Schoof. National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security, Ministry of Justice and Security.
- Johan de Leeuw. Former Secretary General, Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.
- Loes Mulder. Secretary General, Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.
- Manon Leijten. Secretary General, Ministry of Finance.

- Mark Frequin. Director General Accessibility, Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management.
- Marnix Krop. Former Director General European Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Simon Smits. Ambassador to the United Kingdom (and former Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

In Appendix 2 of this thesis, I have enclosed the written interview reports. In this chapter, I will describe my observations. Within each topic I will give a summary of the answers of the British respondents, then of the Dutch respondents and this will be followed by an overview of the main similarities and differences between the two countries.

3.1. Visibility

The visibility of top civil servants is one of the main topics of this research project. In the introduction, visibility of top civil servants has been described as participation in public debates, writing opinion pieces, appearing on television, using social media and hearings in parliament. Therefore, during the interviews I have asked the respondents whether they think top civil servants should be more visible in public and for example participate in public debates.

The United Kingdom

The British top civil servants replied in various ways to the question whether they should be more visible to the public. Half of the British respondents thought that the media are part of the minister's role and that top civil servants have to remain absent. "It is not a very public role and that is right" (Tom Scholar). In their view, more visibility would lead to a confusion of roles, which is not desirable. "I have seen examples where a Permanent Secretary has had a more public position, but this did not really work out" (Robert Devereux).

The other half of the respondents thought that top civil servants are already visible, for example when they speak in public. When it comes to the visibility of top civil servants, the relationship with the minister is always important. As a top civil servant,

you should always check with the minister and make sure not to “outshine the minister” (Lord Jay of Ewelme).

However, despite the debate of the increase or decrease in visibility, in general top civil servants are not very visible or well known to the public. Politicians are slightly better known, but beyond high profile figures like the Prime Minister and Chancellor, are not widely recognised by the public since “many people are happy for politics to pass them by most of the time” (Jill Rutter).

The Netherlands

About whether top civil servants should be more visible to parliament and the public, most Dutch respondents answered “yes, but...” Although they are in favour of visibility, they are also hesitant. If top civil servants are visible to the public, it should be focused on the content, based on their expertise and as part of their function. “The external performances are not for yourself, but in the service of the minister. That is also your boundary, it should be as part of your job” (Chris Kalden). Thus, public appearances should not include personal or political views. “You should be extra careful on political interference, or the suspicion of it” (Dick Schoof). The older or former top civil servants told that the visibility of top civil servants used to be larger ten or twenty years ago. Today, top civil servants are more careful and risk averse due to the increased role of the media. “Formerly, you would read in the newspapers what had happened in politics, today politics discusses what has been written in the newspapers” (Mark Frequin).

Thus, the biggest risk is that the public appearance becomes too political. It is important to be visible and show what you are doing. However, this must be focused on expertise and content. Top civil servants should avoid entering the political debate. The golden rule when it comes to public appearances of a top civil servant is to always discuss this with the minister to make sure there are no surprises or miscommunications.

Similarities

When it comes to visibility, the Dutch and British answers show many similarities. In both countries, the respondents have different opinions on whether or not top civil servants should be more visible. It is a complicated question, since pros and cons exist in a more public role for top civil servants. The research has shown that top civil servants in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom believe that public visibility of top civil servants should be in the interest of their work, their department and their minister. Therefore, the top civil servant should focus on the content and be careful that the publicity is not getting too political.

Differences

The main difference between the Netherlands and the United Kingdom is that Dutch top civil servants said that the visibility used to be larger than today and British top civil servants told me they already feel visible. Moreover, Dutch top civil servants are more careful and reluctant when it comes to visibility due to the increasingly scrutinising role of the media.

3.2. Accountability

Accountability is an essential concept in political-administrative relationships. This research project aimed to look into accountability as part of the role of top civil servants. Accountability has been defined in the introduction as being responsible and being able to justify and explain actions and decisions. Therefore, I have asked the respondents whether they thought top civil servants should have more accountability, for example in terms of budget, policy or people.

The United Kingdom

The British top civil servants all replied that they feel very accountable. “The minister is accountable for the policy, I am accountable for the people and the budget” (Sue Owen). “The implementation of the role of Accounting Officer is a way to formalize the role and responsibility” (Tom Scholar). The British top civil servants take their role and responsibility very serious. It increases the accountability of the Permanent

Secretary: they have to appear in parliament. Since the PAC hearings are public, sometimes the media also pick it up.

Due to the political system in the United Kingdom, there is usually a one-party government. Therefore, according to some respondents the role of the Accounting Officer as part of the job of the Permanent Secretary functions as a control mechanism “to make sure that ministers do not spend it on party purposes for example” (Jill Rutter).

The Netherlands

In the Netherlands the answers to the question whether top civil servants should be more accountable were 50/50. Half of the respondents said that they believed top civil servants should be more accountable and the other half thought they should not.

The ones who were not in favour of more accountability for top civil servants did so because they believe that is the minister’s job as part of their ministerial responsibility. Moreover, although Dutch Secretary Generals are not directly accountable to parliament, they do feel very accountable: “I am already very accountable to the minister, to my employers, to executors” (Mark Frequin) and “The Secretary General is responsible for the civil service. A minister cannot directly voice concerns towards civil servants, this has to pass via the Secretary General” (Loes Mulder).

The ones that were in favour of more accountability only wanted limited accountability. This limited accountability should be focused on informing, for example in the form of technical briefings to parliament. It is important that top civil servants stay far away from political affairs. “I don’t think it’s a good thing to elevate a civil servant to a kind of semi-minister” (Simon Smits). Overall, a minister is doing politics and is being accountable for that. The role of the top civil servant includes informing and supporting the minister. Most Dutch respondents were in favour of keeping the division of roles clear.

Similarities

In both countries, top civil servants feel very accountable. In the Netherlands, top civil servants feel very accountable to the minister, their department and external stakeholder. Although they are not directly accountable to parliament, they feel accountable due the other control mechanisms. As leader of the department, Dutch top civil servants feel accountable for the management and organisation of their department. In The United Kingdom, the top civil servants feel very accountable in their role as Accounting Officer.

Differences

Although top civil servants in both countries experience a high level of accountability, the origin of this accountability is different, since the role of top civil servants is different. Based on the interviews, half of the Dutch respondents do not want to have more accountability. They are not in favour of top civil servants being accountable for the budget as in the British model of Accounting Officers. They are afraid that more direct accountability will make their role too political.

In the United Kingdom, theoretically, only the minister is accountable for policy and the Permanent Secretary is not. However, in fact, in accounting for the responsible use of the budget, sometimes Accounting Officers also have to explain policy. Thus, this direct accountability of top civil servants might sometimes become more political. It is a very thin line between only accounting for the budget and accounting for policy.

3.3. Politicisation

Politicisation is a broad and complicated concept. In general, politicisation means that something becomes more political in character. In the interviews, I have specifically asked whether the position of the top civil servants has been politicised and if so what this politicisation entails.

The United Kingdom

According to most British respondents the position of the top civil servant has not been politicised. Moreover, some emphasized that “civil servants should be independent and impartial” (Lord Jay of Ewelme). In the United Kingdom, sustaining the top civil servants’ impartially becomes even more important due to the one-party governments. “When one party has been in power for some time, people become very used to thinking in terms of that party’s policies being the policies of Government. Indeed, people can have quite long Civil Service careers without having experienced a change of Government. Thus, in the run-up to an election a conscious process of distinguishing Government policy from party policy is necessary, and it is ultimately the Permanent Secretary’s responsibility to make that happen” (Clare Moriarty). Therefore, the Permanent Secretary needs to have the capability to understand politics, distinguish between party and government policy and remain impartial.

Furthermore, in comparison to 20 to 30 years ago an increasing number of political advisors are present in the departments now (Sir Simon McDonald). Many respondents experience the increase of the number and role of the political advisors as more politicisation of the civil service.

Finally, when it comes to the influence of ministers in the appointments of top civil servants there have been some recent changes. “Since 2011, ministers have a bit more influence on who becomes their Permanent Secretary. The Civil Service Commission selects candidates based on expertise, however the minister can choose in the end if there are two candidates of similar quality. In that sense the appointment is a bit more political than it used to be” (Robert Devereux).

The Netherlands

Most respondents do not experience the development of greater politicisation as described in the academic literature. They do not experience their role as more politicised, a process they defined as being more involved in party politics, political appointments or political power. However, some argue that it has become more

political. With more, political they mean being closer to politics. For example, “It has become more important in giving advice to the minister, that this is not only based on facts, but also taking political achievability into consideration” (Dick Schoof).

Furthermore, “politics in the broad sense plays a larger role in the work of top civil servants” (Mark Frequin). This is mainly because politics in the Netherlands have become more “hectic and demanding” (Marnix Krop). The work is also more political because a top civil servant works on many political tasks such as “technical briefings and answering questions from parliament” (Simon Smits).

Finally, some respondents mention the increasing role of the political advisors. “An increase of political advisors, political assistants and communication advisors is noticeable. They are forming a fence between the politicians and the civil servants” (Chris Kalden). Although the research of Van den Berg (2011) showed that the majority of top civil servants regarded the relationships with the political advisors as constructive, my research has shown that some consider the political advisors as an obstruction to the relationship between the minister and the top civil servants.

Similarities

The majority of the respondents in both countries did not share the notice of the politicisation of the role of the top civil servant. However, most respondents argued that it has become more political. They argued that the civil service is both impartial and permanent, therefore it is not politicised. However, they experience politics to be a bigger part of their job, taking into account the increased role of the political advisors as well as increasing demands of parliament and politicians.

Most respondents argued that their position has become more political, by referring to the increase of ministerial influence in appointments of top civil servants, the growing role of political advisors, the increasingly demanding political top and the necessity to include political achievability in the advice to the minister. All of these examples show that political sensitivity and political understanding are important characteristics for top civil servants in the United Kingdom and in the Netherlands.

In the introduction, I have defined politicisation as ‘becoming more political’. According to this definition and based on the answers given by the top civil servants, this consequently means that the role of the top civil servants has become more politicised to a certain extent. Impartiality and neutrality are key values for the Dutch and British civil service. The term politicisation has a negative connotation and sounds more sophisticated and complicating than ‘more political’. Therefore, I think the respondents do not agree with the term of politicisation and prefer to say ‘more political’ instead. The respondents probably use ‘more political’ rather than ‘politicised’, to not undermine their own impartiality. However, according to the definition I have used the role of the top civil servants certainly has been politicised. Yet, politicisation does not automatically undermine the impartiality of top civil servants.

Differences

Based on the interviews, the top civil servants in the Netherlands have different opinions when it comes to politicisation in comparison to the top civil servant in the United Kingdom when it comes to politicisation. First, the British respondents talked about the slight increase in the ministerial influence in the appointment process of top civil servants. This is already the case in the Netherlands, where, as mentioned in the framework, the cabinet officially appoints the Secretary Generals based on the nomination of the Minister of the Interior and the relevant minister.

In the United Kingdom, politicisation partly derives from the one-party governments. The risk when a one-party government is in power for a long time is that the departments get used to a certain political culture or mentality. This risk is less significant in the Netherlands due to the diversity of coalition governments. Moreover, the diversified dynamics in parliament also influence the relationship between the politicians and the civil servants. With the one-party government in the United Kingdom, the new government had a lot of ministers who spent many years in opposition and therefore were “both keen to make rapid progress on their agenda and, perhaps unsurprisingly, worried that their civil servants had become used only to think of things in the way of the previous Government” (Robert Devereux).

In both countries, the respondents discussed the increased role of the political advisors. However, as aforementioned in the framework, the roles of the political advisors in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom are different. In the United Kingdom, the role of the political advisors is larger and they are more active in the political system than in the Netherlands (Simon Smits).

3.4 Ministerial responsibility

In the governmental systems of the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, ministerial responsibility is crucial. Ministerial responsibility means that the minister has to account to parliament and is responsible for the policies, decisions and actions of the entire department. For the purpose of this research project, I wanted to know more about the influence of ministerial responsibility on the role of the top civil servant.

The United Kingdom

All the British respondents regard ministerial responsibility as an essential element of their governmental system. The British top civil servants mainly focused on the division of responsibility between the top civil servant and the minister. Within the ministerial responsibility the minister takes the decisions and is responsible for policy and the top civil servant is responsible for giving advice: “The great mantra is: officials advice, ministers decide” (Clare Moriarty) and “The minister takes the decision. The Permanent Secretary is the last person to give advice to the minister. This is a clear distinction” (Sir Simon McDonald). Despite the fact that the Permanent Secretary also has the role of Accounting Officer, the minister is still responsible due to the system of ministerial directives, where the minister can give a written or oral directive to make clear that he assumes full responsibility.

The Netherlands

In addition, the Dutch respondents regarded the ministerial responsibility as an important and fundamental element of the system. Moreover, the top civil servants emphasized that the minister is accountable to parliament because of the ministerial responsibility doctrine. “I am in favour of a clear model, with clear division of roles”

(Manon Leijten). In a broader view, ministerial responsibility means that the minister is responsible for everything that happens within the department. “However, he or she cannot know or see everything. That is the downside of ministerial responsibility” (Chris Kalden). In a more narrow view, ministerial responsibility refers to political responsibility only. Therefore, “it is important as a top civil servant to discuss this with your minister how he or she views ministerial responsibility” (Dick Schoof). The role of the top civil servant is to “inform the minister” (Loes Mulder) or to “support the minister” (Marnix Krop) to make sure that that he or she is able to take the responsibility.

Similarities

In both countries, the concept of ministerial responsibility is very important. The British and Dutch top civil servants agree that the minister is the one who is directly accountable to parliament and who is politically responsible for the policies, decisions and actions of the department. The respondents do not want to change the concept of ministerial responsibility. The role of the top civil servant is mainly to advice, inform and support the minister, and to manage the organisational side of the department.

Differences

The main difference between the two countries is that in the Netherlands many respondents focused on the distinction between the broad and narrow understanding of the concept, while in the United Kingdom, respondents emphasized the distinction between the minister’s responsibility and the top civil servant’s responsibility.

3.5 Profile of Top Civil Servants

In order to say something about the profile of current top civil servant I have asked the respondents about the important characteristics and skills for a top civil servant. When it comes to the profile of the top civil servant, it becomes clear that there is not one ideal type of a top civil servant. However, some characteristics or skills are important in this position. The answers about the characteristics and skills of top civil servants were diverse, because everybody uses his or her own language to describe

what they believe is important. Although people use different words to describe characteristics or skills of top civil servants, I have developed some broad categories to describe the main characteristics and skills.

The United Kingdom

Based on the answers of the British top civil servants, I also define three main categories of characteristics and skills considered important for top civil servants in the United Kingdom:

- Emotional intelligence;
- Connectivity;
- Management.

In the first category, **emotional intelligence**, the following aspects were mentioned:

- Building trust;
- Attentiveness;
- Having people skills;
- Having confidence in others;
- Maintaining good relationships.

In the **connectivity** category, most top civil servants referred to:

- Having a good relationship with the minister;
- Making sure to have the right people in the right places;
- Being a team player.

In relation to the **management** category, top civil servants mentioned:

- Leading and inspiring people;
- Delegating;
- Making sure others are happy with your leadership.

According to most British respondents, management has become a more important part of the profile of top civil servants. In the United Kingdom, the top civil servants regard the growing role of media and IT communication as the main development in the context of their job. Also more focus on management and leadership skills have

been mentioned as one of the main changes with regard to the role of top civil servants. Moreover, due to a focus on people skills and personal development there is less hierarchy. Today, the top civil servant is more visible to the rest of the people within the department (Sir Simon McDonald). Consequently, there is more connectivity between the top and the department.

The Netherlands

Based on the answers of the Dutch top civil servants, I have defined the following three categories of characteristics and skills that they think are important for a top civil servant in the Netherlands:

- Emotional intelligence;
- Political sensitivity;
- Connectivity.

In the category of **emotional intelligence**, the focus lays on people. The Dutch respondents referred to:

- Having respect;
- Caring for people;
- Being calm and reflective.

Within the category of **political sensitivity**, people talked about:

- Understanding politics and having political insight
- Integrity;
- Problem solving;
- Advising the minister.

The third category is **connectivity**, which emphasizes the importance of:

- Cooperation;
- Leadership;
- Delegation;
- Relationships;
- Keeping an overview of the organisation;
- Having the right people in the right place.

Dutch civil servants emphasized the importance of cooperation, mainly due to the decompartmentalisation and internationalisation. Moreover, top civil servants have become more diverse in terms of gender and professional backgrounds. Today, there is more focus on emotional intelligence, people skills and cooperation. This has led to less evident and non-contentious authority for top civil servants (Johan de Leeuw). The increase of media attention has made top civil servants more aware of publicity. Consequently, top civil servants are more homogenous (Dick Schoof).

Similarities

According to the Dutch and the British top civil servants, characteristics and skills within the categories emotional intelligence and connecting are both important for current top civil servants. Nowadays, there is an increased focus on people skills and top civil servants care more for the people they are working with. The role of the top civil servant is being the connector between the department and politics and between different parties. Due to the increased cooperation outside the department due to the developments, the skill of connecting has become even more important for top civil servants nowadays.

Differences

According to the results from the interviews, there are also differences in the profile of the top civil servants between the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. In the Netherlands, the top civil servants focus more on the political aspect of the role of top civil servant. They mentioned political understanding and political sensitivity as important skills for top civil servants. In the United Kingdom, maintaining a good relationship with the minister was mentioned a couple of times. Most British civil servants focused on the management or leadership aspect of the top civil servant's profile.

The different role of the political advisors can be the explanatory factor in this. In the United Kingdom, the special advisors have a more senior role; therefore, they are more influential in politics. When political advisors give advice to ministers, the top civil servants have to mingle less in politics. Moreover, the origin of the governmental

systems can explain some of the differences. The Netherlands has multi-party coalition governments. This requires the top civil servants to have political sensitivity, because it is important to know the political colour and preferences of the politicians in shaping policy.

In the framework, I have outlined the differences in characteristics of top civil servants in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom, mainly based on the profile sketches of respectively the ABD and the Institute for Government. This comparison showed that there is more focus on personal skills in the Netherlands than in the United Kingdom. My research shows, however, that in practice this is not the case. Also British top civil servants mentioned emotional intelligence, people skills and personal relationships as important characteristics. The focus on management and leadership skills was actually higher amongst British respondents than among the Dutch.

3.6. Loyalty

In the relationship between the top civil servant and the minister, loyalty is crucial. Therefore, I have asked the respondents what they consider as ‘civil servant loyalty’, how far this loyalty goes and if the loyalty is only focused on the minister or also on someone or something else.

The United Kingdom

As in the Netherlands, the British respondents consider loyalty very important. In the United Kingdom, most top civil servants mentioned that they are primarily loyal to their own minister. They emphasize the importance of building trust and maintaining a good relationship with the minister. It is not only about being loyal to the minister, but “the minister needs to feel the loyalty” (Sue Owen). Furthermore, some also feel loyal to the crown, to the country and the department. Moreover, “part of loyalty is being good at your job” (Robert Devereux).

The Netherlands

Loyalty is crucial and important to all respondents in the Netherlands. The civil servant loyalty “is supposed to be high” (Chris Kalden). Nevertheless, Dutch civil servants emphasized that civil servant loyalty is not boundless. It is also important when giving advice to counteract and to contradict the minister if necessary. Yet, when the minister makes a decision, top civil servants should loyally execute this. Dutch top civil servants do not feel only loyal to their minister; in particular, they feel loyal to the society, the country and their department. Therefore, the civil servants’ loyalty is multidimensional in which loyalty to the minister is just as important as loyalty to the society.

Similarities

The respondents in both countries acknowledged that loyalty is very important. Loyalty and mutual trust between the minister and the top civil servant is key for a good relationship between the two. Therefore, it is important for civil servants to maintain this personal relationship with the minister.

Differences

Thus, the fact that loyalty is important in both countries is beyond dispute. However, some small differences exist between the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. In terms of loyalty, Permanent Secretaries in The United Kingdom mainly felt loyalty towards their Secretary of State. Therefore, I would describe this as a personal type of loyalty. They saw it as their task to support and sometimes even protect their minister. The Dutch Secretary Generals are also loyal to their minister, but usually perceive their loyalty as something broader. Besides being loyal to their minister, they also feel loyalty to the department, the civil service as a whole, and the nation. Thus, the loyalty to society is higher in the Netherlands than in the United Kingdom according to the respondents.

3.7 Media and Incidents

In the framework, I have discussed Van Middelaar's distinction between the politics of regulations and the politics of incidents. The politics of regulations is concerned with the systems and rules, and consequently more focused on the long term, while the politics of incidents focuses on incidents and how to solve them on the short term. Generally, the politics of regulations is perceived to be the domain of the top civil servants, while the politics of incidents is part of the political domain. As aforementioned in the framework, the distinction between the politics of regulations and the politics of incidents is not as clear on the national level as on the European level. I have asked the respondents about their opinion on the division, the impact of it on their work and on their relationship with the minister.

The United Kingdom

Most British top civil servants also confirmed that there is a blurred distinction between the politics of regulations and the politics of incidents. They also confirmed that in practice the two domains influence each other, which results into a combination of the two. In addition, in the United Kingdom, ministers tend to have a more short-term view and Permanent Secretaries a more long-term view. However, this also depends on the minister.

“The main change is the media context. Especially the role of the social media increased” (Tom Scholar). Consequently, “there is more pressure to respond to the media fast” (Jill Rutter). The expansion of the media augments the politicians' short-term perspective even more. This might lead to tension between the minister and top civil servant. Yet, “this is less of a problem at the start of a new government” (Lord Jay of Ewelme).

The Netherlands

In addition, the majority of the Dutch respondents confirmed that the division is not as simple, not as black and white. There is not a clear division between the two, because the domain of systems and the domain of incidents affect each other. However, most

affirmed that ministers are usually more concerned with the short-term and event-driven, and top civil servants often have a more long-term perspective. Many respondents talked about the increase of the politics of incidents. According to some, “top civil servants have moved more towards the incidents side of politics “(Chris Kalden). However, according to others it is the task of the top civil servant to limit the incident-driven politics: The task of top civil servant is to constrain the “rule reflex, the incident-driven measures” (Dick Schoof) and as top civil servant it is important that politics of incidents are not taking over (Johan de Leeuw).

The increase of the focus on events and incidents is mainly due to the increased role of the media. This also increased the pace of the work, because faster reactions are necessary. “The social media can easily create a bad image of an incident. A top civil servant should respond faster to incidents. Therefore, communication has become part of the job” (Loes Mulder). Furthermore, top civil servants require “more flexibility due to the 24/7 media” (Manon Leijten).

Similarities

The Dutch and British answers show consistency. On the national level, there is not a clear distinction to make between the politics of regulations and the politics of incidents. The line between the two domains is blurred. The top civil servants are concerned with both the systematic side and the events. Although the respondents confirm that there is an increase in the event-driven politics, which is in line with the arguments put forward by Van Middelaar. The respondents see the role of the media as the main driver of this. Ministers usually have a short-term view and have the tendency to respond quickly to the media. Consequently, this requires the top civil servants to respond fast too in order to help the minister with the preparation for his answer to the media or parliament.

Differences

However, according to some top civil servants the media have become more aggressive in United Kingdom. “Media is making good theatre out of it” (Robert Devereux). No big differences exist between the two countries when it comes to the

role of the media. In both countries, the role of the media has increased recently, which makes it more central in society as well as in the civil service. Yet, the media in the United Kingdom are a bit more aggressive than in the Netherlands. The tabloid newspaper culture in the United Kingdom might be the root cause of this.

3.8. Summary findings

In this section, I briefly summarise the main findings of this research project based on the interviews with (former) top civil servants in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom.

Similarities

There are many similarities between responses of the top civil servants in the United Kingdom and in the Netherlands:

- **Visibility** – More visibility of top civil servants is a good idea, however only in specific cases. The top civil servant should appear in public as an expert, who provides information on a certain topic. The main concern with visibility of top civil servants is that it becomes too political. The minister should remain the face of the government. The public visibility of the top civil servant should contribute to the general interest and goals of the government.
- **Accountability** – The top civil servants in both countries feel very accountable. Therefore, they do not want their accountability to be increased or extended.
- **Politicisation** – According to the top civil servants, their positions have not been politicised, but their work has become more political. However, according to the definition of politicisation meaning that it has become more political, the job of the top civil servants has been politicised.
- **Ministerial Responsibility** – The concept of ministerial responsibility is important in both countries. According to the respondents, there is a clear division of tasks: the top civil servants give the advice and the ministers make the decisions.

- **Profile top civil servant** – In both countries characteristics and skills that belong to the categories of ‘emotional intelligence’ (e.g. trust, people skills, care and respect) and ‘connecting’ (e.g. cooperation, interconnection, team player and relationships) are important for a top civil servant. Today, the top civil servant is not a distant, traditional leader. The current top civil servant should be aware of its environment and the people.
- **Loyalty** – Civil servant loyalty is a very important concept. It also includes “speaking truth to power”, thus giving honest advice to the minister. Moreover, reciprocal loyalty and mutual trust are essential for a good relationship between politicians and top civil servants.
- **Incidents and Media** – The influence of the media has increased over the past decades. Therefore, there is more focus on the incidents and short-term solutions. The combination of the incidents and media has put more pressure on the top civil servants. It requires them to reply and act faster. On the hand, top civil servants need to be more flexible due to the 24/7 media. On the other hand, they need have to keep an eye on the long-term and try to limit the incident-politics sometimes.

Differences

Yet, there are also some differences in the answers of the British and Dutch top civil servants:

- **Visibility** – Several Dutch top civil servants mentioned that the visibility of top civil servant used to be bigger in the past. The British respondents did not really mention that.
- **Accountability** – In relation to accountability, all British top civil servants spoke about their role as Accounting Officer in the United Kingdom. The British top civil servants take their role as Accounting Officer very serious. They are in favour of the division of accountability in the British system. Most Dutch top civil servants already feel very accountable and do not see the

benefits of shifting accountability for the budget spending from the minister to the top civil servant.

- **Politicisation** – The role of the political advisors in the United Kingdom is larger and therefore more influential than in the Netherlands.
- **Profile top civil servant** – The Dutch respondents put more emphasis on characteristics related to the political sensitivity or understanding. The British top civil servants regard management and leadership skills to be relevant for current top civil servants.
- **Loyalty** – The loyalty of top civil servants in the United Kingdom is mainly focused on the Secretary of State, while in the Netherlands the top civil servants also feel loyal to the employees, the department, the government, the nation.
- **Incidents and Media** – The media in the United Kingdom is more aggressive than in the Netherlands, with an even greater focus on incidents and blunders of government and the civil service.

3.9. Additional findings

During the interviews, I figured that there were not only differences between the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, but across the two countries, also differences between former and current top civil servants. This might explain some differences between the past and the present. In addition, I got the impression there are differences between female and male top civil servants. These two additional dimensions can help to understand the role of top civil servants and their visibility. Since I have only interviewed a small number of top civil servants, these claims cannot be generalised to the civil service in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom in general. Due to size limitations and time constraints, it was not possible to gain a broader picture of the entire civil service in both countries. Therefore, I only briefly discuss the main points in the comparisons. In turn, to test the generalizability of the results, further research is necessary.

In particular, in the Netherlands former top civil servants are more in favour of visibility, while current top civil servants are more hesitant or careful. The

aforementioned recent developments in the media are the root causes of this according to the Dutch (former) top civil servants. The combination of the increased complexity and less civil servants, due to reorganizations, resulted in less time available for top civil servants to go outside of the department and be more visible (Johan de Leeuw). Due to the increased role of the media the vulnerability of top civil servants increased (Chris Kalden). Moreover, a stronger and harsher political landscape made top civil servants less outspoken (Dick Schoof). Mark Frequin also has the impression that his colleagues today are more careful and more risk averse when it comes to visibility and publicity. According to Loes Mulder, “it is not functional as Secretary General to participate in public debates”. Manon Leijten also argued that the “Secretary General should remain modest” and that “transparency is good, but as top civil servant you should remain careful”. According to Johan de Leeuw, top civil servants today are less visible than during the 1990s. “I had many external appearances during that time, but we cannot return to the old times” (Johan de Leeuw). Dick Schoof believes that top civil servants could appear more in public, rather than staying on the background. However, he and all other top civil servants I have spoken to emphasize that it is crucial for top civil servants to focus on content and expertise and stay away from the political debate.

However, maybe it is not only a generational issue, but also a gender difference, because in the interviews the current female top civil servants in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom talked about the increased diversity of top civil servants. More diversity and especially more female top civil servants is a good development (Manon Leijten). “Variety in a team is good to increase productivity and effectiveness” (Loes Mulder). The British civil service employs more women now in top civil servant position in comparison to the past. In addition, there is “more focus on diversity and inclusion in the civil service” (Clare Moriarty). Sue Owen, who is the Civil Service Champion on Diversity, is giving a public speech, lecture or participate in a debate on diversity and inclusion around twice a week (Sue Owen). None of the male respondents said anything related to diversity or the increase of women in the top civil service. According to Dick Schoof, the current top civil servants are “uniform” and

less “remarkable” than in the past. Johan de Leeuw argued that top civil servants used to have “more evident and non-contentious authority”.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

Ministerial responsibility, civil servant loyalty and accountability are 19th century concepts. Today, they are still the basis of the political systems in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Yet, technological, social and political-administrative developments have had their impact on the civil service. Especially the role of the media has an impact on the work of top civil servants, according to themselves.

The main aim of this thesis was comparing the role of top civil servants in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom. Many similarities between the two countries have been found. The role of top civil servants in both countries is quite congruous. Moreover, the level of importance of ministerial responsibility and civil servant loyalty is similar in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom.

However, some differences between the Netherlands and the United Kingdom are present too. The differences in political systems, for example the electoral system and type of government, affect the job of the top civil servants and the relationship to the minister. In addition, the role of the Accounting Officer is a difference between the two countries. The role of Accounting Officer gives the British Permanent Secretary the responsibility to be directly accountable to parliament. Dutch Secretaries General do not have this task. However, most Dutch top civil servants are not in favour of a model with more accountability for the Secretary General. The Dutch top civil servants I have interviewed highly value the doctrine of ministerial responsibility. Moreover, they already feel accountable enough. To the British top civil servants I have spoken to being the Accounting Officer was very important in their work and they do not want to change this.

Thus, the research has showed differences in the political systems of the countries, which consequently resulted in some differences in the role of the top civil servant. The respondents are aware of the differences between the two countries and are willing to learn from each other, however they are not inclined to adopt the accountability model of the other country. Moreover, most respondents were satisfied with the current governmental system in their country and do not necessarily want to change too much.

The developments in the media and Internet have led to more news and information on the government available to the public. Some argue that this has resulted into more visibility and less anonymity for top civil servants. Some, mainly Dutch respondents, argued that the visibility of top civil servants has decreased. Due to the presence of 24/7 media, top civil servants are more risk averse, and therefore less visible and less active in public debates. However, according to most respondents it is good for top civil servants to be visible to the public, to participate in debates and to provide explanations as long as it is focused on content not politics. It can be positive and helpful when top civil servants appear in public or in parliament to explain about their department or technical matters. For example, technical briefings to parliament are a good instrument to inform parliament. Yet, this should not necessarily increase. The Dutch and British respondents agreed that the media and political debates should mainly remain the domain of the politicians. Moreover, it is important for top civil servants to avoid becoming too political. An increased visibility of top civil servants can put the relationship between them and the ministers under pressure. Therefore, it remains important for both top civil servants and ministers to invest in good relationships based on mutual trust and respect.

Finally, politicians and top civil servants should be aware of the changes in the society in which they operate: the increasing role of the media, the internationalisation and Europeanisation, and the growing attention to events and incidents. Top civil servants have to remain neutral, honest and impartial. Top civil servants should keep their long-term vision and not always follow the minister in immediate responses to the media and incidents.

This research project was explorative and based on only a small number of interviews. It has revealed some differences and similarities on the role of top civil servants in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Further research, in which more top civil servants are consulted, can elaborate on this research project in order to draw conclusions that are more generalizable. For example, cooperation between the Public Administration Institute of Leiden University and the Institute for Government in

London could result in a larger comparative research on the role of top civil servants in the Netherland and in the United Kingdom.

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6. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Methodology

Research design

The type of the research is positive (neutral and empirical) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews). It is a comparative research: “Comparison is at the heart of all political scientific research, if not all knowledge” (Toshkov, 2016: 258). This is an observational and comparative research on the role of the Secretary General in the Netherlands and the role of the Permanent Secretary in the United Kingdom. “People use comparisons to analyse situations” (Toshkov, 2016: 259). I will use this comparison to analyse the differences in the role of top civil servants in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom. The Netherlands and the United Kingdom have some similarities: both countries are located in Western Europe; and are democracies and monarchies. However, there are also differences in electoral systems, history and political culture. Through the qualitative comparison, I want to see how these similarities and differences have an effect on the role of top civil servants

I have conducted seven interviews in the Netherlands and eight interviews in the United Kingdom. In the Netherlands, I have interviewed two current Secretary Generals, two current Director Generals and three former Secretary Generals. In the United Kingdom, I have spoken to three current Permanent Secretaries, one Permanent Under Secretary, two former Permanent Secretaries, the Dutch ambassador and a senior researcher at Institute for Government. The Dutch ambassador in London also has working experience as a Director General in The Hague; therefore, I have treated his answers as part of the Dutch respondents.

The research is based on a small number of interviews. Therefore, the external validity is not very high and the results of these interviews are not necessarily generalizable for the top civil service as a whole. Thus, it is hard to make predictions, give advice or draw causal relationships from this research. This thesis research is an explorative research, which can provide directions for further and larger research on

the role of top civil servants. All respondents are working in different departments in order to provide a diverse perspective on the issues. The internal validity of the research can be guaranteed because the same questions have been asked to all respondents. In this manner, the research can be controlled and repeated. The same set of questions could also be used to question more top civil servants in the same countries to increase the number of respondents in order to increase the external validity. In addition, the research could be expanded to a broader group of top civil servants in countries with similar political systems.

Data collection

For the framework, I have used secondary sources to briefly outline the main differences and similarities between the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, and to describe the recent developments for the civil service and top civil servants. In the second part of the thesis, the interviews with (former) top civil servants in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom form the data. I have analysed these findings to see how the Dutch and British top civil servants resemble or differ from each other, thereby focusing especially on visibility, accountability and politicisation.

The method of data collection is qualitative interviewing. The type of interview is semi-structured interviewing, which means that I, as a researcher, prepared several sample questions that have been asked to all respondents. However, there are no strict answers, as in surveys or questionnaires. This gives freedom to the interviewee to answer and allows me to ask follow-up questions, focus on personal circumstances and ask for specific examples. Semi-structured interviews are a good technique to get insights on experiences, understandings and opinions of a particular group of people. For the purpose of this thesis, to get an understanding of the role and visibility of top civil servants in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom, qualitative interviewing is an appropriate method. One of the aims of the interviews is to ask the top civil servants if they think their visibility has changed (increased or decreased) over the past ten years. Moreover, I am interested in their opinion on the question whether their visibility in public and parliament should be more, less or similar to what it is

today. Furthermore, I want to find out what consequences this will have for the role of the top civil servant.

The following sample questions have been asked to all respondents:

1. Could you tell me about the three most important aspects of your current position? Which other positions did you have? Which one was the most important in your career?
2. The role of top civil servant can be described in terms of characteristics and skills. What do you consider the most important characteristics for a top civil servant? And which skills are important?
3. How would you say that the role of top civil servant has changed in the past ten years? Are there different characteristics and skills important for top civil servants? Has the position of the top civil servant been politicized? If so, what does this politicisation look like?
4. In the literature, sometimes there is a distinction between ‘politics of rules’ and ‘politics of incidents’. The politics of rules is concerned with the systems and rules, and consequently more focused on the long term. While the politics of incidents focuses on incidents and how to solve them. Generally, the politics of rules is perceived to be the domain of the top civil servants and the politics of incidents is part of the political domain. What is your opinion on this division? What does this division mean for the operation of the top civil servant? Can this lead to tensions between the Secretary (or Director) General/Permanent Secretary and Minister/Secretary of State? (For example if the minister does not want to be advised by his/her civil servants but by others in the case of ‘politics of incidents’)
5. The ministerial responsibility, in which the minister is always accountable, can be regarded as a protection for the Secretary (or Director) General/Permanent (Under) Secretary, but also as a trigger. The minister can be forced to step down in case of failure of the civil service. What is the influence of ministerial responsibility on the role of the Secretary (or Director) General/Permanent (Under) Secretary?

6. In the literature, civil servant loyalty is usually considered to be the other side of ministerial responsibility. What do you consider to be civil servant loyalty? How far does the loyalty of the Secretary (or Director) General/Permanent (Under) Secretary go in relation to his/her minister? Can this loyalty also be focused on someone or something else than the minister's interest?
7. In your opinion, should a Secretary (or Director) General/Permanent (Under) Secretary be more accountable in regard to the policy, budget and employees of the ministry? Why (not)? And how?
8. In your opinion, should a Secretary (or Director) General/Permanent (Under) Secretary be more visible in public and/or participate in the public debate as an expert? Why (not)? If so, in which ways?
9. In which way will public visibility and accountability change the role of the top civil servant? How will this influence the relationship between the political and top civil service top? Would more visibility and accountability of top civil servants be a desirable change according to? Why (not)?
10. Do you have any other suggestions for my research? Are there any people within or outside your ministry that I could discuss this topic with?

The qualitative interviews lasted for 30 to 45 minutes. The interviews with former top civil servants lasted longer, usually between 60 and 90 minutes, since these people had more time to speak to me. The interviews with the Dutch (former) civil servants have been held in Dutch, as this is the respondents' and my mother tongue. The interviews with the British officials were held in English and so are the written reports. The interviews were not recorded, however I took detailed notes of the conversations. All interviewees have received an interview report, which provided them with the opportunity to make any corrections or additions to the text. After the respondents have validated the text, it has been used as a data resource for the purpose of this research. All respondents have received the questions prior the interview via email in order to give them an idea what to expect from the interview. The data were treated confidentially and will not be shared for purposes unrelated to the thesis project.

Appendix 2 – Interview Reports

Naam respondent: Chris Kalden

Functie respondent: Voormalig Secretaris Generaal, Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuur en Voedselkwaliteit

Datum en tijd interview: 3-04-2018 9:30

Locatie interview: Café Barista, Gouda

1. Kunt u mij wat vertellen over de drie belangrijkste aspecten van uw huidige functie? Welke functies heeft u eerder gehad? Welke functie was voor u het belangrijkste in uw carrière?

Ik ben in 1982 bij de Rijksoverheid begonnen en ik heb 12 a 15 verschillende functies vervuld. Tijdje directeur uitvoerende dienst: landelijk gebied. Daarna terug naar Den Haag. De “Haagse Vissenkomp” is een bepaalde context, bepaalde sfeer. Je bent dichterbij de minister en het Kamerwerk.

Het werk was het leukst wanneer de samenwerking goed verliep. Zoals bijvoorbeeld de samenwerking met minister Cees Veerman. Als de persoonlijke relatie goed is, dan vervagen de conventies. Commitment/verbondenheid met de publieke dienst. Dienstbaar aan politiek en samenleving. Interne en externe effect. De output van de Rijksdienst verbeteren. Het weten, kennen en doorvoelen van de publieke zaak is essentieel. De kennis/leer doet er toe. Hoe hoort het? Wat zijn onze manieren? Een effectieve samenwerking zorgt voor een fijne werkomgeving. Kenmerken van LNV toentertijd: uitwisseling tussen buiten en binnen. Veel contact met mensen in het veld, dus contact met niet-ambtenaren. Het is goed om verschillende opvattingen te hebben.

2. De rol van de topambtenaar kan worden beschreven op basis van karakteristieken, vaardigheden en eigenschappen. Onder topambtenaar versta ik iemand die op SG of DG niveau werkt. Wat zijn volgens u de belangrijkste karakteristieken van een topambtenaar? Welke vaardigheden zijn belangrijk voor een topambtenaar? En welke eigenschappen?

“De wereld kennen” is belangrijk voor een topambtenaar. Belangrijkste eigenschappen: respect en interesse. Je moet snappen wat je de ander drijft. Als

topambtenaar heb je een onderlaag van kennis en een bovenlaag van attitude. Dus je weet hoe het zit en je weet hoe je daarmee om moet gaan.

Tjibbe Joustra: “Grens van mobiliteit is affiniteit”. Het is dus belangrijk om affiniteit met een onderwerp te hebben om effectief te kunnen werken. Ik ben een voorstander van generalisten aan de top, maar het is ook niet zo dat iedereen overal zou moeten kunnen werken. Cv’s zijn soms te small, een zekere breedte is goed, maar je moet wel interesse hebben in het onderwerp.

Ik heb binnen LNV verschillende type functies (beleid, staf, uitvoerend, aansturend) gehad. Kennis van zowel beleid als uitvoering is een voordeel.

3. Is de rol van de topambtenaren nu anders ten opzichte van tien jaar geleden? Zijn er nu andere karakteristieken, vaardigheden en eigenschappen belangrijk voor een topambtenaren? Is er sprake van politisering van de functie? Zo ja, waar bestaat deze uit?

Ja, maar al over een langere periode dan 10 jaar. Twee grootse veranderingen:

- i. Grote rol van de media
- ii. De politieke ‘bontkraag’ (term Caspar van den Berg, Leiden, bestuurskundige). Verschijning van politieke adviseurs, politiek assistenten en communicatieadviseurs. Politiseren naar media en tweede kamer. Vormt een scherm tussen politici en ambtenaren.

Hiermee is de kwetsbaarheid van de ambtenaar toegenomen. Je zou als topambtenaar alles moeten kunnen zeggen tegen de minister. Als dat niet kan, verschuift er iets in de relatie. Je kan als ambtenaar verdacht wordt dat je er te veel je eigen agenda op na houdt. Het gevaar is dan dat ambtenaren liever hun mond houden. Terwijl de taak van een topambtenaar juist het informeren en eventueel tegenspreken van de minister zou moeten zijn. Je moet je veilig voelen om te kunnen zeggen wat je wil. De politisering beïnvloed de manier van werken. Het beïnvloed de neutraliteit en de informatie kant. Het is juist aan de SG om dit bespreekbaar te maken met zijn/haar minister.

4. Er wordt weleens onderscheid gemaakt tussen de regelpolitiek en de gebeurtenissenpolitiek. De regelpolitiek houdt zich bezig met de stelsels en de regels, dus meer gericht op de lange termijn. Terwijl de gebeurtenissenpolitiek zich meer richt op de incidenten.

Over het algemeen wordt de regelpolitiek beschouwd als het domein van de topambtenaren en de gebeurtenissenpolitiek als die van de politici. Kunt u zich in deze verdeling vinden? Wat betekent dit voor het werk als topambtenaar? Leidt dit verschil in manier van werken tot spanningen tussen de SG en de minister? (Bijvoorbeeld omdat de minister zich bij de gebeurtenissenpolitiek niet laat adviseren door zijn ambtenaren, maar door anderen)

Als een minister niet luistert, dan heb je als SG meerdere opties. Je kan contact opnemen met de SG van AZ, of met de minister-president. Je kan informatie lekken. Of publiekelijk als klokkenluider optreden. Dan laatste is bij mijn weten nooit gebeurd door een SG. Lekken wel. Als je lekt als SG dan is de verhouding tussen SG en minister 'failliet'.

De verhouding tussen regel en gebeurtenissenpolitiek is niet zo zwart-wit. Topambtenaren zijn wel meer naar de incidentenkant opgeschoven. Deze verschuiving is niet heel recent, maar al langere tijd. De minister is de hoeder van de goeddoordachte systemen (in brede zin). De minister heeft groot belang bij goed functionerende systemen. Maar de zorg voor deze goede systemen ligt met name bij de ambtenaren. De regelpolitiek en gebeurtenissenpolitiek moeten overlappen. Dit moeten niet twee losse eilanden orden. 'Elke klacht is een gratis advies', dus elke incident laat een tekortkoming het systeem zien. 'Casusadoptie' – Froukje Ydema. Als toets op het systeem, we passen het systeem aan zodat het wel mogelijk is (positieve insteek)

Incident kan volgens deze theorie ook toets van het systeem zijn. Dit werkt alleen bij incident op inhoud. Dan past het juist goed binnen de ambtelijke-politieke relatie.

Incidenten op vorm, uiting, persoon hebben niks te maken met de inhoud en kunnen dus niet leiden tot verbetering van het systeem. Dit past binnen echt verschijnsel van de politieke bontkraag.

De topambtenaar moet niet ten koste van alles het systeem beschermen of behouden voor incidenten, maar juist het systeem aanpassen op incidenten.

Dus er zit wel verschil tussen regel en gebeurtenissen domein, maar dit is een nuance verschil, geen principieel verschil. Er is onderscheid te maken tussen de twee, maar ze moeten juist niet uit elkaar gedreven worden. Samenhang tussen de systemen is belangrijk. Spanning tussen ambtenaren en politici treedt op bij de bontkraag. Wanneer de SG niet door deze bontkraag heen komt, dan moet de politiek adviseur het oplossen. De SG moet de kwaliteit van de organisatie waarborgen.

5. De ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid, waarbij de minister altijd eindverantwoordelijk is, kan worden beschouwd als een bescherming voor de SG/DG, maar dit kan ook als prikkel dienen voor de SG/DG. De minister kan immers gedwongen worden om af te treden bij falen van de ambtelijke dienst. Wat is de invloed van de ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid op de rol van de SG/DG?

Als SG moet je veilig voelen, maar niet alles moet kunnen. Er zijn SGs die dagboeken bijhouden van afspraken met bewindspersonen. Ze doen dit uit zelfbescherming, ter verdediging of als zekerstelling. Op deze manier kunnen ze een minister tegenspreken of corrigeren als hij/zij iets anders beweerd.

De minister staat bovenaan de piramide en is verantwoordelijk voor alles en iedereen eronder. Alleen kan hij/zij nooit alles weten of alles zien. Dat is de keerzijde van ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid.

6. In de literatuur wordt vaak gesproken over ambtelijke loyaliteit. Wat beschouwt u als ambtelijke loyaliteit? Tot hoever gaat de loyaliteit van een SG/DG ten opzicht van zijn/haar minister? Kan de loyaliteit van de

ambtenaren ook gericht zijn op anders of iets anders dan in het belang van zijn/haar minister?

De ambtelijke loyaliteit hoort heel hoog te zijn. Loyaliteit heeft dubbele connotaties. Als topambtenaar blijf je binnen de verantwoordelijkheid van de minister. Binnen die loyaliteit moet de SG alles kunnen zeggen tegen de minister. Het wordt lastig met integriteit en rolverdeling. Voorbeeld: De beleidsspeech of informatie voor Kamerdebatten worden voorbereid door ambtenaren, maar een speech tijdens de campagne of voor op een partijbijeenkomst wordt niet door een ambtenaar geschreven. Deze situaties zijn spannend voor de loyaliteit. Als SG hoor je dan te zeggen dat het niet hoort. Als SG heb je het lef nodig om deze grenzen te bewaken en aan te geven. Dus loyaliteit is niet grenzeloos, dan zou het een soort slaafsheid worden. Als ambtenaar dien je te verbinden binnen het departement, tegen te spreken wanneer nodig en weg te lopen als het echt tegen je principes in gaat.

7. Bent u van mening dat een SG/DG meer politieke en publieke verantwoording over zijn/haar beleid, financiën en ambtenaren zou moeten afleggen? Zo ja, waarom en op welke manier? Zo niet, waarom niet?

Ik ben voorstander van apolitieke topambtenaren. Deze onafhankelijkheid is belangrijk. In de VS draagt de SG de verantwoording/verantwoordelijkheid voor de begroting. Zo'n rol zou de SG in Nederland ook kunnen aannemen. Een rol als informant. Dit is een lastige rol, maar zou onderdeel kunnen zijn van het ambtelijke ambacht, van de vakmanschap. Ik ben voorstander van grotere zichtbaarheid van topambtenaren. Dit kan binnen huidige rechtsstatelijkheid, alleen moeten de juiste condities gecreëerd worden. Vroeger was de opiniërende rol van de SG in het publieke debat groter dan nu. Als SG werd ik regelmatig gevraagd om bij te dragen aan het maatschappelijk debat. Nu wordt de minister gelijk ter verantwoording geroepen door de kamer bij het minste of geringste. Ministeriele verantwoordelijkheid leidt ook tot minder ruimte voor een topambtenaar.

8. Bent u van mening dat een SG/DG meer zichtbaar moet zijn voor het publiek en/of in het openbaar als expert zou moeten kunnen deelnemen aan het publiek debat? Zo ja, waarom en op welke manier? Zo niet, waarom niet?

Ja, topambtenaren dienen zichtbaarder te zijn. Deze externe optredens doe je dan niet voor jezelf, maar dit doe je in dienst van de minister. Dat is ook gelijk je grens. Het moet in dienst zijn van je taak.

9. Op welke manier zou meer publieke zichtbaarheid en verantwoording de rol van de topambtenaar veranderen? En welke invloed zou dit hebben op de relatie tussen de politieke en ambtelijke top? Zou dit volgens u een wenselijke verandering zijn? Waarom wel/niet?

De relatie tussen politieke en ambtelijke top zou dan in principiële zin niet veranderen. De ambtenaar blijft in functie van de minister werken. Alleen de praktische invulling is anders, maar staatsrechtelijke verandert er niks. Ik zou dit verkeer tussen SG en de Kamer niet wettelijk regelen, maar door middel van een regeling of convenant. Je kan met elkaar afspreken wat de grenzen zijn van de informatieplicht van de SG. Het doel moet altijd blijven dat de kamer beter geïnformeerd wordt waardoor het verkeer tussen de Kamer en de Minister soepeler en daarmee effectiever kan verlopen. Dit moet onderdeel zijn het publieke en politieke proces en dus juist niet achter gesloten deuren plaatsvinden. De minister kan niet alles weten, daarom zou de SG goed van pas kunnen komen tijdens debat. Dit zou juist de ministeriele verantwoordelijkheid kunnen verreiken in plaats van teniet doen. Als topambtenaar zou spreken in het openbaar een kwaliteit moeten zijn. Nu leest de minister vaak teksten voor die door een ambtenaar zijn geschreven, waarom zou je die ambtenaar niet gewoon aan het woord laten. Het is belangrijk om op een ontspannen manier met spannende situaties om te gaan. Er hoort spanning te zijn in de relatie tussen de SG en de minister, maar de boog moet niet te gespannen zijn. Tegenwoordig is de politiek (Tweede Kamer) met name op zoek naar fouten. Het is een 'leeuwenkuil', waar Kamerleden graag een minister pakken op zwaktes en met zijn allen bij de interruptiemicrofoon staan. Dit is een slechte ontwikkeling. Dat de media alleen gefocust is op de fouten en niet op de goede dingen dat is begrijpelijk,

maar van de Tweede Kamer verwacht je dat zij ook goede dingen willen doen voor de samenleving. Dat de Kamer niet op zoek is naar goed nieuws is verwerpelijk. De politiek is er niet voor zichzelf. Als SG moet je niet alleen het oog hebben voor het belang van jouw departement, maar voor de samenleving.

Ik ben een zondagskind, ik heb weinig gelazer gehad met ministers. Dat is een combinatie van geluk en van mijn eigen instelling. Geluk in de zin dat ik het heb getroffen met de ministers, er was een goede klik. Maar ook eigen inbrengen: benaderbaarheid, dichtbij mensen en onderwerpen staan, met respect en interesse in de mensen en onderwerpen om mij heen.

In Den Haag is 80 a 90% van het beleid top-down en dat is niet goed. Het is belangrijk om naar de mensen te luisteren.

10. Heeft u nog verdere suggesties voor mijn onderzoek? Zijn er binnen uw ministerie of daarbuiten nog mensen die ik zou kunnen spreken over dit onderwerp?

In hoeverre beïnvloed de persoonlijkheid van een SG de perceptie van de rol van topambtenaar, de zichtbaarheid, de domeinen. Bijv. verschil tussen Johan de Leeuw en Mark Frequin.

Interessante vervolgonderzoeken: testen bij de politieke top, de focus/energie die wordt gestopt in HRM/Organisatiecultuur bij de Rijksdienst (curve). Over het algemeen zijn de individuele relaties vaak goed, maar de collectieve relaties vaak niet in de politiek-ambtelijke verhouding.

Verder ben ik altijd beschikbaar voor verdere hulp/vragen via email en telefoon. Tip: Hans Berg (bestuurskundige) 'De eigen aard van de overheid'.

Name respondent: Clare Moriarty

Position respondent: Permanent Secretary, Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

Date and time interview: 17-04-2018 14:00

Location interview: Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London

1. Could you tell me about the three most important aspects of your current position?

The three most important aspects of the job, and probably of all senior leadership functions are:

- Provide overall direction, keep an eye on the whole picture
- Make it happen. Focus on execution and operation
- Care for your people. Focus on their needs and development. See people as individuals. Make sure to have the right people in the right place.

2. The role of top civil servant can be described in terms of characteristics and skills. What do you consider the most important characteristics for a top civil servant? And which skills are important?

The relationship with the ministers is very important. You must be attentive. Build trust and make it work. You have to understand the organisation. You have to know what make people tick. I have a finance and project delivery background, so I have experience in this.

3. How would you say that the role of top civil servant has changed in the past ten years? Are there different characteristics and skills important for top civil servants? Has the position of the top civil servant been politicized? If so, what does this politicisation look like?

I have seen an increase focus on people, leadership and management. Permanent Secretaries used to be a grand figure. His function used to be mainly advising the ministers and provide good writing. Now there is more understanding about management and people. There is more attention to the psychological aspect of the work. So more people are thinking about this, now we need to operate it. We focus

already more on diversity and inclusion. There are more women in senior positions, however we are still lagging behind in other terms of diversity. We are not there yet, but there is more understanding and attention for this. I do not think the position of the top civil servant has been politicized, not in our system. The civil service is neutral and is very good in dealing with a change in government. However, when a certain government is in power for a long time this might create a sort of common mind-set. Some might regard this as politicisation. My father joined the Civil Service in 1954 and retired in 1990; they were also talking about politicisation throughout his career so it is just a debate that we live with.

4. In the literature, sometimes there is a distinction between ‘politics of rules’ and ‘politics of incidents’. The politics of rules is concerned with the systems and rules, and consequently more focused on the long term. While the politics of incidents focuses on incidents and how to solve them. Generally, the politics of rules is perceived to be the domain of the top civil servants and the politics of incidents is part of the political domain. What is your opinion on this division? What does this division mean for the operation of the top civil servant? Can this lead to tensions between the Permanent Secretary and minister? (For example if the minister does not want to be advised by his/her civil servants but by others in the case of ‘politics of incidents’)

I do not really recognize the distinction, but that happens with more concepts that are academic. In addition, the idea of New Public Management is something I do not recognize as part of my daily life. We do what we need to do in the Civil Service, so also dealing with instances. Civil servants support Ministers in making strategy (long term) and in dealing with crises (short term). There are some very specific areas where the Permanent Secretary has the role of being the ‘Guardian of Propriety’ to guard against politicisation. For example now we are in the running up to local elections. We are not allowed to make big policy announcements that might influence the local elections. As a Permanent Secretary, you have to make sure these kinds of rules are obeyed. We have to follow the rules about what is right and appropriate to do and remind the politicians of this. We also have to work with other department in

order to reach 'Collective Agreement'. Most decisions/policies will affect several departments. It is in the interests of Ministers that we all protect the same system and obey the rules, but it falls to Permanent Secretaries to make it happen.

- 5. The ministerial responsibility, in which the minister is always accountable, can be regarded as a protection for the Permanent (Under) Secretary, but also as a trigger. The minister can be forced to step down in case of failure of the civil service. What is the influence of ministerial responsibility on the role of the Permanent (Under) Secretary?**

The great mantra is: 'Officials advice, ministers decide'. However, in reality minister can delegate decisions to civil servants. Ministers have the right to decide, ministers are responsible. Therefore, as a Permanent Secretary I need to make sure that they can take this responsibility. They have to know what is going on in the department. We should not take risky decisions without giving them the opportunity to say no.

- 6. In the literature, civil servant loyalty is usually considered the other side of ministerial responsibility. What do you consider to be civil servant loyalty? How far does the loyalty of the Permanent (Under) Secretary go in relation to his/her minister? Can this loyalty also be focused on someone or something else than the minister's interest?**

Fundamentally, civil servants have to serve the government of the day. There is day-to-day loyalty to the minister. If there are differences within the ministerial team then ultimately the Secretary of State decides. If different Secretaries of State do not agree, I would be most loyal to my own minister and ensure his/her position is understood. Generally, in that situation, civil servants would work together to get to a common fact base and then let Ministers have the final debate.

- 7. In your opinion, should a Permanent (Under) Secretary be more accountable in regard to the policy, budget and employees of the ministry? Why (not)? And how?**

The reality is that being accountable for the budget in practice means that you are accountable for the delivery of policy, because money is spent on delivering policy and as Permanent Secretary, you are responsible for 'value for money'. If a minister wants to spend money and the Permanent Secretary considers that, it does not meet the criteria for value for money, legality, propriety etc. then the minister has to give a ministerial direction or change the policy. Therefore, in that sense the Permanent Secretary has a lot of power, responsibility and accountability. Being accountable for the budget means much more. It is a broader issue. The accountability of the Permanent Secretary in the UK is high. The Permanent Secretary is accountable to Parliament for how money is spent and appears before the Public Accounts Committee, not the minister

8. In your opinion, should a Permanent (Under) Secretary be more visible in public and/or participate in the public debate as an expert? Why (not)? If so, in which ways?

I think Permanent Secretaries have become more visible internally, within their department. However, I do not think they are really more visible externally. As Director General for Rail at Department for Transport, I was more visible in the media. As a Permanent Secretary, I have some external visibility, but I am representing the Minister's view when I talk about Departmental policy. It would not be helpful for a Permanent Secretary to take a view externally that contradicted what the Minister said. Permanent Secretaries are public when they appear in front of the Selection Committees, but not necessarily in the media.

9. In which way will public visibility and accountability change the role of the top civil servant? How will this influence the relationship between the political and top civil service top? Would more visibility and accountability of top civil servants be a desirable change according to you? Why (not)?

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10. Do you have any other suggestions for my research? Are there any people within or outside your ministry that I could discuss this topic with?

Naam respondent: Dick Schoof

Functie respondent: National Coördinator voor Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid, Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid

Datum en tijd interview: 04-04-2018 12:45

Locatie interview: Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, Den Haag

- 1. Kunt u mij wat vertellen over de drie belangrijkste aspecten van uw huidige functie? Welke functies heeft u eerder gehad? Welke functie was voor u het belangrijkste in uw carrière?**

Als NCTV zijn de drie belangrijkste aspecten: kennis van de inhoud, competities en verbinden van veel partners. Verantwoordelijk voor de 3 C's: Contraterrorisme, Cybersecurity en Crisisbeheersing. Het werk is leuk, omdat het er altijd toe doet. De functie van NCTV is pseudo onafhankelijk. Ik ben een schakel tussen de samenleving en de politiek in. Als NCTV ben ik het boegbeeld van terrorismebestrijding en veiligheid in Nederland. Dit brengt zowel lusten als lasten met zich mee. Daarbij komt een hoop, met name gevoelde, verantwoordelijk kijken.

- 2. De rol van de topambtenaar kan worden beschreven op basis van karakteristieken, vaardigheden en eigenschappen. Onder topambtenaar versta ik iemand die op SG of DG niveau werkt. Wat zijn volgens u de belangrijkste karakteristieken van een topambtenaar? Welke vaardigheden zijn belangrijk voor een topambtenaar? En welke eigenschappen?**

Belangrijke karakteristieken voor een topambtenaar: slim en analytisch. Je moet ook begrijpen wat er speelt, belangen kunnen afwegen en de politiek snappen. Een zekere mate van eigenwijsheid is ook nodig. Je moet, op een prettige manier, tegen bewindslieden op kunnen. Je moet tegenspraak kunnen bieden. Tenslotte heb je veel aandacht voor jouw mensen nodig. Je draagt zorg voor de medewerkers en je hebt ook voor hun belangen, behoeftes en ontwikkeling.

- 3. Is de rol van de topambtenaren nu anders ten opzichte van tien jaar geleden? Zijn er nu andere karakteristieken, vaardigheden en**

eigenschappen belangrijk voor een topambtenaren? Is er sprake van politisering van de functie? Zo ja, waar bestaat deze uit?

Vroeger hadden we meer markante topambtenaren, zoals Roel Bekker ook in zijn boek beschrijft. Tegenwoordig zijn de topambtenaren minder market. Daarnaast is het politieke klimaat sterker geworden. Hierdoor zijn wij als topambtenaren meer eenvormig en minder uitgesproken. Dit gaat in golfbewegingen en hopelijk komen we daar ook weer uit.

Er is geen politisering in de zin dat ambtenaar meer in lijn zijn met een politieke stroming. Wel is de functie van topambtenaar politieker geworden. Het is belangrijker om te weten wat er politiek gezien speelt. De advisering van de ambtelijke naar de politieke top is niet aan inhoudelijk, maar ook gericht op politieke haalbaarheid.

- 4. Er wordt weleens onderscheid gemaakt tussen de regelpolitiek en de gebeurtenissenpolitiek. De regelpolitiek houdt zich bezig met de stelsels en de regels, dus meer gericht op de lange termijn. Terwijl de gebeurtenissenpolitiek zich meer richt op de incidenten**

Over het algemeen wordt de regelpolitiek beschouwd als het domein van de topambtenaren en de gebeurtenissenpolitiek als die van de politici. Kunt u zich in deze verdeling vinden? Wat betekent dit voor het werk als topambtenaar? Leidt dit verschil in manier van werken tot spanningen tussen de SG en de minister? (Bijvoorbeeld omdat de minister zich bij de gebeurtenissenpolitiek niet laat adviseren door zijn ambtenaren, maar door anderen)

Ik snap de verdeling tussen regel en gebeurtenissenpolitiek, maar ik ben het niet helemaal eens met de toedeling. Ja, de bewindslieden en de Kamer zijn ontzettend incident gedreven. Zonder de politiek zou de gebeurtenissenpolitiek ook niet bestaan. Het is de taak van de topambtenaar om de incidenten te vertalen naar de systeemkant.

Daarnaast is het de taak van de topambtenaar om de regelreflex (incident gedreven maatregelen) te beperken. De topambtenaar moet tegendruk geven en de lange termijn en bijeffecten van maatregelen in de gaten houden.

De minister kan vallen bij incidenten, dus dit levert zeker spanningen op tussen minister en topambtenaar. Er zijn twee verschillende belangen. Een goede topambtenaar weet hiermee te dealen. Als topambtenaar gaat het niet om je gelijk krijgen, maar om de bewindspersoon tegenspraak te bieden en inhoudelijke uitleg te geven. De boodschap moet duidelijk overgebracht worden. Je moet de politiek begrijp, soms een beetje mee bewegen, maar ook tegenwicht bieden.

5. De ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid, waarbij de minister altijd eindverantwoordelijk is, kan worden beschouwd als een bescherming voor de SG/DG, maar dit kan ook als prikkel dienen voor de SG/DG. De minister kan immers gedwongen worden om af te treden bij falen van de ambtelijke dienst. Wat is de invloed van de ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid op de rol van de SG/DG?

De ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid is een belangrijk leerstuk. De topambtenaar legt geen verantwoording af, behalve aan zijn/haar politieke baas. De topambtenaar moet goed bespreken met de minister wat hij/zij als ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid beschouwd. De invulling van de ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid verschilt per persoon. Sommige ministers hebben een hele ruime opvatting en voelen zich verantwoordelijk voor de hele organisatie. Anderen hebben een engere opvatting en voelen zich alleen politiek verantwoordelijk. Ik geloof zelf meer in dat laatste, omdat de minister niet alles kan weten. Dat kon wel in de tijd dat het systeem en de ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid in het leven werden geroepen, maar in deze tijd is dat onmogelijk geworden. De organisaties zijn te groot en te complex voor één persoon om alles te weten. De ministeriële wordt nog vaak te letterlijk genomen, ook in de Tweede Kamer. Dat blijft een worsteling.

- 6. In de literatuur wordt vaak gesproken over ambtelijke loyaliteit. Wat beschouwt u als ambtelijke loyaliteit? Tot hoever gaat de loyaliteit van een SG/DG ten opzicht van zijn/haar minister? Kan de loyaliteit van de ambtenaren ook gericht zijn op anders of iets anders dan in het belang van zijn/haar minister?**

Als topambtenaar ben je loyaal aan de minister. Je hebt geen politieke opvatting. Binnen geef je juist tegengas waar nodig, maar buiten val je de minister niet af. De ambtelijke loyaliteit is vooral aan de instituties, niet aan de persoon. De ambtelijke loyaliteit is 'de kurk waar het systeem op drijft'. Wederzijdse loyaliteit is erg belangrijk. Als topambtenaar ben je dag en nacht bereid om te zorgen dat de minister de verantwoordelijkheid kan dragen. Dit doe je niet door alleen maar mee te bewegen, maar wel door te ondersteunen.

- 7. Bent u van mening dat een SG/DG meer politieke en publieke verantwoording over zijn/haar beleid, financiën en ambtenaren zou moeten afleggen? Zo ja, waarom en op welke manier? Zo niet, waarom niet?**

Ja de SG/DG mag meer ruimte nemen om uitleg te geven. Dit moet dan wel feitelijk uitleg zijn. Bij technische briefings gebeurt dit al. Bijvoorbeeld bij de briefings over de MH17 was ik als NCTV betrokken. Het is belangrijk dat het niet om politieke zaken gaat. Het is juist goed als het debat niet alleen politiek is. Het is wel belangrijk om dit goed af te stemmen met de bewindspersoon. Als SG/DG moet je oppassen dat jouw bijdrage niet te politiek wordt.

- 8. Bent u van mening dat een SG/DG meer zichtbaar moet zijn voor het publiek en/of in het openbaar als expert zou moeten kunnen deelnemen aan het publiek debat? Zo ja, waarom en op welke manier? Zo niet, waarom niet?**

Wat mij betreft mogen topambtenaren wat meer uit de coulisse. Dan bedoel ik als expert en niet politiek. Je moet dan extra goed oppassen voor politieke inmenging, of de verdenking daarvan.

9. Op welke manier zou meer publieke zichtbaarheid en verantwoording de rol van de topambtenaar veranderen? En welke invloed zou dit hebben op de relatie tussen de politieke en ambtelijke top? Zou dit volgens u een wenselijke verandering zijn? Waarom wel/niet?

Ja dat denk ik wel. Als de topambtenaar meer zichtbaar is, dan wordt hij ook meer accountable gehouden. Nu vormen de ambtenaren geen onderdeel van het debat. De vergrote zichtbaarheid van topambtenaren kan ook eng zijn voor de minister. Nu kan hij de topambtenaar negeren/vergeten in het debat, maar dan moet hij rekening mee de topambtenaar houden. Het zou een wenselijke verandering zijn, mits je uit het politieke debat blijft. Iedereen moet zich er dan wel van bewust zijn dat het speelveld verandert. De topambtenaar wordt dan een actor en heeft geen free ride. Het is lastig om het apolitiek te houden. Bijvoorbeeld wanneer ik als NCTV het dreigingsbeeld bepaal, dan doe ik dat op basis van feiten en expertise, maar deze feiten kunnen het politieke debat aanjagen. Je moet er dus over nadenken wat de gevolgen van zo'n uitspraak zijn en hoe dit politiek gebruikt kan worden.

De naam en functie van de NCTV wordt al regelmatig gebruikt in debat en beleid in de kamer. Het feit dat de functie pseudo-onafhankelijk is, betekent niet dat je in een isolement handelt. Het is belangrijk om met de politiek te praten. Die discussie met de politiek is noodzakelijk, maar je moet je bewust blijven van je rol en nadenken over de effecten.

Op opzoeken van het publieke debat verschilt per functie en per domein. Het mag alleen als het functioneel is. De consistentie in de kwaliteit van de topambtenaar is erg belangrijk. De formulering van de uitspraken van SG/DG is ook belangrijk. De functie is niet gepolitiseerd, maar als SG/DG moet je je wel bewuster zijn het politieke debat.

10. Heeft u nog verdere suggesties voor mijn onderzoek? Zijn er binnen uw ministerie of daarbuiten nog mensen die ik zou kunnen spreken over dit onderwerp?

Name respondent: Jill Rutter

Position respondent: Jill Rutter. Senior Researcher at Institute for Government (and former Director Communications, HM Treasury and former Director Strategy, Defra).

Date and time interview: 16-04-2018 15:00

Location interview: Institute for Government, London

1. Could you tell me about the positions did you have?

I have worked in the HM Treasury. My last job there was Director Communications. Then I moved to Defra, where I was Director Strategy. I am working at IfG since 2009.

2. The role of top civil servant can be described in terms of characteristics and skills. What do you consider the most important characteristics for a top civil servant? And which skills are important?

People have different thoughts on what the role of the Permanent Secretary is. At IfG, we have thought a lot about this and we came up with the seven roles of the Permanent Secretary. You can read these seven roles in the report 'Accountability at the Top'. During the 1980s, Permanent Secretaries would see themselves mainly as the top policy advisor. Now Permanent Secretaries see their role more as management, getting the right people in the right place.

It also depends on what the Permanent Secretary wants to do or achieve and how to do that. In addition, it depends on the Secretary of State. Most of the Permanent Secretaries do not have a personal agenda. The civil service appointments are not political.

3. How would you say that the role of top civil servant has changed in the past ten years? Are there different characteristics and skills important for top civil servants? Has the position of the top civil servant been politicized? If so, what does this politicisation look like?

Treasury and FCO always have Permanent Secretaries from within their own departments. In other departments, you also see people from other departments or

from outside the civil service becoming Permanent Secretaries. Thirty years ago you would only see Permanent Secretaries from within the Civil Service and Permanent Secretaries came mainly from the Treasury. However, nowadays it is not as exclusive anymore.

There is a change since the Blair government. Since then, there is more focus on management capabilities. During the 1980s, there was a sense that the civil service was undermanaged. Since the Blair government there have been more people from outside entered the civil service.

The context has changed, particularly because of the (social) media. You see, especially former Permanent Secretaries, pronouncing their views on social media, for example on Brexit now. Current civil servants are also more on social media, for example Twitter, but they do not use it to articulate their political opinions. It is better behaved, to show the good things of their departments, for example Jeremy Heywood.

The position of the top civil servants is not more politicized. However, there are more concerns. Since Cameron government, PM and Secretaries of State have a bit more influence on the appointment of Permanent Secretaries. They are not completely political appointees, because there is a selection process. Nevertheless, it is more political than it used to be. However, in practice it does not really matter, top civil servants always had to maintain a good relationship with the Secretary of State and they still have to do that.

Another change might be that politicians are more willing to criticize civil servants in public. This is happening more than it used to be. In the UK civil servants are not easily sacked, they are usually replaced into another position.

4. Do you have the idea that events are more prominent in politics nowadays compared to ten years ago?

There is more pressure to respond to the media fast.

- 5. The ministerial responsibility, in which the minister is always accountable, can be regarded as a protection for the Permanent (Under) Secretary, but also as a trigger. The minister can be forced to step down in case of failure of the civil service. What is the influence of ministerial responsibility on the role of the Permanent (Under) Secretary?**

-

- 6. In the literature, civil servant loyalty is usually considered to be the other side of ministerial responsibility. What do you consider to be civil servant loyalty? How far does the loyalty of the Permanent (Under) Secretary go in relation to his/her minister? Can this loyalty also be focused on someone or something else than the minister's interest?**

Most Permanent Secretaries would see their role as improving the relationship between their department and the Secretary of State. They can be a bit defensive about their department. They see themselves as the one on top of the department. Most Permanent Secretaries are loyal to the Secretary of State more than to government in general.

- 7. In your opinion, should a Permanent (Under) Secretary be more accountable in regard to the policy, budget and employees of the ministry? Why (not)? And how?**

The budget is the only thing where Permanent Secretaries are personally accountable for, as Accounting Officer. The Treasury sets out 5 guidelines for the Accounting Officers. It is their personal responsibility; they have to be accountable at the PAC hearings. It is also one of the checks in the system. To make sure that ministers do not spend it on party purposes for example.

- 8. In your opinion, should a Permanent (Under) Secretary be more visible in public and/or participate in the public debate as an expert? Why (not)? If so, in which ways?**

Permanent Secretaries are more visible nowadays. They do more of public speaking and reach out more to the people. However, most people do not know any of the ministers, nor any of the top civil servants. Most people are happy for politics to pass them by. Permanent Secretaries are accountable and visible in the PAC hearings.

Yes, I think it is good when Permanent Secretaries are more visible in public, however it is difficult, especially when policies change. You can speak about anything that is not in line with the government policy, however when government changes, the policy might change too. This might affect your credibility.

There is a quick turnover in ministers and permanent secretaries in the UK (Gavin at IfG will have figures/number on this). Probably a faster turnover than in the Netherlands.

9. In which way will public visibility and accountability change the role of the top civil servant? How will this influence the relationship between the political and top civil service top? Would more visibility and accountability of top civil servants be a desirable change according to? Why (not)?

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10. Do you have any other suggestions for my research? Are there any people within or outside your ministry that I could discuss this topic with?

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Naam respondent: Johan de Leeuw

Functie respondent: Voormalig Secretaris Generaal, Ministerie Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid

Datum en tijd interview: 05-04-2018 16:00

Locatie interview: Universiteit Leiden, Schouwburgstraat, Den Haag

1. Kunt u mij wat vertellen over de drie belangrijkste aspecten van uw huidige functie? Welke functies heeft u eerder gehad? Welke functie was voor u het belangrijkste in uw carrière?

Vanaf 1986 kamerlid voor 5,5 jaar. DG bij LNV, toen Tjibbe Joustra SG was. Op LNV 2 DGs en 1 SG – de ijzeren driehoek van Landbouw. 10 jaar als DG gewerkt. LNV was een groot ministerie met zo'n 12,000 werknemers. In de jaren 90 reorganisaties en afslanking van LNV. DG VWA en IG V en W. Daarna inspectie bij NVWA (3 a 4 jaar). Daarna bij VWS integreren, ontwikkelen, en laten functioneren van de reorganisatie. Daarna voorzitter bij de inspectieraad. Daarna 4 jaar SG Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid (SZW). Laatste 4 jaar bij ABDTopconsultant. 1,5 jaar niet meer in Rijksdienst. Nu nog 2 dagen per week bij CTBG en andere bestuurlijke en toezichthoudende functies. Dus oud-SG/DG/IG met ervaring en interesse in organisatieontwikkeling.

2. De rol van de topambtenaar kan worden beschreven op basis van karakteristieken, vaardigheden en eigenschappen. Onder topambtenaar versta ik iemand die op SG of DG niveau werkt. Wat zijn volgens u de belangrijkste karakteristieken van een topambtenaar? Welke vaardigheden zijn belangrijk voor een topambtenaar? En welke eigenschappen?

Er zijn verschillen tussen SGs en DGs, niet alle DGs kunnen SG worden. Belangrijkste karakteristieken zijn:

- Relationele kwaliteiten en samenwerking
- Goed conceptueel kunnen denken. Op systeemniveau kunnen handelen, denken en terugkoppelen.
- De juiste mensen op de juiste plekken hebben
- Delegeren

- Combinatie tussen inhoud, processen en relaties (“organisatie driehoek”)
- Bestuurlijke antenne
- Politieke context
- Samenwerken, ook buiten eigen departement
- Leiding geven op ambtelijk niveau ten behoeve van politieke top
- Combinatie tussen gezag en dienstbaarheid
- Je plek kennen
- Politieke top niet naar de mond praten, maar ook tegenspraak bieden waar nodig.
- Veilig klimaat en ontspannen sfeer creëren

3. Is de rol van de topambtenaren nu anders ten opzichte van tien jaar geleden? Zijn er nu andere karakteristieken, vaardigheden en eigenschappen belangrijk voor een topambtenaren? Is er sprake van politisering van de functie? Zo ja, waar bestaat deze uit?

In de jaren 80 en 90 hadden topambtenaren meer autoriteit. Ze kregen en namen meer ruimte. Door reorganisatie en afslanking is kenniscomponent nu schraler binnen departement. Het kenniscomponent zit meer bij de uitvoering en toezicht dan bij beleid. Beleidskant maakt te weinig gebruik van de kennis. Dus SG/DG is technocratischer geworden. Ook zijn SGs/DGs makkelijker inwisselbaar. Dat is een verlies. De kennis is wegbezuinigd en dat is problematisch. De SGs/DGs zijn nog steeds slimme, capabele mensen, daar is niks aan veranderd. De context is veranderd en daarmee ook de rol van de SG/DG. Er is minder tijd om naar ‘buiten’ te gaan. Het apparaat is kleiner geworden, daardoor kan de topambtenaar minder de breedte en de diepte in.

4. Er wordt weleens onderscheid gemaakt tussen de regelpolitiek en de gebeurtenissenpolitiek. De regelpolitiek houdt zich bezig met de stelsels en de regels, dus meer gericht op de lange termijn. Terwijl de gebeurtenissenpolitiek zich meer richt op de incidenten. Over het algemeen wordt de regelpolitiek beschouwd als het domein van de topambtenaren en de gebeurtenissenpolitiek als die van de politici. Kunt u zich in deze verdeling vinden? Wat betekent dit voor het werk als topambtenaar? Leidt dit verschil in manier van werken tot spanningen

tussen de SG en de minister? (Bijvoorbeeld omdat de minister zich bij de gebeurtenissenpolitiek niet laat adviseren door zijn ambtenaren, maar door anderen)

Er is een verschil tussen SGs en DGs. DGs houden zich vooral bezig met regelpolitiek. SGs houden zich meer bezig met gebeurtenissenpolitiek, vanuit KB (Koninklijk Besluit) zijn zij er om de rommel op te ruimen. De gebeurtenissenpolitiek is belangrijk aspect voor SGs. Als SG sta je wat verder van de regelpolitiek, als DG is dat je core business. SGs ook regelpolitiek op vaak een hoger aggregatieniveau en iets meer op afstand. Er is altijd enige spanning in de relatie tussen SG en DG, maar beiden moeten zorgen dat het harmonieus verloopt.

De gebeurtenissenpolitiek is altijd aanwezig. Het is als SG de kunst om de gebeurtenissenpolitiek niet de over hand te laten nemen. Als SG/DG moet je het systeem in het oog houden en proberen incidenten voor te zijn. Als SG probeer je anticyclisch te werken, door vooruit te denken, denksessies op systeemniveau. Dit is zeker belangrijk in de voorbereiding van nieuwe bewindslieden. Sturing is een belangrijk begrip. Afspraken over sturing zijn belangrijk. De top moet goed functioneren en open staan voor de buitenwereld.

5. De ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid, waarbij de minister altijd eindverantwoordelijk is, kan worden beschouwd als een bescherming voor de SG/DG, maar dit kan ook als prikkel dienen voor de SG/DG. De minister kan immers gedwongen worden om af te treden bij falen van de ambtelijke dienst. Wat is de invloed van de ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid op de rol van de SG/DG?

Ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid is een begrip dat meer uitleg nodig heeft. Het gaat wat mij betreft om de politieke verantwoordelijkheid. Als minister ben je verantwoordelijk voor het domein en de organisatie. De meeste problemen liggen bij de uitvoering en niet bij het beleid. Als ambtenaar ben je verantwoordelijk voor jouw departement en bijbehorende diensten. Agentschappen en ZBO-s opereren op een grotere afstand van de ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid, maar blijven er wel

onderdeel van. De minister is verantwoordelijk voor het functioneren van het ministerie, maar niet voor de inhoud of besluiten. Er kan dus verschil worden gemaakt in de intensiteit van ministeriele verantwoordelijkheid. De SG/DG staat aan het hoofd van de hiërarchie van de ambtelijke verantwoordelijkheid. Dit omvat de dagelijkse verantwoordelijkheid.

De ministeriele en ambtelijke verantwoordelijkheid zijn verschillend. De ministeriele verantwoordelijkheid staat meer in de schijnwerpers, ook in de Tweede Kamer. Een minister kan moeten aftreden op basis van de ministeriele verantwoordelijkheid, maar ook een SG/DG kan worden ontslagen door de minister bij het falen in termen van ambtelijke verantwoordelijkheid.

6. In de literatuur wordt vaak gesproken over ambtelijke loyaliteit. Wat beschouwt u als ambtelijke loyaliteit? Tot hoever gaat de loyaliteit van een SG/DG ten opzicht van zijn/haar minister? Kan de loyaliteit van de ambtenaren ook gericht zijn op anders of iets anders dan in het belang van zijn/haar minister?

De minister heeft het voor het zeggen. Hij/zij maakt uiteindelijk de politieke beslissing. Als topambtenaar kun je advies geven, maar uiteindelijk moet je de politieke keuze loyaal uitvoeren, ook al ben je het er niet mee eens. Mocht deze politieke beslissing je eigen grenzen overschrijden, dan is opstappen de enige oplossing. Er zijn voorbeelden van ambtenaren die opstapten ten tijde van het kabinet met gedoogsteun van de PVV. Er zit dus een grens aan loyaliteit. Als topambtenaar vormt de samenleving de drijfveer. Je bent in dienst van samenleving, maar je bent loyaal aan de bewindspersoon, de organisatie als geheel en je collega's. Je bent samen gericht op hetzelfde doel. De ambtelijke loyaliteit is breder dan alleen de minister, maar gericht op de hele organisatie.

7. Bent u van mening dat een SG/DG meer politieke en publieke verantwoording over zijn/haar beleid, financiën en ambtenaren zou moeten afleggen? Zo ja, waarom en op welke manier? Zo niet, waarom niet?

Ik heb goede ervaringen met technische briefings. Daar zou meer gebruik van worden gemaakt. In de UK gebeurt dat vaker, waar agency verantwoordelijkheid afleggen. Het verantwoorden, toelichten en uitleggen van ambtelijk beleid neemt al mondjesmaat toe in Nederland, maar dat zou nog meer mogen. Bijvoorbeeld in de vorm van een jaarlijkse toelichting in de betrokken Kamercommissie. Dit zou meer gestructureerd mogen worden. Als een onderwerp aanleiding geeft, dan mag daar meer verantwoording over worden afgelegd. Dat zou een goede ontwikkeling zijn.

8. Bent u van mening dat een SG/DG meer zichtbaar moet zijn voor het publiek en/of in het openbaar als expert zou moeten kunnen deelnemen aan het publiek debat? Zo ja, waarom en op welke manier? Zo niet, waarom niet?

Ja dat denk ik wel, maar dat niet geforceerd. SGs/DGs zijn nu minder zichtbaar dan in het verleden. Het moet niet om de persoon gaan, maar om de inhoud. Topambtenaren hadden vroeger meer vakinhoudelijke kennis. In de jaren '90 had ik veel externe optreden. Die publieke zichtbaarheid vind ik wel goed. Een voorbeeld is Maarten Camps van EZ die een jaarlijks artikel publiceert in ESB. Dus: meer is goed, meer mag. We kunnen de oude tijden niet doen herleven. Toen was publieke zichtbaarheid er van nature meer.

9. Op welke manier zou meer publieke zichtbaarheid en verantwoording de rol van de topambtenaar veranderen? En welke invloed zou dit hebben op de relatie tussen de politieke en ambtelijke top? Zou dit volgens u een wenselijke verandering zijn? Waarom wel/niet?

De gouden regel is elkaar niet voor verrassingen plaatsen. Als topambtenaar moet je altijd eerst langs de minister gaan voor een publieke optreden.

10. Heeft u nog verdere suggesties voor mijn onderzoek? Zijn er binnen uw ministerie of daarbuiten nog mensen die ik zou kunnen spreken over dit onderwerp?

-

Naam respondent: Loes Mulder

Functie respondent: Secretaris Generaal, Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid

Datum en tijd interview: 03-04-2018 14:30

Locatie interview: Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, Den Haag

- 1. Kunt u mij wat vertellen over de drie belangrijkste aspecten van uw huidige functie? Welke functies heeft u eerder gehad? Welke functie was voor u het belangrijkste in uw carrière?**

CV: sinds 2016 SG Min SZW, daarvoor DG Algemene Bestuursdienst (ABD), DG (en daarvoor verschillende rollen) Vreemdelingenzaken.

- 2. De rol van de topambtenaar kan worden beschreven op basis van karakteristieken, vaardigheden en eigenschappen. Onder topambtenaar versta ik iemand die op SG of DG niveau werkt. Wat zijn volgens u de belangrijkste karakteristieken van een topambtenaar? Welke vaardigheden zijn belangrijk voor een topambtenaar? En welke eigenschappen?**

Karakteristieken, zoals ook beschreven in Visie op Leiderschap van ABD:

- i. Integriteit: onderscheidend voor leiders, zichtbaar in publiek. Mensen moeten echt begrijpen van een topambtenaar doet. Een topambtenaar dient zichtbaar te handelen in algemeen belang, daarin navolgbaar zijn. Uit onderzoek van OESO en VN blijkt dat landen met een integere overheid ook beter zijn voor de economie van een land en het geluk van de inwoners. Integriteit vormt de basis.
- ii. Samenwerken. Het is belangrijk om Rijksbreed samen te werken. Tegenwoordig kun je niks vanuit een plek oplossen.
- iii. Reflectie. Als topambtenaar moet je nadenken over wat je doet, hoe je het doet. Oog hebben voor de langere termijn, waar wil je heen? Bij de ABD worden topambtenaren in principe voor 7 jaar benoemd. Na 7 jaar ben jij vaak klaar met de organisatie of anders de organisatie wel met jou. Deze roulatie is heel goed voor het systeem. Juist een

verscheidenheid aan type mensen is nuttig. Er is niet één type topambtenaar. Variatie is juist goed, dan kun je elkaar aanvullen. Binnen een team heb je verschillende types nodig. Maar ook verschil in ervaring: er moeten ook mensen in het team werken die het domein al langer goed kennen, die de risico's goed kunnen overzien.

- 3. Is de rol van de topambtenaren nu anders ten opzichte van tien jaar geleden? Zijn er nu andere karakteristieken, vaardigheden en eigenschappen belangrijk voor een topambtenaren? Is er sprake van politisering van de functie? Zo ja, waar bestaat deze uit?**

Er is meer reflectie nodig. Het tempo ligt hoger dan vroeger. Onze bureaucratie is ingedeeld op hoe de situatie 100 jaar geleden was. Tegenwoordig zijn vraagstukken ingewikkelder. Het is belangrijk dat topambtenaren zich hiervan bewust zijn en hier naar handelen.

- 4. Er wordt weleens onderscheid gemaakt tussen de regelpolitiek en de gebeurtenissenpolitiek. De regelpolitiek houdt zich bezig met de stelsels en de regels, dus meer gericht op de lange termijn. Terwijl de gebeurtenissenpolitiek zich meer richt op de incidenten.**

Over het algemeen wordt de regelpolitiek beschouwd als het domein van de topambtenaren en de gebeurtenissenpolitiek als die van de politici. Kunt u zich in deze verdeling vinden? Wat betekent dit voor het werk als topambtenaar? Leidt dit verschil in manier van werken tot spanningen tussen de SG en de minister? (Bijvoorbeeld omdat de minister zich bij de gebeurtenissenpolitiek niet laat adviseren door zijn ambtenaren, maar door anderen)

Uitvoerders en IG's kunnen een expertrol vervullen. VB: Hoofd AIVD was in de publiciteit, mengde zich in het publieke debat rondom de WIV. Een expertrol vervullen in het maatschappelijk debat is goed: hoe meer, hoe beter. Maar als SG of DG het is niet functioneel. De deskundigheid van SG of DG is politieker en daarmee

ook politiek gevoeliger, terwijl een uitvoerder of IG over meer inhoudelijke deskundigheid beschikt. Als SG zit je dan gelijk in het politieke debat.

Als SG ben je er voor het algemeen belang, niet alleen voor de minister. Topambtenaren zijn, zijn, naast het lange termijn perspectief ook bezig geweest met de gebeurtenissenpolitiek. Die twee beïnvloeden elkaar natuurlijk ook wezenlijk. In die zin werken bewindslieden per definitie ook altijd aan de lange termijn.

Het tempo wel hoger en is sneller handelen of reageren noodzakelijk. Bij incidenten wordt het beeld snel gevormd, met name door Social Media. Het vak van de topambtenaar is dus veranderd. Je moet sneller reageren op incidenten. Communicatie is echt onderdeel van het vak geworden. Er worden ook communicatietrainingen aangeboden aan nieuwe topambtenaren. Het tempo en de heftigheid van de incidentenpolitiek is toegenomen.

5. De ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid, waarbij de minister altijd eindverantwoordelijk is, kan worden beschouwd als een bescherming voor de SG/DG, maar dit kan ook als prikkel dienen voor de SG/DG. De minister kan immers gedwongen worden om af te treden bij falen van de ambtelijke dienst. Wat is de invloed van de ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid op de rol van de SG/DG?

Alle nieuwe bewindslieden ontvangen het Blauwe Boek. Hierin staat hoe zij om dienen te gaan met het ambtelijk apparaat. De SG is duidelijk verantwoordelijk voor het ambtelijk apparaat. Als de minister een van de ambtenaren wil aanspreken kan dat alleen via de SG. De SG is ook de enige ambtenaar die door de minister afgezet kan worden. Hiermee is de verantwoordelijkheid van de SG toegenomen. De rol is geëxpliciteerd, maar ook leuker geworden. De ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid beschouw ik al een vanzelfsprekendheid, ik denk er niet bewust over na. Wanneer er sprake is van fouten of incidenten dan ben ik mij wel bewuster van de ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid.

Transparantie is erg belangrijk. Als SG zorg je dat de minister de kamer goed kan informeren, zeker bij incidenten. Daarnaast moet je als SG ook ruimte maken voor

fouten. Innovatie kan alleen wanneer er ook fouten gemaakt mogen worden. Dit is het bedrijfsleven heel normaal, maar binnen de overheid is die ruimte er vaak niet. Als SG heb je de rol om dat wel te faciliteren.

Als SG spreek je jouw mensen aan, neem je je verantwoordelijkheid. Je ben er alert op dat de organisatie fouten meldt, zodat de minister op de hoogte gesteld kan worden. Je maakt goede afspraken met uitvoerders. Er zijn veel controlemechanismes: Rekenkamer, Audit-diensten. Op deze manier moet er verantwoording afgelegd worden. Tenslotte probeer ik te zorgen voor een open cultuur.

6. In de literatuur wordt vaak gesproken over ambtelijke loyaliteit. Wat beschouwt u als ambtelijke loyaliteit? Tot hoever gaat de loyaliteit van een SG/DG ten opzicht van zijn/haar minister? Kan de loyaliteit van de ambtenaren ook gericht zijn op anders of iets anders dan in het belang van zijn/haar minister?

Loyaliteit voor het algemeen belang is belangrijk, ik word immers betaald uit belastinggeld. De loyaliteit is ook gericht op de minister. Maar de loyaliteit jegens de minister mag niet ten koste gaan van het algemeen belang. Vaak zijn de belangen van de minister en de Tweede Kamer ook in het maatschappelijk belang.

De functie van SG is veranderd, maar de functie van politici en met name bewindslieden is nog meer veranderd. De functie is zwaarder en harder geworden. Er is meer druk, met name mediadruk. Ik heb veel respect dat mensen deze functies nog willen vervullen en wil mijn best doen mijn minister zo goed mogelijk te ondersteunen

7. Bent u van mening dat een SG/DG meer politieke en publieke verantwoording over zijn/haar beleid, financiën en ambtenaren zou moeten afleggen? Zo ja, waarom en op welke manier? Zo niet, waarom niet?

8. **Bent u van mening dat een SG/DG meer zichtbaar moet zijn voor het publiek en/of in het openbaar als expert zou moeten kunnen deelnemen aan het publiek debat? Zo ja, waarom en op welke manier? Zo niet, waarom niet?**
9. **Op welke manier zou meer publieke zichtbaarheid en verantwoording de rol van de topambtenaar veranderen? En welke invloed zou dit hebben op de relatie tussen de politieke en ambtelijke top? Zou dit volgens u een wenselijke verandering zijn? Waarom wel/niet?**

7/8/9:

Het is naar mijn mening niet functioneel om de SG publiek uitgebreider verantwoording te laten afleggen in de politieke arena. Dat laat onverlet dat we altijd aanspreekbaar zijn op onze organisatie en hoe we onze publieke taak vervullen.

Voor een uitvoerder zou wel een publieke expertise rol zijn weggelegd. De SG ter verantwoording roepen in de Kamer heeft geen meerwaarde. Wel organiseren wij regelmatig technische briefings waarbij onze uitvoerders de kamer informeren over waar zij mee bezig zijn. Dit is een belangrijke, mooie vorm van transparantie. Maar op inhoudelijke onderwerpen wel. De Britten zijn een goed voorbeeld In hoe zij hun overheid aan de buitenkant presenteren. Jeremy Heywood en Rupert McNeill zijn actief op Twitter. Zij laten zien wat zij en hun organisatie doet. Op deze manier maak je het werk zichtbaar voor het publiek. Het is lastig op welke manier je dit doet, maar hier zouden wij in Nederland nog van kunnen leren.

10. **Heeft u nog verdere suggesties voor mijn onderzoek? Zijn er binnen uw ministerie of daarbuiten nog mensen die ik zou kunnen spreken over dit onderwerp?**

Jeremy Heywood en Rupert McNeill – Britse voorbeelden van transparantie via Social Media. Ik kan je ook in contact brengen met mensen bij de ABD.

Name respondent: Lord Jay of Ewelme

Position respondent: Former Permanent-Under Secretary, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Date and time interview: 17-04-2018 11:00

Location interview: House of Lords, London

- 1. Could you tell me about the three most important aspects of your current position? Which other positions did you have? Which one was the most important in your career?**

My last position was as Permanent Secretary at the Foreign Office (FCO) from 2002-2006. Before that, I was Ambassador in Paris. Before I was concerned with EU Affairs within FCO as Director and Director General. I started in the Overseas Department. I also spend some time in the Cabinet Office and at the World Bank.

The roles of Ambassador and Permanent Secretary are completely different. As an Ambassador, you have a very public profile. You have to appear in public. As a Permanent Secretary, you are running an organization mainly. You are also advising the minister, but you also have good experts for that. So there is a big contrast between the two jobs. In addition, FCO is a different department, because of all the embassies. Part of your staff works in different countries.

During the Blair government, Cabinet Secretaries like Andrew Turnbull and Gus O'Donnell tried to create more cooperation between departments and move away from the idea of separate silos. They tried to make the department function in a more similar way. Government issues have become more complex so cooperation is necessary. However, I think that the structure should not be changed too much. This can be very disruptive. We should leave the departments as they are. For example. Theresa May has now moved EU Affairs out of FCO, while this has also formed an important part of FCO.

- 2. The role of top civil servant can be described in terms of characteristics and skills. What do you consider the most important characteristics for a top civil servant? And which skills are important?**

As a Permanent Secretary, you predominantly have a management function. In addition, you give policy advice. You have to focus on the structures and the issues, but mainly you are responsible for management and organization. You have to make sure that you have the best and brightest people to advise the minister. You have to work closely with the minister. However, you also have to be good in delegation. The civil service has become too big for one person to know everything. This changed to hierarchy in practice. You do not have leaders at the top; they need to interact with their people.

Skills you need as a Permanent Secretary:

- Interest in the issues
- Management skills
- Personal skills
- Be a team player – Operate a team and operate in a team, not only act as the head, but really be a good manager)

3. How would you say that the role of top civil servant has changed in the past ten years? Are there different characteristics and skills important for top civil servants? Has the position of the top civil servant been politicized? If so, what does this politicisation look like?

I do not know if and how it has changed. I suspect that IT has changed the way of communication within and across departments. This also affects how the organizations work.

I am not sure whether the position of the top civil servant has been politicized. At least the Permanent Secretary should not be politicized in my view. It is important that they are independent and impartial. They have to do what the ministers want. I do not think the top civil servants no feel more pressure that is political. Our civil service works because top civil servants are neutral and work for the government of the day. The transition of government may be awkward or difficult. However, a Permanent Secretary should serve the minister despite its political affiliation.

- 4. In the literature, sometimes there is a distinction between ‘politics of rules’ and ‘politics of incidents’. The politics of rules is concerned with the systems and rules, and consequently more focused on the long term. While the politics of incidents focuses on incidents and how to solve them.**

Generally, the politics of rules is perceived to be the domain of the top civil servants and the politics of incidents is part of the political domain. What is your opinion on this division? What does this division mean for the operation of the top civil servant? Can this lead to tensions between the Permanent Secretary and minister? (For example if the minister does not want to be advised by his/her civil servants but by others in the case of ‘politics of incidents’)

Yes, politicians usually think about the short term and about political gains. As a Permanent Secretary, you have to think about the long term. Sometimes the minister will not want a long-term strategy, because he/she has the feeling that it constraints in the short term. As a Permanent Secretary, I sometimes had to persuade the minister to focus on long-term strategy. This can and does lead to tension, particularly in the run-up to elections. The current minister is much focussed on winning the next election. As a civil servant, you are more focussed on the long term. This might result into conflict. This is less of a problem at the start of a new government.

- 5. The ministerial responsibility, in which the minister is always accountable, can be regarded as a protection for the Permanent (Under) Secretary, but also as a trigger. The minister can be forced to step down in case of failure of the civil service. What is the influence of ministerial responsibility on the role of the Permanent (Under) Secretary?**

It depends on the minister how it affects the Permanent Secretary. A robust relationship between the minister and the civil servants is needed. You wish or hope for a minister to be protective for the civil service, to stand up for them and take the blame. However this is not always the case, some ministers publicly blame the civil service.

The traditional division is that the minister is in the public eye, and that the Permanent Secretary is not. This is the traditional view. This division has broken down. As a Permanent Secretary I would appear on TV or Radio, speak to parliamentary committees. In the Select Committees, you were supposed to be asked about the functioning of the department, but this always also touches upon policy issues. So as a Permanent Secretary, you are not excluded from public speaking. As Permanent Secretary, you are responsible for the finances of the department and you have to account to the Public Accounts Committee. The budget is not part of ministerial responsibility. I also took the PAC very serious and prepared it well. They would ask difficult questions. As a Permanent Secretary, you are personally responsible. This puts you more in the fire line, so you are not always protected by ministerial responsibility.

- 6. In the literature, civil servant loyalty is usually considered to be the other side of ministerial responsibility. What do you consider to be civil servant loyalty? How far does the loyalty of the Permanent (Under) Secretary go in relation to his/her minister? Can this loyalty also be focused on someone or something else than the minister's interest?**

The job of the Permanent Secretary is advice the minister and to do what the minister wants (as long as it is legally and constitutionally right). Therefore, Permanent Secretaries are loyal to the minister, but also to the department. In very difficult situation with my minister, I would seek out to the Cabinet Secretary, because in the end everybody is responsible and loyal to the whole system. Therefore, if there is a problem it is the problem of the whole system.

- 7. In your opinion, should a Permanent (Under) Secretary be more accountable in regard to the policy, budget and employees of the ministry? Why (not)? And how?**

I think the role of Accounting Officer is a good thing. As Permanent Secretary, you have a longer-term view, which transcends elections. Being the AO enforces the civil servants to focus on the long term, also in terms of budget spending. However, there

accountability is more than that. Permanent Secretary also account in the Select Committees in the House of Commons and House of Lords. The Permanent Secretary is also responsible for the organisation. The accountability should not be necessarily more, but also not less. The Permanent Secretary has to be accountable and responsible.

8. In your opinion, should a Permanent (Under) Secretary be more visible in public and/or participate in the public debate as an expert? Why (not)? If so, in which ways?

It actually happens quite a lot nowadays. Permanent Secretaries do appear on TV, Radio etc. Ministers do not want them there too much, because they want to do it themselves. I think it is good when they appear on events, conferences and think tanks. That is entirely appropriate. I think that you have to do that. You should have a certain degree of publicity. However, you should not outshine the minister. You have to focus on the functioning of the department. There can be a thin line; it can easily become too political. A good relationship with the minister is important. I also informed the minister about my public appearances.

9. In which way will public visibility and accountability change the role of the top civil servant? How will this influence the relationship between the political and top civil service top? Would more visibility and accountability of top civil servants be a desirable change according to? Why (not)?

Yes, this visibility requires different qualities. You have to feel comfortable standing in front of people, speaking to the media. 15 years ago, you did not need those skills. Therefore, things changed. Permanent Secretaries have to be accountable and they need a certain public profile. I think that is a good thing to do. They do not necessarily need more. You have to represent your department, make your people feel they are represented. You have to defend your people and be a good manager.

10. Do you have any other suggestions for my research? Are there any people within or outside your ministry that I could discuss this topic with?

Some other issues:

Role of the special advisors:

- Their role varies a lot. Some spad's protect the ministers from the civil service; I regard that as a wrong model. Some spad's see their job to advise the minister politically, but work together with the civil service. That would be a good model. A good spad can be an advantage to the Permanent Secretary. It is essential to have a good relationship with the special advisors if possible. In addition, work together if they want to cooperate.

Change:

- The role of the media has changed. The press expect quick responses nowadays. This will change more and more due to technology. Sometimes you have to do not respond and think time to think. Theresa May is doing this, whereas David Cameron also responded more quickly. It requires courage and determination to take time to think. Some issues are too complex, so then its better to take time to think.

Problem of Collective Memory:

- This is the biggest issue of the government today. There are no files, no papers, and no archive. When people leave there is no information available. It is important to create a collective memory. We need to have a structure to maintain emails, decisions etc. We need to find a solution.

Naam respondent: Manon Leijten

Functie respondent: Secretaris Generaal, Ministerie van Financiën

Datum en tijd interview: 05-04-2018 9:00

Locatie interview: Ministerie van Financiën, Den Haag

- 1. Kunt u mij wat vertellen over de drie belangrijkste aspecten van uw huidige functie? Welke functies heeft u eerder gehad? Welke functie was voor u het belangrijkste in uw carrière?**

Als SG heb je een dubbele rol, dus de twee belangrijkste aspecten zijn ambtelijk eindverantwoordelijk voor de organisatie en eerste/laatste adviseur voor de bewindslieden. De functie van SG kan je ook zien als een ‘duizend dingen doekje’. Voorzitten van bestuursraad, overleg met ministers, planning en control, benoeming van de bestuursraadsleden, stukken voor bewindspersonen lezen en ook crisismanagement. Het is van alles wat en dat maakt de functie zo leuk.

- 2. De rol van de topambtenaar kan worden beschreven op basis van karakteristieken, vaardigheden en eigenschappen. Onder topambtenaar versta ik iemand die op SG of DG niveau werkt. Wat zijn volgens u de belangrijkste karakteristieken van een topambtenaar? Welke vaardigheden zijn belangrijk voor een topambtenaar? En welke eigenschappen?**

Als topambtenaar moet je flexibel zijn en snel kunnen schakelen. Je moet een generalistisch kijk hebben. Oplossingsgerichtheid is belangrijk: Hoe kan het wel? Zeker in Nederland met coalitieregering is dit een belangrijke kwaliteit. Je moet sensitief zijn en mensgericht: je moet zowel de bewindslieden als je medewerkers begrijpen. Je moet in staat zijn om relaties op te bouwen. Deskundigheid is natuurlijk ook een vereiste, maar je hoeft niet de beste econoom te zijn om SG Financiën te worden. Je moet overzicht kunnen houden en een helicopterview hebben, maar ook de diepte in kunnen gaan.

- 3. Is de rol van de topambtenaren nu anders ten opzichte van tien jaar geleden? Zijn er nu andere karakteristieken, vaardigheden en eigenschappen belangrijk voor een topambtenaren? Is er sprake van politisering van de functie? Zo ja, waar bestaat deze uit?**

Tien jaar geleden was ik nog geen topambtenaar, dus ik weet niet helemaal hoe het toen was. We hebben nu een kabinet van vier partijen en dat is een groot verschil ten opzichte van een 2-partijkabinet. Oud-topambtenaren hebben vaak het idee dat het vroeger beter was, maar daar geloof ik niet zo in. Ik denk dat de huidige topambtenaar diverser is. Er zijn meer vrouwelijke topambtenaren en dat is een goede ontwikkeling. Er is ook sprake van ‘ontkokering’, topambtenaren hebben vaker bij verschillende departementen gewerkt. Volgens critici doet dat af aan de deskundigheid, maar volgens mij is de roulatie tussen departementen juist goed. De problemen van nu zijn complexer dan vroeger. Door de ontkokering is de samenwerking tussen ministeries verbeterd. Deze toegenomen gezamenlijkheid draagt bij het samen oplossen van complexe problemen. Co-creatie en samenwerken zijn essentieel en ervaring in andere domeinen kan daaraan bijdragen. Ook mensen die in de uitvoering of in het veld hebben gewerkt zijn nuttig voor de organisatie. Daarnaast zijn eigenschappen zoals sensitiviteit en deskundigheid natuurlijk nog steeds van belang.

- 4. Er wordt weleens onderscheid gemaakt tussen de regelpolitiek en de gebeurtenissenpolitiek. De regelpolitiek houdt zich bezig met de stelsels en de regels, dus meer gericht op de lange termijn. Terwijl de gebeurtenissenpolitiek zich meer richt op de incidenten.**

Over het algemeen wordt de regelpolitiek beschouwd als het domein van de topambtenaren en de gebeurtenissenpolitiek als die van de politici. Kunt u zich in deze verdeling vinden? Wat betekent dit voor het werk als topambtenaar? Leidt dit verschil in manier van werken tot spanningen tussen de SG en de minister? (Bijvoorbeeld omdat de minister zich bij de gebeurtenissenpolitiek niet laat adviseren door zijn ambtenaren, maar door anderen)

Deze tweedeling is te simpel en te strak. Het is een beetje van allebei. Ambtenaren en politici moeten samenwerken op beide terreinen. Het beleid moet worden gemaakt in dialoog tussen ambtenaren en politici.

Wel is de rol van de incidentenpolitiek toegenomen. Alles is sneller, met name door de toegenomen rol van social media. Bijvoorbeeld met de kwestie van de bonus van de ING-topman waren er binnen een paar uur ruim 7,500 tweets. Je moet hier als Ministerie van Financiën op reageren, om de schade aan het vertrouwen in de financiële sector te beperken. Hier zie dat een incident invloed kan hebben om het systeem.

Ambtenaar dienen politici te ondersteunen in een crisis of bij een incident. Wel is het de taak van de SG om de lange termijn in de gaten te houden. Waar nodig moet de bewindspersoon een beetje gedempt worden, zodat het incident niet groter gemaakt wordt dan het is. Door het hogere tempo, met name door social media, is meer flexibiliteit nodig als SG/DG. Het werk is meer 24/7 geworden.

5. De ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid, waarbij de minister altijd eindverantwoordelijk is, kan worden beschouwd als een bescherming voor de SG/DG, maar dit kan ook als prikkel dienen voor de SG/DG. De minister kan immers gedwongen worden om af te treden bij falen van de ambtelijke dienst. Wat is de invloed van de ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid op de rol van de SG/DG?

De onbekendheid van ambtenaren is afgenomen. Ze worden vaker met naam en toenaam genoemd, maar mogen zich niet publiekelijk verdedigen.

De ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid is staatsrechtelijk de enige juiste weg. Ik ben voorstander van een zuiver model, waar de rollen duidelijk zijn. Topambtenaren werken met volle overtuiging voor de publieke zaak. Ze willen goede dingen zo goed mogelijk doen. Dat de Ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid er toe zou leiden dat ambtenaren makkelijk weggelaten bij falen is mijn inzien niet juist. Dit houdt in dat je scherp moet zijn binnen het ministerie en niet daarbuiten. De bescherming van topambtenaren is afgenomen, omdat de zichtbaarheid het onveiliger maakt.

Topambtenaren zijn niet verkozen en hoeven ook geen verantwoording af te leggen, dit is de taak van de minister.

- 6. In de literatuur wordt vaak gesproken over ambtelijke loyaliteit. Wat beschouwt u als ambtelijke loyaliteit? Tot hoever gaat de loyaliteit van een SG/DG ten opzicht van zijn/haar minister? Kan de loyaliteit van de ambtenaren ook gericht zijn op anders of iets anders dan in het belang van zijn/haar minister?**

Loyaliteit is cruciaal. Als SG/DG moet je advies geven op basis van expertise. Uiteindelijk neemt de minister de beslissing. Het is de taak van de topambtenaar om alle belangen en informatie naar voren te brengen.

- 7. Bent u van mening dat een SG/DG meer politieke en publieke verantwoording over zijn/haar beleid, financiën en ambtenaren zou moeten afleggen? Zo ja, waarom en op welke manier? Zo niet, waarom niet?**

Meer experts is de media, die op basis van deskundigheid commentaar geven, lijkt mij een goed idee. Publieke verantwoording afleggen over beleid, financiën door ambtenaren lijkt mij geen goed idee. Een politieker ambtelijk apparaat is niet wenselijk. Dit gaan knellen. Dan zitten de SG en de minister elkaar in de weg. Dit kan alleen bij technische toelichtingen en achtergrondgesprekken of adviezen. Verantwoording over beleid en financiën vallen onder verantwoordelijkheid van de minister.

- 8. Bent u van mening dat een SG/DG meer zichtbaar moet zijn voor het publiek en/of in het openbaar als expert zou moeten kunnen deelnemen aan het publiek debat? Zo ja, waarom en op welke manier? Zo niet, waarom niet?**

Dit hangt af van de rol van de ambtenaar en van de situatie. Deskundigheid mag meer aanwezig zijn. Hier kunnen we minder krampachtig mee omgaan. Dit kan de zichtbaarheid vergroten. Het moet echter wel functioneel zijn. De rollen moeten

zuiver blijven. De SG kan zich niet zomaar in de media vertonen, dat is de taak van de minister. Een SG dient bescheiden te blijven. De organisatie is het domein van de SG, maar de minister is het gezicht naar buiten.

9. Op welke manier zou meer publieke zichtbaarheid en verantwoording de rol van de topambtenaar veranderen? En welke invloed zou dit hebben op de relatie tussen de politieke en ambtelijke top? Zou dit volgens u een wenselijke verandering zijn? Waarom wel/niet?

Dit zou tot toenemende spanning tussen politieke en ambtelijke top kunnen leiden. Het is belangrijk om goede afspraken te maken, zodat je elkaar niet onaangenaam verast. Een IG of NCTV zou meer zichtbaar kunnen zijn, maar voor een SG of beleidsDG ligt dat lastiger. Het is belangrijk om heldere rollen te hebben. Als SG ben je scherp aan de binnenkant, maar wil je geen ruis veroorzaken aan de buitenkant. Technische briefings zijn belangrijk om deskundigheid van ambtenaren te delen met politici. Transparantie is goed, maar je moet wel voorzichtig blijven.

10. Heeft u nog verdere suggesties voor mijn onderzoek? Zijn er binnen uw ministerie of daarbuiten nog mensen die ik zou kunnen spreken over dit onderwerp?

Naam respondent: Mark Frequin

Functie respondent: Directeur Generaal Bereikbaarheid, Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Watermanagement.

Datum en tijd interview: 01-05-2018 11:30

Locatie interview: Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Watermanagement, Den Haag

1. Kunt u mij wat vertellen over de drie belangrijkste aspecten van uw huidige functie? Welke functies heeft u eerder gehad? Welke functie was voor u het belangrijkste in uw carrière?

-

2. De rol van de topambtenaar kan worden beschreven op basis van karakteristieken, vaardigheden en eigenschappen. Onder topambtenaar versta ik iemand die op SG of DG niveau werkt. Wat zijn volgens u de belangrijkste karakteristieken van een topambtenaar? Welke vaardigheden zijn belangrijk voor een topambtenaar? En welke eigenschappen?

In mijn boek 'Tegenspraak graag' heb ik beschreven wat een bestuurder van een topambtenaar kan verwachten en wat een topambtenaar zou kunnen leveren. Het is belangrijk als topambtenaar om de lange termijn in de gaten te houden. Je geeft adviezen aan de bestuurder op basis van kennis, ervaringen en inzichten. Je moet de verbinding met de politiek weten te maken. Als topambtenaar ben je de verbindende factor tussen de politiek en de kennis in het systeem. Je hebt ook voor het hier en nu én voor de lange termijn.

3. Is de rol van de topambtenaren nu anders ten opzichte van tien jaar geleden? Zijn er nu andere karakteristieken, vaardigheden en eigenschappen belangrijk voor een topambtenaren? Is er sprake van politisering van de functie? Zo ja, waar bestaat deze uit?

De topambtenaar beweegt meer naar de politieke top dan in het verleden. Dus er is sprake van politisering van de functie, maar niet op de manier dat partijpolitiek een rol speelt. Roel Bekker noemde dit 'het onvermogen van de tegenspraak'. Politiek in

brede zin speelt een belangrijke rol. Er zijn meerdere partijen, het krachtenveld in groter. Als topambtenaar bevindt je je midden in dit samenspel. Deze krachten/partijen schuiven voortdurend. De snelheid, intensiteit en diversiteit van deze samenhang neemt toe. De buitenwereld is steeds dynamischer. Er zijn meer informatiebronnen. Als topambtenaar ben jij niet meer de enige met kennis in huis. In dit nieuwe netwerk moet je als topambtenaar opnieuw je plek vinden. Een deel van het speelveld is alleen politiek en een deel is alleen ambtelijk. Er is een ook gezamenlijk speelveld, waar deze twee overlappen of samenkomen. Deze speelvelden zijn niet altijd even prettig georganiseerd of gescheiden. Dat kan het lastig maken.

- 4. Er wordt weleens onderscheid gemaakt tussen de regelpolitiek en de gebeurtenissenpolitiek. De regelpolitiek houdt zich bezig met de stelsels en de regels, dus meer gericht op de lange termijn. Terwijl de gebeurtenissenpolitiek zich meer richt op de incidenten. Over het algemeen wordt de regelpolitiek beschouwd als het domein van de topambtenaren en de gebeurtenissenpolitiek als die van de politici. Kunt u zich in deze verdeling vinden? Wat betekent dit voor het werk als topambtenaar? Leidt dit verschil in manier van werken tot spanningen tussen de SG en de minister? (Bijvoorbeeld omdat de minister zich bij de gebeurtenissenpolitiek niet laat adviseren door zijn ambtenaren, maar door anderen)**

Regelpolitiek staat niet los van de gebeurtenissen. De Brusselse arena is vrij klein. De Nederlandse arena is anders, daar zit meer kennis in het departement zelf. Er kunnen fouten optreden wanneer de politiek te snel wetten wil invoeren. De regel en gebeurtenissenpolitiek lopen in elkaar over. Als topambtenaar moet je deze dingen verbinden en ook bedenken of er wel of geen nieuwe regels nodig zijn. In essentie zorgt de topambtenaar dat een minister de juiste beslissingen neemt. Je moet als topambtenaar het vermogen hebben om dat te kunnen doen.

- 5. De ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid, waarbij de minister altijd eindverantwoordelijk is, kan worden beschouwd als een bescherming voor de SG/DG, maar dit kan ook als prikkel dienen voor de SG/DG. De**

minister kan immers gedwongen worden om af te treden bij falen van de ambtelijke dienst. Wat is de invloed van de ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid op de rol van de SG/DG?

Als topambtenaar heb je een afgeleide verantwoordelijkheid. De minister moet zich verantwoorden in het parlement. Als topambtenaar leg je verantwoording af aan de minister, je medewerkers, externe partijen waar je mee samenwerkt.

6. In de literatuur wordt vaak gesproken over ambtelijke loyaliteit. Wat beschouwt u als ambtelijke loyaliteit? Tot hoever gaat de loyaliteit van een SG/DG ten opzicht van zijn/haar minister? Kan de loyaliteit van de ambtenaren ook gericht zijn op anders of iets anders dan in het belang van zijn/haar minister?

Als topambtenaar ben je loyaal aan je politiek bestuurder, maar er zit ook een grens aan loyaliteit. Ik spreek liever over wederzijds vertrouwen dan over loyaliteit. Er is namelijk veel samenwerking tussen topambtenaar en politiek bestuurder. De uitkomst is altijd in samenspraak. Dit is de uitkomst van maanden puzzelen en overleggen.

7. Bent u van mening dat een SG/DG meer politieke en publieke verantwoording over zijn/haar beleid, financiën en ambtenaren zou moeten afleggen? Zo ja, waarom en op welke manier? Zo niet, waarom niet?

Ik leg al veel verantwoording af: aan de minister, medewerkers, uitvoerders.

8. Bent u van mening dat een SG/DG meer zichtbaar moet zijn voor het publiek en/of in het openbaar als expert zou moeten kunnen deelnemen aan het publiek debat? Zo ja, waarom en op welke manier? Zo niet, waarom niet?

Ik ben zelf erg actief. Ik vind dat ik open moet kunnen zijn over mijn vak. Ik ben een van de weinige in Nederland die zo transparant is. Ik sta ook op podia. Ik krijg verschillende reacties op de debatten die ik voer en die boeken die ik schrijf. In de

Nederlandse politiek worden kleine incidenten vaak groter gemaakt dan ze zijn. Er is meer voorzichtigheid. Veel topambtenaren kiezen voor een risicomijdende formule. De bangheid is toegenomen. Dit komt ook door de toenemende rol van de media. “Eerst stond er in de krant wat er in de politiek gebeurde, nu wordt wat er in de krant staat in de politiek besproken”.

9. Op welke manier zou meer publieke zichtbaarheid en verantwoording de rol van de topambtenaar veranderen? En welke invloed zou dit hebben op de relatie tussen de politieke en ambtelijke top? Zou dit volgens u een wenselijke verandering zijn? Waarom wel/niet?

Als topambtenaar moet je niet bang zijn. De kamer mag, en moet zelfs, kritisch zijn. De adviesraden zijn kleiner geworden, waarmee risicomijdend gedrag gestimuleerd wordt. Topambtenaren hoeven niet perse nog zichtbaarder te worden, maar de verhalen moeten worden verteld. Het gaat niet om de persoonlijke zichtbaarheid, maar om de zichtbaarheid van het verhaal. In de samenleving wordt alles steeds zichtbaarder, het is dus juist gek als ministeries dat niet zijn.

10. Heeft u nog verdere suggesties voor mijn onderzoek? Zijn er binnen uw ministerie of daarbuiten nog mensen die ik zou kunnen spreken over dit onderwerp?

Boek ‘Tegenspraak, graag’ lezen. En ‘Zoektocht naar de Overheidsmanager’ van Paul ’t Hart.

Naam respondent: Marnix Krop

*Functie respondent: Voormalig Directeur Generaal Europese Samenwerking,
Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken*

Datum: 29-03-2018

Interview per e-mail

- 1. Kunt u mij wat vertellen over de drie belangrijkste aspecten van uw huidige functie? Welke functies heeft u eerder gehad? Welke functie was voor u het belangrijkste in uw carrière?**

M'n cv geeft al het nodige inzicht. Ambtelijk gesproken alleen op BZ gewerkt. M'n zwaarste functie was DGES (2002-2006). Ook zwaar, maar met meer voldoening, was ambassadeur Berlijn (2009-13).

- 2. De rol van de topambtenaar kan worden beschreven op basis van karakteristieken, vaardigheden en eigenschappen. Onder topambtenaar versta ik iemand die op SG of DG niveau werkt. Wat zijn volgens u de belangrijkste karakteristieken van een topambtenaar? Welke vaardigheden zijn belangrijk voor een topambtenaar? En welke eigenschappen?**

Karakteristieken: rustgevend door natuurlijk overwicht;

Vaardigheden: vindingrijk door inhoudelijk overzicht en politiek inzicht;

Eigenschappen: loyaal door onafhankelijk oordeel en gevoel voor verhoudingen.

- 3. Is de rol van de topambtenaren nu anders ten opzichte van tien jaar geleden? Zijn er nu andere karakteristieken, vaardigheden en eigenschappen belangrijk voor een topambtenaren? Is er sprake van politisering van de functie? Zo ja, waar bestaat deze uit?**

Vergeleken met 15 jaar geleden zeker, omdat de NL politiek meer hectisch en veeleisend is geworden. Op mijn eigen terrein heeft het terrein van de Europese integratie en samenwerking een sterke politisering ondergaan. De Tweede Kamer is veel belangrijker geworden, terwijl de EU sterk is uitgebreid, zowel getalsmatig als

inhoudelijk (ook extern). Dit vergt meer van de bewindslieden en van hun top- en andere ambtenaren.

- 4. Er wordt weleens onderscheid gemaakt tussen de regelpolitiek en de gebeurtenissenpolitiek. De regelpolitiek houdt zich bezig met de stelsels en de regels, dus meer gericht op de lange termijn. Terwijl de gebeurtenissenpolitiek zich meer richt op de incidenten. Over het algemeen wordt de regelpolitiek beschouwd als het domein van de topambtenaren en de gebeurtenissenpolitiek als die van de politici. Kunt u zich in deze verdeling vinden? Wat betekent dit voor het werk als topambtenaar? Leidt dit verschil in manier van werken tot spanningen tussen de SG en de minister? (Bijvoorbeeld omdat de minister zich bij de gebeurtenissenpolitiek niet laat adviseren door zijn ambtenaren, maar door anderen)**

Dat onderscheid geldt bij BZ veel minder. We hebben minder regelpolitiek en meer gebeurtenissenpolitiek dan andere departementen. Recente grote gebeurtenissen op Europees terrein: de Eurocrisis, de Brexit, de migratiecrisis, het conflict met Turkije. Deze onderwerpen worden politiek en ambtelijk met vereende krachten aangepakt. Politieke adviseurs spelen bij BZ alleen een rol in de relatie met het parlement (en dan eigenlijk alleen op partijpolitiek vlak).

- 5. De ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid, waarbij de minister altijd eindverantwoordelijk is, kan worden beschouwd als een bescherming voor de SG/DG, maar dit kan ook als prikkel dienen voor de SG/DG. De minister kan immers gedwongen worden om af te treden bij falen van de ambtelijke dienst. Wat is de invloed van de ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid op de rol van de SG/DG?**

In mijn ervaring alleen dat de topambtenaar de bewindspersoon zo goed mogelijk steunt en zelf binnen de perken van die verantwoordelijkheid opereert.

- 6. In de literatuur wordt vaak gesproken over ambtelijke loyaliteit. Wat beschouwt u als ambtelijke loyaliteit? Tot hoever gaat de loyaliteit van**

een SG/DG ten opzicht van zijn/haar minister? Kan de loyaliteit van de ambtenaren ook gericht zijn op anders of iets anders dan in het belang van zijn/haar minister?

De loyaliteit van een topambtenaar geldt allereerst de opdracht en taken van zijn departement, zij het steeds ook in de context van het kabinetsbeleid. Mits de bewindspersoon zich daarbinnen beweegt, kan van de ambtenaar volledige loyaliteit worden verwacht. Bij ambtelijk gewetensbezwaar of een onoverkomelijk verschil van inzicht/opvatting overweegt uiteindelijk het oordeel van de bewindspersoon (de SG kan evt. proberen te bemiddelen). Overplaatsing naar een positie waar dit probleem niet speelt is dan geboden. De topambtenaar is ook loyaliteit aan zijn medewerkers verschuldigd en kan zich evt. genoodzaakt zien hen in bescherming te nemen tegen een onredelijk opererende bewindspersoon. Conflict van loyaliteiten: zelf niet meegemaakt dat dit ooit op de spits werd gedreven. Geen partijpolitieke loyaliteit aan bewindspersoon. Topambtenaar moet verschillende meesters kunnen dienen.

7. Bent u van mening dat een SG/DG meer politieke en publieke verantwoording over zijn/haar beleid, financiën en ambtenaren zou moeten afleggen? Zo ja, waarom en op welke manier? Zo niet, waarom niet?

Nee, dat behoort tot de ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid. Zou op het departement maar tweespalt teweeg brengen.

8. Bent u van mening dat een SG/DG meer zichtbaar moet zijn voor het publiek en/of in het openbaar als expert zou moeten kunnen deelnemen aan het publiek debat? Zo ja, waarom en op welke manier? Zo niet, waarom niet?

Ja. Topambtenaar zou daarin beleidsinformatie kunnen verschaffen (evt. ook aan parlement), maar mag daar niet zijn persoonlijke opvattingen etaleren. Hij/zij blijft opereren binnen de context van de ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid. Dit geldt echter niet voor onderwerpen die duidelijk buiten zijn ambtelijke verantwoordelijkheid vallen. Dan gelden voor hem/haar de zelfde staatsburgerlijke vrijheden en plichten als

voor iedere andere Nederlander (wel verstandig dit vooraf met bewindspersoon en/of hoogste ambtenaar af te stemmen).

9. Op welke manier zou meer publieke zichtbaarheid en verantwoording de rol van de topambtenaar veranderen? En welke invloed zou dit hebben op de relatie tussen de politieke en ambtelijke top? Zou dit volgens u een wenselijke verandering zijn? Waarom wel/niet?

Zie eerder. Ambtenaar moet zo opereren dat bewindspersoon ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid kan blijven waarmaken. Publiek optreden ambtenaar moet het politiek en staatsrechtelijk functioneren van het departement versterken, niet verzwakken. Geen nodeloze spanning veroorzaken.

10. Heeft u nog verdere suggesties voor mijn onderzoek? Zijn er binnen uw ministerie of daarbuiten nog mensen die ik zou kunnen spreken over dit onderwerp?

Renée Jones-Bos. Frank Majoor. Tom de Bruijn.

Name respondent: Robert Devereux

Position Respondent: Former Permanent Secretary, Department Work and Pensions and Department for Transport.

Date and time interview: 16-04-2018 10:30

Location interview: British Library, London

Some remarks: Two roles as Permanent Secretary: supporting the government of the day, and leading an impartial civil service. The way the support is provided to the Government of one colour needs not to cause the next Government of another colour to doubt the impartiality of the civil servants.

You have to create the right conditions where the Secretary of State trusts you. That is more or less difficult depending on the personality of the Secretary of State, and the time since the last change of Government: so 1979, 1997, 2010 were all much more difficult for Perm Secs to establish relationships than all the intervening changes of PM/SoS. That is because the new Government in those years had spent years in Opposition and was both keen to make rapid progress on their agenda and (perhaps unsurprisingly) worried that their civil servants had become used only to thing of things in the way of the previous Government.

The relationship, and the outlook of the SoS, is also affected by rapid turnover: I have experienced 10 different ministers in 10 years. There is a fast turnover. The fact that a minister is usually in office for a short period of time can create the wrong incentives for them. However, despite the changing circumstance the basic rules of the system have not changed much. This also indicates that we have a decent system, which works fine.

1. Could you tell me about the three most important aspects of your current position? Which other positions did you have? Which one was the most important in your career?

I have been Permanent Secretary for Transport and for Work & Pensions. Before I have been working in different departments: Treasury, Social Security etc. I have a Maths background – I am a statistician. I am analytical and good in policy making. Being Permanent Secretary at Work & Pensions was a bigger job than at Transport.

The department was larger and the issues were more political. In Transport, you are dealing with long-term projects: It feels like it takes forever to deliver a major programme. In Social Welfare, I have experienced big government change. In 2010, the new government wanted to spend less money. We needed to implement reforms, over 5-10 years, to make it cheaper. However, politicians will never say they make something cheaper, they will say they make it better. Therefore, we also had to take account of this political rhetoric.

2. The role of top civil servant can be described in terms of characteristics and skills. What do you consider the most important characteristics for a top civil servant? In addition, which skills are important?

The role of the top civil servant very much depends on the department they are working in. In general, as a Permanent Secretary you have to:

- Lead people, especially in bigger department good leadership is necessary.
- Fully understand policy and politics. There are Permanent Secretaries who are not interested in the details. They behave in a more presidential way however that is not working. At the end of the day, the Permanent Secretary and the Secretary of State have to cooperate well. However, as a Permanent Secretary you cannot attend all meeting, so you have to choose the ones you believe are important. In addition, when you attend a meeting you have to contribute. You also have to think of where you sit. I always used to sit next to the Secretary of State, visibly sending the signal to SoS and others that I was on the side of the SoS, and – as necessary - ask sharp questions to the policy advisors or experts. You do not have to follow everything, however you should be aware of where things could go wrong. You have to be smart enough to sense this.
- Have the courage to say difficult things to the Secretary of State

3. How would you say that the role of top civil servant has changed in the past ten years? Are there different characteristics and skills important for top civil servants? Has the position of the top civil servant been politicized? If so, what does this politicisation looks like?

The role of the Permanent Secretary did not change fundamentally. In a constitutional sense, the role is still the same. However, the civil service has changed. There is more recognition in Whitehall for expertise and professionalism. In addition, there is more attention to the influences of policies on the day-to-day lives of people. Whitehall is more aware of how policy affects life. Especially since 2010, government is more aware of what is really happening on the ground. Also Permanent Secretaries are more aware of the role of IT, however this does not mean they totally understand it. The journey towards professionalism is not yet completed; it is also a generational thing – junior and middle ranking colleagues are now exposed to some of the new ways of working, and will make better leaders in the longer term as a result.

Previously, people would become a Permanent Secretary really at the end of their career, maybe at 55. Now people become Permanent Secretaries when they are a bit younger than before, for example at the age of 50. The benefit of this is that they can serve longer as a Permanent Secretary and this creates more experienced Permanent Secretaries.

People usually think that the role of the Permanent Secretary has politicized, however I am not sure if it has. However, since 2011 there has been made a subtle change in the way civil servants are appointed. Ministers have a bit more influence on who becomes the Permanent Secretary. However, this is only at the end of the selection process. There is an independent committee who selects the best candidates based on expertise etc., however if there are two candidate that would both be good to do the job, the minister can take a decision. In that sense the appointment is a bit more political than it used to be.

- 4. In the literature, sometimes there is a distinction between ‘politics of rules’ and ‘politics of incidents’. The politics of rules is concerned with the systems and rules, and consequently more focused on the long term. While the politics of incidents focuses on incidents and how to solve them. Generally, the politics of rules is perceived to be the domain of the top civil servants and the politics of incidents is part of the political domain. What is your opinion on this division? What does this division mean for**

the operation of the top civil servant? Can this lead to tensions between the Permanent Secretary and minister? (For example if the minister does not want to be advised by his/her civil servants but by others in the case of ‘politics of incidents ’)

I do not recognize the distinction. It is usually a combination of the two. The social welfare system for instance is mainly a rule-based system. The biggest crises occurred when we failed to apply those rules, which caused events. There are different things that cause problems for politicians. For example when somebody does not deliver what he promised, or when information is lost or leaked. However, either this can be a systematic mistake or it can be an event. Nowadays, Whitehall is more interested in the whole system and how it works. Previously it was only interested in passing laws.

The role of the media and news has changed. The media used to be very respectful. Nowadays it is 24/7 and quite aggressive. Many of these stories are false, partially untrue or misleading. The climate of discourse is very aggressive, which is not good. The media is producing good theatre, but no constructive evaluation of government. The issues are often more complex than portrayed in the media. The better ministers have a good grasp of whether an apparent issue is actually going to be quite a short-term wonder; other ministers can more frequently insist on new policies right away. This relationship between politicians and media is not helping good politics. Ministers are often more worried about ‘is this safe?’ rather than ‘is this right?’ As a Permanent Secretary you give advise, you have be ‘speaking truth to power’, which means you don’t always agree with the ministers and tell him/her what you think, in a decent way.

5. The ministerial responsibility, in which the minister is always accountable, can be regarded as a protection for the Permanent (Under) Secretary, but also as a trigger. The minister can be forced to step down in case of failure of the civil service. What is the influence of ministerial responsibility on the role of the Permanent (Under) Secretary?

As a Permanent Secretary, it is your duty to serve the government of the day. You have to help the minister, because they are responsible and they will set the direction. For example in Work & Pensions, the 2002 government wanted a more generous welfare system and then the 2010 wanted a meaner social welfare system.

In the UK, all Permanent Secretaries are also Accounting Officers (AOs). Parliament controls the money, gives the money to the department and the Permanent Secretaries are personally accountable to Parliament for this. They have to make sure the taxpayers get 'value for money'.

Therefore, the minister is in charge of the department, but the AO is responsible for spending wisely the budget allocated by HM Treasury. If the minister wants to spend money on something the AO does not agree, he/she has to write a letter ("directions") to the Permanent Secretary to account for this. These directions are rarely used, however they possess power. Usually ministers change their policy rather than sending "directions". The Permanent Secretary has influence on the policy and the budget in this way. This means that ministers are not completely free to spend money. They have to get past the AO; but the AO is still there to serve the Government. In this way, there is a dual leadership of Departments.

6. In the literature, civil servant loyalty is usually considered the other side of ministerial responsibility. What do you consider to be civil servant loyalty? How far does the loyalty of the Permanent (Under) Secretary go in relation to his/her minister? Can this loyalty also be focused on someone or something else than the minister's interest?

The cheap answer is we are loyal to the Crown, because all civil servants are working for the queen actually. As a Permanent Secretary, you are very loyal to the minister. You try to be done what the minister want to be done. You have serving government. However, it is not a passive job. As a Permanent Secretary, you have to come up with innovative ideas and have the right people in your department to come up with innovative policies. So part of the loyalty to the minister is being very good at your job. Sometimes it is hard to do so if you do not like the minister or the policy. Most

Permanent Secretaries' loyalty is foremost to their Secretary of State, and the two of them may well have similar views about the agendas of the junior ministers.

7. In your opinion, should a Permanent (Under) Secretary be more accountable in regard to the policy, budget and employees of the ministry? Why (not)? And how?

The Permanent Secretary in the UK is accountable for the budget. The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) only calls the Permanent Secretary to give evidence, not the minister. In front of PAC the Permanent Secretary is not only explaining budget, but also policy. You have to have a good explanation. Therefore, you are accountable on camera in public to account for the department. Strictly PAC cannot ask about policy, but in practice, the lines between budget and policy are blurred.

However, as a Permanent Secretary you are only accountable to parliament, not to the press. The media is part of the minister's job. Therefore, as a Permanent Secretary you are accountable to the public but in a more controlled way, through the PAC. Both the Permanent Secretary and the Minister are accountable to parliament.

8. In your opinion, should a Permanent (Under) Secretary be more visible in public and/or participate in the public debate as an expert? Why (not)? If so, in which ways?

No, because it will confuse the roles. As a Permanent Secretary, I cannot say something different from the minister. I have a more old-fashioned view, where the minister has to be competent to appear in public and talk to the media. I have seen examples where Permanent Secretary has had a more public position, but this did not really work out.

9. In which way will public visibility and accountability change the role of the top civil servant? How will this influence the relationship between the political and top civil service top? Would more visibility and accountability of top civil servants be a desirable change according to? Why (not)?

Top civil servants are a bit more visible now; they are less anonymous. This is a result of the 24/7 media, social media, Twitter. Therefore, people are a bit more aware of them, however the relationship between the ministers and the top civil servants has not really changed as a result. Indeed, most people do not really understand the role of the Permanent Secretary. That's is fine: it is important the Permanent Secretary, Secretary of State and Parliament understand it. It is not desirable for top civil servants to be more or less visible/accountable. This system has proved to be quite resilient.

10. Do you have any other suggestions for my research? Are there any people within or outside your ministry that I could discuss this topic with?

Final remark: The system is more resilient than people think. The system is not perfect, but the architecture is good. It is a 19th century system, still going strong. Our democracy is based on this stable system.

Name respondent: Sir Simon McDonald

Position respondent: Permanent Under Secretary and Head of the Diplomatic Service at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Date and time interview: 19-04-2018 15:00

Location interview: Foreign and Commonwealth Office., London

1. Could you tell me about the three most important aspects of your current position? Which other positions did you have? Which one was the most important in your career?

My current position has two titles: Permanent Under Secretary and Head of the Diplomatic Service at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. As Permanent Under Secretary, my main role is to give policy advice to the minister. As Head of the Diplomatic Service, the main task is to run the department and the network of posts all around the world. The third main aspect is to empower other people to do their job, to advice and support them: to make it work. I must think about the future, and now in particular about the UK after Brexit.

2. The role of top civil servant can be described in terms of characteristics and skills. What do you consider the most important characteristics for a top civil servant? And which skills are important?

Be calm, inspire others, have trust and confidence in others, make sure others are happy with your leadership, prioritize, trust as you delegate, and then delegate.

3. How would you say that the role of top civil servant has changed in the past ten years? Are there different characteristics and skills important for top civil servants? Has the position of the top civil servant been politicized? If so, what does this politicisation look like?

I do not think that very much has changed over last 10 years, but maybe there are changes compared to 20-30 years ago when there were no political advisors (Spad's) in departments. Politicians are more involved in the appointment process now. This puts the independence of the civil servants into question. The number and role of the spads has grown. So there is more politicisation. This requires different skills for a top

civil servant. The Permanent Secretary used to be a very remote figure, but now there is more contact within the department. There is more interaction. I have a blog and I am on Twitter. There is good connectivity between the top and the people in the department.

4. In the literature, sometimes there is a distinction between ‘politics of rules’ and ‘politics of incidents’. The politics of rules is concerned with the systems and rules, and consequently more focused on the long term. While the politics of incidents focuses on incidents and how to solve them. Generally, the politics of rules is perceived to be the domain of the top civil servants and the politics of incidents is part of the political domain. What is your opinion on this division? What does this division mean for the operation of the top civil servant? Can this lead to tensions between the Permanent Secretary and minister? (For example if the minister does not want to be advised by his/her civil servants but by others in the case of ‘politics of incidents’)

Ministers tend to have a more short-term view. As a Permanent Secretary I must have a wider perspective, I focus on the long-term and prioritize and balance things. Each side acknowledges the role of the other; both sides know that ultimately the minister is in charge. It is always important to maintain good personal relationships.

In the UK, there are more ministers in one department than in the Netherlands (and probably than most countries). This has always been the case in the UK so we are used to this elaborate system of cabinet ministers and numerous junior ministers, needed because all ministers are members of parliament (either Commons or Lords) and governments spend a lot of their time accounting to parliament.

5. The ministerial responsibility, in which the minister is always accountable, can be regarded as a protection for the Permanent (Under) Secretary, but also as a trigger. The minister can be forced to step down in case of failure of the civil service. What is the influence of ministerial responsibility on the role of the Permanent (Under) Secretary?

The minister takes the decision. The Permanent Secretary is the last person the give advice to the minister. This is a clear distinction. Everybody understands that this is the division of roles. As Permanent Secretary, you are also Accounting Officer, which means that I have to account to parliament for how the department spends taxpayers' money. It does not mean I decide on policy, because the minister decides, but I have influence.

6. In the literature, civil servant loyalty is usually considered the other side of ministerial responsibility. What do you consider to be civil servant loyalty? How far does the loyalty of the Permanent (Under) Secretary go in relation to his/her minister? Can this loyalty also be focused on someone or something else than the minister's interest?

We work for the Queen, so we are ultimately loyal to the head of state that embodies our country. The civil service is permanent, while governments change. I am loyal simultaneously to the minister, to the department, to parliament and to the country. I am loyal within the law, I do not do improper things out of loyalty; I should stress that I am not asked to do that. Therefore, the question of loyalty is big, especially in the Foreign Office, where we are aware of our history.

7. In your opinion, should a Permanent (Under) Secretary be more accountable in regard to the policy, budget and employees of the ministry? Why (not)? And how?

I already feel pretty accountable. It is in the law that I am accountable for certain things. I have to appear at least once a year in front of The Foreign Affairs Select Committees. They ask very detailed questions. They can also ask me to give additional evidence whenever they like, as can the PAC. Therefore, I do appear in parliament. Between FAC appearances, I submit quarterly reports about what is happening in the administration of the department, and I reply to the chairman's letters and inquiries. Permanent Secretaries in their role of Accounting Officer are made to feel personally responsible.

8. In your opinion, should a Permanent (Under) Secretary be more visible in public and/or participate in the public debate as an expert? Why (not)? If so, in which ways?

The hearings in parliament are already televised and reported in the press. The politicians should be the public face of the ministry. They are the ones to explain the policy. Diplomats are exception to the rule. There are allowed and encouraged to speak in public - but only overseas, FCO ministers explain and defend policy within the UK. Media performance is important for an ambassador.

9. In which way will public visibility and accountability change the role of the top civil servant? How will this influence the relationship between the political and top civil service top? Would more visibility and accountability of top civil servants be a desirable change according to? Why (not)?

Formally, the Permanent Secretary always has been accountable. The levels of accountability are already high. Therefore, it is not desirable to increase it more. The role of the media has always been active, but now we have the 24-hour news cycle. Ministers and senior civil servants are now held publicly accountable 24/7.

10. Do you have any other suggestions for my research? Are there any people within or outside your ministry that I could discuss this topic with?

Talk to Joke Brandt

Naam respondent: Simon Smits

Functie respondent: Ambassadeur in het Verenigd Koninkrijk (en voormalig Directeur Generaal, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken)

Datum en tijd interview: 18-04-2018 14:00

Locatie interview: Embassy of the Netherlands, London

1. Kunt u mij wat vertellen over de drie belangrijkste aspecten van uw huidige functie? Welke functies heeft u eerder gehad? Welke functie was voor u het belangrijkste in uw carrière?

De belangrijkste aspecten van mijn huidige functie zijn: rapporteren (naar Den Haag over ontwikkelingen in VK), informeren (Nederlandse standpunten overbrengen naar Britse counterpart, vertegenwoordigen (Holland promotie) en verbinden (onderhouden van de bilaterale relaties).

Mijn vorige functie was DG BEB (Buitenlandse Economische Betrekkingen). Met iedereen baan binnen Buitenlandse Zaken krijg je steeds zwaardere verantwoordelijkheden. Als DG sta je heel dichtbij de politieke top, op het snijvlak tussen beleid en politiek. Je geeft strategisch advies, adviseert de minister over mogelijke valkuilen, ondersteunt de minister bij algemene overleggen met Kamercommissies e.d.. Dat heb je als topambtenaar in Den Haag meer dan als ambassadeur in het buitenland. Op een ambassade ben je minder betrokken bij de nationale politieke discussie. Je staat minder dicht bij de politieke bewindspersonen.

2. De rol van de topambtenaar kan worden beschreven op basis van karakteristieken, vaardigheden en eigenschappen. Onder topambtenaar versta ik iemand die op SG of DG niveau werkt. Wat zijn volgens u de belangrijkste karakteristieken van een topambtenaar? Welke vaardigheden zijn belangrijk voor een topambtenaar? En welke eigenschappen?

De rol van een topambtenaar is geleidelijk aan het veranderen als de maatschappij verandert. Je bent strategisch adviseur en sparring partner voor de ambtelijke en politieke top. Andere eigenschappen en karakteristieken worden nu gezocht. Er is bijvoorbeeld meer aandacht voor managementvaardigheden als “coachend”

leiderschap. Je bent de leader van een team. Dat was 10-15 jaar geleden nauwelijks. Vroeger was de Directeur/DG/SG de man of vrouw met de beste kennis van het dossier. Nu heb je andere vaardigheden nodig dan alleen de theoretische kennis. Het is ook niet altijd handig om de persoon met de meeste kennis de baas te maken. Je moet als DG/SG ook juist kunnen delegeren en de juiste mensen op de juiste plaats zetten.

- 3. Is de rol van de topambtenaren nu anders ten opzichte van tien jaar geleden? Zijn er nu andere karakteristieken, vaardigheden en eigenschappen belangrijk voor een topambtenaren? Is er sprake van politisering van de functie? Zo ja, waar bestaat deze uit?**

Ik geloof niet dat er politisering is van de functie. We kennen geen traditie van politieke benoemingen (anders dan bijvoorbeeld in de VS). Je bent een carrière-ambtenaar en je dient verschillende politieke bazen. Wel zitten topambtenaren dicht tegen de politiek aan. Je doet veel politiek werk, zoals technische briefings en het beantwoorden van Kamervragen.

- 4. Er wordt weleens onderscheid gemaakt tussen de regelpolitiek en de gebeurtenissenpolitiek. De regelpolitiek houdt zich bezig met de stelsels en de regels, dus meer gericht op de lange termijn. Terwijl de gebeurtenissenpolitiek zich meer richt op de incidenten.**

Over het algemeen wordt de regelpolitiek beschouwd als het domein van de topambtenaren en de gebeurtenissenpolitiek als die van de politici. Kunt u zich in deze verdeling vinden? Wat betekent dit voor het werk als topambtenaar? Leidt dit verschil in manier van werken tot spanningen tussen de SG en de minister? (Bijvoorbeeld omdat de minister zich bij de gebeurtenissenpolitiek niet laat adviseren door zijn ambtenaren, maar door anderen).

Ik denk dat de verdeling wel klopt. Voor het werk van het ministerie zijn de ministers een soort van “ships that pass the night”. Zij zijn logisch genoeg gericht op de korte

termijn, op profilering en publiciteit. Ze moeten denken aan hun politieke draagvlak en zichtbaarheid. Het werk van de minister is meer event-driven.

80% van het werk van een ministerie dat onttrekt zich aan de waarnemings sfeer en de belangstellings sfeer van de politiek. Dat geeft niet, dat zorgt voor een bepaalde continuïteit. Dat onderscheid klopt dus wel en dat is niet erg. Of dat tot spanningen leidt? Al sinds een jaar of 10, minstens, hebben we het fenomeen van de politieke adviseurs. Iedere minister neemt een politiek adviseur met zich mee die dichtbij zit en over de meer politieke discussie adviseert. Zij houden zich met name bezig met de partijpolitiek. Deze politiek adviseurs worden ook wel de “bontkraag” genoemd. De Special Advisors in het VK zijn actiever betrokken bij de politiek. Het politieke spel in hier ook meer zwart-wit door het twee partijen stelsel, want dat is het in de praktijk.

In de praktijk loopt dat een beetje in elkaar over, want het is moeilijk om precies te scheiden tussen de regelpolitiek en de gebeurtenissenpolitiek. Er zijn grijze gebieden, bijvoorbeeld het beantwoorden van Kamervragen. In mijn ervaring heeft dat nooit tot spanningen geleid, maar dat komt omdat de ministers waar ik mee heb gewerkt heel duidelijk luisterden naar zowel hun politiek adviseurs als naar hun topambtenaren.

5. De ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid, waarbij de minister altijd eindverantwoordelijk is, kan worden beschouwd als een bescherming voor de SG/DG, maar dit kan ook als prikkel dienen voor de SG/DG. De minister kan immers gedwongen worden om af te treden bij falen van de ambtelijke dienst. Wat is de invloed van de ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid op de rol van de SG/DG?

Dit is een loyaliteitsvraag. Je zou kunnen zeggen, de prikkel/de bescherming, dat zou een hele perverse prikkel zijn, want het is natuurlijk zo dat je nooit opzettelijk een minister zou wille laten struikelen. Daar kun je wel zeggen, die ambtelijke gemeenschap is toch wel mede debet aan geweest. Als je werkt op wederzijds vertrouwen, dan heeft dat niet zoveel invloed en doet het niet ter zake. Het heeft alles met loyaliteit te maken.

- 6. In de literatuur wordt vaak gesproken over ambtelijke loyaliteit. Wat beschouwt u als ambtelijke loyaliteit? Tot hoever gaat de loyaliteit van een SG/DG ten opzicht van zijn/haar minister? Kan de loyaliteit van de ambtenaren ook gericht zijn op anders of iets anders dan in het belang van zijn/haar minister?**

De loyaliteit is persoonlijk, maar ook nationaal. Dus dat is landsbelang en het is loyaliteit naar de democratisch gekozen minister, die ook het landsbelang in het oog heeft. In principe zou daar geen verschil in moeten zijn. De grens is natuurlijk als je uit misplaatste loyaliteit opzettelijk gaat liegen of dingen onder het tapijt veegt ten gunste van de minister. Dan zit je aan de verkeerde kant van de streep.

- 7. Bent u van mening dat een SG/DG meer politieke en publieke verantwoording over zijn/haar beleid, financiën en ambtenaren zou moeten afleggen? Zo ja, waarom en op welke manier? Zo niet, waarom niet?**

Als ambtenaar ben je meer aan het informeren dan verantwoording aan het afleggen. Er worden bijvoorbeeld vaak technische briefings gegeven, o.a. aan Kamerleden. Dus een heleboel van het werk dat gedaan wordt komt naar buiten, tot in redelijk groot detail. Dat is een prima manier om de kamer af te leggen. Verantwoording afleggen doe de minister. Dat hoort tot de ministeriele verantwoordelijkheid. Die staat aan de lat om gecontroleerd te worden en wordt hierin gesteund door zijn ambtenaren. Maar om een ambtenaar tot een soort semi-minister te verheffen dat lijkt me niet goed.

- 8. Bent u van mening dat een SG/DG meer zichtbaar moet zijn voor het publiek en/of in het openbaar als expert zou moeten kunnen deelnemen aan het publiek debat? Zo ja, waarom en op welke manier? Zo niet, waarom niet?**

Dat gebeurt natuurlijk al heel veel. Als ik kijk naar de Brexit-bijeenkomst van de VNO_NCW waar ik samen met de minister ben opgetreden. Of je nou een vrouwenrechtenseminar opent of Nederlands voorlicht over Brexit dat zijn allemaal publieke optredens. En dat doe je zowel als topambtenaar in Nederland als

ambassadeur in het buitenland. Dat is al “common practice”. Wat wel belangrijk is, is dat je je bij de zaken houdt en dat je niet allerlei persoonlijke politieke verhalen en voorkeuren gaat spreken. Dat spreekt voor zich, dat is niet je rol.

9. Op welke manier zou meer publieke zichtbaarheid en verantwoording de rol van de topambtenaar veranderen? En welke invloed zou dit hebben op de relatie tussen de politieke en ambtelijke top? Zou dit volgens u een wenselijke verandering zijn? Waarom wel/niet?

Die verandering is allang gaande. Wat heel belangrijk is, omdat je als topambtenaar ook onder de ministeriele verantwoordelijkheid valt, is dat het dat heel goed afstemt. Het is niet verstandig om op eigen doof allerlei dingen te gaan doen en in discussies deel te nemen en dat de minister dan achteraf hoort wat je als DG hebt gezegd. Je wordt toch als een soort verlengstuk van de politiek, van het beleid gezien. Als je ineens een hele andere richting opgaat, dan krijg je verwarring en vraagtekens. Daar kun je de minister in moeilijkheid brengen. De gouden regel is dat je je optredens van tevoren afstemt. Het is wel belangrijk om de taken duidelijk te onderscheiden.

10. Heeft u nog verdere suggesties voor mijn onderzoek? Zijn er binnen uw ministerie of daarbuiten nog mensen die ik zou kunnen spreken over dit onderwerp?

- Een politiek adviseur. Dan zie je de andere kant, en die sparren ook veel met topambtenaren
- Directeur COM/BZ, want hij zit ook op het snijvlak tussen wat er wel naar buiten wordt gebracht en wat we niet perse actief gaan communiceren

Name respondent: Sue Owen

Position respondent: Permanent Secretary, Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sports

Date and time interview: 12-04-2018 11:00

Location interview: Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sports, London

1. Could you tell me about the three most important aspects of your current position? Which other positions did you have? Which one was the most important in your career?

Being responsible for the budget and being accountable to parliament is an important part of the job. However, it is not the most important aspect for me. It is more of a routine. I have good people in the finance department and audit committees.

So there are three things that I consider the most important in this job:

- i. The Chief Executive Function or the Leadership Role. I am in charge of running and leading the department. I arrived in 2013 and since then, we have enlarged the department from 350 people to 1300 people. We have grown mainly in the field of digital work, civil society and volunteering. It is important as a Permanent Secretary to create an organisational culture. We have built an inclusive and diverse culture. In the past 4,5 years I have had five different secretaries of state, so it is important that the Permanent Secretary establishes an organisational culture.
- ii. Being the ambassador of the Department. We have 45 public bodies. I need to keep in touch with all the people. Therefore, it is a very personal function. Building personal relationships is important.
- iii. I am the personal advisor to the Secretary of State, who may not know much about the department, which can be scary for them. I focus on the human aspect. I am here to help them. So being adaptable is important, since you need to approach every secretary of state in a different way that will suit his or her personality. Emotional

intelligence is a key aspect. I do not advice that much on policy, because I have good people for that; I focus on the relationship.

2. The role of top civil servant can be described in terms of characteristics and skills. What do you consider the most important characteristics for a top civil servant? And which skills are important?

- i. Emotional intelligence is often an undervalued and underappreciated characteristic of the top civil servant. But the relationship between the PS and the Secretary of State is very important
- ii. Numeracy skills are important. The civil service has to come up with evidence-based policies.
- iii. Values and integrity are important too. As a top civil servant, you have to know what is right and always do the right thing when nobody is watching. You have to challenge a minister when it is necessary, to prevent him/her doing the wrong thing.

3. How would you say that the role of top civil servant has changed in the past ten years? Are there different characteristics and skills important for top civil servants? Has the position of the top civil servant been politicized? If so, what does this politicisation look like?

Yes, the civil service has changed quite a lot. There a fewer civil servants. There is more work with less people. There is more focus on leadership. There are fewer checks, so you have to trust the person who writes a policy or report, even is this is a very junior person. There is less hierarchy and less status for people at the top. The power structures have ebbed away a bit, which I think is a good development.

The position has not become more political. It is important to understand how politics fits in, but this has always been the case. You have to know about politics and have some kind of political sensitivity. In giving advice, you have to be aware of how they will read it.

The special advisors have the role to add the political dimensions and to advise the minister in a political way. As PS, it is important to get on with the advisors. I see the special advisors as an asset.

The British civil service is very different from the US, where top civil servants change when there is a new president. There is a wider range of civil servants, but it is also more political and there is less continuity.

The importance of leadership skills has grown in the British Civil Service over the last 5 to 10 years. There is more focus on staff engagement.

In addition, there is more public speaking. I speak around twice a week, mainly because I am the Civil Service Champion on Diversity. My talks are mainly about diversity and inclusion.

- 4. In the literature, sometimes there is a distinction between ‘politics of rules’ and ‘politics of incidents’. The politics of rules is concerned with the systems and rules, and consequently more focused on the long term. While the politics of incidents focuses on incidents and how to solve them.**

Generally, the politics of rules is perceived to be the domain of the top civil servants and the politics of incidents is part of the political domain. What is your opinion on this division? What does this division mean for the operation of the top civil servant? Can this lead to tensions between the Permanent Secretary and minister? (For example if the minister does not want to be advised by his/her civil servants but by others in the case of ‘politics of incidents’)

It depends on the secretary of state, whether they are strategic or tactical. Some are tactical, focussed on the short term. The current secretary of state of this department is focussed on long-term strategic vision. Sometimes the two overlap. For example, we have worked on Internet safety, mainly for children, as a core strategy for about 3 years now. Due to current events with Facebook and Cambridge Analytica, this issue

has risen up in the public consciousness. In this department, there is a good balance between the two.

There is a lot of legally required work to do. This is not always part of the ministerial priorities. Ministers sometimes forget about the legally obliged things. The legal 'bucket' makes of 25% of the work we do. This can present a time/resource conflict with the minister's priorities. The role of the PS is to explain that the systematic things are important too and to be careful that the ministerial priorities do not take over.

5. The ministerial responsibility, in which the minister is always accountable, can be regarded as a protection for the Permanent (Under) Secretary, but also as a trigger. The minister can be forced to step down in case of failure of the civil service. What is the influence of ministerial responsibility on the role of the Permanent (Under) Secretary?

The minister makes the political decisions, we give the advice. The Permanent Secretary is accountable that the department delivers value for money. The PS also looks after resource allocation across the department.

6. In the literature, civil servant loyalty is usually considered the other side of ministerial responsibility. What do you consider to be civil servant loyalty? How far does the loyalty of the Permanent (Under) Secretary go in relation to his/her minister? Can this loyalty also be focused on someone or something else than the minister's interest?

Loyalty is important. The minister needs to feel that loyalty. I need to make sure the right things happen, and that the Minister gets his ideas delivered. I want to keep the special advisors as friends. I also wish the minister good luck or ask him how things went. This helps in building trust. Example: Previous minister was wrongly accused of a sex scandal in the media. This was a difficult period and I helped him getting through. He was very grateful for that.

7. In your opinion, should a Permanent (Under) Secretary be more accountable in regard to the policy, budget and employees of the ministry? Why (not)? And how?

The minister is accountable for the policy; he should talk to parliament and the opposition. I am accountable for the people and the budget.

8. In your opinion, should a Permanent (Under) Secretary be more visible in public and/or participate in the public debate as an expert? Why (not)? If so, in which ways?

We already have some of that. I have a Director General who speaks in public on digital. I speak about diversity and inclusion. The key thing is to not be competing with the ministers. So as a top civil servant you do not proactively approach the media, but you speak in public when you are asked to do. I would check with minister if I should do it or not. As a top civil servant, you are usually explaining evidence.

9. In which way will public visibility and accountability change the role of the top civil servant? How will this influence the relationship between the political and top civil service top? Would more visibility and accountability of top civil servants be a desirable change according to? Why (not)?

It does not change it fundamentally. It can help to explain things to the public. Recently we have done more talking in schools. We aim for a wider variety of backgrounds within the civil service. Promoting diversity in one of the reasons for us to go into schools. More visibility is a good thing. As PS, I am accountable for the budget. The Public Accounts Committee is televised and sometimes ends up on the news. Therefore, civil servants are visible.

I am not on Twitter, some colleagues are. It is not my role to give my personal opinion. I dislike Twitter. Minister love it. It is more their role. However, it is a hostage to fortune. There is a high risk to say something wrong or be offensive even you do not mean it. Therefore, I chose not to use it.

10. Do you have any other suggestions for my research? Are there any people within or outside your ministry that I could discuss this topic with?

TV-Series: 'Yes, Minister' and 'In the thick of it'.
Report on relationship minister and civil servants by Andrew Kakabadse.

Name respondent: Tom Scholar

Position respondent: Permanent Secretary, HM Treasury

Date and time interview: 19-04-2018 11:00

Location interview: HM Treasury, London

- 1. Could you tell me about the three most important aspects of your current position? Which other positions did you have? Which one was the most important in your career?**

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- 2. The role of top civil servant can be described in terms of characteristics and skills. What do you consider the most important characteristics for a top civil servant? And which skills are important?**

There are three parts to the role:

- i. Leader of the department – leadership skills
 - ii. Senior Advisor to the Minister – policy skills, ability to cooperate with the minister
 - iii. Publicly accountable to parliament
- All three things are necessary to be a good Permanent Secretary

- 3. How would you say that the role of top civil servant has changed in the past ten years? Are there different characteristics and skills important for top civil servants? Has the position of the top civil servant been politicized? If so, what does this politicisation look like?**

The role of the top civil servant is not politicized or more political. It did not change much over the last 10 years. The main change is the media context. There is 24/7 media. Especially the role of the social media increased. This is a massive change compared to 25 years ago. Now there is more information available to the public. However, the nature of the role of the top civil servant did not change.

- 4. In the literature, sometimes there is a distinction between ‘politics of rules’ and ‘politics of incidents’. The politics of rules is concerned with the systems and rules, and consequently more focused on the long term. While the politics of incidents focuses on incidents and how to solve them.**

Generally, the politics of rules is perceived to be the domain of the top civil servants and the politics of incidents is part of the political domain. What is your opinion on this division? What does this division mean for the operation of the top civil servant? Can this lead to tensions between the Permanent Secretary and minister? (For example if the minister does not want to be advised by his/her civil servants but by others in the case of ‘politics of incidents’)

I do not recognize the distinction entirely. It is true that the Civil Service usually have a longer time horizon than the minister. However, this also depends on the minister. It is all about balance.

- 5. The ministerial responsibility, in which the minister is always accountable, can be regarded as a protection for the Permanent (Under) Secretary, but also as a trigger. The minister can be forced to step down in case of failure of the civil service. What is the influence of ministerial responsibility on the role of the Permanent (Under) Secretary?**

There is a division of responsibility. The minister is responsible for the policy and the operation. The Permanent Secretary is responsible for the implementation of it. However, in practice this distinction is less clear.

Since the 1860s, Permanent Secretaries in the UK also have the role of Accounting Officer. This was implemented by Parliament to give responsibility to the Permanent Secretary. There are four tests/checks: regularity, legal, proper and value for money (see “Managing Public Money” for detailed explanation). The minister can use ministerial directions, but this is not very usual. Therefore, as a Permanent Secretary

you take responsibility. The implementation of the role of Accounting Officer is a way to formalize the roles and responsibility.

In Treasury, allocating money is easy. We do not buy and spend so much. In other departments, it is the role of the Secretary of State to approve the budget spending based on the advice of the Permanent Secretary (and other expert officials). Therefore, the role of Accounting Officer works as a check or test.

6. In the literature, civil servant loyalty is usually considered to be the other side of ministerial responsibility. What do you consider to be civil servant loyalty? How far does the loyalty of the Permanent (Under) Secretary go in relation to his/her minister? Can this loyalty also be focused on someone or something else than the minister's interest?

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7. In your opinion, should a Permanent (Under) Secretary be more accountable in regard to the policy, budget and employees of the ministry? Why (not)? And how?

Permanent Secretaries are already pretty accountable. Parliament can always ask us to explain/account. However, we are not accountable for policy advice. Policy advice to the minister is confidential. This takes place in the private sphere. This allows the Permanent Secretary to give straightforward and critical advice. If it will be published, it will be less effective. I am pushing for more transparency in government, because transparency forces honesty. However, in the case of policy advice I do not think it is a good idea. If policy advice is to be published this will lead to less good, honest and direct advice.

8. In your opinion, should a Permanent (Under) Secretary be more visible in public and/or participate in the public debate as an expert? Why (not)? If so, in which ways?

No, I do not think that should be more visible in public, because we have a system of neutral and impartial civil servants. Our personal view is not important. This is for

example different in the US, where all officials are politically appointed.

9. In which way will public visibility and accountability change the role of the top civil servant? How will this influence the relationship between the political and top civil service top? Would more visibility and accountability of top civil servants be a desirable change according to? Why (not)?

It is not a desirable change to have more visibility of top civil servants. The media has led to a bit more visibility, but this is not a big change. We are visible when we are giving evidence to parliament. These hearings are filmed and sometimes picked up by the press. However, it is not a very public role and that is right. Our task is to give the best possible advice, run the department and fix problem. The distinction between minister and civil servants is good. We should remain that. The system got much strength.

10. Do you have any other suggestions for my research? Are there any people within or outside your ministry that I could discuss this topic with?

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