

MODALITIES FOR REGIONAL AND GLOBAL COOPERATION ON CIVIL SERVICE DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS THE SDGs

Anneli Temmes¹

Abstract

This article briefly describes the public administration structure of Finland and provides an analysis of the key factors such as value-based civil service and higher compensation of the civil servants which support good governance and corruption prevention in Finland. In doing so, it discusses main legal norms and administrative arrangements. To conclude, the article considers and highlights the importance of civil service training in promoting civil service ethics and corruption prevention.

Key Words: *corruption prevention, public administration values, good governance, civil service ethics, civil servant's education, training programmes, legal norms, Finland.*

I. Public sector in Finland

Similar to many other countries, the Finnish public administration represents a three-level model consisting of central, regional and local levels of public administration. The state administration includes central administration (ministries, state agencies and institutions), regional state administration and local state administration. The state administration employs approximately 82 000 civil servants and state employees. This figure can be considered reasonable for a country with the population of 5,6 million inhabitants. The number of civil servants and state employees has decreased more than twice following the long-lasting public sector reform compared to 20 years ago when this figure was still over 200 000.

Finland has traditionally had a strong local self-governance. The municipalities are independent, and they also exercise taxation right. There are 310 municipalities, and approximately 420 000 public servants work in those municipalities. This figure includes all public servants and employees whose salaries are paid from the municipalities' budgets, for instance, teachers, doctors and nurses as the municipalities take care of welfare services.

¹ *Anneli Temmes is the Managing Director of the HAUS Finnish Institute of Public Management.*

II. Critical success factors in ensuring good-governance and corruption prevention in Finland

The Finnish civil service is an open system in which all positions are openly announced. There are, however, few exceptions which mainly employ career-based model, namely in the foreign affairs and military services. The civil servants are not politically nominated. Exceptions to this practice are politically nominated state secretaries of the ministries who come and go with the minister.

In Finland there is a long tradition of cultural attitude against corruption. Value-based administration and strict legalistic culture have been considered as the key elements in supporting good governance and corruption prevention in the country. Transparency and openness are the part of administrative culture. For instance, citizens have access to official data. Another important factor to prevent corruption is a free media. Even small corruption cases receive large attention in the media, and, consequently, they are widely discussed by public.

It should also be pointed out that the Finnish civil servants are highly educated i.e. 29 per cent of them possess higher academic or postgraduate degree. In addition, civil servants receive a reasonable salary that is considered to be one of the crucial aspects to prevent corruption.

The above considered measures ensure the Finnish citizens' trust in and respect for the civil servants. According to several studies, most of the respected professions are in the field of civil service, for example, police and boarder guard service among others.

III. Legal norms, principles and practices of the civil service ethics

Finland has been recognised as one of the least corrupted countries in the world in recent years and ranked high in the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index. As discussed above, the main reasons for this high ranking derive from the cultural and historical background, high values in public administration and the pay policy. However, in spite of all these factors, there are regular instances of corruption cases. In this regard, an important question that naturally arises today is to find ways to keep the present good position in the future as well.

The main legal norms to guarantee the high level of civil service ethics and corruption prevention are the following:

- The Constitution;
- The State civil servants' act;
- The Openness of government act;
- The Administrative procedure act;
- The Act on public procurement;
- The Penal code.

In the Finnish public administration there is a strong emphasis on the civil service ethics. Management and work in civil service is based on values. The related legislation provides necessary framework and the code of ethics lists the main elements of the ethical behaviour of civil servants. Even if there is a small suspicion of an unethical behaviour, civil servants' conduct is openly discussed ,especially, in media, and appropriately handled. The internal and external control system in the public administration should reveal cases of misbehaviour.

An unethical behaviour can result in a written warning, termination or even cancellation of the employment in the civil service. One of the consequences of such a case that is also considered to be the most serious punishment is an unpleasent publicity it receives as a result.

The main agencies responsible for dealing with the civil service ethics in the Finnish state administration are the Ministry of Finance that provides Government's principal decision on cases and the Ministry of Justice that leads the anti-corruption network. Finland also participates actively on this matter with the international organisations such as the European Union, the Council of Europe, OECD, and the Nordic Council.

IV. Trainings to promote corruption prevention

In Finland people highly value education and training. This equally relates to the civil servants as well. Finland has extensive experience in the development of management and staff's capacities in the civil service. The civil service training plays an important role in promoting the civil service ethics and corruption prevention. However, Finland does not have a tradition of long-term training programmes specifically tailored to anti-corruption area. Still, these questions are included in the most of the civil service training programmes.

Such public management training programmes are directly linked with the state managerial policy. The Finnish senior and middle level public managers have traditionally had good substantial expertise in field. Yet, nowadays management and leadership skills have been especially emphasized in the training courses. To demonstrate, those civil servants who participate in the management training, can also be backed by the personnel development plans, and receive individual coaching and mentoring support.

A high-level ethical standards and anti-corruption components are also well included in the special trainings on human resource management, financial management, public procurement, legal drafting, and other customised training modules and short courses. In addition, these trainings' integral part is the practical case study discussion as based on real corruption facts.

V. Conclusion

Lastly, it is always essential to ensure a close collaboration and coherence between the national civil service training institute and the public administration, ministries, agencies, and other public sector organisations. The training institute should be kept abreast of the real needs of the public administration bodies. High-quality training programmes should support, facilitate and provide appropriate tools to guarantee a well-functioning public sector and effective corruption-free civil service.

To sum up, it is vital that the public administration's efforts to ensure the civil service ethics and preventing corruption requires a strong support from the whole society. High-level political will is also essential, and civil society should rightly understand and not tolerate any kind of corruption. It is important to remember that even in the least corrupted countries nothing is self-evident; hence, regular open discussion as well as varied types of activities aimed at preventing corruption should be exercised and implemented. In addition, the legal norms should be effectively utilised, and the significance of anti-corruption should be regularly highlighted during the civil service training. Lastly, an international exchange of experiences in this area should be promoted as it also immensely contributes towards achieving the stated goal of highly ethical and corruption-free civil service.