Power games in the administration: A case study on the defence of the military culture during the reform process of the defence administration

The study focuses on the reforms made in the (Finnish) defence administration in the 1980's and 1990's. The goal of the study is to grasp the reality of administration, its prevailing practices and phenomena. This is a qualitative study in which the research material has been gathered from real situations and phenomena the present writer personally has experienced and observed during a period of some 15 years. The strategy in this study is case study research of multiple (4) cases by building on the ideas presented by Robert Yin and using cases as a research method. The cases are studied by taking a phenomenological and hermeneutic approach of study.

Answers are sought to the following questions: by what kind of power games does military culture defend itself in large-scale and profound changes and what factors do explain the power games? Max Weber's definition of power is used as the concept of power. The classification of the forms of power is above all based on the classification system created by Dennis Wrong. Regarding power games, the study is based on the power game models developed by Henry Minzberg.

Military culture is studied by examining the cultural features of the defence administration, regarded as a paradigmatic institution, and the soldier as an individual cultural phenomenon. A suitable instrument for investigating military culture is developed in the study by applying Thomas Kuhn's concept of paradigm, which forms a basis for creating the battle paradigm concept introduced in this work. The prevalent feature of the battle paradigm is a battle for survival, aiming at victory, and maintaining discipline. The selection of the cases has been guided by the assumption that as the reforms challenge the paradigmatic matters prevailing in the institution, the expectation is a strong and organized opposition to the reforms. The functional paradigmatic menu typical of military culture explains the phenomena included in the cases. The paradigmatic menu is formed of the battle paradigm, the administrative paradigm and the political paradigm. To explain individual behaviour and the mutual power combinations between the individuals, military profiles of ideal type, based on Max Weber, are developed in the study.

The basic profiles are the professional soldier, the political soldier and the military manager.

The study showed that the sponsor game was the most popular of the political power games. The cases proved that the sponsor game seems to have a tendency to escalate in a hierarchal organization like the defence administration. The legitimate authority that proved to be the most popular sponsor is not only in possession of power, but based also on his position, has a possibility to ensure the wished final result. One factor explaining the popularity of the sponsor game would also seem to be the historical tradition. The functional paradigm of military culture - the battle paradigm - and the causes of friction created between it and the paradigm of administration emerge as a common factor explaining the defence of military culture. Based on the cases, the (classic) professional soldier keen on a bureaucratic policy emerges as the prevailing military type. Persons with the profile of a political soldier are also found in the high military command while soldiers with the profile of a military manager were not found.

The study clearly shows the need of reforming the classical battle paradigm in the changed and continuously changing operational environment. In this study, the name "crisis-management paradigm" is used of the reforming paradigm, which is considered to form a substantial starting point of the development of future armed forces and the recruiting of their personnel. The model of examination created in the study can also be applied while examining internal power games in other hierarchal organizations.