The object of this study are the recent administrative reform programmes of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of Great Britain and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. The main aim of the study is to determine the degree of institutionalisation of some of the reforms. The study uses the New Public Management doctrine to characterise the recent public management reform programmes spearheaded by the central governments of the UK and Finland. This development imposed by New Labour in the UK and the second government of Paavo Lipponen in Finland is defined as the institutional environment of the respective Foreign Ministries. An overview of the historical development of reforming public management in both of the countries is included in the study.

The study applies the new institutionalist theory. The process of institutionalisation is first explained by demonstrating how the Foreign Ministries have responded to the expectations of the central governments. This section is mainly based on two reports produced by the Foreign Ministries. These are the ‘Foresight 2000’ –report of the Foreign Office and the report by the Finnish Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja ‘Challenges for the Finnish Foreign Service in the 21st century’.

The degree of institutionalisation is analysed on the basis of interviews. A number of new ideas and reforms that have come up in the preceding documentary analysis have been selected to be analysed in the interviews. These are: customer and service orientation, output control and cutting costs, performance measurement and appraisal systems, flexible personnel policy, new IT systems, decentralisation and reducing hierarchy. Besides literature, the main materials used are the interviews conducted and documents issued by both of the Foreign Ministries and the central governments of the UK and Finland.

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