

BOOK REVIEWS

The Anonymous Leader: Appointed CEOs in Western Local Government, (Eds.) Klausen, Kurt and Annick Magnier, Odense University Press, 1998, pb, 312 pp. ISBN 87-7838-413-3

The Anonymous Leader is a compilation of observations relating to the "highest ranking appointed administrative officials in municipalities" — or Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) — in 15 western countries, principally in Europe. The researchers seek to answer several basic questions relating to the role of the CEO such as: What does the system of local government look like? What is the role of the CEO and what is the background of the individuals in these positions? Who do they relate to and depend upon? The findings are drawn from data gathered over several years in the mid-1990's from over 4000 CEOs through standardised questionnaires and follow-up interviews. An analysis of job advertisements for the CEO position was conducted in seven of the 15 countries to capture the changing views of the requirements for the position over the last 20 years. The research was performed as a part of a study of leadership in local government and the book is the first in a planned 4-volume series based upon the data gathered.

This book will appeal to academics interested in the area of local government management as it is firmly grounded in an academic approach. There is a clear description of the research methodology and great pains are taken to describe the survey techniques and coding of responses in order to ensure comparability across countries. The first chapter contains a review of relevant public management literature as well as some discussion of leadership theory. Subsequent chapters describe the findings in each country and provide an historical framework for the analysis of local government and the role of the CEO. The editors have managed to keep contributors from straying too far from the prescribed format for each country analysis thereby enabling the reader to more easily assess the similarities and differ-

ences between countries. The objectives of the book are to "improve the comparative knowledge of the sociology of bureaucracy (p. 20)" and "to point out tendencies which are qualitatively new and capable of identifying new patterns (p.282)".

The first objective is achieved through the reporting of the findings for each country and cross-country comparisons described in the final chapter. In this chapter several conclusions are drawn by the editors. The first is that the relative levels of authority/influence of CEOs tends towards the same national groupings of local authority structure identified by Humes and Martin (1961), i.e., the highest levels of CEO authority are found in the Anglo-Saxon and northern European countries, with the lowest levels of authority in southern European countries. A tendency towards professionalisation of the CEO role is identified, the evidence for which is the higher levels of education in CEOs, as well as the increasing importance of professional associations in the CEO's network. The results of a network analysis based upon the CEO's reported contacts and influence groups (Lauermann and Pappi 1976, Eulau 1986), shows that all CEOs have a strong reliance on the elected mayor or council and on their own administrative staffs.

The analysis that seems to engage the editors most is the distinction between the "classical" and "political" bureaucrat (Putnam 1975). This distinction is made on the degree to which the CEO views his/her role as including a level of responsibility for recommending policy and advising elected officials (political) as opposed to a more limited role as an administrator of policies determined by the elected representatives (classical). A scattergram of the views of CEOs on their roles indicates that there is virtually no statistical relationship between these two types of roles. It does appear that the administrative content of the CEO's job seems to run along the same lines as their level of authority, i.e., higher authority seems to be consistent with less administration and lower authority with more. The importance of a political role does not appear to be related either to geographical groupings or the level of administrative responsibility. Nevertheless, the authors claim that the findings suggest that the political and classical roles are supplementary — a conclusion that is puzzling based upon the data presented.

Except for the rather unsurprising tendency towards professionalisation, it must be said that the book fails to achieve its second objective, that of identifying new tendencies and/or patterns in the role of the CEO in local government. Academics will find this book to be a potentially interesting resource to support further analysis, which

would be enhanced by more of the type of charts and summaries presented in the final chapter, as well as an appendix containing more details on the database created from the research. Practitioners will be disappointed by the lack of interesting or useful conclusions and should probably wait for future volumes in the series for more insightful analyses in this important area of research.

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Sole Survivors: How Exceptional Companies Survive and Thrive at the Edge by Anto T. Kerins, Oak Tree Press, Dublin, 1999, pb, 420 pp, £18.95, 24 Euro. ISBN 1 86076 131 3

The footwear industry, together with textiles and clothing, were among the first casualties of the opening of the Irish economy to free trade. Employment in footwear manufacturing in Ireland today is one-tenth of what it was twenty-five years ago. The sector has declined dramatically in all developed countries and most of the world's footwear is now manufactured in the newly industrialised countries where labour costs are very low and where many workers endure conditions which are often little better than slavery. Given such pressure on wage costs in an intrinsically labour intensive industry, the survival of any footwear manufacturers in the high wage economies is remarkable. The factors which have enabled some of the footwear firms to survive in Europe is the theme of Anto Kerins's wittily titled book *Sole Survivors*, published by Oak Tree Press, Dublin.

The book presents detailed case studies on nine footwear manufacturers in four countries, Ireland, the UK, Finland and Sweden. Two of the UK firms, Barker of Earls Barton and Start-Rite, are well known manufacturers of high quality adult and children's footwear respectively. The Irish firm studied, Dubarry, is the most successful surviving Irish footwear manufacturer, well known for its yachting shoes. The countries were chosen largely because among EU countries, they had suffered the greatest reduction in their footwear industries as a result of cheap imports. The author tells us that he chose the footwear industry because in an industry so familiar, producing a basic product needed by everybody, it is possible to concentrate on the business