Political Consulting: an Episode in the Career or a Separate Professional Path?

This article is an attempt to deliver a more thorough analysis of the professional trajectories of political advisers, as they have rarely been thoroughly investigated to date. Additionally, the paper looks at political cabinets as a potential space for professionalization. The aim of this analysis is to answer the question of whether the advisory function evolves into an autonomous career path or becomes a stage on the way to independent political positions. The study is based on a quantitative analysis of the trajectories of advisers employed in the political cabinets of successive prime ministers. The results indicate that advisers often accumulate political capital and are employed in strictly political positions, especially if they have gained earlier experience in politics. The advisory career is regularly chosen by a marginal number of the studied individuals. A significant percentage of individuals work as advisers more than once, but movement between positions reveals no regularities for indicating a specific career pattern or advancement scheme. The analysis of the trajectories also revealed that the educational and professional profiles of advisers are fairly uniform and similar to that of government administrative and political elites. Observation of these similarities and examples of long-lasting adviser careers become an additional impulse for the analysis of advisers from the perspective of professionalization, whose essential components are the differentiation and constant redefinition of boundaries, which in this case separate advisers from politicians and officials within the three-component configuration of governance.

Keywords: policy advisers, political cabinets, professionalization, trajectory