

## **The British Agency System: Its Organization and Implementation**

*Thomas C. P. Peng*

### **Abstract**

The implementation of the British “agency” system, beginning in 1988, was the most radical change in U. K. civil service history since 1854. Agencies are headed by fixed-term and contracted chief executives. Although still under the jurisdiction of the ministries, agencies have substantial discretion over their operations and personnel management. After eleven years of agencification, 77 percent of British civil servants work in agencies or according to the agency line. The establishment of the agency system, which is not based on any law, was progressive in nature. However, the agency system has generated great concern about its impact on the unified nature of the traditional British civil service. One of the most significant features of the agency system is the accountability mechanism, which is discussed in detail in this article.

**Key Words:** agency, British civil service, new public management, privatization, Next Steps