

## IMPLEMENTATION OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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### **Abstract**

*Implementation of modern methods of quality management contributes to improvement of the services provided by public administration. Quality management systems are a tool to change structure, methods of action and, in consequence, image of the Polish administration authorities. The methods of implementing quality management system at public administration offices are very similar. Quality management system requires from the offices continuous improvement, defining the customers needs and performance of the needs in an effective and economic manner.*

### **Key words**

*public administration, management, quality systems.*

### **Introduction**

The basic purpose of public administration offices is to serve the citizens by satisfying their needs and consideration of their reasonable interest. Therefore, for effective use of budget funds and resources, mainly for the performance of the basic mission of the office, i.e. satisfaction of the need of a specific society, the administrative office should undertake pro-quality activities. Implementation of the quality system streamlines the operation of public sector organisations. The necessity stems out particularly from the trust of the citizens. Quality in administration means clear leadership based on the determined vision and strategy of the office. Quality means efficient management and focus on customer requirements. Quality also represents identified processes and indicators, management of administrative services instead of cases, management of projects, strategic tasks and objectives. Quality signifies efficient flow of information and effective internal control.

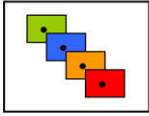
Modern understanding of quality means fulfilment of customer needs and expectations not only through the quality of the provided services but also through the quality of work organisation at the office and quality of the office management. The previous model of administration based on bureaucratic rationality has mostly been negated in the European countries and replaced with a model of managerial public management. The model is characterised, among others, by administration focused on the citizen and by separation of strategic functions from the operating ones. In such system performance of public services is often vested in competing organisations from outside of the administration. Implementation of such method of management is aimed at subordination of activities to citizen expectations. Public administration units perform their tasks at quite different costs and within various scopes. Therefore, it was necessary to implement public services standards along with a system of indicators and methods of measuring the level of performance of an imposed standard, as well as continuous surveillance whether the standard is kept and the organisation is capable of reacting effectively.

Another reason for introducing changes at the Polish offices stems out of the previous assumption that it is enough to operate in accordance with the law, without particular interest in the social and economic results of such activities, to name 'good' an office or a clerk. Currently, public administration is to provide public services in accordance with the principles set out by law. Public administration should provide services to the citizens, which comply both with the legal standards and public expectations. Fulfilment of such requirements is decisive for the efficiency of the activities undertaken by the administration.

The purpose of the publication is to present the analysis and assessment of the system of implementation and management of quality in the public sector on the example of selected units of the public finance sector in two Provinces – Podkarpackie and Lubelskie. Based on the selected subject-matter literature, process approach to management in public administration was presented. Barriers and factors limiting that process are presented on the basis of an opinion poll carried out at selected local government units of the Podkarpackie Province. The opinion poll carried out among a selected group of respondents enabled assessment of the influence of the quality management system on the operation of public administration.

### **Total quality management in public administration**

The service function of administration in the conditions of growing globalisation and intensive market competition becomes of key importance in order to ensure conditions for efficient operation of economy and society – functioning of



companies and human life. Therefore, the operation of offices and public institutions must be seen from the angle of processes instead of procedures. Only then handling cases may be replaced with provision of services to citizens. Application of process approach is the basis for implementation of task budget and assessment of efficiency and effectiveness of administrative services. Determination of the quality management process forms basis for implementation of electronic flow of documents and other IT systems, as well as creation of eadministration.

The issues of quality management in public administration are particularly important in the policy of the European Union, which implements the principles of cohesion within cooperation with member states, in which domestic institutions and bodies are responsible for determining the expenditures strategy and selection of projects as well as making payments based on the applications filed by the beneficiaries. An important factor for the Community and the member states is creation of an efficient institutional system responsible for the performance of the cohesion policy, related to management of operational programmes and performance of projects co-financed by the EU budget. The task of a member state is to determine the competencies of institutions and factors determining the process of management in administration. Another task is to improve the quality of the administrative potential of the institutional system performing the National Strategic Reference Frameworks. Quality in public administration, including local government administration, means efficient management. Complete evaluation of a public institution operation may be performed solely when the number and quality of results may be referred to the assumptions, i.e. what are the citizens expecting from administration compared with what the administration provides. In local government units implementing quality systems evaluation of the methods of providing public services performed by the institutional surveillance system and assessment of the public opinion reflected positive examples. Implementation of the quality management system in administration is a modern method which improves management. There have been determined eight basic principles of excellence in management, which significantly affect the process of implementing quality in public administration.

Referring to ISO standards, their basic typology needs to be reminded:

- ISO 9000:2005 Quality Management System – basics of the quality management systems, terminology;
- ISO 9001:2000 Quality Management System – requirements for the quality management system;
- ISO 9004:2000 Quality Management System – guidelines regarding quality system and the whole organisation improvement;
- ISO 19011:2002 Guidelines on Quality – guidelines regarding audits of the quality management system and/or environmental management system;
- ISO 1401:2004 – Environmental Management Systems. General guidelines on principles, systems and support techniques – guidelines regarding creation, implementation and maintenance of the environmental management system.

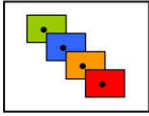
Implementation of a system of quality-ensuring solutions based on the ISO 9001:2000 standard requires continuous improvement, defining of the needs of the customers and fulfilment of the needs in an effective and economic manner. Such operation of public administration offices provide opportunities for creation of transparent, ordered and self-improving organisations open to the needs of the customers and staff.

On the level of administration the constitutional principle of the 'law-governed' state must be complied with, therefore, use of the quality management systems becomes more and more desired. The idea of a quality system signifies consideration of such elements as: means and objects of work, methods, technologies, staff and interrelations of the elements. The ISO 9001:2000 defines the system as the organisational structure, distribution of responsibilities, procedures, processes and resources enabling quality management. Quality assurance means all planned and systematic actions which are necessary for the achievement and maintenance of the adequate reliability level, namely that the product or service fulfils specific quality requirements.

The requirements of the ISO 9001:2000 standard are to ensure achievement of a certain status of the organisation, in which:

- actions are repeatable;
- quality is a result of planned actions instead of a coincidence;
- the method of conduct is determined and documented;
- emphasis is put on prevention instead of correction.

Use of quality management systems compliant with the ISO standards in public administration was historically the earliest and was already popular in the 1980s – particularly in the European local government administration. This resulted from the earlier popularity of the model in the private sector, measurability of the model effects in the form of a certificate as well as a strive for improvement of the services provided in an organised, planned and repeatable manner. Common initiatives for quality management in the public administration of EU countries have often been undertaken on the level of meetings of general directors of public administration the EU member states. On the level of the European Community there is no uniform policy regarding quality management in public administration. The particular countries determine the



principles and details of such policy on their own, within the general mission and strategy of public administration. The concepts of management applied most often are management by determination of objectives, management of results and quality management. The quality management tools that are most often used in the EU countries include quality audits, self-assessment models, measurement of results, service standards, benchmarking tools, sets of recommended procedures. For the purpose of accelerating the process of change and improvement of public services at public administration offices the following activities are undertaken:

- focus on the development of human potential by training programmes devoted to quality management;
- creation of a cooperation network among administration units in order to establish a forum for exchange of ideas and establishment of interdisciplinary working groups;
- use of new IT technologies (e-administration) for the exchange of knowledge, information and best practices;
- granting of awards and honours for quality, in order to acknowledge outstanding quality of customer service.

In most EU countries quality management initiatives have been clearly related to the comprehensive programmes for modernisation of administration. The initiatives have been formulated on the central level, e.g. by productivity and quality improvement programmes at administration offices, development of quality policy, planning of long-term modernisation. A strive for improvement of the services has been visible on the local level. This phenomenon has been observed mainly in countries with decentralised administrative structure and strong tradition of autonomy on local level.

Quality management system does not only mean a system built based on the quality standard. In practice, organisations which do not use an ISO standard may possess or build their own quality management system. The system must take into account the fact that quality is affected by various interrelated parts, which may be grouped in sub-systems. Moreover, such system may be documented, for example in the form of procedures or instructions, or undocumented, namely preserved in know-how and working tools. Offices which have not implemented ISO-based systems also possess their own management systems. They operate based on office instructions, legal acts and sector regulations. Such collection of external legal provisions determines the course of processes performed at the offices. Not only public administration is managed externally – local administration is not independent, either. Most of the customer service processes cannot be changed, and the offices operate based on the binding procedures set out in legal regulations.

The quality management system is:

- a set of rules, principles and standards of conduct;
- a tool for quality improvement;
- a dynamic structure that brings order to an organisation;
- a guarantee of stable quality;
- a good educational tool;
- a basis for TQM philosophy implementation.

The system is not:

- a guarantee of high quality;
- a method for efficient management of the whole organisation.

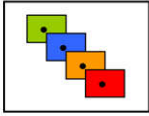
### **Operation of quality management systems in public administration**

A quality management system represents coordinated actions related to organisation management and supervision in order to achieve the assumed objectives of an organisation, integrated with daily practice and other systems. There have been differentiated the following stages of preparing and implementing a quality management system:

- diagnosis of the management system;
- project organisation;
- determination of the system implementation objectives;
- launching of an information portal to support quality management;
- identification and description of processes;
- training and stimulation of staff attitude change;
- implementation of a quality management system compliant with ISO 9001 requirements.

Development, implementation and use of the system is the responsibility of the managerial staff. Their duties include:

- preparing of the quality policy and provision of adequate means for the policy to be understandable, implemented and used;
- implementation of the quality assurance system which will ensure the quality policy execution;
- provision of finance for the performance of the system quality objectives;



- determination of qualitative factors affecting the market position of the company, as well as determination of tasks related to the introduction of new products and processes;
- preparing and publishing system documents in order to implement the quality objectives and policy.

Analysis of the quality systems implementation processes by the local government units reflected that the methods of implementing the quality management system at the offices which had already obtained the quality certificate has been very similar. After a decision has been made on implementation of a quality system, each organisation possesses a quality system. The system may be developed, documented and notified (this happens, for example, at the companies holding ISO 9001 certificate) or informal, based solely on the experience and principles developed. In all local government administration offices the process of implementing normalised quality management systems in place of the existing, imperfect quality systems has ended. The requirements of the ISO 9001:2000 brought about a need to change, for example, of the approach to planning activities, responsibilities and customer service.

Implementation of a quality system is dependent on focusing all management functions on quality by virtue of planning quality objectives and controlling quality, i.e. determination of tasks, methods and means enabling enforcement of the determined quality at the particular stages of a product manufacturing or service provision process.

The literature differentiates ten basic principles of public service used in the evaluation of the quality system application:

- setting service standards – clearly specified, monitored and publicly available;
- openness and provision of complete information about a specific service, its cost and the expected results;
- consultations with and inclusion of the existing and potential recipients of public services as well as the use of their opinions in making improvements;
- availability of services to all potential recipients and ensuring choice, if possible;
- treating all recipients in the same manner – respecting their privacy and dignity, providing assistance and being kind;
- correcting the errors made in a fast and effective manner, possession of a transparent, widespread and easy to apply complaint procedure;
- effective use of means ensuring the best value for tax payers and recipients;
- searching for the methods of innovation and improvement of the services provided;
- cooperation with other suppliers in order to ensure that the services are effective;
- ensuring user satisfaction from the quality of the services provided.

The quality policies of the particular analysed public offices show that the main objective is to create a friendly climate and convenient conditions for the fulfilment of community needs, which include but are not limited to:

- handling the affairs reported in the manner and within the timeframe set out in the legal regulations;
- signing agreements with suppliers in a correct manner;
- consideration of the needs and expectations of local communities in the prepared programmes and development plans;
- establishing partner relationships with the customers, focusing on the ancillary nature of the office for the members of the local community.

The opinion poll results (Fig. 1) reflect that the advantages of system implementing comprise, among others, optimisation and standardisation of decision-making processes, improvement of the level of control and management, effective use of resources and better protection against legal liability (less irregularities and errors). The main positive effects resulting from the quality system operation mentioned are:

- improvement of market position;
- improvement of the office image;
- higher level of satisfaction among local community.

The opinion poll results (Fig. 1) confirm the positive change and improvement of the offices operation efficiency. Only 10% of the analysed offices have not seen any relationship between the quality system implementation and improvement of the public services provided.

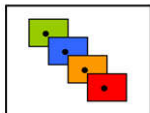


Fig. 1. Advantages of the quality management system implemented at public offices



Source: Proprietary material based on opinion poll results.

The most frequent quality definition cited in public administration is:

- set of product or service features that fulfils recipient requirements;
- acting for the benefit of society in accordance with law and in an honest manner;
- result of good work;
- achievement of optimal relationship between the task effect and the cost of that effect;
- determination of service performance level;
- set of standards determining requirements;
- description of objective fulfilment from the angle of customer expectations;
- efficient and effective provision of products or services, timeliness, proper organisation and performance standard, reliable task performance, high quality of services.

A definition of an efficiently operating administration comprises:

- customer satisfaction;
- administration enjoying recognition among citizens;
- transparent organisational structure, clear distribution of responsibilities;
- proper and timely handling of affairs;
- efficient state;
- timeliness and competent, efficient, disciplined staff.

The quality of administration depends mainly on the timeliness of handling affairs and organisational structure which minimises the costs of operation. The results of the opinion poll may be seen in Fig. 2.

The main barriers in quality management system implementation identified by public offices staff include:

- missing incentive system within the staff remuneration;
- the level of knowledge regarding quality management among staff;
- work organisation at the office, frequent reorganisation;
- low training budget;
- the fact that staff do not identify themselves with the objectives of the office as an organisation.



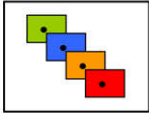
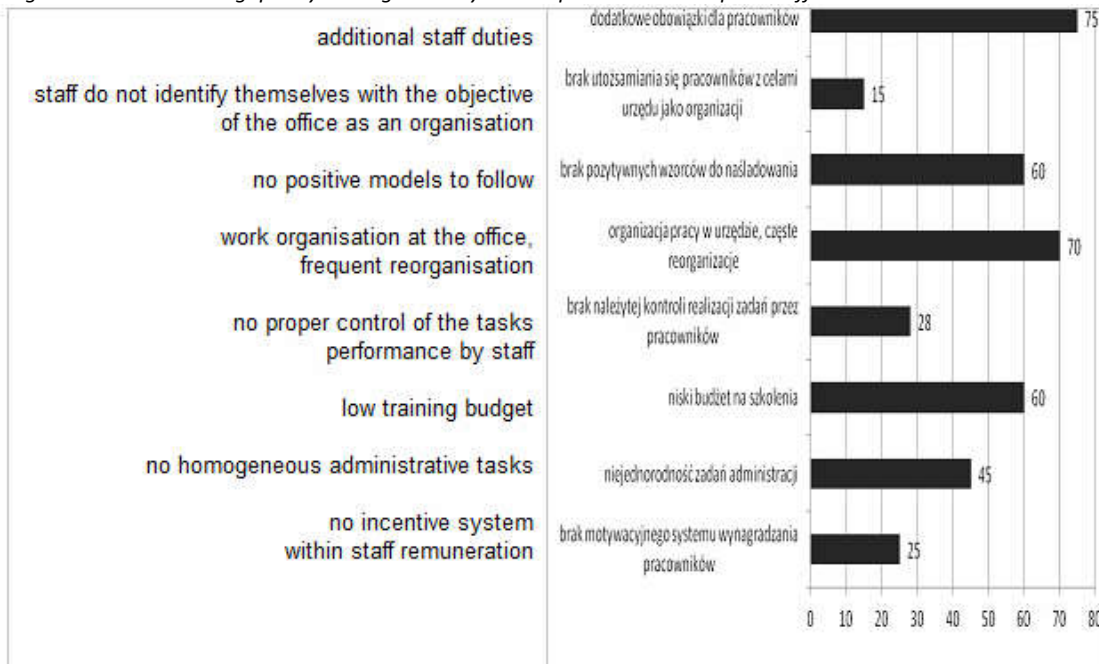


Fig. 2. Barriers hindering quality management system implementation at public offices

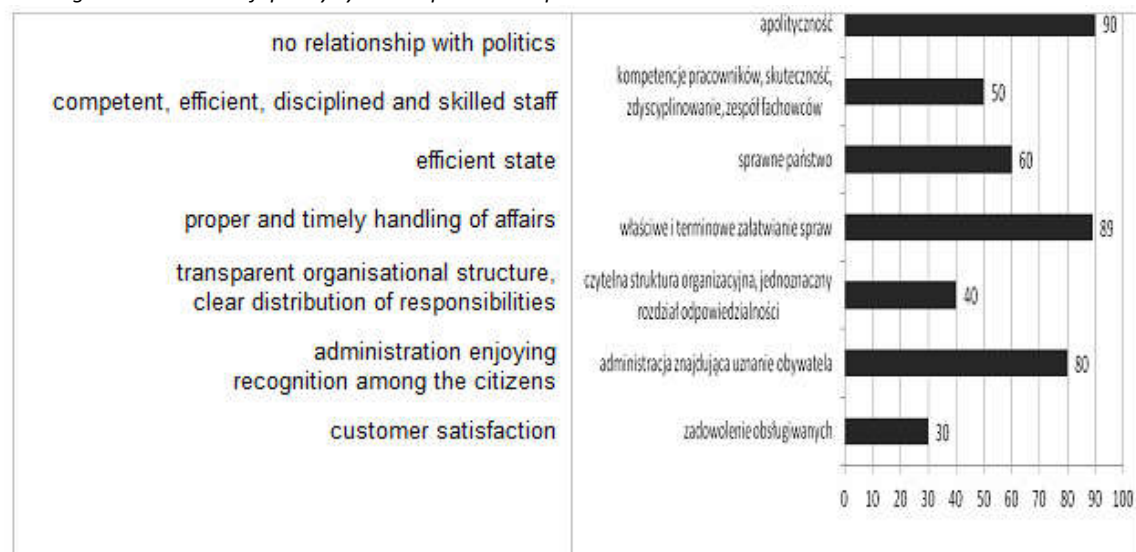


Source: Proprietary material based on opinion poll results.

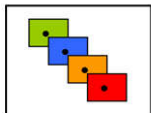
The least important barrier selected was the absence of incentive system within staff remuneration. Most of the clerks have been inclined to accept additional duties, being aware that the office in which they work would be better perceived by people from the outside. Office staff identify the process of the quality management system implementation with additional, new duties. A major barrier in implementing quality systems have been expenditures on training in modern management methods, particularly as regards work organisation.

The opinion poll results (Fig. 3) show that measurable effects have been achieved by implementing quality management system, which means improvement of office operation at all management levels. The customers' assessment of the effects achieved by offices which have implemented quality management systems shows visible growth of efficiency and effectiveness of the particular offices operation. The respondents referred mainly to the fact that the system limits the impact of politics on the offices, and improves proper and timely handling of affairs.

Fig. 3. Assessment of quality systems operation at public administration



Source: Proprietary material based on opinion poll results.



Solutions within the quality management system serve integration of the administration management system for the purpose of improvement of administration productivity and effectiveness, better human resources management and raise of customer satisfaction. The changes provide opportunity to improve organisation and effectiveness of public administration operation, which refers also to local administration. A favourable factor is the model of civil service developed as well as the process of integration with the European Community.

The quality management methods introduced should be user friendly and must not result in a growth of bureaucracy. An integral element of all of the quality management systems is documentation (specifications, procedures). The chief objectives for implementing quality management systems in public administration are:

- certification;
- improvement of customer satisfaction from the services provided by public administration and improvement of effectiveness in spending public funds;
- creation of pro-quality organisational culture;
- remediation of defects and irregularities within the system operation.

Implementation of modern management methods results in improvement of the quality of the services provided by the Polish administration. Quality management systems are tools for changing the structure, methods of operation and, in consequence, the image of the Polish administration.

The methods of conduct, i.e. the methods of implementing the quality management systems at the local administration offices have been the same. The process starts from a decision on implementing the quality system at the unit, and then follows searching for a consulting company to provide advice in creating and implementing the quality system. After the agreement with the consulting company has been signed, a resolution of the local government management is issued on starting the implementation works. The decision on the system implementation is preceded with a report on the assessment of the office organisation, recommendations, comments and opinions to consider during the work on the system. Further the quality system implementation schedule is prepared, which determines the stages of actions, selected implementation teams, internal audits, selected quality representative and training to be provided. The training refers to all staff in order to provide the most important information regarding the model requirements, process definition, principles of identification, description, analysis and methods of processes improvement. After the training the existing documentation is ordered and new documentation, required by the standard, prepared. This is a period of identification, describing and improvement as well as establishment of the principles of the process surveillance. Each process is a collection of specific methods of conduct. Preparing, implementation and verification of processes serves the fulfilment of the office quality policy objectives. On the other hand, the processes form basis for determining more detailed procedures and operating instructions, which describe the patterns of conduct in the performance of tasks. For the simplification of works an implementation team is appointed, consisting of the management representatives and chief staff members.

The basic principles applied include:

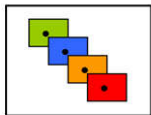
- identification of processes considering the basic tasks of the office and the methods of their fulfilment;
- ordering of processes in a form which enables presentation of relationships between them, their hierarchy, and determination of main and operating processes.

Processes are divided as follows:

- main processes – covering the basic tasks of the office resulting from the legal regulations;
- operating processes – being the elements of main processes, which are directly related to the provision of public services;
- ancillary processes – securing the necessary resources and management of the quality system, which are indirectly related to the provision of services.

The processes are presented in the form of linear or extended conduct diagrams (algorithms). The diagrams show interrelation and sequence of activities and their subordination to the performers. The diagrams are subject to analysis with regard to the particular activities, covering for the following elements, among others: sequence of actions, persons and units to perform the same, resources needed for the performance, as well as the number and location of decision-making points. The documentation describing the functioning of the office processes includes:

- quality manual;
- procedures and forms used therein: system procedures (required by the standard) and operating procedures (describing the principles of conduct);
- instructions,
- internal normative acts, i.e. applicable resolution of the board or the office manager.



In accordance with the standard requirements, it is necessary to determine the principles of the office documentation supervision. Procedures are passed by resolution of the office manager and are subject to continuous changes, along with the changes of the affairs circumstances and the affairs themselves.

The most important task is to determine measures for the particular processes as well as organisational units that will determine the efficiency of the tasks performed. Parameters are determined for the particular processes (services) performed by the organisational units.

The parameters are measured after they have been grouped in three areas:

- products – this group refers to the main features of the services performed (good to bad service ratio);
- processes – this group refers to the service provision process control and internal effectiveness measures (time of performance, costs, number of affairs);
- satisfaction – this group refers to customers' reaction to services and the measures cover for three basic categories: quality, time and costs.

When defining measures the following issues are determined:

- what does the customer care for (final effect);
- what does the superior care for (use of resources, objectives of the organisation);
- what does the direct performer care for (for the purpose of proper process performance).

## Conclusion

Standards are treated as a collection of parameters characterising the respective service. Usually, they are presented to the office customers in the form of extensive applications or information cards comprising the basic information about the method, deadline and conditions of handling affairs.

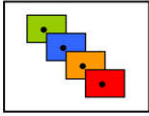
Along with the quality system implementation, reorganisation at the office takes place, the organisational structure and the regulations change, the value and objectives for the particular units are determined, and further the quality policy is prepared together with measurable quality objectives, which are subject to continuous improvement.

Upon the quality management system documentation in the quality manual, internal and external audits are carried out in order to verify whether the office has prepared and implemented the system documents required by the standard. During the audits, compliance of the tasks performed with the legal regulations and standard principles as well as the system procedures is verified. Internal audits are prepared by the office staff, whereas in the case of pre-certification audit the system is analysed by independent auditors of the consulting unit. Should irregularities be determined, corrective actions are implemented. If there are no irregularities during the pre-certification audit, the office may apply for certification. For that purpose a unit authorised to grant quality certificates is selected to carry out the certification audit and confirm the fulfilment of the standard requirements by the certificate granting. The quality certificate is a document confirming the capability of the office to ensure the proper quality of the provided services.

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