QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND CITIZENS’ SATISFACTION - SELECTED PRACTICE OF CZECH PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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Abstract
The first part of the paper summarizes the specifics of quality in public administration. The second part introduces reflections of quality management in Czech public administration reform (within its policy context), and in real administrative practices of territorial self-governments which have been implementing various quality management instruments apparently more intensively than the central administration level.

1. Introduction – specifics of quality management in public administration

The quality is omnipresent regardless how hard it is to define it in a universally acceptable way because of its summarizing features. Service quality has become a key marketing tool for achieving competitive differentiation and fostering customer loyalty according to Zeithaml and Parasuraman (2004). Based on empirical findings and the conceptual development of service quality, quality is now often believed to be the antecedent of satisfaction particularly through positive quality judgements of consumers according to Schneider and White (2004). Similar ideas can be heard not only in the private sector where quality is vital in order to survive the competition, apparently they are emerging more and more also in the public sector, one can read about them in public administration reform strategies, some speak even about the quality movement in Europe (Löffler and Vintar, 2004).

In public administration, the concept of competitiveness may be problematic because of the nature of the administrative context. Public administration represents a social, inter-sectoral and multidisciplinary phenomenon that is different from private administration in a certain respect. Public administration consists of a large group of institutions and a vast amount of activities of societal management and coordination of the executive power. The main function of public administration is to guarantee and therefore to manage the realization of functions that are assigned to public sector by political decision-making which is not always stable, or innovative. Administrative activities are decided politically and exercised by a specific group of employees (civil servants) on the basis of law that prescribes and also limits the scope of managerial practices and the extent of possible competition in service delivery. Although some claim that the concept of political and administrative dichotomy (separation) is outdated (e.g. Hughes, 2003) it may be apparent in administrative contexts of post-communist countries which have not always represented a systemic part of comparative public administration studies yet.

According to Caddy and Vintar (2002) efforts to improve quality in public administration are undertaken in the hope of achieving a number of tangible benefits like a culture of continuous improvement, better customer service, greater strategic thinking about missions and goals, or sustained levels of performance. Specifics of public administration influence concepts of quality that have been described and methodically elaborated in various quality management instruments for public authorities. The features of a negotiated concept of quality as described for example by Gaster and Squires (2003) is visible in various quality management instruments that have become a part of today’s official national lists which have been used also for purposes of national quality awards. The concept of negotiated quality tries to address the following key question of quality in the public sector:
“how to balance the complex needs, wants and demands of individuals, communities and society as a whole, with the capacity, resources, legal requirements and technical abilities of organizations and individuals responsible for achieving good quality services?” (Gaster and Squires, 2003, p. 42). Analogies of this question are reflected in various quality management instruments like excellence models, Local Agenda 21, BSC etc., and require making public decision- and policy-making more participatory and inclusive for internal as well as external stakeholders.

Certainly the implementation of the negotiated concept of quality is demanding, some may claim even unrealistic, but for sure it is preventive. Similar approaches to quality integrate the focus of Beltrami’s three phases of the evolution of quality in the public sector (quality in the sense of respect of norms and procedures, quality in the sense of effectiveness, and quality in the sense of customer satisfaction; Löffler, 2002, pp. 21 - 23), go beyond them and question the real situation and limits of inclusiveness, transparency, rationality, legitimacy and thus also efficiency in public administration. The negotiated concept of quality directly springs from the specific accountability of the government - “Government must be accountable to the larger public interest – not merely the self-interest of individual customers or consumers”, as Denhardt and Denhardt point out (2003, p. 60). Flynn (2001, pp. 202 – 204) warns of contradictions in customer/citizen orientation when arguing potential tensions in a) relationships between the quality and budgets (where the word precondition is more suitable); b) relationships between politicians, service providers (and managers) and users; and c) potential trade offs between equity of treatment and customization. Milakovich (1995), who describes the concept of total quality public service, gives also notice that reconciling the competing demands of diverse interest groups forces politicians to reconcile multiple, vague and often conflicting goals. According to him, “often the net result is that nothing gets done” (p. 159).

The concept of negotiated quality is based on trust, participation accessible to stakeholders, necessary coordination and thus communication that try to explain and learn what is and what is not feasible. The concept depends on partnership rather than on strict enforcement by those entrusted with public power from the supply-centred view. It also requires surveying and evaluation of stakeholders’ needs. Similar principles establish basis of Denhardt and Denhardt’s New Public Service (2003). Beam (2001, p. 32) warns that not all participation is meaningful and, thus, not all participations lead to the satisfaction of those affected nor to improving quality or increasing productivity – “meaningful participation occurs when the agency personnel and affected citizens coproducing the organization’s product have significant power in matters of central importance to them.” Flynn (2002) recommends considering the nature of the service² developing and maintaining a relationship which gives the recipients or users of the service as much control over the service as they want (and can be allowed to have). He also discusses the opinion of Willcox and Harrow that service can be more responsive if there is a consumer relationship than if the relationship is one of the dependency. Flynn also warns that some managers use the fact that a service is defined by law, as a reason for not allowing the users of the service to have a choice.

When discussion about specifics of quality management in public administration is spreading out, one must be aware of the fact that quality management instruments which have been modified for public authorities are not established on different basis than quality instruments of the private sector. They require real rather than formal systemic approach which takes into account internal as well as external stakeholders. Their general aim is to balance internal capacities of an organization with requirements and capacities of external environment which is traditionally elaborated in general management theories. The questions to which answers are needed are: How is quality defined? How is it measured? How is it put into practice? How is it maintained? Whose quality is it? (Gaster and Squires, 2003, p. 39).

² He differentiates services that are protective (fire, child protection); services concerned with organizing access to entitlements (social security); and services concerned with helping people to have fuller lives (adult education). (p. 191).
Particularly the last question of the ownership of the quality requires much efforts when addressing the previous questions in existing administrative cultures. Within public administration, particularly possible greater variability of expectations, which are discussed with regard to real practices in quality concepts, make the building of culture for continual quality improvements in public administration, which would address the questions, harder. Hypothetically following expectations may not be in accordance mutually also due to the rule of law requirements in the current European administrative space:

a) expectations of a citizen / client / user / customer;
b) expectations of a service provider (including possible varieties of expectations in subordination relationships within an individual organization and also within an administrative system);
c) expectations of a service designer or a regulator (including various expectations among the existing structure of European, international, national and sub-national institutions that are allowed to pass regulation),
d) other evaluator (e.g. international benchmarking researchers).

According to Beam (2001), First, “for an organization to satisfy those affected, their needs and wants must be ascertained,” (p. 6), and “in addition to listening to what the affected people say, accurate assessment of needs and wants require researching what they do.” (p. 33). Second, people practicing quality management shall resolve issues about participation by acquiring empirical data concerning the situation or problem according to him, including the intergovernmental dimensions. Such evaluation may reduce possible contextual collision as described by Heeks (2004) with regard to e-government systems.

Löffler and Vintar (2004) claim it is necessary to look under the surface of the quality rhetoric in order to find the extent to which words are translated into practice. The practice of quality management itself plays a very important part of discussions. In this respect, some speak about the absence of robust public deliberation of representative democracies in twentieth-century and their ill-suit to active citizens’ participation (Blumler and Coleman, 2001; Coleman and Gotze, 2001) referring to requirements of a more deliberative view of active citizenship as described in writings of Burke, Dahl, Habermas and Rawls, comparative reports and governmental reports. Attempts to increase legitimacy of current representative systems, their purposes, goals and results are clearly visible also in the case of utilization of information and communication technologies (ICT) (Špaček, 2008a).

The paper introduces reflections of quality management
a) in Czech public administration reform - within its policy context, and
b) in real administrative practices. The paper focuses on initiatives of the Ministry of Interior which is the central authority responsible for quality promotion in public administration in the Czech Republic, and on activities of territorial self-governments which are implementing various quality management instruments apparently more intensively than the central administration.3

The paper emphasizes particularly one aspect of quality negotiation processes – the approach to citizen satisfaction in the Czech administration context. The research, the partial results of which are proposed for presentation and elaboration in the paper, is carried out within the framework of the project of the Czech Science Foundation no. 402/07/1486 “Measurement of Citizens’ Satisfaction with Public Sector Services as Integral Part of Quality Management in Public Sector Organizations”.

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3 Currently The Ministry is a central governmental authority for home affairs, in particular for: a) public order and other matters relating to internal order and security within its defined scope of competence, including supervision of road traffic safety fire protection; b) the right of association and the right of assembly, and registering organisations with international links; c) public collections; d) state, economic and service secrets; maintaining archives; and d) the territorial structure of the state; e) travel documents, granting residence to foreign nationals and granting refugee status; f) the national border, surveying of the national border, maintenance and documentation; g) national symbols; h) first names and surnames, Registers of Vital Records; nationality, identity documents, reporting residence, the register of inhabitants, and birth (personal) identification numbers; i) firearms and ammunition.
2. Quality and citizens satisfaction in the context of Czech public administration reform

2.1 Central government approach to quality management in public administration

Czech central government has not been passive in promotion of quality management in general, neither in public administration. Building on the categorisation of roles which central government has adopted in relation to the promotion of quality management, as proposed by Löfler and Vintar (2004), we may say that the Czech approach is more converging to the “hands-on approach” rather than to control-oriented approach which is discussed by them with regard to the UK and performance management monitoring of the Audit Commission. Czech central government has promoted some instruments, but had not perceived quality instruments group as limited only to them. There have been launched also central government’s initiatives in the Czech Republic similar to some of those enumerated in the Irish practice, but nothing like the Irish Public Service Management Act of 1997, which was based on the Strategic Management Initiative with its requirement on Quality Customer Service and Customer Action Plan, has been approved. Leading principles of Czech central government approach to quality management in public administration, which are not always easy to categorize as Löfler and Vintar do, can be summarized as follows:

- **Governments approved national policy and strategies on quality support in public administration**

European trends of quality management in public administration were introduced very briefly in the *Conception of Public Administration Reform* which was “taken into account” by government in 1999. The main aim of the conception was to propose alternatives of territorial public administration organization in order to solve the constitutional creation of 14 regions (including the capital city of Prague) in 1997 without any further specification of their responsibilities. Proclamations on quality have been brought to the stage particularly by the later *National policy on quality support in the Czech Republic* (“National quality policy”) which was approved by the resolution of government no. 458 in 2000. This policy referred to quality initiatives in private and public sector and was elaborated in twinning expert cooperation with the European Union. The policy was also approved in order to harmonize Czech practice with international initiatives (including the European Charter of Local Self-Government which was incorporated into Czech law in 1999). In this era of the Czech candidateship to the EU, the European pressures were often stressed in the National quality policy, particularly the European quality charter, role of education, benchmarking and learning from good practices, the EFQM excellence model together with the ISO 9000 series were among the most emphasized in the policy. Special attention was given to quality support in the army in order to harmonize this area with quality assurance in NATO which the country entered in 1999.

On the basis of the 2000’s National quality policy the *Council of the Czech Republic for Quality* (thereinafter “Council for quality”) was established within the responsibility of the Ministry of Industry and Trade in order to coordinate activities of “state and non-state bodies” within the area of the quality policy, and to help the Government as a consultative, initiative and coordination body. Members of the Council for quality shall include ministerial deputies, representatives of central standardisation authorities, non-governmental and non-profit organisations from the field of quality and of trade unions. Besides the Council for Quality also the *National Information Centre for Quality Support* (“NIS-PJ”, later renamed as “NIS-PK”) was created together with its *Consultation Centre for Statistical Methods*. Also a civic association *Czech Association for Quality* was created in order to support the quality practice in the private as well as in the public sector.

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In 2002, the government approved the **Czech Quality Program** (CzQ) by its resolution no. 685 which also emphasized the role of consumer protection in accordance with the former **Conception of Consumer Policy** of the Ministry of Industry and Trade for the period 2001 – 2005. This initiative referred particularly to the assurance and inspection role of public administration, not to quality in public administration itself and will not be more discussed in the paper.

Quality management in public administration was highlighted also in the period of project management in “reform and modernization” of central administration level which started in March 2003 when the government approved its resolution no. 237 on the **Process and main directions of reform and modernization of central state administration**. This document repeated most of aims declared by previous governments and its contempt is still echoed in initiatives of the current government that are introduced below. For example the project C.1 required the implementation and development of quality management in central state administration level. This project presumed two phases of its realization – it was supposed that managers of central authorities would be educated and trained during the first phase and Common Assessment Framework methodology and benchmarking would be implemented during the second phase. In 2003 also the **Government’s Council for Sustainable Development** was established by the government’s resolution no. 778. In April 2004 its working group on Local Agenda 21 was appointed in order to make Local Agenda 21 a common instrument of Czech public administration. This group produced a list of binding criteria for evaluation of Local Agenda 21 practice in the Czech Republic.

Relatively strong policy focus of the centre on **improving quality of public services** was apparent in the Czech policy particularly in the period 2000 - 2005. In December 2000, the government set requirement in its **Updated preview of legislative work for 2002** to solve legislatively the planned abolishment of district authorities, which had been executed state administration in districts since 1990, and to address the transfer of their competencies to municipal and regional self-government which have been executed self-government as well as state administration in accordance with the created joined model of public administration in the territory (in case of municipalities since 1990, in case of regions since 2001). In February 2002 a **Bill on standardization of selected public services** was approved by the government by its resolution no. 164. The Bill attempted to address the situation when no legal definition of “a public service” and “parameters of availability of public services” were not incorporated in Czech legislation. The Bill defined public services (its text stressed several times that it was doing so in accordance with prepared European Comission’s directive of services provided in public interest) as services created, organized or regulated by public authorities in order to ensure their delivery in the way that is supposed as necessary to satisfy needs of society while respecting the principle of subsidiarity at the same time. The Bill aimed at the prescription of the list of services and quantitative and qualitative criteria of their provision that would be binding for municipalities and regions (“guarantors”) as well as the mechanism of control. The Bill prescribed standards of the following public services: a) social services, b) medical rescue service, c) anti-alcoholism and anti-toxicomanic catch stations, d) accessing of museum and fine arts collections, e) librarian and information services, f) transportation service. Other public services were supposed to be left for specification by (existing and future) special acts or were not appropriate for standardization according to the submitters of the Bill.

The resolution from February 2002 required the prime minister, minister of labour and social affairs, minister of transport and communications, minister of culture and minister of healthcare together with minister of interior to elaborate and submit bills on necessary legislation till the end of July 2002. The resolution stated that till the end of November 2002 an analysis of possibilities of public services standardization had to be elaborated and submitted to government. In December 2002 the government realized that the deadline was set too tight and expanded the first deadline till the end of March 2003 and the second deadline till the end of May 2003 (by its resolution no. 1259). Ministry of Interior elaborated the **Methodical Guide for Public Services Analysis** in order to secure uniform steps and to stipulate the schedule of necessary activities. The ministry was criticizing cooperation of some ministries, because it obtained last supplementary documents necessary for the

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5 The Proposal of Program for Support of quality goods selling and quality services delivery.
analysis at the end of April 2003. The analysis of possibilities of public services standardization was
submitted to government in late July 2003. Because of complaints of some ministries, the Ministry of
Interior was asked to change the analysis and resubmit it in August. The final version of the analysis
was “taken into account” by the government by its resolution no. 848/2003 which also required a
strategy for support of public services availability and quality to be elaborated till the end of March
2004.

This strategy was “taken into account” by the government in September 2004 (by its resolution
no. 824) which enumerated the list of 69 public services “appropriate for standardization”. The
strategy was based on a questionnaire prepared for all 13 regions (their regional offices6, except
Prague), in the case of municipalities a questionnaire was prepared and sent to 728 municipal offices
of municipalities existing in one region (Region Vysočina). The survey focused on social services,
healthcare, education, culture, transportation, post and telecommunication services, environment,
services of technical infrastructure and information services, and discussed also potential of various
quality methods (EFQM Excellence Model, ISO norms, Common Assessment Framework,
benchmarking and BSC, regional standards of social services approved by the community planning
initiatives). Submitting report of the strategy required modification of previous documents and
recommended further financial supporting of the benchmarking initiatives in the future period 2005 –
2008 (see below).

The resolution approved future financial support of the benchmarking project and prioritized central
support of creation of voluntary associations of municipalities that would address partly the situation
when more than 6200 municipalities represented a basic administrative level which had less then 500
inhabitants in 60 % of cases (this form of voluntary cooperation was later called as “association of
municipalities” as elaborated by working group on small municipalities of the Ministry of Interior, but
has not been incorporated into the legislation so far). Till the end of 2005, a specification of
information system on availability and quality of local public services was awaited. The proposal was
elaborated in cooperation with VŠB – Technical University of Ostrava. Reports of the Ministry of
Interior, which were summarizing progress of Czech public administration reform till the end of
20067, did not speak about the destiny of the public services standardization project. They only
mention the cooperation within the Visegrad group that aimed at elaboration of analyzes
Standardization of public services with regard to use of modern management methods and Analysis of
responsibilities of local and regional authorities in V4 countries. No such analyses have been
published and no act on public service standardization has been approved and entered into force so far.
The issue of standardization of public services and evaluation of public services quality has become
topical at least partially among initiatives of the current government.

Public administration quality management is incorporated into the broad strategy of the current
government (which gave its resignation in March 26, 2009) Efficient Public Administration And
Friendly Public Services – Strategy on Realization of Smart Administration in the Period 2007 – 2015
(“Smart Administration strategy”). This strategy was approved by the government in July 2007. Some
claims that the Smart Administration strategy is just a special-purpose text elaborated with regard to
requirements of European structural funds rather that the real strategy in its nature (eStát, 2007). The
strategy works with a hexagon of public administration, among its pillars ICTs can be found together
with legislation, organization of its execution, citizen, bureaucrat and finances and also with the
emphasize on good governance principles. According to the “situation analysis” of the strategy the
central administrative level is characterized by very limited application of quality management
methods like CAF, EFQM, benchmarking and the like, and also by insufficient definition of
responsibility for quality outputs. Among the key issues of self-government particularly deficiencies in
managerial capacities of small municipalities, heterogeneous quality of services and low pace of
innovation are emphasized, but only in brief and qualitative terms.

According to its authors, the strategy is incorporating following key principles: openness and

6 Regional offices and municipal offices are fundamental executive bodies of Czech regions and municipalities,
which carries out tasks from the both fields of responsibilities (state administration and self-government).
transparency, accountability, productivity and effectiveness and also credibility and reliability. The strategy also highlights the role of regulatory reform and reducing administrative burden. It also requires practice of strategic planning in the state administration. The strategy requires implementation of quality management systems in public administration and sociological surveying of citizens’ satisfaction with public administration operation, also continual monitoring of quality and performance of public administration shall serve the realization of its aims. The text also highlights experiences with quality management implementation in self-governments. Effectiveness of these partial initiatives shall be measured against indicators – the strategy speaks about “indicators of output” (the number of implemented instruments, number of public authorities with implemented quality systems) and about “indicators of impact” (reduction of operational costs, increase of client satisfaction). No further specification of targets, accountabilities, deadlines and costs is defined in the strategy. Specific deadlines and accountabilities are not specified in the strategy. Its part on evaluation of public administration performance claims a bit contradictory that “public administration can be considered as public good and it is not possible to identify individual customers, thus evaluation of public administration operation can be based only on subjective indicators which express attitudes of citizens (e.g. confidence in public authorities, satisfaction with services)” (point 3.2.4; p. 30).

The Smart Administration strategy presupposed that the Group for Smart Administration Coordination would be appointed which shall also inform semi-yearly and annually about the progress. Semi-yearly reports shall be submitted to the Board of deputies (of central authorities, the Union of towns and municipalities of the Czech Republic, the Association of Regions of the Czech Republic and the Economic Chamber) for regulatory reform and efficient public administration with the minister of interior as its chairmen. Annual reports shall be submitted to governments. No such reports have been made available to public so far.

The strategy also assumed that the project schedule would be elaborated within 3 months after the approval of the strategy. The complete schedule of “smartening of administration” has not been published yet. In April 2008, the complementary Strategy for development of services for information society was approved which is currently supplemented by the Integrated Operation Programme (“IOP”, approved by the European Commission on 20 December 2007) and the Strategy of eGovernment Implementation in a Territory.

Particularly four priorities of the IOP relates directly to quality management in public administration: a) Priority 1a: Modernising public administration – Convergence Objective, b) Priority 1b: Modernising public administration – Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective, c) ICT for territorial public administration, and d) Priority 3: Improving the quality and accessibility of public services – Convergence Objective.

The primary goal of priorities 1a, 1b and 2 is to create a more efficient public administration system. This also includes modernising public services at local and national level through greater use of ICTs that can bring public administration closer to citizens. Definition of aims of these priorities also speaks about implementation of quality management systems and monitoring of public administration performance. Priority 3 aims to improve the quality and availability of public services in the following areas: social services (including social integration of some minorities), public health, employment and security, and risk prevention. These services are of great benefit to Czech citizens, and their efficient delivery depends on good quality public administration at state, regional and municipal levels. Breakdown of finances of the IOP’s e-government components is summarized in the following Table 1.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Priority Axis</th>
<th>EU Contribution</th>
<th>National Public Contribution</th>
<th>Total Public Contribution</th>
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<tr>
<td>1a: Modernising public administration – Convergence Objective (including 1.1a: Development of information society in public administration)</td>
<td>310 602 133</td>
<td>54 812 141</td>
<td>365 414 274</td>
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</table>
1b: Modernising public administration – Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective  
(including 1.1b: Development of information society in public administration)  

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<td></td>
<td>23 892 472</td>
<td>4 216 319</td>
<td>28 108 791</td>
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2: ICTs for territorial public administration  
(including 2.1: Introduction of ICTs in territorial public administration)  

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<td></td>
<td>170 831 173</td>
<td>30 146 678</td>
<td>200 977 851</td>
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3: Improving the quality and accessibility of public service  

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>545 106 743</td>
<td>96 195 308</td>
<td>641 302 051</td>
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Source: Czech Republic - Operational Programme 'Integrated Operational Programme'.

For the creation of Smart Administration in the Czech Republic also the practice of Methodology on inclusion of public in preparation of government’s document, which was initiated by former government in 2006 (by its resolution no. 657), but approved by the current government in August 2007 (by its resolution no. 879), is important. The methodology prescribes general principles of inclusion of the public like partnership, equal inclusion, information in advance enabling distant access to documents, clearness and comprehensibility, transparency and necessity to give reasons, sufficient inclusion, respecting alternative forms of inclusion, estimation of inclusion costs, annual reporting. The methodology is currently a complement of the document General principles of regulatory impact assessment (RIA) which was approved by government resolution no. 877 in August 2007, but which was required also by the mentioned project management initiative of the former government. Czech RIA methodology that is incorporated into Legislative rules of the Government requires that consultations with public shall become one form of inclusion of public within the process of evaluation of legislation proposals, submitters of regulation shall prove they consult a public before they submit a final proposal.

In 2008 the National quality policy was updated by the document Strategy of National Quality Policy in the Czech Republic for the period 2008 – 2013. This document also speaks about further improvements of public services and public management quality (including the methodical help of the Ministry of Interior, organization of national quality conference and quality awards) and also about further developments of administrative burden reduction which shall refocus on burden on citizens according to current initiatives (Fejtek, 2009).

Recently the Ministry of Interior’s organization structure for the public administration area has been reorganized and new Department for efficient public administration has been created and is responsible for international cooperation and human resources management, process optimization and regulatory reform and quality in public administration. It is based on transfers of competences in the field of public administration from the Office of the government to the Ministry of Interior realized in November 2006 (after the change of government).8

- Central government has avoided being highly directive and top-down.

Czech central government has avoided being directive and top-down in its promotion of quality management in public administration. No quality instrument is obligatory for public authorities and the quality management in public administration is based on voluntariness. The only directive feature that has been of a normative nature is the stress on the need to improve the quality of public administration which has been emphasized by introduced quality policies (if we abstract from quality requirements of financial management stipulated particularly by budgetary rules and financial control provisions, duties related to free access to public information, qualitative requirements imposed on information systems, public procurements and many others). The top-down approach is apparent in

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various forms of methodical help as introduced below. Also bottom-up interactions emerged – e.g. in
the field of e-government where it is planned to improve the current practices of contact points
(the current Czech POINTs and future CzechPOINT@home) by incorporation of good practices of
municipal and regional self-governments’ projects (e.g. Virtuos, eObec) (Špaček, 2009). The top-
down and bottom-up meeting point is represented also in various consultations as required for example
by mentioned methodology of inclusiveness of public in decision-making processes or as it is
inevitable for central evaluation of planned, running or realized projects.

- Central government has been methodically coordinating quality management in public
administration.

Also the methodical guidance of the central government in public administration quality management
has been visible. Particularly the Common Assessment Frameworks (EIPA, 2002 and 2006) and
benchmarking have been methodically elaborated and promoted by the Ministry of Interior in the past,
but the official list of quality tools has been growing. The official guide-like information were
published on various official quality management websites – particularly on the web pages of the
Ministry of Interior, the National quality policy and the Czech Association for Quality.

On the web pages of the Ministry, special link to “Public administration modernization” existed which
contained also the link to “Quality in public administration”. Information published here was not
systematic and up-to-date till autumn 2007, however (Špaček, 2007a). They referred only to two
instruments – benchmarking and the CAF – and related projects. The link to the CAF led users to brief
information on its history and purpose which almost copied the EIPA’s introductory texts (EIPA,
2002). Besides, the practice of the instrument was briefly described, but the information referred only
to the practice made till 2005. According to the information of that time, in 2003, the CAF was
implemented by 3 public authorities (2 regional offices, 1 municipal office). In cooperation with the
Council of the Czech Republic for Quality this project was continuing also in 2004 when 26 territorial
self-governments took part in it (7 regional offices, 2 “magistrates”*, 17 municipal offices). The only
condition required for participation was the commitment to implement the CAF for 3 years which
should resulted in its establishment, approving of action plans on improvement and the proposal of self
evaluation system of participating public authorities. Three consultation days with experts were
funded for each of the participating authority. Experts assisted authorities in self-assessment, during
elaboration of the self-assessment report and of their action plans. In 2005 similar project was realized
and 23 public sector organisations took part in it (19 municipal offices, 1 regional office and 3
secondary schools).

Web pages of the Ministry of Interior contained also a link to Methodical guide of CAF (EIPA, 2002)
situated on the web pages of the National quality policy, but in that time they led to a downloadable
document with the old second version of translation of the EIPA’s 2002 guide, although the later third
version from October 2005 and also the Czech translation of the CAF 2006 were available on the
National quality policy’s website. Within the Quality in public administration section of the ministerial
information the rest of them referred to invitation to the 2nd National quality in public administration
conference (which was organised in December 2005), announcement of a declaration of the first year
of resort awards of the Ministry of Interior (2005) and similar announcement informing about 2006’s
3rd national quality conference which was in January 2007.

The content of information on the web pages of the Czech Association for Quality was similar – they
made methodical information on the CAF, benchmarking and also on the EFQM excellence model
available for their users. The web pages referred mainly to the period from 2003 to 2005, but included
also the year 2006 while informing about the project of the association and the ministry which dealt
with the CAF implementation within the central administration authorities (according to the
information only two out of 15 ministries and 11 other central authorities joined the project that time -
the Ministry of Finance and the Office of the government of the Czech Republic). Part of the web

* „Magistrát“ is a special name of a municipal office of statutory cities.
pages was also devoted to the benchmarking initiative and linked the users with the “CAF database” with the list of its 50 users (8 regional offices, 36 municipal offices, 2 municipal offices of the Municipal parts of Prague and 4 secondary education institutions)\(^{10}\). The list was not up-to-date that time, however, it did not refer for example to the Regional Office of the Olomoucký region which had implemented the CAF for the third time already in 2006. The list did not contain the Municipal office of Konice and Municipal office of Šlapanice which implemented the instrument in 2006 for the first time. Current informational content focus on the same quality instruments, including offered courses and seminars and also possibilities of managers and system certifications.

Current web pages of the Ministry of Interior offer up-to-date information. Within the sub-section “Public administration” of the menu “About us”, there is a link to “Promotion of quality implementation in public administration”\(^{11}\) which offers users to get to:

a) an article *Quality in public administration* published in a magazine Public administration (vol. 5, 2008) which summarizes the 4th National quality conference and related quality awards of the Ministry of Interior;

b) information about national conferences on quality in public administration. Here, users can download proceedings of conferences organized in 2009, 2008, 2007 and 2005, not from the 2006 (available information only introduces competing projects which were awarded during this conference\(^{12}\));

c) description of national quality in public administration awards organized by the Ministry of Interior;

d) links to international quality conferences (currently the links refer to 4th and 5th quality conferences in Tampere and Paris, here also the link to inclusion of public into preparation of government documents is accessible which raise a question about the system of information available on the web pages);

e) the section “Methods” (CAF, benchmarking, citizen charters), which are briefly introduced here, and links to further descriptions are available. Links refer to

- CAF 2002 and 2006 translations,

- the Benchmarking project which was firstly launched in the period 2002 – 2003 with the support of the British Know How Fund, Educational Centre for Public Administration and Statutory city of Ostrava focusing on delivery transportation and disposal of waste in 6 statutory cities (Ústí nad Labem, Plzeň, Jihlava, Pardubice, Ostrava and Havířov). In 2004 another benchmarking project was realized which focused on 29 administrative activities of 48 municipalities with extended competences\(^{13}\) and was funded by The Canadian Urban Institute (CUI) and The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). This project resulted in publication of *Benchmarking in public administration* and *Management of state administration processes* (summarizing the practice of the town Vsetín). More recent information about benchmarking project is not available on the web pages.

- other information on Citizen Charters. Users can get to information on the pilot project Citizen Charters launched in March 2006 and organized by former Department of public administration modernization of the Ministry of Interior. Ten institutions participated in the project according to available information (municipal offices of Chomutov, Pelhřimov and Vsetín, Czech Association of Nursing Services, Centre of social and healthcare services Poděbrady, Rest Home for Retired of Luhačovice, Library of Jiří Mahen Brno, Department of social affairs of the regional office of the

\(^{10}\) The list is currently available here - http://www.benchmarking.cz/caf/Urady/UradySeznam.aspx.

\(^{11}\) Within the structure of the available also links to Modernization of public administration (leading users to information about Smart administration strategy), Regulatory impact analysis (RIA) and Informatization exist which related to quality management (see http://www.mvcr.cz/verejna-sprava.aspx).


\(^{13}\) Municipalities with extended competences execute the largest amount of state administration in Czech municipal administration system. These municipalities represent the youngest category of municipalities that has been created in relation to the abolishment of district authorities and the transfer of their competencies to municipal level) since January 2003. Czech administrative system was introduced for example in Špaček, D., Špalek, J. Communication and Electronic Public Administration: Some Issues in the Context of the Czech System of Public Administration. In Nemec, J. (Ed.), Lessons and Recommendations for Improvement: Central and Eastern European Public Administration and Public Policy, Bratislava: NISPAcee 2007, pp. 217 – 238.
Region Zlín and Transportation company of the capital city of Prague). Participation was free and based on voluntariness. The project was realized with the expert support of the OECD’s SIGMA with Elke Löffler and Salvador Parrado as lecturers of 4 passed seminars.\(^{14}\)

Users of the Ministry’s web pages can get to the archived version of their previous form. Here, within the section „Quality in public administration“ they can also obtain publications Improving customer orientation through service charters (Löffler, Parrado and Zmeškal, 2007), Satisfaction measurement in public administration organizations (Půček, M. et al., 2005a) which introduces practices of the town Vsetin (and which was partly incorporated into the CAF 2002 methodical guide – Půček, M. et al., 2005b) as well as the publication Management of state administration processes (Půček and Kocourek et al., 2004) which is not downloadable from the current web pages (the link is not clickable as it is available on the archived form).

Besides the mentioned official translation of CAF’s methodologies, the web pages of the National quality policy contained for example the brochure that referred to a hypothetical case study of the CAF implementation and the use of the tool in various areas (in self-governments, schools or central administrative authorities). Also methodical guide to BSC or ISO norms (particularly the 9000’s serie) in public sector are available.\(^{15}\) Users can also download a handbook Models of Measurement and Improvement of Customers Satisfaction (Nenadál, J. et al., 2004) introducing methodologies related to customers as well as employees. Among the available service “Search for / Databases” special link to “Public administration” has been made available. Currently it refers to publications and links to other websites, but at the time of preparation of this article, only the links “magazine Modern municipality” and “European Institute of Public Administration” were working, the others (“Model EFQM within the project of Modernization of central state administration”, “Ministry of Interior – public administration”, “Project of Implementation of EFQM model by Police of the Czech Republic”) were not.

- There are several national quality awards in the Czech Republic organized according to the national quality policy during national conferences on quality in public administration.

Certain features of the “control-oriented approach” are embedded in various awards initiatives that have been realized in the Czech Republic. The text below introduces particularly the National Quality Award and Resort Awards of the Ministry of Interior which represent the most influential prizes that can be awarded in Czech public administration, although public managers can be awarded also a prize “Quality Manager of the Year” as organized by the Czech association for Quality (in 2009 the 8th year of this competition was announced\(^{16}\)).

The National policy on quality presupposes (since 2001) the National Quality Award within its instruments. Since 2006, this award has been separately specified for the private sector and public sector organisations (since 1995 similar award was described only for the purposes of private sector organisations). Since that time, candidates for the award from public sector organisations have been required to implement EFQM excellence model or the CAF instrument, since 2009 also the category Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been added. The Council of the Czech Republic for Quality is the announcer of the award, control body and it also appoints and examines evaluators of self-assessment reports and supplementary materials of applicants for the competition required for application for the award.

Similar platform is utilised in the case of the Resort Awards of the Ministry of Interior. In the case of 2005, 2006 and 2007’s ministerial awards competition, applicants were awarded in the following three categories during the national conferences on quality in public administration – “Organization that improves public service quality” (the bronze category), “Organisation of good public service” (the


\(^{15}\) See http://www.npj.cz/informacni-centrum/nabidka-publikaci/.

silver category), and the third category - “Resort award of the Ministry of Interior for an innovation in territorial public administration”.

1) The first award category (i.e. the bronze) required the true evidence on initial implementation of some of the standard instruments of public service quality improvement, e.g. the CAF, EFQM excellence model, ISO 9000 or 14000, BSC, benchmarking cycle or other instruments (in 2006 the level C of the Local Agenda 21 and community planning were added to the list that expressively enumerated the methods) which might lead to public service quality improvement. Organizations could be awarded even in the case of “modest results”.

2) The second award category (i.e. the silver) could be received by institutions which gave true evidence on

a) two years CAF implementation with the minimum score 2.4 in the final evaluation based on the Czech CAF methodology, or the minimum score 3.0 when calculated like in EIPA’s methodology (complex evaluation of 27 criteria);

b) EFQM implementation with the minimum score of 250 points;

c) benchmarking cycle realization and the compliance with 5 sub-criteria (plan of improvement; multi-criteria performance indicator higher than 0; positive results of realized employee and citizens/clients survey; action plan that clearly defines the area of change, goals, justification, concrete measures, time scale; innovative approach – at least one example of good practice);

or d) ČSN EN ISO 9001 certification, including the plan of improvement and positive results of employees and citizens/clients surveys.

For the purposes of 2006’s awards the requirements changed, as in the previous category due to the enumeration of the Local Agenda 21 in the list (level A or B was required together with the elaborated improvement action plan and positive results of citizen/customer and employee satisfaction measurement). The 2006’s award also required that for the purposes of this category self-assessment reports would be assessed by an external independent evaluator during the site visit, in the case of application of Local Agenda 21 implementation, applicants had to be evaluated by the Working group on Local Agenda 21 of the Government’s Council for Sustainable Development

3) Criteria of the third supplementary award category - The Award for innovation - referred to non-traditional solution that contributed to activities of authorities and public service delivery efficiency which may become good practice examples for other organisations. Self-assessment reports of assistants had to describe the status quo and characteristics reached in order to show improvements. An applicant was also required to present their practice during the national conference.

In 2008 requirements of the ministerial resort awards were modified and the golden category award “The Winner of National Quality Award” was initiated - since that time awards of the Ministry and National quality awards of the Council have been interconnected for the purposes of golden category awards. Particularly applicants implementing the CAF have had to meet stricter requirements since that time. Some expert external evaluators have been used in both competitions since that time. In 2008, first award category required that applicants were awarded the second award category previously and that they also implemented CAF 2006 (reaching at least 55 points during using the fine-tuned evaluation as described in this new methodology – EIPA, 2006). In the case of silver prize at least two years implementation of CAF was required together with the minimum score of 40 points based on the fine-tuned scoring, self-assessment report elaborated according to the CAF 2006 methodology, related action plan and proving of meeting the previous action plan on improvements. The bronze prize could be awarded if 25 total score was reached during CAF 2006 implementation regardless the way of giving scores (traditional or fine-tuned), applicants had to submit self-assessment reports as well as followed-up action plans. For the purposes of the 2008’s ministerial awards the EFQM excellence models was displaced, only applicants for the National quality award organized by the Council could be awarded in the case of implementation of this system.

In February 2009 the fifth national conference on quality in public administration was organized. Again, the EFQM excellence model was displaced. Among the list of expressively enumerated methods also the implementation of the environmental management Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) and its registration by the EMAS Agency was required. Propositions of the awards described only bronze, silver and innovation awards similarly to the awards scheme of 2008, the
golden category which was organized together with the competition National Quality Awards as in the previous year is not described in the awards specification.

Among the supplementary awards for example the “Open x Close” competition of the initiative Otevrete.cz is mediated (besides its evaluation Infoliga which is based on self-evaluation of meeting the duties prescribed by act on free access to information). These initiatives are organized by non-governmental sector however. The competition Open x Close is based on good and bad practices as nominated by the public. For example in 2008 competition (which is the last that has been organized so far) Building and Construction Authority of Magistrát (municipal office) of the city Karlovy Vary received the 1st prize “Closed” for its obstructions and continual disobeying of decisions made by superior state administration level. In 2006 the president of the regional office of the Jihomoravský region was awarded the 1st anti-prize for his public attack on an applicant during the press conference. Jihomoravský region obtained the bronze ministerial prize in 2005 and the silver prize in 2007, which raises questions about the quality culture and mechanism of awarding and displacement of quality prizes.

2.2 Quality management and citizen/consumer satisfaction in Czech territorial self-government

The concept of negotiated quality makes quality improvement a specific kind of participatory political process which necessarily requires evaluation of stakeholders’ needs in order to make decision- and policy-making evidence-based. Evaluation requirements may spring from legal definitions of self-government. Czech act on municipalities (act 128/2000) as well as the act on regions (act 129/2000) works with similar definition. Municipalities shall attend to the general development of their territory and to needs of their citizens. A municipality shall take care of development of its social services and shall satisfy needs of its citizens in accordance with local conditions and local customs. Similar provisions presuppose the knowledge of self-governments on needs of their citizens. This is supported also by general duty of members of municipal/regional council, which represent directly elected self-governamental bodies, to support the interests of citizens. Such requirements raise the importance of the notion of quality and its evaluation in the form of comparing expected and perceived aspects of public administration activities in their political and bureaucratic dimensions by their addressees / users.

There is no list published for example by the Ministry of Interior that would inform about practice of various quality methods in Czech public administration. Most probably it is also caused by the voluntariness of quality management tools implementation which caused problems for EIPA’s evaluation of the CAF use (EIPA, 2002 and 2005). In the national ministerial awards of 2005 – 2008, 113 participants were awarded 125 prizes, 20 public authorities participated twice, 8 public authorities took part in all competitions. Particularly municipalities with extended competences have been applying for quality awards. They mostly implemented the CAF also together with other management instruments. For example Neshybová (2009) summarizes the practice of applicants for ministerial awards from municipalities with extended competences by the following chart.
Chart 1 - Structure of methods used by municipalities with expanded competences which have applied for national ministerial quality awards from 2005 - 2007*

2.2.1 Common Assessment Framework in Czech self-government

Methodology of the CAF is described sufficiently in the literature (EIPA, 2002 and 2006) and will not be specified further here. The CAF’s core is found in the self-assessment technique against the evidence which shall describe the organization’s practice of nine boxes. In order to facilitate the self-evaluation, CAF’s methodologies 2002 and 2006 work with a list of more than 250 questions that can be possibly asked by self-assessment teams of public authorities. They can be also used for purposes of learning and comparisons with similar organisations. The CAF’s design apparently attempts to operationalize a systemic approach to management of public administration organizations that is based on negotiation with their external as well as internal stakeholders, as such it also requires participation of customers / citizens and measuring of their satisfaction with various aspects of public administration activities.

It was already mention that the list of about 50 institutions which have implemented the CAF is available through the web pages of the Czech Association for Quality. Albeit the list is still not sufficient, we used it as a basis of our research in spring, 2007, because the web search revealed that only one of 14 regions and 1 municipality published some results of their self-assessment activities based on the CAF (the methodology of 2002 in that time) on their web pages: a) Regional Office of Vysočina region (in this case only the 2005’s self-assessment report summarizing the second year of implementation was published, nor the earlier nor the later results were made accessible on the region’s website) and Municipal Office of the town Konice (in this case results of the first phase of the CAF implementation in 2006 were published electronically and later also results of the second and third self-evaluation based on the CAF 2006 methodology were also made available). Other information that refer to the practice of the CAF on the web pages regional and municipal authorities only contained newspapers-like brief information about the implementation without any link making a self-assessment report nor an action plan available.

That is why we asked selected regions and municipalities for participation in our research that would support comparative study of self-assessment reports produced during the CAF’s implementation. No similar analysis had been carried out so far in the Czech Republic in that time, only few cases that briefly described the CAF implementation in a single authority were available particularly as papers published in proceedings of national quality conferences. The EIPA’s two existing studies (2003, 2005) on the use of the CAF were insufficient for the purposes of our research. Therefore senior civil servants of municipal and regional offices were asked by e-mail if they were willing to take part in the research and provide us with self-assessment reports and related action plans. The e-mails were sent to
all of the 50 contact persons from the list and also to presidents of regional offices and their secretaries in the case of regions that were not included in the list (5 out of 14 regional offices). If regional offices had not implemented the CAF before their representatives were asked to state if they considered the implementation in future. Anonymity of results was stressed and guaranteed and therefore reflected in the text below. We gathered some self-assessment results of 18 institutions that implemented the CAF. Only one third of all 14 Czech regional offices and only one third of municipalities that were contacted by e-mail were willing to participate in the research. Some municipalities and regions provided us with self-assessment reports that describe the self-evaluation practice of more years of the CAF’s practice. Others provided us with only one self-assessment report referring to the first or the second year of self-assessment. The rest of institutions claimed the internal / confidential / intellectual property character of such documents and did not decide to publish them for the purposes of our research, the majority of them was willing to take part in potential telephone or personal interviews with researchers. In one case the representative answered one year after the email was sent without any previous reply.

We have already published some of the results of our analysis of gathered self-assessment reports that focused on human resources management and also on measuring customers/citizens satisfaction as described in the CAF’s 6.1 and 6.2 group of criteria and their examples (in English see e.g. Špaček, 2008b). According to the CAF’s 2002 methodology, the term customer/citizen is used to emphasize the dual relationship between the public administration and, on the one hand, the users of public services and, on the other hand, all the members of the public, who as citizens and taxpayers have a stake in the services and their outputs (EIPA, 2002, p. 54). Customers are usually understood as clients visiting the bodies of municipalities in order to arrange some administrative formalities. Citizens are considered as those, who do not necessarily visit public authorities, but whose quality of life may be influenced by decision-making of public authorities. We may summarize some of our results that focus on parts of gathered self-assessment reports dealing with evidence and scoring of 50 criteria (EIPA’s CAF 2002 “examples”) of participatory features of municipal decision-making and approaches of 12 municipalities to measuring of customers/citizens satisfaction as follows:

• Analysis showed that all surveyed reports of municipalities and regions worked with the CAF’s example questions as with more or less perfect criteria, they did not design their own criteria. All self-assessment teams considered the group of examples given by EIPA’s methodology as enumerating every item against which the practice had to be assessed. Because the scoring of individual examples shall reflect the amount of evidence describing their practice it is more interesting to survey what comments and evidence self-assessments teams gave within the evidence. One must be cautious when commenting the published scoring, because individual scores of examples usually represents a result of consensus-seeking among members of the CAF-team. The points given to examples represent the average. In the case of surveyed Czech municipalities, they resulted from opinions of teams comprising from 7 to 13 members.

• In the case of the CAF’s criterion 2.1a Identifying all relevant stakeholders, among the most used evidence (which can be linked more easily to all stakeholders rather than to citizens) particularly the following comments were used by self-evaluators: 1) existence of a strategy of municipal development (which was approved by 8 municipalities and all of them were passed already in the first phase of the CAF according to gathered self-assessment reports) and 2) databases of individual departments of municipal offices (4 municipalities) which are up-dated only ad hoc according 4 self-assessment teams. Only 3 self-assessment teams specified further individual categories of municipal stakeholders and 2 of them warned that there was not a perfect list of stakeholders available for them even during the second year of self-evaluation. Two municipalities approved plan of health (as a result of their participation in Local Agenda 21 initiative introduced below), two municipalities stressed the role of the organizational rules for the purposes of identification of stakeholders. Other evidence appeared only once among self-assessment reports of individual municipalities (information of social department of municipal office, process maps, partnership project). One self-assessment team only emphasized the role of legal provisions among the evidence – “we come out from requirements of the act on municipalities”. 
The criterion 2.1b refers to Systematic gathering information about stakeholders and their needs and expectations by organising appropriate surveys of customers/citizens, employees, society and government. It may be directly interlinked with other criteria from results described by the CAF. Four self-assessment teams explicitly highlighted that they gathered information, but particularly on ad hoc basis according to needs of decision-making bodies of municipalities (particularly those of political nature) in the field of self-government, or when needed so for quality exercise of their state-administration tasks. The comments show that thanks to the implementation of the CAF, some municipalities have started with measurement of citizens/customers satisfaction. Among the evidence particularly the following comments were the most frequent: (existence of) opinion polls and surveying citizens opinions by questionnaire (6 municipalities experienced this instrument already in the first phase according to their self-assessment reports, 9 municipalities confirm the practice during the second phase of evaluation, only one municipality explicitly warns of low participation of citizens in surveys); meetings with the public (including briefings) (5 municipalities), round tables realized within running projects (including the Local Agenda 21 initiative and community planning of social services) (4 municipalities), public meetings of the council and meetings of its consultative bodies (4 municipalities). Other evidence emerged mostly individually – e.g. discussions in local press (2), expert magazines (1), registering of petitions and complaints (2). Only two self-assessment teams specify the ways of gathering the information more deeply.

In the case of the criterion 2.1d - Regularly evaluating the quality of information and the way it is gathered, three self-assessment teams explicitly stated that information quality could not be considered as systematic and regular. The analysis of CAF-teams’ comments of other municipalities did not reveal more progress in their practice. Regular questionnaire surveying citizens/customer satisfaction as well as evaluation of complaints were mentioned only in 2 cases.

CAF 2002’s criteria of the sub-group 4.2 (Develop and implement partnerships with the customers/citizens) directly relate to customers/citizens. Considering all gathered data, the average scoring of the whole sub-category in three years was following: 2.47 → 2.65 → 2.80, i.e. the initial phase was perceived as somewhere in between Doing and Checking and as slowly converging to reviewing of what had been implemented in the third phase. The speed of convergence to “Checking” between the first and the second phase of CAF’s implementation was even slower when we compared average scoring of municipalities, which provided as with self-assessment reports describing the first two, or all three phases of implementation (2.36 → 2.51).

The requirement to involve customers/citizens in political decision-making processes (e.g. consultation groups, surveys, opinion polls) is incorporated in the criterion 4.2b. The average rating of this criterion was following (considering those, who provided us with more self-assessment reports): 2.00 → 2.24 → 2.43. Self-evaluators perceived the practice as more converging to implementation rather than to reviewing of the practice. In the evidence particularly following comments were among the more frequent: participation on meetings of the municipal council and consultative and initiative bodies of the council and also of the board (the case of all 12 municipalities, 4 municipalities underlined the approval of rules of the meetings and 3 underlined to possibility of their citizens participate on deliberations considering the strategical plan, or the plan of territorial development); surveys and questionnaires (9 municipalities, only 3 self-assessment reports enumerated topics of surveying, only in one case electronic form was underlined); round tables and public hearings (4); and announcements made in local television or newspapers (3). Other evidence was not frequent among self-assessment reports (this was also the case of Local Agenda 21 initiative, special mail-box for complaints and proposals, or community planning of social services). One municipality highlighted the right of citizens to use elections for changing the situation. One self-assessment team warned of low willingness of citizens to participate in decision-making.

Criteria of the sub-group 5.2 - Developing and delivering services and products by involving the customers/citizens - form another perspective of partnership with customers and citizens. In the case of criterion 5.2a - Involving customers/citizens in the design and improvement of services and products (e.g. by means of inquiries concerning which services or products are wished and useful), gathered data showed progress perceived by self-evaluators which gain 3 in average
when considering all municipalities (2.30 → 2.42 → 3.00). When we take into account only those who provided us with more self-assessment reports and also exclude one municipality with 0 scores during both of the first two phases, the averages of the first two phases are 2.38 and 2.75. The majority of evidence commented the existence of certain kind of surveying - opinion polls and questionnaires related to satisfaction of citizens/ customers were used by 9 municipalities according to the self-assessment reports, but only 2 reports specified the object of surveying. One municipality underlined the role of ISO 9001 certification for good practice of the criterion. Two other most frequent comments on evidence spoke about meetings of the council (6 municipalities according to the reports), meetings with the public or roundtables (4) and local newspapers (4). Self-assessment teams of 3 municipalities gave comments on e-discussion forums. Other examples of comments were fragmented among all gathered individual reports and occurred mostly once or twice (e.g. special box for proposals and complaints, citizens’ participation on designing strategic documents and action plans of a municipality, internal directive on continual improvement, e-surveying on the municipal web pages, teams of Healthy city project and of community planning of social services project, the role of ISO 9001).

The second criterion of the subgroup requires practice of involving customers/citizens and other stakeholders in the development of quality standards for services, products and information. The average scoring was relatively low in all gathered self-assessment reports (1.73 → 2.07 → 2.50) and even lower in the case of municipalities that provided us with more than one report (1.58 → 1.80 → 2.50). Particularly the possibilities of stakeholders to take part in activities of consultative and initiative bodies were emphasized in the given evidence (8 municipalities). Other 20 expressed examples of comments were fragmented among all gathered individual reports and occurred mostly once.

The evidence was very fragmented also in the case of criterion 5.2d Involving customers/citizens in the design and development of information sources and channels. Mainly the used information sources and channels rather than the involvement were stressed in the evidence. Particularly the role of local newspapers (7 municipalities), municipal web-pages (6), public polls and questionnaires (5) and deliberation meetings with the public and roundtables (4), meetings of the municipal council (3), official notice board (3), regional TV (3), municipal information centre (3) were underlined more frequently by self-assessment teams in case of this criterion. Other forms of evidence (from the total 28 given comments) occurred mostly once (e.g. e-discussions, local radio, internal directive on continual improvement, rules for ensuring the access to information, PR officer, free telephone number). Similar approach to evidence was apparent in the case of criterion 5.2e Ensuring appropriate and reliable information, assistance and support to customers/citizens, although the average given score was relatively high here.

Practice of the criterion 5.2g and its scoring was probably influenced by the legal duties (particularly of those prescribed by the administrative procedure act). Developing sound response and complaint management systems and procedures were linked particularly with existence of internal directive for handling petitions and complaints (11 self-assessment teams used similar the comment, 9 teams stated examples of evaluation of their content by special department of their municipal office, special employee, during meetings of the municipal council or during deliberations of managers of municipal office). Only one self-assessment team linked the evidence with practice of surveying citizens/customers’ satisfaction.

- Scores of the subgroup 6.1 Results of customer/citizen satisfaction measurement were relatively low during the first phases of the CAF 2002 implementation and the average 0.92 indicates that the practice of customer/citizen satisfaction measurement was limited as perceived by CAF-teams during the first self-assessments. Only one municipality scored more than 1 (2.7) in the first phase, its CAF-team assessed particularly the existence of a study on public opinion. On the other hand, CAF-team of another municipality informed about the questionnaire survey, but gave only 1 point in the first self-assessment, “because the direct feedback on the practice of the authority with concrete measurable results was carried out for the first time”. The average scoring of the second and the third self-assessment was 2.07 and 2.73, indicating the perceived shift from “Results show modest progress” closer to the practice characterized as “Results show substantial progress” as presupposed by the CAF’s Results panel. But the analysis indicated that CAF-teams more probably linked the score with the progress of measurement rather than with progress with
results. This was also the case of evidence stated during the first self-assessments. According to surveyed reports, the measurement was carried out and some results were available to CAF-teams only in the case of 4 municipalities during the first self-assessments based on CAF. This was in less than the half of all 9 municipalities that provided us with reports on the first self-assessment. Analysis of the evidence revealed that the measuring was carried out in 8 municipalities in the second phase, but the progress could be linked only with one municipality, because other municipalities either measured the satisfaction already or only provided us with reports on their second self-assessments. The level of specification of measurement practices was very low among the given evidence. Only three CAF-teams linked the score with more specific evidence with regard to almost each example enumerated in the methodology with regard to the sub-group 6.1.1., but one of the CAF-teams copied the results in the following phase. Analysis clearly shows that we cannot anticipate similar evidence given to examples which scored similarly in surveyed reports of municipalities. Two municipalities scored 0 in both years of self-assessments which raise questions about continuous developments as presupposed by CAF’s authors. The scoring average can be again only illustrative because it is not clear if all the CAF-teams understood the meaning of individual examples similarly during their scoring, which may be partly revealed by questioning the given evidence. Only 2 CAF-teams gave points to individual examples of the sub-group 6.2.1 and only one of them followed the approach in the case of all sub-groups. The majority of teams gave points to the whole subgroups 6.x.x. Comments on evidence were not linked with results of satisfaction measurement as well as the existence of a systemic set of internal indicators in vast majority of surveyed cases. Evidence referred mostly to possibilities of citizens to use various tools rather than being related to opinions of their users. Such practices are acceptable in the case of CAF enablers’ criteria, but not in the case of criteria of results.

Also self-assessment reports we received from 5 regions showed that their self-assessment teams perceived highest deficits particularly in their practices of citizens/customers satisfaction measurement. Two regions did not carry out the measurement during the first year of CAF implementation and did not progress even in the second year (Špaček, 2007b). Analysis of self-assessment reports of regions also discovered that one region copied parts of the self-assessment report produced by a CAF team of another region, once even without changing the name of original region. This may indicate a possible detrimental effect of the methodology on the creativity of CAF-teams as criticized for example by Zorn, Page and Cheney (2000).

All gathered reports describe self-evaluation based on CAF 2002. Currently only two municipalities publish self-assessment reports based on CAF 2006 methodology and related action plans on their web pages – Konice17 and Jablunkov18. Konice was among the group of municipalities which did not realize measurement of citizens/customers satisfaction even in the second year of the CAF’s implementation. According to its self-assessment report which describes the second round of the CAF, the measurement was to be realized at the end of 2007 within the initiative of Olomoucký region that was launched in order to promote quality management tools in municipalities of the region. The report on third self-evaluation, which is the last published so far, states the measurement was realized among the evidence. It informs about 120 interviews made with citizens, but no information about the methodology of interviews is given in the self-assessment report.

It is possible to obtain a Report on clients satisfaction measurement by the Municipal office of Konice (Štainer, Ryšavý and Zmeškal, 2008) which was elaborated within the project Quality management systems implementation in municipal offices of Olomoucký region and the project Quality of management in municipal offices of Moravskoslezský region and its improvement. The projects apparently attempted to improve and unify the practice of client satisfaction measurement carried out by municipalities of the two regions during their CAF implementation. Measurement was focused more on clients – users of services of municipal offices - rather than on citizens and was realized in 12

towns of Olomoucký and Moravskoslezský region from November 2007 till January 2008, 4730 interviews were included in the final analysis in which CAF teams of the municipalities also participated.

The report describes the practice of the project, including the evaluation of frequency of clients’ visits of various departments of municipal offices (which do not always have the same organizational structure) as well as the use of other channels for interactions with municipal offices (telephone, post, e-mail, web pages) – e.g. real use of the internet is only at the beginning according to the report. It also claims that satisfied clients appreciate municipal offices much higher than clients whose procedures remained pending. Its text also warns that surveys which are realized when clients exit an authority can be misleading to a certain extent, because some individuals may arrange their interactions with public authorities by e-mail or phone, some administrative activities are not solved within an authority, but “in the field” where civil servants go up to (e.g. in the case of departments for environment, social services or departments of construction authorities). The report also recommends that surveys should differentiate also purposes of clients’ visit (some come as citizens, others as representatives of businesses, public authorities, non-profit institutions etc.). Therefore labels like client, citizen and customer must be clearly defined for the purposes of satisfaction measurement. The report also recommends monitoring the rate of return or the rate of rejected interviews at individual departments in order to survey the reasons of clients’ averseness. Also frequency of clients’ visits is important in order to distinguish satisfaction with „mass“ and „technical-engineering“ departments of municipal offices. The report does not recommend using of marks as in school, according to its authors five point scales are more suitable for client satisfaction measurements for they can lead to more heterogeneous responds. Similar conclusions can be found in other outputs of the project – e.g. Ryšavý and Štainer (2008a), particularly Ryšavý and Štainer (2008b) summarizes the project according to individual participating municipalities.

Jablunkov has been implementing CAF since 2004. The self-assessment based on CAF was realized in 2007. The 2007 report informs only about existence of a survey in which 140 citizens participated. It speaks about 10 questions, which are not stated, and about the 5 points scale. Similarly to Konice, also Jablunkov was among the towns participating in the project of clients satisfaction measurement in Olomoucký and Moravskoslezský region. On the web pages of this town, also information on vision and strategy of the municipal office, results of benchmarking initiative 2005, participation in community planning of social services, information about awards gained for quality methods implementation and brief SWOT analysis are available.

Also Fantová Šumpíková and Rousek (2009) have surveyed approaches to quality of services delivered by Czech municipalities. They carried out a questionnaire survey asking only representatives of municipalities however. They gathered 535 questionnaires similar to those used by their research partners in Estonia and Slovakia and focused on the following “logical sequence” (p. 3):

a) municipalities continually attempt to increase a quality of their services,
b) municipalities do maximum in order to increase a quality of their services,
c) according to municipalities themselves they deliver quality services,
d) citizens of municipalities are satisfied with quality of services.

Probably because of the construction of questions most responds were positive and misleading to some extent, point d) was only mediated by responds of civil servants.

Within the framework of the Czech Science Foundation project, our research team (Lukášová, Nunvářová, Špaček and Urbánek) has carried out a qualitative research based on structured interviews, the objective of which was to identify quality attributes and the degree of agreement on perceived quality attributes of employees and clients of municipal offices. Currently we are analyzing the gathered data in order to create a questionnaire that will be addressed to clients of municipal offices (we have progressed more in the case of librarian services where we are currently carrying out a questionnaire survey).
2.2.2 Local Agenda 21 in Czech self-government

Local Agenda 21 is currently another very visible initiative of quality management in Czech territorial self-government which requires participatory instruments and satisfaction measurements to be embedded in municipal and regional decision-making in order to ensure sustainability of development. Among its basis principles, which refer to good governance in general, particularly strategic planning (including the SEA, SWOT and community planning instruments), openness and transparency, participation (meeting point of bottom-up and top-down approaches) and evaluation based on sustainable development are emphasized.

In the Czech Republic the Local Agenda 21 indicators are based on European Common Indicators (ECI). They work also with the level of citizen satisfaction with the local community. Similarly to CAF, “citizens” refer to the people living within the administrative borders of the municipality (European Common Indicators - Methodology Sheets, 2002, pp. 1 – 3 and 50 – 52). Local Agenda 21 indicators were incorporated in a certain extant in practices of more than 100 Czech towns according to the database of Local Agendas 21 users19 which is administered by CENIA (Czech information agency for the environment).

Local Agenda 21 (“LA21”) has become a cornerstone of public administration initiatives like TIMUR and National Network of Healthy Towns.

a) TIMUR (an acronym of Team Initiative for Local Sustainable Development) has started in 2002 in cooperation with the Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic within the Europen Commission’s campaigns Towards local sustainability profile – Common European Indicators and Sustainable cities. It is an association of non-state non-profit organizations and partner towns. Currently 23 towns and 1 micro-region (i.e. voluntary association of municipalities) participate in the project.20

b) The National Network of Healthy Towns has been launched in 1994 and is based on WHO Healthy Cities Project which was initiated already in 1988. Within the initiative of the healthy towns network criteria of LA21 are tested. CENIA has a role of methodical co-ordinator, the coordination is enabled electronically (through www.cenia.cz). The criteria speaks about 5 categories of participants (“Interested person”, Category D, Category C, Category B and Category A. They differ by the level of embedment of LA21 principles in organizational structures facilitating participation and their management (including requirements of benchmarking, certification of management systems like ISO, CAF, EMS, or EMAS). The network’s methodology was awarded a title World Project EXPO 2000 and was also given a quality WHO certificate in 2001. Currently the network consists of 92 members which regionally influence 1 870 of 6 200 municipalities (32 % population).21 The network also promotes an electronic tool “DataPlán”22 in order to inform uniformly about LA21 practice of its members, it also runs a Good Practice Databases (currently 84 projects are described23) and a bulletin.

2.2.3 Interconnection of strategic management, quality management and human resources management – a missing link?

Our research indicate possible missing link between strategic management, quality management, and human resources management in Czech self-government. In summer 2007 we carried out a qualitative research based on structured interviews with representatives of Czech regional offices within a project Human factor and communication in public administration24. The research in which 11 regional offices (out of 13 regions excluding Prague) participated also attempted to discover the level of

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21 See http://www.nszm.cz/?apc=r2086521t.
22 See http://dataplan.info/.
23 See http://dobrapraxe.cz/.
24 Project of the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, elaborated in cooperation with the Faculty of Public Administration of the University of Pavel Jozef Šafárik in Košice, Slovakia.
interconnection between practices of human resources management, strategic management and quality management of regions. The research was based on assumption that if human resources management is understood as an activity of strategic importance, it must be organized and realized in the way that ensures systematic and logic interconnection of processes integrated in the management system of an organization in order to bring synergies.

The research revealed that systemic strategic management did not exist in majority of regional offices (according to their human resources managers) in that time. Only one regional office stipulated SMART strategic aims from which tasks of human resources management derived, the strategy was communicated intensively within the authority and this brought relatively high awareness of senior managers as well as other civil servants about the strategy. Only in the case of 5 regions (out of 9 regions where comparison was possible), opinions of top representatives of regional offices and opinions of senior human resources managers about existence of the strategy were in accordance. Some discrepancies can be found also in their responds enumerating quality management systems which were implemented in regional offices, as it is summarized by the following Table 2 (Špaček, 2008c).

Table 2 – Quality management systems implementation in Czech regional offices – according to their top representatives and human resources managers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implemented quality management systems</th>
<th>As stated by (from 9 regional offices)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>human resources managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAF</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISO</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSC</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benchmarking</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benchlearning</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process management</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process and organizational audit</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No system have been implemented so far.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If human resources managers stated that some quality management system was implemented by their regional office, they were asked
a) if they were trained in quality management. Only 3 out of 8 human resources managers were trained according to their responds, in 2 of these cases a human resources manager was a member of the CAF-team. Four human resources managers stated that they were not trained, one human resources manager claimed that all employees of the regional office were given only a brochure describing the CAF. One human resources manager stated that all employees were trained during the implementation of the ISO norm and the CAF, another 2 stated that only employees participating on quality instrument implementation were trained;

b) about the way their department influence reaching the quality of their regional office. Most of the respondents emphasized the role of education of employees. Only two respondents were of the opinion that their department influence the quality thanks to the system of evaluation. One respondent stated “i think that there is no such way ... probably we do not have an instrument”;

c) about the way of interconnection of human resources activities and quality management (how is quality management reflected in human resources management). This question appeared to be the most difficult one of the interview. Most of the human resources managers stated they had not considered the interconnection so far. Their responds show that the implementation of strategic management and quality management supported the beginnings of human resources management systems, eventually the beginning of employees satisfaction measurement (Špaček and Lukášová, 2007).
E-Participation instruments may support quality management initiatives in public administration. Today, e-participation is a single category in some e-government concepts. It represents a relatively young field of research mainly in the area of government-to-citizens electronic services. In compliance with the e-government movement, e-participation apparently attempts to improve government by achieving better governance. Based on the international e-participation literature, we have discussed the broader context of the terminology of (e-) participation and particularly surveyed reflections of international e-participation concepts in the Czech territorial self-government.

Web-content analysis of e-participation practices of 13 Czech regions (Prague was excluded) was carried out in August 2007 (Špaček, 2008a), progress of regions was surveyed in June 2008 and presented during the EGPA 2008 conference (Špaček, 2008d), and the survey framework was modified for purposes of research that included 23 Czech statutory cities in the analysis (Špaček, 2008e). It was the first analysis of its kind that focuses on e-participation practices in Czech public administration. Albeit the approach of the analyses was supply-centred (it took into account only available e-participation services available on web pages, not opinions of their users) and limited to tools of e-information and e-consultation as defined in the United Nations’ E-participation framework, results clearly indicate the predominant supply of e-information instruments among surveyed group of territorial self-governments which represent larger municipalities and regions that may facilitate e-participation of smaller municipalities. The surveys discovered limited cases of more participatory and transparent e-consultations instruments. Such instruments were utilized in less than half number of surveyed regions. Limited number of regions organised electronic surveys through their introductory web-pages, only four regions enabled more transparent instruments of e-discussions where visitors may propose a topic as well as react to issues organised by others. The survey revealed that only one region published video files that would enable to scrutinize former public meetings of the Council and that also this region was using the webcasting tool that would enable transparent real-time broadcasting of the Council’s meeting. Two regions offered downloadable audio files of former meetings of its Council. In the case of statutory cities, e-surveys represented the most frequently used instrument for consulting the public, but only 5 websites of statutory cities provided archives of past surveys summarizing their results for their users. A discussion forum was only found on 2 out of 23 websites, but only one statutory city made information on its purpose and instructions for use available to users. This can raise the importance of analysis of practices of citizen-to-citizen instruments.

3. Conclusions

The paper clearly shows that quality management is not a forgotten topic in the Czech public administration reform and modernization policies as well as in practices of Czech territorial (municipal and regional) self-governments. Czech central government has not been passive in promotion of quality management in general, neither in public administration. Its approach is more converging to handing-on rather than to control-orientation. No quality instrument is obligatory for public authorities and the quality management in Czech public administration is based on voluntariness. The only directive feature that has been of a normative nature is the stress of central policies on the need to improve the quality of public administration (if we abstract from quality requirements specified in special acts on information systems, public information, budgeting, public procurements etc.). Central government has focused particularly on quality management promotion (also through national quality conferences and quality awards schemes) and methodical help intensively using also electronic channels (websites) for information dissemination.

With regard to Czech self-government the intensity to use quality management instruments has been briefly described. There is no list published for example by the Ministry of Interior that would inform about complete practices of various quality methods in Czech public administration. The paper builds particularly on practices of Common Assessment Framework which clearly highlight the need to go beyond the rhetoric of instruments and to research particularly the practice of individual instruments in
public administration, including the communication culture. The presented results partly validate the following sceptical conclusion of EIPA 2005’s study on the CAF’s use which was not made on the analysis of self-assessment reports: “organisations want to use CAF in the first place for themselves, the ownership is very high. This explains, together with the intrinsic quality of the tool, why they all want to use it again... On the other hand, external reasons can also be valuable in case the application of CAF responds to a demand from the stakeholders. The benefits of involving stakeholders apparently still have to be discovered” (p. 40).

The paper also shows the necessity to involve citizens/customers in quality management and to survey their satisfaction more intensively. This can be supported by regional projects similar to those which have been realized in order to improve and unify municipal quality management practices. Various initiatives, of which Local Agenda 21 was stressed in this paper, have been launched in Czech territorial self-government, but their practices must be further scrutinized. Instruments of e-participation may be used more intensively, but their rationality must be questioned in some situations (e.g. in the case of small municipalities).

References


