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TETYANA KOVTUN

Quality Management in  
Public Administration:  
International Experiences and  
Lessons for the Ukraine

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TETYANA KOVTUN

## Quality Management in Public Administration: International Experiences and Lessons for the Ukraine

### Abstract

Quality management of service and policies is a political matter and should form a major part of the political agenda. International experience shows that quality management, which emerged in the private sector after World War Two with the advent of mass production, is geared toward a government that is efficient, transparent and accessible and which provides an excellent quality service to customers. The Ukraine is taking the first steps in the direction of implementing quality management and will have to build on the experience of other countries. In the Ukraine, with its deeply rooted administrative inefficiencies, bureaucracy and neglect for customer needs, legislative steps are necessary to promote quality management and help transform bureaucrats into public servants. Training is the crucial factor for the Ukraine, as international experience shows that training is the central issue regarding the application of quality management.

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The views contained inside remain solely those of the author who may be contacted at [kovtun@policy.hu](mailto:kovtun@policy.hu). For a fuller account of this policy research project, please visit <http://www.policy.hu/kovtun/>

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International Policy Fellowship Program

Open Society Institute

Nador Utca 9

Budapest 1051

Hungary

[www.policy.hu](http://www.policy.hu)

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## Introduction

Quality management has undergone a significant evolution, from just inspecting products to an entirely different vision of organisational strategy. Quality increases in the business sector have been followed by such development in public administration. Such trends are present in many European countries, as well as the USA and Canada. Recently, improving the quality of public service has become a major theme for the public sector reform agenda for Eastern Europe.

The public administration sector offers a number of quality tools. These include the ISO 9000 and third party certification, citizens' charters, quality excellence models, the European Foundation for Quality Management and Common Assessment Framework (CAF), a joint quality framework adopted in the EU, and others. No matter what quality management model is chosen, public service quality remains a key issue for the public modernisation agenda.

Ukraine's political leaders have put public sector modernisation and an increased quality of public service delivery at the top of their reform agenda. Ukraine's European integration efforts also create additional pressures for enhanced administrative capacities. Quality management offers solutions to problems of inefficiency and the poor quality of service delivery. Moreover, international experience shows that quality management is a powerful tool via which to get capacity building in the public sector. The Ukraine is undertaking the first small steps in the direction of implementation of quality management - and it can build on the experiences of other countries.

This research paper is organised as follows. In the first part, I shall look at the history of quality management in Europe and elsewhere. In the second part, several quality management models will be considered in greater detail; while case studies and country-based experiences are dealt with in the third part. Finally, in the fourth part of the research paper lessons for The Ukraine and conclusions will be offered.

# 1 The History of Quality Management in the Public Sector

Quality management in the private sector emerged after the World War II and with the rise of mass production. Initially, quality management focussed on output and product quality. Then, the emphasis gradually shifted to customer satisfaction.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, Total Quality Management, with its focus on *users* of products, emerged in the public sector. Quality thinking was initially based on users' charters (1991 the 'Citizens Charter' in the UK, 1992 'Charte des services publics' in France and, in 1993, the Users' Charter in Belgium, later followed by such charters' arising in a number of other countries).

In the late 1990s, various quality models (EFQM, ISO) and the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) were introduced into the public sector. Recently, new members of the EU have taken aboard quality management.

In 2002, a survey regarding quality activities in the public administrations of the European Union member states was conducted. One of the conclusions of this survey was that most EU members have used a number of various quality models. Quality initiatives often have as their focus customer relationships (one-stop shops, e-government), innovation, quality of life improvement for citizens, the usage of modern management techniques, simplification of administrative procedures and regulations, and achieving higher standards of service provision.

Quality management in public administration is geared towards a government that is efficient, transparent and accessible, and which provides an excellent quality service to customers. As a result of quality initiatives, a number of governments have developed comprehensive strategies to improve their public service delivery. To implement such strategies, some organisations/organisational divisions have been set up at central or local levels to facilitate quality management in the public sector. Moreover, the private sector is actively involved in government quality initiatives via consulting, training and professional services.

The most popular quality management tools are the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), which is widely used in the UK and Spain; the Common Assessment Framework in Belgium and Italy; and the ISO in a majority of EU countries. Sweden has developed its own Swedish Institute Quality Model (SIQ). The United Kingdom has put forward its own quality management as a means of benchmarking.

Charters and national quality prizes exist to improve relationship with citizens and to reward excellent administrations in Finland, France, Holland, Spain, the UK and Sweden. Customer satisfaction assessment and complaint registers are being used in the majority of EU countries. Quality champions are eager to share their experiences through conferences and professional associations.

Quality management, as a continual form of self-improvement, stimulates an exchange of experiences. A best practice exchange set in motion the development in the EU of a joint quality framework, i.e. the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). The CAF is a joint 'product' of 15 public administration ministers in EU countries; it combines the most progressive lessons of quality management that have applied in business. At the same time, it is fully adapted to the needs and specifics of public administration. "The main purpose of the CAF is to provide a fairly simple, free and easy-to-use framework which is suitable for the self-assessment of public sector organisations across Europe and which would also allow for the sharing of best practices and benchmarking activities."

## 2 Quality Management Models

### *2.1 International Standards for Quality Management Systems (ISO)*

ISO 9000 is a set of standards for quality management systems that is accepted around the world. Currently, more than 90 countries have adopted ISO 9000 for national standards in the business and public sector. ISO standards are most commonly used in business to ensure that the product or service purchased from an organisation that is registered with the appropriate ISO 9000 standard *actually complies* with the claimed quality level. In addition, with (the year) 2000 revision of the standard, quality objectives, continual improvement and the monitoring of customer satisfaction will provide customers with increased assurances that their needs and expectations will be met.

The ISO standards originated with the US military, which needed to develop standards in connection with procurement contracts. In 1979, the United States issued Generic Guidelines for quality systems. This was a menu of quality management elements, and each organisation chose the elements they felt were most helpful, thereby also allowing for almost an infinite degree of tailoring.

The increase in international trade stimulated the development of internationally recognised quality management standards; for it was feared that a mosaic of different national standards would be a barrier to international trade. The ISO Technical Committee (TC) 176 had its first meeting in 1980.

The first standard issued by TC 176 was ISO 8402, which standardised quality management terminology. In 1987, the Committee issued ISO 9001, 9002 and 9003, establishing three different levels of quality management systems. They also issued ISO 9004, which is a set of comprehensive guidelines. These standards were revised in 1994, and then extensively revised in the year 2000. They have gained wide international acceptance.

ISO relies on a system of audits to provide assurances that the organisation is meeting the requirements laid down by the standard. An audit includes an inspection of the documents and records that make up a quality system. Most importantly, it is an inspection of the way people in the organisation work and the knowledge they have of the operations of the given quality management system.

Design and implement the quality system to comply with the requirements of ISO. This will typically require:

- writing a quality manual, describing a quality system at a high level,
- establishing a quality policy and measurable quality objectives,
- writing procedure documents to describe how most work in the organisation is carried out,
- creating a system to control distribution and re-issue of documents,
- designing and implementing a corrective and preventive action system to prevent problems from recurring,
- identifying competency needs for all positions in the organisation,
- monitoring and measuring customer satisfaction, process, and product conformity,
- training the staff on the operation of the quality management system,
- planning and conducting internal quality audits,
- continual improvement of the quality management system.

## *2.2 European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM)*

EFQM was founded at the end of the 1980s by 14 major European companies; and, in 1992, EFQM introduced its excellence model as a framework for assessing organisations with regard to a European Quality Award. It has now become the basis for the majority of national and regional Quality Awards.

The EFQM Excellence Model is a practical tool that can be used in a number of different ways: as a tool for Self-Assessment; a way to Benchmark with other organisations; a guide to identify areas for Improvement; as a basis for a common Vocabulary and way of thinking; and as a Structure for the organisation in question's management system.

The EFQM Model is a non-prescriptive framework based on 9 criteria. Five of these are “Enablers” and four are “Results”. The “Enabler” criteria cover what an organisation *does*. The “Results” criteria cover what an organisation *achieves*. “Results” are caused by Enablers, and Enablers” can be improved by using feedback obtained from 'Results'.

The EFQM Model, which recognises that there are many approaches as regards the achievement of sustainable excellence in all aspects of performance, is based on the premise that excellent results - with regard to performance, customers, people and society - are gained via a leadership's driving policy and strategy, which comes through people, partnerships and resources, and processes.

### *2.3 Total Quality Management (TQM)*

TQM is a management philosophy aiming at the continual improvement of goods and services with the goal of total customer satisfaction, an optimum use of resources and better worker satisfaction, which will lead to more profitable companies and more reliable and innovative products.

TQM principally means making use of quantitative methods (measurements and statistical analysis) for processes, and using materials and human resources (people) to improve the goods and services an organisation encompasses to make/deliver products for/to its customers. The degree to which these satisfy customer needs and desires is then subject to further analysis with the aim of continual improvement of the product, service, and the processes by which these are generated. The key objective, therefore, is continuous improvement. In contrast with ISO, which is a quality management standard, TQM is a philosophy of perpetual improvement. ISO implementation is a beginning for Total Quality Management implementation. Where there is an ISO system, about 75 percent of steps are in place with regard to TQM. The implementing of TQM is proactive concerning quality, rather than reactive; and it seeks out ways for constant improvement. TQM is the foundation for activities that include:

- meeting customer requirements
- reduction of the development cycle

- demand-flow manufacturing
- improvement teams
- reducing product and service costs
- improving administrative systems' training

## 2.4 A Common Assessment Framework

In 1997, following intense consultations seeking the modernisation of public administrations, the Innovative Public Services Group (IPSG) was set up at the EU level. In 1998, after a number of preparatory meetings, 15 ministers of public administrations adopted a declaration with regard to general principles concerning an improvement in the quality of services for citizens. Based on those principles, in 2000 the IPSG developed a new quality tool adapted to the public sector – the Common Assessment Framework, being a self-assessment framework based on the principles of TQM and EFQM.

The CAF has four main purposes:

- To capture the most unique features of public sector organisations.
- To serve as a tool for public administrators who want to improve the performance of their organisation.
- To act as a bridge across different models made use of for quality management.
- To facilitate a benchmarking between public sector organisations.

The CAF has been designed for use in all parts of the public sector, and is applicable to public organisations at a national/federal, regional and local level. It can also be used under a wide variety of circumstances, e.g. as part of a systematic programme of reform, or as the basis via which to target improvement efforts in public service organisations. In some cases, and especially in very large organisations, self-assessment may also be undertaken in *one part* of an organisation only, e.g. a selected section or department.

The CAF serves as a blueprint for the organisation. It is a representation of all aspects that must be present in the proper management of an organisation in order to achieve satisfactory results. All of these elements will be translated into nine criteria - and there will be further operationalisation and a given concrete form in the subcriteria. On the basis of such subcriteria, a group from within the organisation can then evaluate that organisation.

Using CAF provides an organisation with a powerful framework to initiate a process of continual improvement. Compared to a fully developed Total Quality Management model, the CAF is a "light" model, being one especially suited to gaining an initial impression of

how an organisation performs. It is assumed that any organisation that intends to go further will select one of the more detailed models, such as EFQM. The CAF has the advantage of being compatible with these models, and may therefore be a first step for an organisation that wishes to go further with their quality management.

## 3 Country-based Experiences

In this section, I take a closer look at several country cases in which there was improved customer satisfaction without the application of specific quality management models. These case studies offer examples that could be useful for The Ukraine's government.

### *3.1 US Government Experience with the Customer Satisfaction Index*

Since the early 1990s, the US federal government has increasingly focused itself on how well its programs and services meet or exceed the needs and expectations of its citizens. Through a combination of legislation, policy directives from the Executive Branch, and agency initiatives, federal agencies have made achievements in measuring satisfaction with their services and programs. In particular, in 1993, Clinton signed an Executive order directing "all agencies" to:

- identify their customers;
- ask them how satisfied they are, and what they want;
- post service standards, and measure results against them;
- compare performances to the best in business;
- survey employees about how to give a better service;
- give customers' choice;
- make information, service and complaint systems easily accessible;
- provide means via which to address complaints.

One of the challenges that government program managers faced was to find a measure that would provide highly accurate measurement of citizen satisfaction - and also enable them to benchmark agency service performance against other similar service providers in both the government and the private sectors. At the same time, policymakers needed a measure that would track the overall quality of government services delivered to its citizens.

In 1999, the federal government selected the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) as a standard tool for measuring citizen satisfaction with the delivery of

government services. The ACSI is a uniform and independent measure of consumer experiences as regards the purchase and consumption of goods and services in the United States. Participation in the ACSI is voluntary.

The ACSI measures citizen experiences with the services delivered by government - such as social security, healthcare, and veterans' benefits; grants and loan programs for students, exporters, farmers, etc.; recreational facilities and services; services to international travellers; tax filing; and regulatory and enforcement programs. In addition to company-level satisfaction scores, ACSI produces scores for the causes and consequences of customer satisfaction and also how they relate.

By participating in the ACSI, program managers can get to identify and understand which of their processes should receive the most immediate attention. Examples of the kinds of activities that were identified included writing regulations and information in plain language, providing more services to citizens electronically, maintaining a high quality customer service, and streamlining processes to provide quicker responses to inquiries and applications as regards services or benefits. By responding to findings from the ACSI, managers were able to improve program effectiveness and focus themselves more on results, service quality, and customer satisfaction.

One agency that has clearly benefited from the results of ACSI data has been the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the agency responsible for tax collection. The IRS measured separately the satisfaction of individuals who had filed their tax returns using a traditional paper-based method - and compared that with the satisfaction of individuals who filed their tax returns electronically. The results show that citizens are notably more satisfied using an electronic tax filing process, as there are fewer errors, the filing process is much quicker, and they can obtain refunds more quickly. Moreover, the IRS is able to reduce its overall costs and also regain citizens' trust in the income tax system.

### *3.2 Poland's "The Friendliest Office of Government Administration"*

The competition for the "friendliest office of government administration" is organised, annually, by the Head of the Civil Service of Poland. The purpose of the competition is to promote activities aimed to improve the quality of customer service and increase citizen satisfaction, hence building an image of the government administration as a professional organisation characterised by legality, integrity and high competence.

The prize is awarded via two nominations: a small office employing fewer than 100 employees, and a large office employing over 100 employees.

The Competition Board comprises:

- a representative of the Prime Minister's Office;
- a representative of the Commissioner for Civil Rights Protection;
- a representative of Transparency International;
- two representatives of the media;
- a representative of the National School for Public Administration;
- a representative of the Head of the Civil Service.

Offices seeking to participate in the competition complete questionnaires regarding customer satisfaction, services, access to information and facilities - and a special audit is done so as to check this information. Short-listed offices carry out surveys among a random sample of its employees and customers. The competition's winner is awarded a commemorative cup and the title "the Friendliest Office of Government Administration"(which is held for one year).

During 2002-2004 over 60 administrations of regional and central levels took part in the competition; and the results of the competition play an important role when it comes to performance appraisals for line managers and supervisors in the civil service. The questionnaire is refined after each competition to thus serve as an adaptable tool for customer satisfaction measurement.

### *3.3 Latvia's ISO Certification Experience within the Framework of Civil Service Reform*

Latvia's experience with quality management is by far the most thorough among European countries. Latvia's civil service reform was initiated in the mid-1990s to increase administrative capacity and make the public sector more effective and efficient. When a new civil service law was drawn up in 1999, the State Civil Service Administration said that a new law would not be enough - and that a quality management system was needed. The working group created under the Prime Minister comprised representatives of the various ministries and was chaired by the Head of the State Civil Service Administration; and it wished to explore possibilities with regard to introducing quality management into Latvian public administration. The working group arrived at the conclusion that the ISO 9001 standard, which focuses on the effectiveness of a quality management system in meeting customer requirements, should be used for public administration.

The Latvian Bank, which had already introduced quality management as a pilot project and had undergone external certification, proposed that ISO 9001 should be made compulsory in the public sector. Subsequent detailed regulations were drafted in 2000. On December 4, 2001, the Cabinet of Ministers approved regulation #501 “On the introduction of a quality management system in public administration”, which put responsibility on the heads of all public sector organisations to introduce, implement and continually improve their quality management system and to appoint a ‘quality manager’.

The regulation followed on from extensive political debate in the country on whether quality management should be made compulsory. The working group that drafted the regulation was in favour of making ISO 9001 voluntary. Firstly, the working group was aware that the voluntary introduction of quality initiatives and models is common practice internationally; secondly, the working group thought that a recommendation would allow public agencies that were *against* introducing ISO 9001 to choose an alternative quality management model - such as the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) or the European Foundation for Quality Management Excellence Model.

By 2004, over 70 public sector organisations had got a ISO 9001 certificate after a successful external certification. ISO certification receives substantial media coverage in the country, for it promotes improvements in the quality of public sector operations and services and makes the administration more customer-friendly.

### *3.4 Public Services and Quality*

The public services theory comes from the experience of Great Britain, Canada, the USA and other countries, where, since the ‘80s, priorities had by public administration and relations with citizens have changed. The needs of a person, his/her rights are a key value for the society - and the goal of any public administration is to provide quality public services to the citizen. Thus, citizens are consumers of, and not just petitioners for a service. The state should thus orient its activity as if dealing with the needs of *a client* (just as done in the private sector).

In the Ukraine, the quality of public services is deficient:

- There are a number of unjustly paid-for administrative services;
- unjustified prices for services;
- limited access to information;

## 4 Lessons for the Ukraine

Over the last 6 months, the new government of Ukraine has taken a number of steps to carry out public administration reform. The Vice-Prime Minister of The Ukraine for Administrative and Territorial Reform supports civil service reform. At the same time, he believes that civil service reform can be effective only when sound processes and procedures as well as standard documentation have been introduced. Moreover, there is a priority here as regards European integration.

A pilot project dealing with introducing quality management into the Main Department for the Civil Service (following a standard ISO 9000:2000) is a first step towards building a more efficient and customer-oriented public administration system.

A pilot project serving to build a quality management system into the Main Department for the Civil Service might be a basis for the introduction of a similar system in the *entire* system of agencies operating in the executive branch.

International experience shows that there are a number of success factors aiding successful implementation and the continual improvement of any quality management system:

### 1. *Ownership of Quality Management*

The primary factor for success within an organisation is the presence of a single team that *owns* the strategic, planning, performance and improvement processes. The presence and continuity of a team involved in both strategy development and any analysis of present performance will allow for a deep understanding of the organization's capabilities and performance.

### 2. *Top Management Commitment*

This is a critical factor for quality management to be effective. Both private and public sector experience shows that this commitment should be demonstrated through active communication and support within the organisation; for more committed top managers actively seek to understand quality management *techniques*. This would involve the training of personnel, exchanges of experiences, and experimenting. With such an understanding, top managers will be better able to support and drive forward organisational improvements. It is also vital that politicians have a strong role in improving public service delivery; and they should include this objective in the agenda of their political party.

### 3. *A Voluntary vs. Legislative Approach*

The overwhelming majority of public sector organisations implement quality management systems on a voluntary basis. The philosophy of quality management requires that organisations have ownership of the results, and develop a genuine interest and motivation with regard to self-improvement. At the same time, a voluntary approach can only give limited results to a country that would be willing to radically reform and strengthen its administrative capacity.

#### *4. Additional Tools*

Using any one particular quality management model is still only a partial answer to one's organisational success. Successful public sector organisations used a whole mix of approaches and additional tools, such as customer surveys, benchmarking, e-government and citizen engagement, national prizes etc. And the use of such additional tools can also aid organisational lesson learning.

#### *5. Continual Learning and Training*

A willingness to learn and develop is also important for every organisation. Public sector organisations sought to do implementations rapidly - and learn as they went along. Their quality management systems have undergone continual development, so reflect real-life experience. People within the organisations were also engaged in/entrusted with manage improvement activities within the context of a clearly communicated organisational strategy. The need to effectively leverage knowledge as a core value-adding process, was both recognised and actively promoted and managed.

#### *6. Partnering*

The successful organisations had strong relationships with external partners, which included other public administrations, both domestic and international, civil society organisations, citizens and *their* organisations, political parties, media, professional organisations, academic institutions, etc. It is clear that a technological or instrumentalist approach is substantially less effective compared to consultations with citizens and other service users and/or a partnership working with public sector organisations, CSO's and business.

Such partnering allows administrations to broaden their understanding of their changing environment, both current and future; thus, they can be continually improving their service delivery.

#### *7. Exchange*

Many initiatives launched in different European countries may be termed ad hoc initiatives of countries by themselves. However, there is a growing tendency, both in Western and Eastern European countries, towards a common reference framework.

The setting up of a Common Assessment Framework in EU countries can provide powerful lessons on how, overall, a reform platform will create some impetus towards the exchange of best practices – which, in turn, creates additional stimuli for public administration in the direction of self-improvement.

Quality conferences have proved to be an excellent tool via which to discuss problems, challenges and solutions within various organisations. They are also a tool to enhance the general effectiveness of the public sector.

### *Conclusions*

For The Ukraine, with its post-Soviet tradition and deeply-rooted administrative inefficiencies, bureaucracy, neglect for customer needs, it would seem sensible to say that some legislative steps should be taken to promote quality management. A common legislative framework will serve as a guiding principle for public management. Then, gradually, quality management will be able to change the mind-set of civil servants - from persons operating within a world of bureaucratic, self-serving paperwork to being a customer service.

Training is a crucial factor for The Ukraine; for international experience shows us that training is a central issue regarding quality management applications. A number of countries have a vested interest in public administration schools to provide training in quality management.

Quality management of service and policies is also a political matter, i.e. so it is not just technical. Thus, it should be actively put on the political agenda.

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