

Assessment of Quality of Social Services in Lithuania: Context of Conceptions of Quality and Assessment Criteria

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Abstract

No unified and systematic quality management in social services has been developed in Lithuania. All research works on quality management in social services so far were carried out not at the national level but at the level of one service institution or municipality. Besides, quality management of general and social care services (except for quality management of social wardship services) takes place within a municipality as well. This is one of the first attempts to provide a general review of the assessment of the quality of social services in Lithuania, explaining the conceptions of quality and assessment criteria.

Keywords: social services, quality of services, quality assessment.

Introduction

Research problem, novelty and relevance. Social services are one of the parts of the social security system of a modern state, which together with pensions and other pays helps to ensure people's security and welfare, integration, independence and opportunities to take part in public life. In Lithuania, like in many European countries, the recent decade saw changes in the family lifestyle: the increasing numbers of late marriages, the decrease in birth rate, the increase in single people and incomplete families which require the society's assistance. Therefore, formal assistance and social services become increasingly significant.

It must also be underlined that as life quality and the society's welfare is increasingly more discussed, the quality of social services directly influences life quality of separate and most vulnerable society's groups and at the same time life quality of the whole society of Lithuania.

According to Zalimiene (2003), encouraging and developing the idea of the mixed market of social services during the recent decade, opportunities are sought to develop such market of social services which would enable the client to choose and receive

the best quality services for the lowest costs both for himself/herself and the state. Therefore, good management of the quality of social services is very important and necessary in Lithuania.

The assessment of the quality of services at the theoretical level was investigated by Pranulis et al. (2008), Mikalajauskiene, Tijunaitiene et al. (2001), Kotler, Keller (2006), Kurtz, Clow (1998); quality management of social services, by Svedaite-Sakalauske (2007), Zalimiene (2005, 2007). All scientific researches into quality management of social services so far have been carried out within the limits of one service institution or municipality. This research is one of the first works aiming to provide a general review of quality management of social services in Lithuania, explaining quality conceptions and assessment criteria.

Research aim is to analyze quality assessment of social services in Lithuania and explain quality conceptions and assessment criteria.

Research methods:

- Content analysis of documents.
- Expert method (based on interview).

Research methodology is based on the following essential conceptions, approaches and theories:

- It is maintained that service providers and users may understand the quality of the service in different ways. The client often comes with preconceived expectations regarding a specific service, and he/she will stop or continue using these services depending on whether his/her expectations are met. Therefore, the service provider must either seek correspondence of the services to the clients' expectations or inform the client so that he/she forms his/her expectations in parallel with the received services (Lovell, 2001; Gronroos, 2000).

- The research is based on the *conception* of the service which encompasses orientation both to the person, his/her individual needs and to general features of the quality of the service, which in market

economy conditions means “the best product with the least expenditures” (Daft, 1997). Therefore, the suitability of the service is defined through its goals, content and the forms of presenting this content, which in terms of social services mean continuity, reliability of information, its suitability (applicability). Besides, the service is perceived as exceptional, orientated not to material but to the ideal product of culture, the development of which is a long-lasting process and requires efforts both from the supplier of services and the user, because the user is not a passive successor of these services. The user is the creator who together with the service provider participates in the processes of the quality of the service. Therefore, the network of relations between the user and the service provider must be continuously developed and supported at mezo (the level of ideas), macro (the level of institutions), and micro (the level of the interaction of groups and personalities) levels.

- The *theory* of universal quality management, when it is constantly sought to improve the organisation process (Barczyk, 1999). In universal quality management the statements of classical and behavioural management schools, of group work theories, systemic and situational approaches and the practice of applying mathematical statistical methods are combined. This is a new stage in the development of management science because it encompasses efficient principles and methods of management science, employed in practical activities, supplements them with new ones and provides with a distinctive philosophy. It is also acknowledged that universal quality management is the most efficient measure of quality management when seeking better competitive abilities of the organisation.

Research sample and process

Expert method. The research sample consists of 7 experts. The experts were chosen so that they represent all institutions which according to the law are responsible for ensuring the quality of social services and so that the representative of these institutions knows the situation in the investigated area best:

- The Ministry of Social Security and Labour – 1 expert,
- The Department of Supervision of Social Services – 1 expert,
- Municipality – 4 experts,
- Methodical centre – 1 expert.

Two municipalities were chosen for the research. One of them represents one of the three largest cities with the developed infrastructure system of social services and the other, belonging to the same county as the first one, but being the municipality of

a small town has only one institution of social services, which provides both general services of social attendance and social wardship. Two experts were interviewed at the municipalities: the representative of the administration of the municipality, which in the area of social support is represented by Social Support Departments, and the representative of Social Support Centres, which are the main providers of social services, offering general and social attendance services, and are fully financed by the municipalities.

The representative of the Methodical Centre was involved in the research because the employees' qualification and dissemination of good practice is one of the factors ensuring the quality of services. The Methodical Centre of social attendance services, which offers its experience to the employees of other institutions of social services of Lithuania and operates in the same municipality of the big city was chosen.

The counties were not investigated in this research although they also have responsibilities but only in their established institutions of social services, which, as a rule, provide social wardship services, which, through licensing, would be supervised by the Department of Supervision of Social Services. One more circumstance which influenced the decision not to involve them in the research is that according to the programme of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania it is planned to liquidate the counties and distribute part of their functions to other institutions.

The method of content analysis of documents.

The research sample is social services plans of 60 municipalities of Lithuania. The research employed social services plans that are compulsory for the municipalities to be set annually and one of the goals of the process of setting these plans is to improve the quality of social services. The most recently approved social services plans were chosen for the analysis.

Explanations of the Conception of the Quality of Social Services and Search for Criteria for Quality

The results obtained during the research have been analysed in two aspects: of perception of the quality of social services and of search for the criteria for the quality of social services.

Explanations of the conception of the quality of social services. The main legal act that regulates the provision of social services is the Law on Social Services (October 19, 1996, No. I-1579) that says that the management of social services encompasses planning, organisation of social services, distribution of competence and assessment, supervision and control of the quality of social services at the state and local self-governance levels. The key legal act – the

Law on Social Services – does not explain what is understood as the quality of social services, and nothing is mentioned about quality assessment criteria.

It was found during the research that the institutions that had to control the quality of social services did not have a single understanding of the quality of social services. It can also be stated that the understanding of quality also differs between controlling and controlled organisations. All experts who expressed their opinion about the quality of social services mentioned different things and expressed doubts as to whether certain indicators can indicate quality. On one hand the experts named the undefined conception of quality (“*the quality of social services is a very intangible matter*”, “*you cannot measure the quality of social services*”) and on the other hand they focused on:

- Correspondence to documents (“*the quality is present when the provided service corresponds to the description of the social service*”),
- Meeting the users’ needs (“*most likely when the user is satisfied with the services and when he/she is provided with all services he/she finds necessary*”),
- Correspondence to certain norms (“*correspondence to the standards set by the law*”),
- Changes (“*the presence of quality in the work with the client is a change*”).

Though there is no unambiguous definition of the quality of social services, the municipalities and the government representatives of Lithuania emphasize the need to improve them in one or another way, say that their goal is to ensure quality and the provision of quality social services (Figure 1).

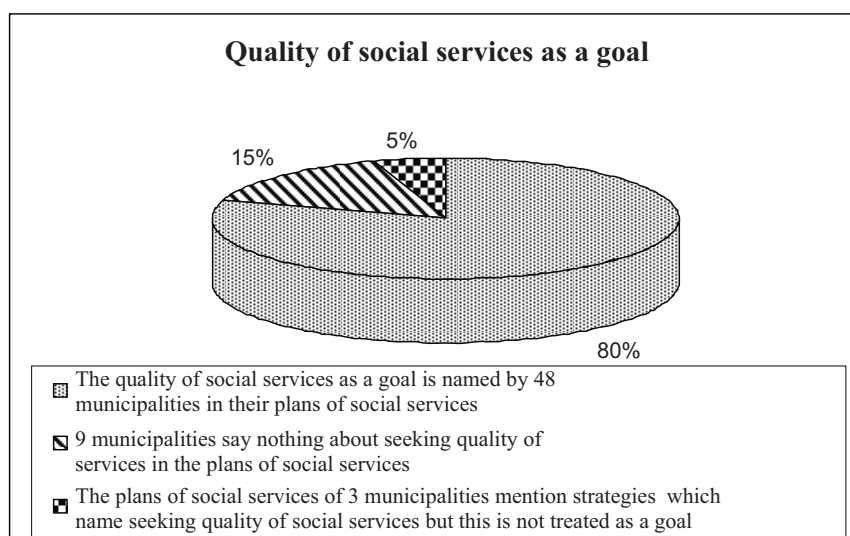


Fig. 1. Presentation of the quality of social services as a goal (%)

Out of 60 municipalities 48 plans of social services mention goals related to the quality of social services in one or another way. The municipalities seek:

- To increase the availability of social services;
- To improve the infrastructure of social services, encouraging the provision of good quality social services to a certain group of clients;
 - To provide quality social services;
 - To increase the diversity;
 - To develop the network of social services (in village residential areas);
 - To increase availability of human resources and improve their qualification;
 - To ensure the quality and the development of non-stationary social services and to improve the quality of stationary social services and the like (example from plans of social services of the municipalities).

Nine plans of social services of the municipalities neither in their regional plans nor in the strate-

gies that have concrete plans of social services in order to achieve their goals name the quality of social services as a goal.

In three plans of social services of the municipalities the quality of social services as a goal is not set but in the strategies or in regional strategic plans such goals are set. This way the contradictions between the above mentioned documents show up (the plan of social services contributes to the implementation of the above-mentioned strategies and regional plans).

Analysing the websites of the municipalities of Lithuania it can be observed that the topic of the quality of social services can also be found in the information provided to the users. Most often this is announced in the context of the functions ascribed to Social Support Departments. We present the commitments announced on the web sites of social support of the municipalities in the area of social services in Table 1.

Table 1

The functions taken by the municipality in quality management of social services

Category	Number of statements	Examples of notional contexts-statements
Provision	1	<to provide quality services of assistance at home>
Supervision	2	<to supervise the quality of social services provided in the territory of the municipality>
Control	4	<to control the quality of general social services provided in the district>, <according to the competence to control the activity of these institutions and the quality of provided services>, <to control the scopes and quality>, <to control the quality of general social services and social wardship>
Administration	1	<to administer organisation of social services and control of general social services and social wardship>
Ensuring	1	<to ensure quality provision of social services>
Assessment	1	<to assess the quality and effectiveness of provided services>

It can be stated that the municipalities take such functions which are directed at the supply, supervision/control, administration and assessment of social services. Because there is no single conception encompassing the quality of social services, it is not clear how it is agreed upon supervision/control and assessment of these services.

Search for the criteria for the quality of social services. As it is not clearly established what is understood as the quality of social services, its measurement criteria have not been set, too. However, as it can be seen from various legal acts (laws, decisions, orders, municipal decisions) there are tendencies most often to relate the quality of social services to the infrastructure of these services (*“to improve the infrastructure of social services”*) and material facilities (*“to improve material facilities adjusting better every time”*).

It can be stated that only a few documents name one of the goals which is directed towards the provision of good quality services (Hygiene Standards, approved by the minister of health, the orders of the minister of social security and labour regarding The Requirements for the Institutions of Stationary and Non-stationary Social Services, the Programme of the Development of Infrastructure of Social Services for 2007-2009 (2006, State News, 2006, 111-4316).

The criteria for the assessment of the effectiveness of social services (which can be named as the criteria for the quality of social services) are indicated in the Methods of Planning Social Services (*“set considering how the needs of the recipients of social services are met: whether these services are of good quality”*). It can be stated that these criteria for assessing effectiveness are directed towards meeting the users' needs where more focus is given to quantitative aspects:

- Expenditure from the municipality's budget per year on social services for one resident of the municipality;

- The proportion of the state's subsidies to the municipality's budget funds allocated for social services;

- The proportion of the number of places in stationary institutions of social services to the number of places/ maximum number of visitors in non-stationary institutions of social services per day;

- The proportion of the recipients of services to the total number of the municipality's residents and among themselves;

- The number of social workers and social workers' assistants at the municipality for 10 thousand municipality's residents;

- The percentage of meeting the needs of social services comparing the proportion of persons whose needs are met to the number of persons to whom the need for social services has been identified (Methods of Planning Social Services, 2006).

Certain characteristics of the norms in the Portfolio of Social Care Norms require assessing only subjective indicators of the quality of social services, i.e., the relations between the institution and the client, the attitudes and approach of the personnel. Though this corresponds to the provisions of quality management of services and of general quality management, their assessment is particularly complicated: there are numerous influencing factors, assessment requires certain qualification and common understanding of the criteria by the suppliers, recipients of the service, and assessors.

On the other hand, the information in the plans of social services of certain municipalities allowed to conclude that in certain cases the quality of social services is related to the results; e.g., presenting the annual planned activities to implement the task *“To hold periodical discussions on the quality of provided services”* it was planned to carry out the measure *“Based on the achieved work results to organise discussions in the elderships of the district”*, the expected results of which are as follows: *“The specialists of social services would familiarize the employe-*

es with the most recent special information, reconcile the solution and correction of current problems; the specialists of social services who know the topical situation would be able to organise the provision of assistance for the recipients of social support more optimally”.

The analysis of the research literature shows that by means of legal acts it is attempted to create a certain standard of social services in Lithuania, specifying the provided services. At this point one of the factors which becomes very important for the implementation of the norm/standards as well as for their formation should be emphasised. The system of managing social services does not have the possibilities to operate as seamless and undivided – the implementation of the Law on Local Self-Government prevents the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, which is responsible for the social area, from influencing the organisation and the quality of social services in Lithuania directly because this is an independent function assigned to the municipalities and they are responsible for planning, organisation and provision of social services. By this it is by no means attempted to say that such separation is faulty; however, it is wanted to draw attention to the fact that the organisation of social services in the country is more a matter of public administration, which seeks to implement the trends of the national policy but does not form the policy of the municipalities in any way. This becomes particularly clear when the experts speak about meeting the needs for the services and the capabilities of the municipalities to meet them, “...the need for the service would kind of exist but the municipality does not have resources for the provision of the services it has not been mentioned anywhere that the municipality has the right not to have money for the provision of that service. The person’s rights to receive services are very broad but such funds do not exist”.

The orders of the minister of social security and labour are obligatory for the administrations of the municipalities and their social support departments; general practice of the municipalities to ensure that in the areas of education and health the clients receive generally the same services in the whole Lithuania is not being formed. Therefore, it is natural that the experts speak about the necessity to correct this kind of situation: „... by all means it would be necessary to solve this. Either by setting a certain percentage from the total budget (as for national defence) or like in education – according to the client’s basket – if the need is identified, funding must arrive, and not like it is at the moment – the law obliges but

there are no funds for that. The law must also contain an obligation for the municipality to find money in order to meet the identified need. By means of law the ministry formulates people’s expectations to receive services, but they come to the municipality that cannot meet these needs because on one hand the municipalities do not have sufficient funds and on the other hand the politicians sometimes do not look for them because they prioritize other things...“.

Despite all measures applied to ensure the quality of social services, the experts said they did not know what quality was and how it should be measured; they also noted that assessment differs: “*I think that it is too early to speak about quality in Lithuania. Of course it is necessary to speak but so far quality means what you understand yourself, legal acts do not say anything. When theoreticians speak about us they say that there is little real social work at the institution ... In their opinion, actual work is being done by non-governmental organisations, but they also work in the way they understand. Then how can we state that they work qualitatively? What are they doing? As I understand they do not have anything at all, especially here, in Lithuania. Abroad, let’s take NGOs, their organisation, structure, employee’s responsibilities are clearly defined, and here there are so many non-governmental organisations... And no one knows what they are doing – they write projects, get funding both from the ministry and the municipality. And they still find this too little. Announce that they provide high quality services. Who measured? Who checked?”*

Legal acts relate the provision of services to individual interests, needs and regular assessment of their effectiveness. At the national level every municipality is required to plan social services by filling in the plan of social services, the methods of which stipulate that one of the goals of the process of planning social services is to improve the quality of services, but this is not further specified. Therefore, the experts doubt about quality assurance procedures in their speeches: “*these are purely personal initiatives, the way somebody devises how to do things, because it seems to me that nowhere is written what has to be done in the area of quality, how to achieve that quality, at what intervals and what must be done to ensure it”.*

The experts both assess the existing situation and indicate measures that could improve the current situation pointed at information-communication, control mechanism systems, improvement plan, qualification, diversity of services (Table 2).

Means to improve of the quality of social services (in experts' opinion)

Category	Examples of notional contexts-statements
Information system, communication system	“to register all provided services by using the software of social services information system”, “to cooperate with various institutions and organisations”
Control mechanism	“to prepare the mechanism for controlling the quality of services provided”, “to set a work group responsible for the control of the provision of social services”, “to create and approve the form for assessing the effectiveness of provided social services”
Improvement plan	“to organise ... the discussion on the implementation of the social services plan at budgetary organisations that provide social services not rarer than twice per year (more often if necessary)”, “to handle records of all mentioned measures and assess whether the change of the indicators influences the improvement of social services organised by the municipality”
Qualification	“to improve the qualification of the staff seeking to improve the quality of provision of services to the clients”
Diversity of services	“to increase the scope and the diversity of social services”

The criteria for assessing the effectiveness of social services (which we can call criteria of quality of social services) are indicated in the Methods of Planning Social Services (“is being set considering the way the needs of the receivers of social services are met: whether these services are of good quality”). These criteria of the effectiveness of social services are directed towards meeting the users’ needs with more emphasis on quantitative aspects: budget expenses, ratio of subsidies, number of employees, but experts also notice (Table 2) the means concerned with development of the quality of social services.

Conclusions

1. The institutions that have to control the quality of social services do not have a shared conception of the quality of social services. It can also be stated that the understanding of quality differs between controlling and controlled organisations. The Ministry of Social Security and Labour passes legal acts considering that the measure of quality is the user’s satisfaction, the Department exerts control based on correspondence to the standards, the municipalities see it very differently, but there are process-orientated and product-orientated approaches among them, whilst the provider of the services either does not receive a clear order regarding quality or follows its intuition and creates according to one approach or seeks to encompass all approaches.

2. Although no unambiguous definition of the quality of services exists, the representatives of the municipalities and the government of Lithuania emphasize the need to improve them in one or another way and aim at ensuring quality and provision of quality social services. Out of 60 municipalities 48 plans of social services contain goals related to the quality

of social services (the approaches towards quality as availability of services and diversity of services showed up).

3. While analysing the websites of the municipalities of Lithuania it can be noticed that the issue of the quality of social services also occurs in the information presented to the users. Most often it is announced in the context of functions assigned to the Departments of Social Support. It can be stated that the municipalities take functions directed towards provision, administration, supervision/control and assessment of social services. Because there is no shared conception encompassing the quality of social services, it is not clear how it is agreed to supervise/control and assess these services.

4. The quality of social services and its assessment criteria in the system of social services are named variously. Criteria for assessment of the quality of social services that are most often used are directed towards assessment of the correspondence of the condition of infrastructure (buildings) to the requirements, qualification of personnel, presence of the documentation according to the requirements, correspondence to the standards of the development of social services. There are no clear definitions of criteria for assessment of the quality of social services in the legal acts and they are not easily named by the experts either.

5. The criteria for assessing the effectiveness of social services (which we can call criteria for the quality of social services) are indicated in the Methods of Planning Social Services (“set considering the way the needs of the receivers of social services are met: whether these services are of good quality”). These criteria for the effectiveness of social services are directed towards meeting the users’ needs with more emphasis on quantitative aspects: budget expenses, ratio of subsidies, number of employees, etc.

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Socialinių paslaugų kokybės vertinimas Lietuvoje: kokybės sampratų ir vertinimo kriterijų kontekstas

Santrauka

Socialinės paslaugos – viena šiuolaikinės valstybės socialinės apsaugos sistemos dalių, padedančių garantuoti žmonėms reikalingą apsaugą ir gerovę, integraciją, savarankiškumą ir galimybes dalyvauti visuomenės gyvenime. Kaip ir daugelyje Europos šalių, Lietuvoje per pastarąjį dešimtmetį pasikeitė gyvenimo stilius, daugėja vėlyvų santuokų, mažėja gimstamumas, daugėja vienišų žmonių ir nepilnų šeimų, kuriems reikia visuomenės pagalbos. Todėl vis didesnę reikšmę įgauna formali pagalba ir socialinės paslaugos.

Akcentuojant gyvenimo kokybę ir visuomenės gerovę (Socialinės sanglaudos strategija, 2004), teigiama,

kad socialinių paslaugų kokybė tiesiogiai sąlygoja atskirų ir labiausiai pažeidžiamų visuomenės grupių, kartu ir visos Lietuvos visuomenės gyvenimo kokybę.

Pastarąjį dešimtmetį, skatinant ir vystant mišrios socialinių paslaugų rinkos idėją, ieškoma galimybių sukurti tokią socialinių paslaugų rinką, kuri leistų klientui rinktis ir gauti geriausios kokybės paslaugas mažiausiomis sąnaudomis tiek jam pačiam, tiek valstybei. Todėl efektyvus socialinių paslaugų kokybės valdymas yra labai svarbus ir būtinas Lietuvoje.

Lietuvoje nėra sukurto vieningo ir sistemingo socialinių paslaugų kokybės valdymo. Visi iki šiol atlikti

moksliniai tiriamieji socialinių paslaugų kokybės vadybos darbai buvo vykdomi ne nacionaliniu, bet vienos paslaugų įstaigos ar savivaldybės lygiu. Kaip žinia, bendrųjų ir socialinės priežiūros paslaugų kokybės valdymas (išskyrus socialinės globos paslaugų kokybės valdymą) taip pat vyksta atskiros savivaldybės ribose. Šis tyrimas – tai vienas pirmųjų mokslo darbų, kuriame siekiama išanalizuoti socialinių paslaugų kokybės vertinimą Lietuvoje, aiškinantis kokybės sampratą ir vertinimo kriterijus.

Tyrimo metodologija remiasi šiomis pagrindinėmis sampratomis, požiūriais ir teorijomis:

- Laikomasi *požiūrio*, kad paslaugų teikėjai ir vartotojai gali nevienodai suprasti paslaugos kokybę. Klientas dažnai ateina jau turėdamas iš anksto suformuotus lūkesčius dėl konkrečios paslaugos ir nuo to, ar kliento lūkesčiai bus patenkinti, priklausys tolesnis jo naudojimas paslaugomis. Todėl teikėjas turi siekti paslaugų atitikimo klientų lūkesčiams arba jį informuoti taip, kad klientas savo lūkesčius formuotų lygiagrečiai gaunamoms paslaugoms (Love-lock, 2001; Grönroos, 2000).

- Tyrimas grindžiamas paslaugos *samprata*, orientuota į asmenį, jo individualiuosius poreikius ir bendruosius paslaugos kokybės požymius, kuri rinkos ekonomikos sąlygomis reiškia „geriausią produktą mažiausiomis sąnaudomis“ (Daft, 1997). Todėl paslaugos tinkamumas apibrėžiamas per jos tikslus, turinį ir šio turinio pateikimo formas, kurios socialinių paslaugų kontekste reiškia prieinamumą, informacijos patikimumą, jos tinkamumą (pritaikomumą). Be to, paslauga yra suvokiama kaip išskirtinė, orientuota ne į materialų, o į idealų kultūros produktą, kurio kūrimas yra ilgalaikis procesas ir reikalauja pastangų tiek iš paslaugų teikėjo, tiek iš vartotojo, nes vartotojas nėra tik pasyvus šių paslaugų perėmėjas. Vartotojas yra kūrėjas, kartu su teikėju dalyvaujantis paslaugos kokybės procesuose. Todėl ryšių tinklas tarp vartotojo ir teikėjo turi būti nuolat plėtojamas ir palaikomas tiek mezo- (idėjų), tiek makro- (institucijų), tiek mikrolygmeniu (grupių ir asmenybių sąveikos).

- Visuotinė kokybės vadybos *teorija*, kai stengiamasi nuolat gerinti organizavimo procesą (Barczyk, 1999). Visuotinės kokybės vadyboje matyti klasikinės ir elgsenos vadybos mokyklų, grupinio darbo teorijų teiginių, sisteminio ir situacinio požiūrių sintezė. Taip pat pripažįstama, kad visuotinė kokybės vadyba yra veiksmingiausia kokybės vadybos priemonė, siekiant didesnio organizacijos konkurencingumo.

Tyrimo taikytų metodų (dokumentų turinio analizė, ekspertų metodas (interviu pagrindu)) pagrindu formuluojamos šios išvados: socialinių paslaugų kokybę turinčios kontroliuoti institucijos neturi vieningo socialinių paslau-

gų kokybės sampratos. Galima konstatuoti, kad kokybės supratimas skiriasi ir tarp kontroliuojančių ir kontroliuojamų organizacijų: socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerija kuria teisės aktus, kokybės matu laikydama vartotojo patenkinimą; socialinių paslaugų priežiūros departamentas kontroliuoja remdamasis atitikimu standartams: savivaldybės kokybės valdymą nukreipusios į procesą ir į produktą. Taigi paslaugų teikėjas arba negauna jam aiškaus kokybės „užsakymo“, arba vadovaujasi savo nuojauta, orientuodamasis į visus kokybės valdymo požiūrius.

Nors vienareikšmio socialinių paslaugų kokybės apibrėžimo nėra, tačiau Lietuvoje savivaldybės ir valdžios atstovai vienaip ar kitaip pabrėžia poreikį juos gerinti, tikslu įvardydami kokybės užtikrinimą ir kokybiškų socialinių paslaugų teikimą. Iš 60 savivaldybių 48 socialinių paslaugų planuose minimi su socialinių paslaugų kokybę susiję tikslai (išryškėjo nuostatos į kokybę kaip į paslaugų prieinamumą ir paslaugų įvairovę).

Analizuojant Lietuvos savivaldybių interneto svetaines, galima pastebėti, kad socialinių paslaugų kokybės tema pasitaiko ir vartotojams pateikiamoje informacijoje. Dažniausia ji skelbiama socialinės paramos skyriams priskirtų funkcijų kontekste. Galima teigti, kad savivaldybės prisiima sau tokias funkcijas, kurios nukreiptos į socialinių paslaugų teikimą, priežiūrą / kontrolę, administravimą, vertinimą. Kadangi nėra vieningos sampratos, apimančios socialinių paslaugų kokybę, nėra aišku, kaip susitariama prižiūrėti / kontroliuoti, vertinti šias paslaugas.

Socialinių paslaugų sistemoje socialinių paslaugų kokybė ir jos vertinimo kriterijai įvardijami nevienodai. Socialinių paslaugų kokybės vertinimo kriterijai nėra aiškiai apibrėžti nei teisės aktuose, nei lengvai įvardijami ekspertų. Dažniausia naudojami socialinių paslaugų kokybės vertinimo kriterijai nukreipti vertinti infrastruktūros (pastatų) būklės atitikimą reikalavimams, personalo kvalifikaciją, tam tikros dokumentacijos atsiradimą, atitikimą socialinių paslaugų normatyvams.

Socialinių paslaugų efektyvumo vertinimo kriterijai (kuriuos galima įvardyti kaip socialinių paslaugų kokybės kriterijus) yra nurodyti *Socialinių paslaugų planavimo metodikoje* („nustatomas atsižvelgiant į tai, kaip tenkinami socialinių paslaugų gavėjų poreikiai: ar šios paslaugos yra geros kokybės“). Šie efektyvumo vertinimo kriterijai yra nukreipti į vartotojų poreikių tenkinimą, kur labiau akcentuojami kiekybiniai aspektai: biudžeto išlaidos, dotacijų santykis, darbuotojų skaičius ir pan.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: socialinės paslaugos, paslaugų kokybė, kokybės vertinimas.

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