Common Assessment Framework: potential and factual issues in the Czech administrative practice

The paper introduces the importance of quality and basic ideas of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), gives a background on the methodology of the research. The first part focuses on the quality management support of the Czech central institutions. The second part discusses the selected self-evaluation practice in relation to the claimed benefits and discussed issues of the instrument within the territorial public administration.

Keywords: public management, public administration reform, quality excellence models, Common Assessment Framework.

Introduction

The movement of quality is visible and often seen as inevitable across the European region whatever the definition of quality is. The quality is omnipresent without any regards to the hardiness to define it. Service quality has become a key marketing tool for achieving competitive differentiation and fostering customer loyalty according to V. A. Zeithaml and A. Parasuraman (2004). Within the field of public administration the concept of competitiveness may be problematic and its substitution by the perception of an organisation’s image in the eyes of the public and legitimacy may be more useful. The basic challenge for providers of public services, working directly or through contracts, is to provide responsive services within the legal, financial and policy framework in which they are required to operate (Gaster, Squires, 2003). According to J. Caddy and M. 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.
In the public sector, the phenomenon of continual quality improvement rhetoric or even the principle brings a lot of questions related to quality methodologies and related practice. Many methods and instruments that are proposed for the purposes of quality management are sufficiently described and discussed. Although the best practice of public management is often heard in the rhetoric of public administration reform’s proclamations, strategies and real activities within the quality area, important deficiencies remain particularly in the field of rigorous analyzes that try to reveal questions about the effectiveness of quality measurements themselves. That is why the quality of quality instruments’ practice plays a very important part of discussion led by academicians as well as practitioners – public managers.

The following paper focuses on the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) – an instrument that has been a part of quality instruments group reality particularly since 2000. According to its authors it has been based implicitly or explicitly (particularly since the CAF 2006 version) on the premise that excellent results in organisational performance, citizens/customers, people and society are achieved through leadership driving strategy and planning, people, partnerships, resources and processes. All versions of the CAF stress that it is the tool created in order to assist public sector organisations across Europe to use quality management techniques to improve performance while paying attention to specifics of public sector itself. The version of 2006 mentions democratic responsiveness/accountability, operating within the legislative, legal and regulatory framework, communicating with the political level, involvement of stakeholders and balancing of stakeholder needs, excellence in service delivery, value for money, achievement of objectives and management of modernisation, innovation and change. The core is found in the self-assessment technique based on evidence and learning and studying which also presupposes comparison with other public sector organisations in the form of benchmarking-type analysis. The authors of the instrument underline that the technique serves also as a link between goals and supportive strategies and processes.

Clearly, the CAF instrument tries to operationalise the kind of systemic approach to management while proposing the well known five boxes of enablers and four boxes of results aspects that must be discussed in their mutual relationships. The ideas are compatible with the Gaster's definition of quality – “a negotiated and agreed set of characteristics, ensuring services that are fit for purpose, delivered in a user-friendly way in a decent environment, with consistent and rising standards, and changing over time to meet new needs and aspirations”. Generally, the instrument is also in compliance with her model for quality as a part of this model not as the model itself (Gaster, Squires 2003). The CAF instrument may be seen not only as a bridge across the various models used in quality management (as it is stressed by its authors), but particularly it may be perceived as an alternative bridge between traditional public administration principles and public management principles as more or less robustly described for example by O. E. Hughes (2003) which leads to other bridges. It must be stressed that a principle of one-best-way of working that is assigned to traditional public administration by Hughes may be discussed in situations when the top-down or even the bottom-up approach to man-
agement and particularly to coordination of quality management adopted within the public administration is in contrary with today’s recommendations that no one size fits all (Humphreys, 2004, Gaster, Squires, 2003).

The CAF instrument has been almost glorified in the Czech practice of quality management within the field of public administration. Especially the version of 2002 has been specified for the purposes of public administration practice. However, this central government has not adopted so directive formal “hands-on approach” as it was discussed in literature for the case of ISO 9001 in Latvia (Löffler, Vintar, 2004; Reinholde, 2004). Particularly the territorial public administration has been the most visible part of the quality management practice in the Czech Republic. Bodies of such authorities – particularly municipal and regional offices that have served as important executive institutional bodies created for facilitating of exercising state administration (decentralized government functions) and self-governmental activities in the Czech administrative environment – have been almost eager to implement the instrument. The paper discusses especially the mentioned ideas of the CAF and related necessary implications particularly in reflection with the selected Czech practice that may be revealed within the regional and municipal public administration quality management. Such approach relates to one of the stipulated aims of the instrument itself – to facilitate bench learning between public sector organisations. In order to contribute to the discussion good as well bad practice of the Czech regional practice will be questioned. The article is a part of the preparatory work on the grant of the Czech Science Foundation.

### Methodology

The theoretical background of the study sources particularly from the CAF documentation that has been published by the European Institute for Public Administration (EIPA) and selected quality management publications analyses. The CAF instrument requires that the self-assessment report that would support management in prioritising actions is to be past. According to the CAF 2006 brochure (EIPA 2006) a typical self-assessment report should follow the structure of CAF and comprise at least the strengths and areas for improvement for each sub criterion supported by relevant evidence, a score which is justified on the basis of the scoring panel and ideas for improvement actions. Passing of the report is not the end however. The organization should reflect the self-assessment in the action plan that is considered as one of the main goals of the CAF self-assessment effort and also the means to feed vital information to the strategic programming system of the organisation.

For the purposes of the analysis web pages search was carried out in the beginning of April 2007. This search focused on institutions that are comprised in the list that should include organizations which have implemented the CAF instrument. This list is available on the web pages created in order to support benchmarking in the Czech public administration in the initial phases of CAF implementation. This initiative was based in the 2004’s projects of the Czech society for quality in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic and the Council of the Czech Republic for the quality. The list is not up-to-date however, because it does not contain, for example, the Regional Of-
office of the Olomoucký region which had implemented the CAF for the third time in 2006. The list does not contain also the Municipal office of Konice and Municipal office of Šlapanice which implemented the instrument in 2006 for the first time. That is why the list may not be considered as official list of institutions that have implemented the CAF in the Czech Republic. There is no official (within the central institutions which support the CAF in a certain way – particularly the Ministry of Interior) and even unofficial list that would perfectly inform about institutions that have implemented the CAF. That is why the web search was enlarged to regional offices that are not included.

Only two bodies of municipalities and regions have published some results of their self-assessment activities based on the CAF instrument on their web pages – Regional Office of the Vysočina region (but only in case of 2005’s self-assessment report, not of earlier and later results) and the Municipal Offices of Konice (the results relate to the first phase of the CAF implementation of 2006). That is why the author of the paper addressed an e-mail with a demand for self-assessment reports and related action plans that would support comparative study of such documents across the Czech practice. For the purposes of analysis, senior civil servants of these bodies have been asked to take part in the research and provide the self-assessment reports and related action plans. The e-mails were sent on April 18, 2007, to all of the 50 contact persons from the mentioned list (8 regional offices, 36 municipal offices, 2 municipal offices of the Municipal parts of Prague and 4 secondary education institutions) and to presidents of regional offices of regions that are not included in the list and their secretaries (6 out of 14 regional offices). In case that the regional offices have not implemented the instrument representatives of the authority were asked to state if they consider such implementation in specified future. Anonymity of results have been stressed and guaranteed in the e-mail that is it is reflected in the following text that introduces the CAF practice in the Czech public administration and analyses related results that were made available by one regional office.

The Common Assessment Framework and public administration in the Czech Republic

Central public administration approach to quality management and the CAF

Central government of the Czech Republic has not been passive in the field of quality management in general, neither in public administration. Building on the categorisation of approaches that was proposed by E. Löffler and M. Vintar (2004), we may say that the Czech approach is somewhere in between the group "central government taking a supportive role" and "central government using a ‘hands-on’ approach". Arguments that are not easy to categorize and separate easily are as follows:

- There can be found particularly administrative initiatives that served to underpin efforts to improve the quality of public services developed in the Czech context. The National policy on quality support in the Czech Republic ("National quality policy"), which was approved by the Government in 2000, may be considered the most important one which
include the rhetoric in both private and public sector. On the basis of this policy the Council of the Czech Republic for the quality (“Council”) has been established within the responsibility of the Ministry of industry and trade in order to coordinate the activities of “state and non-state bodies” within the area of the quality policy and to serve the Government as a consultative, initiative and coordination body. The members of this Council shall include the ministerial deputies, representatives of central standardisation authorities, non-governmental and non-profit organisations from the field of quality and of trade unions. In the era of the Czech candidate-ship to the EU, the European pressures have been often stressed in the National quality policy, particularly the European charter, white book and the EFQM excellence model. The importance of the ISO 9000 series is also expressed here.

There can be seen relatively strong focus of the centre on improving public service quality. Special strategic document for this field was approved by the Government in 2004 – Strategy of availability support and public services quality which speaks about the issue of often discussed but still not solved in the Czech context – standardization of public services. This strategy was not “approved”, but only “taken into account” by the Government.¹

Another criterion of the first governmental approach group is clearly visible in the Czech Republic too – in spite of imposing obligations, central government has deliberately avoided being highly directive and top-down. The only directive feature is the stress on the need to improve the quality within the public administration or public sector in general (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).

Also the guidance of the central government in the field of methodology is visible. This feature may be directly linked to the CAF in the Czech context. The official guide-like information is spread particularly within the web pages of the Ministry of Interior, the Council and the National quality policy.

On the web pages of the Ministry, special link to “Public administration modernization” exists which contains also the link to “Quality in public administration”. Information published here may not be considered as systematic and up-to-date however. They refer only to two quality management instruments – benchmarking and the CAF – and related projects. The link to CAF leads to brief information on its history and purpose which almost copies the EIPA’s introductory texts (EIPA, 2002). Besides, the practice of the instrument is briefly described, however, the information still cover only the reality till 2005. According to them, in 2003, the CAF was implemented by 3 public authorities (2 regional offices, 1 municipal office). In cooperation with the Council this project was continuing also in 2004 when 26 territorial self-governments took part in it (7 regional offices, 2 “magistrates”⁵, 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, action plan on improvement and the proposal of evaluation system of the authority in the three years cycle of the CAF implementation. Three consultation days with experts were funded for
each of the participating authority. These experts assisted authorities in self-assessment, elaborating of the report and of the action plan. 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). There is also a link to Methodical guide of CAF (2002) situated on the web pages of the National quality policy, but it leads to the old second version of guide, although the later third version from October 2005 and also the Czech translation of CAF 2006 are available here. Within the quality in public administration section of information the rest of them refer to invitation to the 2nd National quality in public administration conference (which was organised in December 2005), announcement of declaration of the first year (2005) of resort awards of the Ministry of Interior (see below) and similar announcement that covers 2006 for the case of the 3rd quality conference which took part in January 2007.

The content of information on the web pages of the Council is similar to that of the ministerial website. It covers the period from 2003 to 2005 but includes also the year 2006 while informing about the project of the Council which deals with the CAF implementation within the central administration authorities (according to the information only two out of 15 ministries and 11 central administrative authorities have joined the project till this time – the Ministry of Finance and the Office of the government of the Czech Republic). The mentioned list of some institutions which have implemented CAF may be found here. Besides the mentioned guide-like information, the web pages of the National quality policy contains for example the brochure that refer to hypothetical case study of the CAF implementation, special methodological guides for the CAF implementation within self-government, schools or central administrative authorities.

- Certain features of the “control-oriented approach” (which are also apparent in the last mentioned argument) are embedded in various awards initiatives that are realized in the Czech Republic. The National policy on quality support 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. The Council is the announcer of awards, control body and it also appoints and examines evaluators of self-assessment reports which are among requirements for application for the award. Similar platform is utilised in case of the resort awards of the Ministry of Interior. Since 2005 applicants have been awarded in three categories – “Organization that improves public service quality”, “Organization of good public service” and “Resort award of the Ministry of Interior for an innovation in territorial public administration”. The first award category 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 which may lead to public service quality improvement”. Organizations might have been awarded even in the case of “modest results”. The second award cat-
egory may receive institutions which gave true evidence on a) the 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 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. The Award for innovation criteria refers to non-traditional solution that contribute to activities of authorities and public service delivery efficiency which may become good practice examples for other organisations. The 2006 awards categories were the same, however the set of criteria was enlarged – among the examples of instruments, the first price category spoke about the citizen charters or communal planning of certain public services with C-level of official Local Agenda 21 Criteria; in case of the CAF, the second prize category required at least two years of implementation, and in case of Agenda 21 the grade of B or A. The list of awarded institutions was published in the paper, but not in the electronic version of the popular weekly journal Public administration that is edited by the Ministry of Interior. The lists cannot be found on the ministerial web pages.

The CAF instrument and potential and factual issues in the Czech territorial public administration

Potential issues of the CAF

Results of self-assessment and proposals for solutions may be discussed in relation to the purposes of the CAF claimed by their authors and negatives that can be found in the literature or just deduced from the purposes themselves. According to the CAF 2002 and CAF 2006 methodology (EIPA 2002, 2006) the instrument provides

1) self-assessment based on evidence (that must exist in the time of elaborating the self-assessment report and related action plan);

2) assessment against a set of criteria which has become widely accepted across the public sector in Europe;

3) a means to achieve consistency of direction and consensus on what needs to be done to improve an organisation;

4) a link between the different results to be achieved and supportive practices or enablers (a link between goals and supportive strategies and processes as the 2002 version adds);

5) a means to focus improvement activity where it is most needed (expressed in the version of 2002);

6) a means to create enthusiasm among employees by involving them in the improvement process;

7) opportunities to promote and share good practice within different areas of an organisation and with other organisations (opportunities to identify progress and outstanding levels of achievement as the 2002 version specifies);

8) a means to integrate various quality initiatives into normal business operations;
9) a means of measuring progress over time through periodic self-assessment.

Literature discusses some often interlinked deficiencies and potential issues of the instrument. They relate to the quality of individual boxes of enablers that are presupposed by the CAF, are influenced also by the quality of results’ boxes evaluation during the self-assessment and certainly by their mutual relationships design. Analogies with the above mentioned criteria of the E. Löffler and M. Vintar’s four categories of approaches of the central government to the quality management coordination could be discussed. The argumentation of the CAF problems may be summarized as discussion about the quality management itself. The following examples of potential negatives may be found in the literature:

1) The instrument provides a diagnostic tool for assessing what has been done and what needs to be done to improve quality. It could stop at the assessment stage, especially if this is used for award-seeking. It needs to link with action. (Gaster, Squires, 2003). At the beginning, the CAF represents the first step of quality improvement that is similar to the known SWOT analysis. The instrument itself does not represent a way to efficient, quality and productive authority as the Czech Application guide to the CAF (v2002) says (Půček et al., 2005). It is only the beginning of the long journey.

2) The quality of evidence on self-assessment results may not be revealed to the external environment of the public authority, because the relevant documentation is not made available to the public which is in contrary with the external benchmarking benefits and also with the ideas of openness and transparency.

3) There is a danger of becoming purely a management tool, unconnected with other stakeholders and implemented top-down, without adequate staff or public understanding or involvement. (Gaster, Squires, 2003). According to E. Löffler and M. Vintar (2004), quality tools such as the EFQM Excellence model which is the older but very similar brother of the CAF fail to take the co-producing role of costumers into account. In the structure and terminology of the EFQM Model, the customer is placed at the end of the production chain and not considered as an ‘enabler’. Půček (2005), who was a representative of the vital quality manager as a Secretary of the Municipal Office, claims that the satisfaction of clients may not be even measured by authorities implementing the CAF.

4) In case of directive top-down approach which make the CAF implementation obligatory the practice may lead towards ideas of the first concepts of quality management (see for example Löffler, 2002) – compliance with the technical norms and standards that tend to formalism rather than to the focus on clients.

5) The unification across the European region may be problematic. The instrument is not normative in the level that can enforce the uniform practice. The national awards procedures may not be unified with the European awards. This may cause other barriers of comparability, particularly in the international perspective.

6) Some negatives may source from the following words of the director of the Czech society for quality which is grounded in the method of self-assessment scores – “I must summarize that in case of the CAF certain possibility to over-evaluate results exist.” (Moderní obec, 2005, vol. 10). M. Půček (2005) claims that pressures
from the side of political representatives of a municipality to increase the score may occur.

7) The political representatives of the self-government decide to implement the CAF, but nobody is willing to cooperate with the self-assessment team within the authority (Půček, 2005).

8) The self-assessment team was not sufficiently educated in relation to the CAF. It may cause the situation where the object of self-evaluation is unclear – is it the municipality itself or just the bodies of municipality? (Půček, 2005).

9) Půček is also against the popular claim of bureaucrats that it is not necessary to describe processes because everything can be found in legislation (Půček, 2005).

10) According to van Dooren and de Walle (2004), organisations which have participated in quality awards successfully may easily become self-satisfied and complacent, which is counterproductive to continuous improvement. On the contrary, organisations which have not received a prize in a quality award, however, may perceive themselves as ‘losers’ and in frustration might discontinue their improvement efforts.

11) Löffler and Vintar claims that many public agencies in Europe have launched self-assessments without being clear about the yardstick. Obviously, such kind of self-assessment exercises becomes very formalistic and do not lead to substantial organisational change. (Löffler, Vintar 2004);

12) The research concentrated more on the processes and problems of introduction of the excellence models and their organizational impact than on the effects of the use of the model on the quality of the services produced. Results for the public sector were not yet available and could not be assessed (Gaster, Squires, 2003).

**Introduction to the Czech territorial administrative system**

Since the beginning of 2001, territorial public administration in the Czech Republic consists particularly of regional level public administration authorities (14 regions which also form a group of 8 regions of cohesion – the Czech variation of NUTS2) and municipal level (over 6200 municipalities, almost 60 % of them has less then 500 inhabitants – the Czech category “small municipality”). The municipal and regional public administration of the Czech Republic is characterized by the mixed execution of self-governmental activities and state administration (deconcentrated central administration) activities by the same bodies, not by the institutional separation of such activities. District offices were a part of state administration system from 1990 and from 2001, January 1 till the end of 2002 they were existing simultaneously with regions.

The abolishment of district offices led to creation of special type of 205 municipalities – municipalities with enlarged sphere of activity (municipalities of the type III) that received some of their responsibilities since the beginning of 2003. This group of municipalities together with the municipalities of the II type (“municipalities with commissioned municipal office”) exercise self-government for their own administrative territory, however they provide state administrative activities for the special territory that covers more municipalities (supra-municipal state administration territory). Still discussed problems with financing of such system will not be analysed in this paper. Within the territory of districts various state ad-
ministration (central government) activities are still executed by deconcentrates of ministries and other central administration authorities (e.g. financial authorities, labour authorities, customs authorities etc.). It must be noticed that the practice of the CAF may be linked only to the bigger municipalities that have been authorised by law to exercise the highest amount of state administration activities (particularly the mentioned youngest category of municipalities of the type III).

**Approaches to publish self-assessment results based on the CAF**

On the basis of the web search and replies to the emails, the following three general categories of approaches to publish self-assessment reports and related action plans can be found in the Czech practice of territorial public administration:

a) some institutions publish the self-assessment report and related action plan on their web pages (at least in case of results of some, particular initial phases of the instrument implementation);

b) other institutions publish the documentation on the basis of application (here two groups of institutions may be found – the first group publish both of the documents, the second decides to publish only the self-assessment report);

c) the rest of institutions claim the internal / confidential / intellectual property character of such documents and do not decide to publish them, the majority of them is willing to take part in potential Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-assessment results based on the CAF</th>
<th>Regional office</th>
<th>Municipal office*</th>
<th>Educational institutions</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) are published on the web pages of the authority</td>
<td>1 7,1</td>
<td>1 2,5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) are published on the basis of application sent by the researcher</td>
<td>3 21,4</td>
<td>10 25</td>
<td>1 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) are not made available on the basis of the application, because they are considered as internal / containing confidential information / intellectual property by the managers of public authority</td>
<td>2 14,3</td>
<td>1 2,5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... the CAF implementation is a part of larger project and according to the manager of the public authority the publication would go beyond the framework of the project</td>
<td>1 7,1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... the manager of a public authority is not willing to participate in the research project because of being overeaten with large amount of the CAF issues including surveying citizens satisfaction and related high number of questions and questionnaires that have been received in recent time</td>
<td>1 7,1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... the CAF is under the process of the first implementation</td>
<td>1 7,1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... the CAF has not been implemented yet</td>
<td>1 7,1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) are not made available, because no response to the emails with the demand has been received from April 18 till May 10, 2007 (it was not clear if the CAF has been implemented here particularly in case of some regional offices)</td>
<td>4 28,6</td>
<td>28 70</td>
<td>3 75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14 100</td>
<td>40 100</td>
<td>4 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Including Municipal offices of Municipal parts of the Capital of Prague (36 + 2 from the list published on the web pages of the Council of the Czech Republic for Quality + 2 municipalities that are not included in the list (Konice + Slapanice)
telephone or personal interviews with researchers (questions related to the public character of such institution that may be based in provisions of the act on free access to information will not be discussed here).

Division of the categories is specified in Table 1 that contains findings of approaches to publish self-assessment results based on the CAF. These findings are preliminary and refer only to the set of institutions that have been requested as described above.

Table 1 may at least indicate some of the potential problems of the Czech practice. The first and very visible one is related to the active publishing of the self-assessment results on the web pages. The vast majority of websites of institutions that have implemented the CAF comprise only newspapers-like brief information about the implementation without any link to self-assessment report nor an action plan. The second visible feature is the approach to publish such information passively (on the basis of application). Here the approach to make the information available for the research may be discussed, not interactions with other individuals that may apply for similar information. The preliminary findings indicate almost reluctant approach to participate on the research. The evidence may be found particularly in the negative e-mails of regional offices' top management or high number of municipal top managers who have not even replied to the e-mail. Questions about cooperation and benchmarking between organisations themselves may not be fully answered here.

Other issues may be indicated by analysis of the results that have been made available by public managers. Documents of 16 institutions have been gained. Sometimes they cover more than one year of the CAF practice. The research that would give final list of potential issues is far from being ended and the paper deals with only a very limited number of them. The paper refers to CAF’s implementation results that have been made available in the form of self-assessment report of one regional office.

**Regional office X and the CAF**

This part of the paper relates to results of the second (2005) and third (2006) phase of the CAF implementation within one selected regional office. This regional office has 386 employees and is divided into 15 departments which may be further divided into sections (from 2 two 5 special organisational sections exist). This regional office exercises public administration for 510,000 inhabitants and 704 municipalities. For the purposes of research, the office made available only self-assessment reports which contains also proposals for future improvements. The regional office’s quality management activities of 2006 were awarded the resort price of the Ministry of Interior “Organisation of good public service” during the 3rd quality conference in January 2007.

At the beginning of the text, the self-assessment report of 2005 on the second phase of the CAF implementation briefly introduces (within 2 pages) the process of self-assessment implementation. It informs that the deputy of the President of the regional office was appointed as the director of the evaluation team which contains 11 members from employees of the office. The management activities had been carried out under the supervision of two experts from a private sector company. The CAF 2002 questions have been adapted to the conditions of the re-
Regional office and the self-assessment itself has been realised particularly in October 2005. Checklists for individual categories of criteria were prepared and the evaluators filled in comments and information on evidence. The filled-in checklists were internally published on the web-pages of the office to give individual members of the self-assessment team the possibility to make objections or to add the information. The report informs that the self-assessment process of comments was under way only internally among individual teams that evaluated criteria of enablers and results. According to the text of the report, for the purposes of being prepared for evaluation important materials for the second phase of self-assessment had been prepared – strategic aims of the Regional office, process map and the definition of key processes, products of the office provided for stakeholders which had been described for individual departments of the office. Authors of the report notice that the strategic documents had not been finalised in the form that would be approved due to time deficiencies, but the evaluators based the score on the assumption that strategic goals and processes exist. According to the text, the self-evaluation had been carried out in two phases – within the first one the criteria of results had been evaluated, within the second one the enablers’ criteria had been given a score. Other 85 pages contain the tables and charts of scores of individual criteria.

According to the conclusion of the authors of the 2005 report, the principle change had been achieved in case of the criterion 6 – Customer/citizen-oriented results (from the 2004’s score 0,7, that is expressed as a trend to “Key results are measured and show negative or stable trends” according to the CAF 2002 version, to the score 2,4, that express something in between “Results show modest progress” and “Results show substantial progress”\(^{1}\)). On the contrary, the stagnation was characteristic for the criterion 2 – Strategy and planning (1,9 → 2,0 – “An approach is planned and implemented – D (do)\(^{2}\)). The conclusions also give notice to disputes about assessing the sub-criteria. Authors of the report claim that such disputes indicated that:

- it is very difficult to objectively evaluate the level of the office with so heterogeneous set of activities and processes;

- it is necessary to enhance the space for multiple opinions not only of members of the self-assessment teams, but also of the heads of departments of the regional office. The text notices that this would require relatively deep knowledge of the CAF instrument among large number of employees and sufficient time for such deliberations;

- the quality self-assessment requires that the self-assessing team has enough time to make each criterion clear to each of its members. Annexes of the document contains only:

  a) brief description of areas proposed for future improvements which in case of “Management methods” also recommend to make evaluation more exact and to interlink the enablers with the results. Area “Strategy, strategic aims” recommends finishing the strategic and general goals (including the proposal to “considerably include the self-government in the process of strategic planning”, finalise the HRM policy, define the mission and focus on project management). Recommendations for the communication propose the dissemination of sociologic survey’s results to employees if this method will be utilised in the future self-assessment. The
area “Metrics” recommend to finalise the definition of services that are provided, customers, their segments and partners of the office and besides also the implementation of strategic aims and strategic documents evaluation.

b) example of action plan card proposing an instrument for prioritising activities.

For the purposes of this paper the following issues have been selected:

1) satisfaction results, required by the 6th box of the CAF 2002 criteria (Customer/citizen-oriented results), were analysed by the self-assessment team in regards to the time costs in relation to selected departments that stipulated the matrix of its services that are most important for its customers. The report does not contain a word about criteria of such selection of the departments and the kind of departments.

2) the 2005 report informs about discussion on the border-line between activities of the regional office as a body of the region and the region itself. According to the text, the final methodology and thus the border was based on the “sense” of evaluators.

3) The self-assessment of external relationship of the office is influenced particularly by the evaluation of the criterion 2/2.1 – The collection of information on current and future needs of stakeholders. Main conclusions of the mentioned sociological survey of employees that is also expressed within the evidence on the criterion 7.1.1 (Results of the general satisfaction of employees with the regional office, score 2,0) are lacking in the report or its annexes.

d) The core question of self-assessment stipulated in 2.1.1 – Had all of the stakeholders been defined (and further defined important stakeholders)? – was given the score 1,7 (the practice is tending to the modest improvement).

e) The evidence of the score 2,8 on systematic continual collection on information on needs and expectations of stakeholders through surveys speaks about two-year periodicity of public opinion polls and ad hoc shorter frequency in case of surveying satisfaction of political representatives of the region and clients from municipalities in the region. Again no empirical evidence is given.

f) The answer to the question 2.2.1 (How potential stakeholders are included in elaboration, review and up-dating of strategies and plans and how it is decided on the importance (priorities) of their expectations and needs) gives evidence only on the possibility of stakeholders to express their opinions during public deliberations or in a written form addressed to the office rather than on real activity of the stakeholders without any statistical evidence.

g) The performance of the office was not evaluated by its employees because the authors of the 2005 report considered the regional office as institution that was a public-law corporation where the performance may not be measured.

h) While evaluating the question 8.1.7 (The awareness of people about the influence of the office on the quality of life of citizens) self-assessment report says that it is highly influenced by media-reporters and without the feed-back it is not possible to determine what the media perception is (1,4 score that speak about the tendency to “Key results are measured and show negative or stable trends”). According to the authors of the report, it may be partly assumed that the reporters give great importance only to the nega-
tive and scandal news. The profit-making sociological research organisation STEM was ordered to carry out the quantitative survey of opinions of citizens on self-government functioning. Again, the final results of the survey are not included in the self-assessment report.

The 2006’s report on the third phase of the CAF implementation has even briefer introduction which includes very important information – the third phase of the CAF was carried out during March and April 2006, not even in the half year time after the finalisation of the second phase. Another 59 pages inform about scores given to each criteria and sub-criteria and mention evidence that is not specified by quantitative evidence in the text or within annexes of the report. Again, selected topics will be discussed here:

a) Within the text about the Criterion 1 there is an information on clarification of aims of the office and its individual departments which were published on the intranet for the purposes of potential employees’ remarks. Further information briefly speak about documents of strategic nature comprises the concept of process map, customers definition and strategic goals that were presumed in the previous year’s conclusions. The implementation of the BSC instrument was planned in 2006. The system of employees’ evaluation was enlarged by features that indicate the contribution of an employee to the vision and strategy of the office. No formal system for innovation support was implemented during the period. The proposals are expressed during deliberations of departments’ managers. Special electronic comments space was established within the Intranet.

b) The activities reflected in the scoring for the criterion 2 are documented similarly as in the previous report. The importance of the electronic space for citizen participation is stressed here. The increase of scoring was caused particularly due to the improvements in strategic planning.

c) Comments on the criterion 3 emphasize particularly the legal provisions of the labour law and constitutional principles related to equality and non-discrimination. Regular evaluation of employees is based on interviews between an employee and his/her manager. Some courses have a form of immaterial benefits for employees (e.g. ECDL).

d) The strategic partners were defined within the period which was reflected in the scoring of the criterion 4. Increases caused by improvements of external relationships management relates to the realization of the special project that is focused on partnership. As the 2005’s report said, the public is included in the work of most teams in the form of special consultative and initiative bodies of political nature (committees of the Council of the region and commissions of the Regional board) but the membership is often influenced by the political affinity. The similar comments relate to the accuracy and reliability of information that is – according to the report – influenced by competences of personnel. The Regional office also attempts to collect comments and initiatives from stakeholders by various means. The report stresses the importance of electronic communication. The evidence of external opinions is still missing in information published in the report. A separated department that analyses economic and statistical data has been established. In comments on financial aspects, legal provisions are stressed again; however certain innovation is expressed in relation to project financing
and special fund for continual financing of activities. The importance of internal audit is also underlined.

e) Information that support the scoring of the criterion 5 also state that in case of the sub-criterion 5.1 existing surveys, that are used for inclusion of employees and external stakeholders in the process of proposing and designing key processes, focus mainly on the past rather than on the present or future (as in the previous report). Improvement relates particularly to the mentioned definition of strategic aims and related strategic measures. However, direct measurability of some performances is considered to be difficult without any specification of this opinion. A consideration to approve special carts that would interlink measurable outputs and strategic aims is expressed. Enhancement of possibilities to comment with stakeholders is also positively evaluated by the report in case of the criterion 5.2. The satisfaction with information sources is also surveyed. Importance of benchmarking is stressed again in this report.

f) Great improvement is apparent in the evaluation activities related to customer/citizens satisfaction measuring. However, the improvement is not that visual in case of evidence. Various forms of consultations are expressed, however without any quantitative support of their utilisation by citizens themselves again. For example, the score of the sub-criterion 6.1.1 “Results of general perceived image of the office” was increased from 2.8 to 3.8. The 2005 report’s score was based on almost the same evidence. 2005’s score of the sub-criterion was based on the general claims about continual public opinion polls which – according to the authors of the report – show the greater awareness of citizens of the region, monitoring of feedback from stakeholders, international cooperation, enhancement of the extent of grants, meetings with citizens. The only difference was related to passing of strategic aims definition. The 2005’s report speaks about the first formal version of aims of the office which is not always specified by quantitative results, however – according to the report – „this vision is sufficient to define fundamental requirements of non-quantitative aims (modern institution, professional and helpful activities, open and friendly office).” These criteria were reflected in the short-term aims and tasks“. Such statement was only replaced by the claimed evidence which only verbally inform about final approval of strategic aims and basic strategic docu-

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion 6.1.4 – Results of products and services score increase and its scoring (2006)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Results of products and services:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. quality, reliability, compliance with quality standards and declarations of rights of customers or citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. processing time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. quality of advices given to a customer/citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Services are evaluated as accessible; the regional office has a good image. Submissions processing times is stipulated under legal conditions. Every submission is handled individually in according to the criterion of time requirements and the time limit is influenced by the complexity of an administrative procedure. Submissions beyond the administrative procedure act are handled immediately. We produce outlines and analysis of administrative decisions issued. Index of an-nulled decisions in case of the first instance decisions is stagnating, in case of the second instance decisions the situation is improving.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Development of scoring of individual CAF 2002 criteria (Region X)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAF 2002 criterions</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Regional office A</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ENABLERS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Leadership</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Give a direction to the organisation: develop and communicate vision, mission and values</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop and implement a system for managing the organisation</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Motivate and support the people in the organisation and act as a role model</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Manage the relations with politicians and other stakeholders</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Strategy and planning</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Gather information relating to present and future needs of stakeholders</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Develop, review and update strategy and planning</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Implement strategy and planning in the whole organisation</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. HRM</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Plan, manage and improve human resources with regard to strategy and planning</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Identify, develop and use competencies of the employees aligning individual, team and organisational targets and goals</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Involve employees by developing dialogue and empowerment</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Partnerships and resources</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Develops and implements key partnership relations</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Develops and implements partnerships with the customers/citizens</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Manages knowledge</td>
<td>2.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.4 Manages finances</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.5 Manage technologies</td>
<td>2.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.6 Manages buildings and assets</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Process and change management</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Identifies, designs, manages and improves processes</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Develops and delivers services and products by involving the customers/citizens</td>
<td>2.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.3 Plans and manages modernisation and innovation</td>
<td>2.0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>RESULTS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Customer/citizen citizen-oriented results results</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Results of customer/citizen satisfaction measurements</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Indicators of customer/citizen citizen-oriented measurements</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. People results</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1 Results of people satisfaction and motivation measurements</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2 Indicators of people results</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. Society results</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1 Results of societal performance</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2 Results of environmental performance</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9. Key performance results</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1 Goal achievement</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2 Financial performance</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ments of the office, which are not further specified in both cases. The sub-criterion 6.1.4 “Results of products and services” score increase from 2.0 to 2.7 although the evidence is expressed in the same way. Certain aspects of the office-centred and formalistic vision may be revealed, particularly in relation to the time-limits. The sub-criterion’s scoring justification of 2006 is formulated as it is described in the following Table 2. It also raises some questions when comparing the sub-criterion with the content of claimed evidence. Similar verbal justification is expressed in vast number of scoring baseline information in the report.

g) Within the evidence of the Criterion 7’s evaluation information on employees surveys is comprised which says that 46 % of employees participated (in 2005 59 % employees took part in such surveys). The methodology of surveys is not specified however. Results express general satisfaction of respondents with some exceptions in case of 52 % agreement on satisfaction with performance assessment and only 28 % satisfaction with possibilities to influence the strategy of the office in 2005 which may be in contrary with the above proclaimed improvements in participatory strategic management. It also may not be claimed that “in 2006 we gained 56 % satisfaction with inclusion to decision-making” because of the time of finalization of the self-assessment (04/2006). In some cases the improvement cannot be claimed due to the different design of questions which is apparent but not clearly described in the 2006 report. Without any regards to the methodology of their collection the empirical data from this area represent a significant change in the content of the report that may be inspiring for the evidence on external stakeholders’ satisfaction data that is still missing.

h) The comments on results of societal performance speaks also about the 2004/2005 results in the field of provided and received grants, but does not express the situation in 2006. The project on partnership and its ideas is stressed here. Improvements in results of environmental performance are connected with possible underestimation of previous year’s scoring because plans, approved in 2003 or 2004, are mentioned here. The scoring was influenced by new project on waste disposal sorting within the office and the attempts to monitor different kinds of produced waste disposal.

Conclusions

The CAF is a popular quality instrument within the Czech public administration practice. This instrument presupposes the self-evaluation of criteria that relates to internal as well as external environment of self-assessing institutions which may diagnose problems and good practices. The results are to be a matter of benchmarking according to authors of the instrument, however, the Czech practice of this instrument may raise questions about openness and transparency of quality management of territorial public administration institutions and their bodies. The findings indicate that content of some criteria as well as the scoring that follows may not be always clear to members of self-assessment teams. Certain aspects of the office-centred and formalistic vision may be revealed. In some cases, criterion scoring may increase but the description of evidence may not change. The quality of self-assessment relates particularly
to the quality aspects of evidence which form a baseline for the scoring and is also influenced by time dedicated to the self-assessment which may not be always determined by self-assessment teams themselves. Such evidence may be expressed more in words than in the clear empirical results based on the systemic or at least clear methodology. Is this a problem of the approach of institutions that decide to implement the instrument or of the instrument itself?

Endnotes

1 Grant no. 402/07/1486 – Measurement of Citizens’ Satisfaction with Public Sector Services as Integral Part of Quality Management in Public Sector Organizations.
2 The list is available here: http://www.benchmarking.cz/caf/Urady/UradySeznam.aspx
3 In the similar respect, EIPA’s Study on the use of the Common Assessment Framework in European Public Administrations of 2005 was not up-to-date.
4 The same approach of government occurred in case of the Conception of public administration reform (1999) which presupposes three variants of territorial public administration solution, but the recommended variant was not chosen by the Government at last. The quality of this document will not be discussed here.
5 Bodies like municipal offices which exist at the top of “statutory towns”.
6 Or 14 in the nearest future, because the abolishment of the Ministry of Informatics which have been functioning since the beginning of 2003 waits for the signature of the President of the Czech Republic (the bill has been approved by both of the chambers of the Parliament already).
8 Regions of cohesion exercise only the state administration branch of activities.

References

12. Humphreys, P. C. (2004). Improving the Quali-
ity of Services Delivered in Ireland: Different Approaches to the Challenge of Change. – In Löffler, E., Vintar, M. (Eds) Improving the Quality of East and West European Public Services. – Ashgate Publishing.

13. Information on the web-pages of institutions that are responsible for central guidance on the CAF in the Czech Republic (the Ministry of Interior, Council of the Czech Republic for the quality).


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David ŠPAČEK

BENDRASIS VERTINIMO MODELIS: POTENCIALUS IR FAKTINIS PRITAIKOMUMAS ČEKIJOS VIEŠOJO ADMINISTRAVIMO ĮSTAIGOSE

S ant r a u k a


Bendrasis vertinimo modelis – labai populiarus kokybės valdymo instrumentas Čekijos viešojo administravimo įstaigose. Šis instrumentas remiasi prielaida, jog įsakymai apibrėžia tikslus, strategijas bei procesus. Straišnyje analizuojamos pagrindinės Bendrojo Vertinimo modelio (BVM) idėjos, aprašomas tyrimo metodologijos pagrindas, sutelkiamas dėmesys į Čekijos įmonių praktiką naudojant BVM instrumentą. Čekijos įmonių praktiką naudojant šį instrumentą kyla klausimų apie kokybės valdymo viešojo administravimo įstaigose.

В статье представлена важность качества и основные идеи Общей модели Оценки (ОМО); представлена основа методологии исследования; внимание сосредоточено на качестве управления центральных учреждений Чехии. Также анализируются случаи выбора самооценки, принимая во внимание оказываемые выгоды и применимость инструмента ОМО в территориальных государственных администривных учреждениях. Ключевые слова: управление государством, реформа общественного администрирования, модели совершенствования качества, Общая Модель Оценки (ОМО).