

# THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE QUALITY OF LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICES

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## **Abstract:**

*To meet the needs and expectations of citizens - customers, the government from the administrative units provides local public services. Organization and functioning of local public services should be designed to lead to meeting the needs of beneficiaries - members of the local community. In this context, achieving the quality in public service delivery should be a major concern for local government authorities. In such a way, this article proposes analysing the component of local public services to measure their quality as perceived by members of the local community. The research carried out among citizens customers allowed measuring the quality of services available to them, this determination being the support of the substantiation of decisions and actions to improve public services whose quality is degraded. Since the qualities of local public services, the extent to which they respond and meet the needs of beneficiaries depend on the economic and social progress of the local community, the continuous assessment of the quality of these services should be a priority for the local public administration.*

**Key words:** local public administration, local public services, quality, local community, territorial-administrative unit

**JEL classification:** H83

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The goal of the public administration in any state is to provide public services to citizens, through a series of actions to contributing to the meeting of their general interest.

Through the way they work, the public services should lead to a maximum degree of satisfaction for consumers. In other words, achieving quality in the provision of public services should be one of the major objectives of any reform program or strategy for public administration.

Whereas the local government is closest to the citizen, it is also the best able to produce services that respond to the problems of the territorial-administrative units. Always the organization and functioning of the local public services should be designed to result in customer satisfaction from a local community.

Moreover, achieving development at local level occurs involving both the central and local administration, the communities that they serve, on the one hand, and the companies, the NGOs, on the other hand (1). Essentially, a high quality of public services is presented as a prerequisite for local development.

In this context, the present paper intends to analyse the local public services component, to measure their quality as perceived by members of the local community.

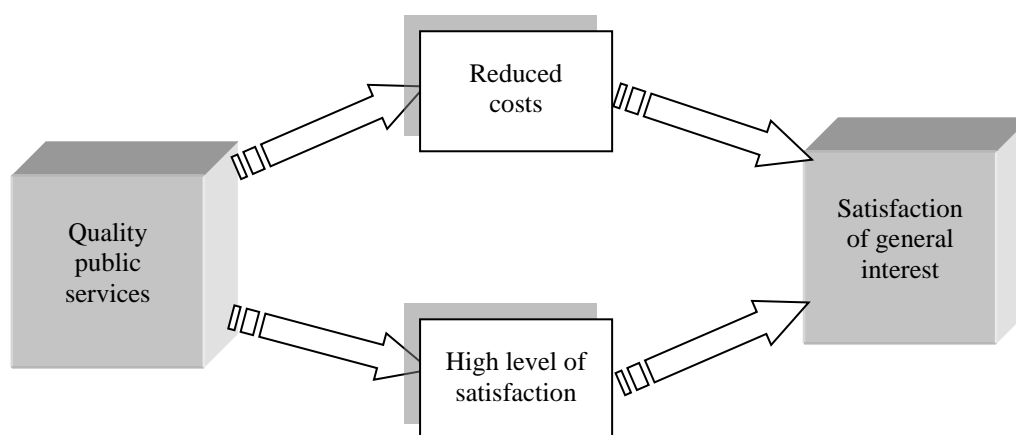
## 2. THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC SERVICE QUALITY MEASUREMENT

Citizens' expectations about public services are increasingly difficult to satisfy, they are more demanding about the measures taken by the administration in public services, measures that should be less procedural and more focused on meeting the needs of citizens.

Nowadays, the beneficiaries have an important role in the evolution of the public services, and being a component part in the management of public services, through the mechanisms of representation. (2)

Measuring the quality of public services in order to search for the optimal solutions for those services for which one identifies poor quality must be a priority for every government structure.

If the public administration authorities manage to provide quality service with the lowest possible costs and that generate a high level of satisfaction among beneficiaries, they will meet the general interest of community members (see Figure no. 1):



**Figure no. 1. The importance of quality public services for satisfying the general interest**

To measure the quality of a public service and the extent to which the public services meet the targets generated by serving the needs of the customers, performance indicators are imperative.

In all European Union countries performance indicators have begun to be determined since the 80s, to enable substantiating investments based on accurate data and a more correct estimation of the resources necessary to achieve minimum quality standards.

With these indicators we can evaluate the results of the functioning of public services, depending the volume and quality of benefits, taking into account the profitability, efficiency and effectiveness of the public services.

These performance indicators allow all interested parties to form an image on authorities' ability to serve their community in terms of supply, on parameters of quality, certain public services.

One of the indicators on which we want to insist on measures the involvement of all interested parties in the provision of public services, i.e. *citizens' satisfaction evaluation concerning the quality of public services* (see Table no. 1). This indicator gives an overview of public opinion towards the quality of public service provided. It is a qualitative indicator that complements the quantitative data which can be obtained by measuring other indicators.

Providing quality public services in correlation with the needs of citizens should be an important objective of the activity of public administration, the continuous improvement of services in terms of their quality being related to economic and social progress of the community.

**Table no. 1. Describing the evaluation of citizens' satisfaction on the quality of public services indicator**

Name of the indicator	Evaluating the citizens' satisfaction on the quality of public services
<b>Definition</b>	By analysing this indicator is quantified the overall perception to the public services provided. This indicator clarifies the measuring of the role of civil society to contribute to real institutional reform, transparent and focused on the needs of citizens, and stimulate citizen participation in the public policy development process.
<b>Calculation method</b>	Survey, applying questionnaires
<b>Data source</b>	Public services providers
<b>Monitoring</b>	Annual
<b>Interpretation</b>	The higher the level of public trust regards the supply of public services, the better the quality of public services offered.
<b>Difficulties encountered</b>	The risk of inadequate or superficial monitoring capacities of citizens' satisfaction.

## THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC SERVICES PERCEIVED BY LOCAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS

In continuation of the present approach, for measuring the quality of public services we have carried out a survey based on a questionnaire among local community members of Suceava. This investigation has been the subject of a wider research which was developed at the level of the administrative-territorial units of Suceava County, respondents were requested to respond to, among others, the question "How would you rate the quality of each of the following local public services: 1. Very poor/ 2. Poor/ 3. Neither poor nor good/ 4. Good/ 5. Very good/ 0. It is not the case?". (3)

**Table no. 2. Averages and standard deviations on the variable quality of local public services**

Current No.	Variable	Number of respondents	Average	Standard deviation
	<b>Quality of local public services</b>	352	<b>3,16</b>	0,577
1.	Water supply	340	3,84	0,875
2.	Natural gas supply	313	<b>3,96</b>	0,889
3.	Central heating	260	3,69	1,001
4.	Sewerage	331	3,31	1,096
5.	Sanitation	351	3,18	1,095
6.	Local public transportation	312	3,36	1,097
7.	Public lighting	348	3,55	1,019
8.	Rendering (stray dogs)	318	<b>1,87</b>	0,995
9.	Urbanism and discipline in constructing	340	2,63	1,033
10.	Health units	349	2,95	1,116
11.	State educational institutions	332	3,80	0,919
12.	Administration of food markets	333	3,26	1,066
13.	Street safety	351	2,74	1,178
14.	Road infrastructure	352	2,58	1,219
15.	Parking places	344	2,49	1,205
16.	Playgrounds for children	348	2,79	1,169
17.	Maintenance of green spaces	350	3,17	1,104
18.	Civil registry	349	3,44	0,956
19.	Collecting taxes and fees	351	3,61	0,985
20.	Social care	350	3,09	1,051

Averages and standard deviations of the respondents' answers of Suceava local community on the variable *quality of local public services* are included in the table below (see Table no. 2).

From the data summarized in the table above follows that the overall average for the variable *quality of local public services* is 3.16, which means that the respondents consider services provided as neither poor quality nor better.

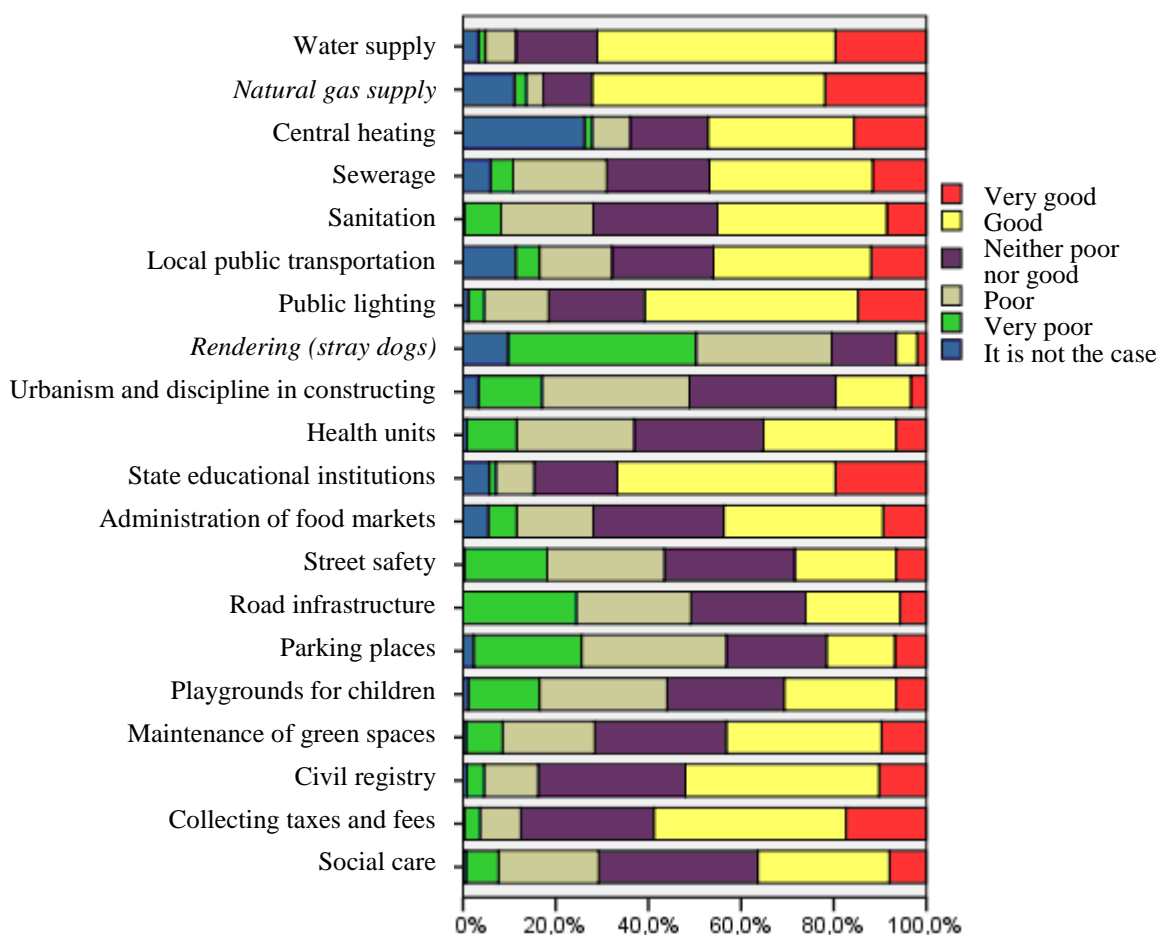
Local public service *natural gas supply* recorded the highest average (3.96). This means that the respondents consider that it is a good quality service. In contrast, the lowest average (1.87) recorded local public service *rendering (stray dogs)*, which means that respondents consider the service mentioned as being of poor quality.

For a comprehensive view of the local community members' perception on *the quality of public services* provided at local level, in the table below their opinion can be found, expressed in percentage (see Table no. 3):

**Table no. 3. Perception on the quality of local public services**

Current No.	Local public service	It is not the case	Very poor	Poor	Neither poor nor good	Good	Very good	Total
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1.	Water supply	3,41	1,42	6,53	17,62	51,42	19,60	100
2.	Natural gas supply	11,08	2,56	3,69	10,51	<b>50,28</b>	<b>21,88</b>	100
3.	Central heating	26,14	1,70	8,24	16,76	31,53	15,63	100
4.	Sewerage	5,97	4,83	20,17	22,16	35,22	11,65	100
5.	Sanitation	0,28	7,96	19,89	26,70	36,65	8,52	100
6.	Local public transportation	11,36	5,11	15,63	21,88	34,09	11,93	100
7.	Public lighting	1,14	3,41	13,92	20,74	46,02	14,77	100
8.	Rendering (stray dogs)	9,66	<b>40,63</b>	<b>29,26</b>	13,92	4,54	1,99	100
9.	Urbanism and discipline in constructing	3,41	13,64	31,82	31,53	16,19	3,41	100
10.	Health units	0,85	10,80	25,28	27,84	28,69	6,54	100
11.	State educational institutions	5,68	1,42	8,24	17,90	47,16	19,60	100
12.	Administration of food markets	5,40	6,25	16,48	28,12	34,37	9,38	100
13.	Street safety	0,28	17,90	25,28	28,13	21,88	6,53	100
14.	Road infrastructure	0	24,43	24,72	24,72	20,45	5,68	100
15.	Parking places	2,27	23,30	31,25	21,59	14,77	6,82	100
16.	Playgrounds for children	1,14	15,34	27,56	25,28	24,15	6,53	100
17.	Maintenance of green spaces	0,57	7,95	19,89	28,41	33,52	9,66	100
18.	Civil registry	0,85	3,69	11,65	31,82	41,76	10,23	100
19.	Collecting taxes and fees	0,28	3,41	8,81	28,69	41,48	17,33	100
20.	Social care	0,57	7,10	21,59	34,38	28,41	7,95	100

Graphical representation of local community opinion on *the quality of services* provided locally is as follows (see Figure no. 2):



**Figure no. 2. Perception on the quality of local public services**

Source: elaborated on the basis of the data presented in Table no. 3

Data analysis summarized in the table above, as well as viewing the graph above show that the local public service which most community members (72.16%) say it has a good (50.28%) and very good quality (21.88 %) is *natural gas supply* service. These results can be attributed to the fact that, most likely, in local public service provision mentioned, the respondents did not identify failures likely to affect his quality.

At the opposite pole is found local public service *rendering (stray dogs)* that most local community members (69.89%) say is poor (29.26%) and very poor (40.63%) . The information that the quality of the local public service indicated is not appropriate to the needs of the local community members is important for management of local government, highlighting a real problem whose solution does not involve delay.

### CONCLUSIONS

Taking into account the information above, we can conclude that the periodic assessment of the quality of public services is likely to provide some information needed to formulate appropriate strategies on services offered. Analysis of this indicator can answer several questions, such as: To what extent services meet customer expectations?/ Do services offer enough quality for users?/ Is there improvement or degradation of service quality?/ To what extent projected objectives relative to the services provided were made? etc. Responses to such questions may be set as starting point for the formulation of measures and actions to improve/ make better of public services for which is identified impairment in terms of their quality.

Finally, we consider that it is necessary the continuous assessment of the quality of public services, in order to avoid significant degradation and to adopt in due time measures required for their optimization.

## ENDNOTES

- (1) According to A. L. Scutariu, (2013), *Cercetarea fenomenului turistic din perspectivă regională*, PhD thesis, University „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” of Iasi, p. 34
- (2) D. Dincă, *Cine se ocupă de e-guvernare?* Revista Sfera Politicii, [nr. 133, disponibil la http://www.sferapoliticii.ro/sfera/133/art08-dinca.html](http://www.sferapoliticii.ro/sfera/133/art08-dinca.html)
- (3) P. Zaharia, (2013), *Autonomia în managementul administrației publice locale*, PhD thesis, University „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” of Iasi, p. 195

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