

Quality Evaluation in Social Services: Challenges for New Public Management in Russia¹

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While there were huge social, political, and institutional impediments to reform in Russia in the early 1990s, decades of so-called “political economy” ensured that the intellectual obstacles to reform also would be substantial even after the commitment, in principle, to a market economy had been made (Barnett 1996). Historically, most of today’s public administration in Russia is left over from Soviet central planning. Russia inherited a bulky and rigid system of social security based on public institutions and its beneficiaries—categorized in over 150 groups like people with disabilities, single mothers, and war veterans—were irregularly paid. Thus, the development of New Public Management (NPM) should be considered against the modernization of social welfare in Russia.

The first attempts to adopt NPM in Russia—in industrial companies, public administration, universities, and social services—began in the 1990s. Many NPM reforms are not named as such, perhaps in order to distance themselves from the neoliberal political context and the “suspicious Western experience” of those years, and these reforms are seen in Russia as segmental and often contradictory. The tendency to implement NPM principles in the Russian public sector is a process tightly connected with basic changes to the whole economy. Smaller enterprises were acquiring higher legal and economical independence. The introduction of a free-market economy in Russia evoked the tendency to introduce market principles into all realms of the economic and social life. Similarly to those processes in Eastern Europe, not only real business units but also nonprofit organizations tried to implement these principles into their management and governance (Malý 2000). The key characteristics of NPM, such as the creation of a corporate identity mission statement, corporate strategy, and increasing managerial autonomy, were apparent in social services, too. However, the most characteristic for the process

in the Russian public sector in general, and in social services sector in particular, is the persistent monopoly position of organizations providing public services and the few opportunities to create a competitive environment.

The transition of such social services to a market economy in 1980s and 1990s in Western countries was caused by the accumulated distrust and dissatisfaction by people and politicians of previous paternalist models of social policy (Public Policy 1993; Schiavo-Campo 1994). In social services, expert knowledge began to play a crucial role in the evaluation of and increase in quality and the effectiveness and efficiency of performance (Weimer and Vining 1992: 12).

As the experiences of the UK and other countries in the West demonstrate, New Public Management increased the privileges of professional autonomy, the more accountable social worker targeting scarce resources in the most efficient and effective way. Also, it tried to increase service users' alternatives and raise the standards of social workers' qualifications and practice (Dominelli 2004: 14–15); it promoted the turn in social services from a paternalist to a partnership model.

These changes, however, led to the reinforcement of bureaucratic forms of stabilization and control of practitioners who used to work more autonomously (Dominelli 2004: 57). But the intervention of market ideology (or “businessology”) in the “caring” domain of social services (Harris 2003) did not solve old dilemmas but rather added new problems and contradictions.

Marginalized individuals, families, groups, or communities have not accumulated additional resources as a result of NPM. Neither clients nor social workers were automatically empowered in this new mode of management. The full workload was not reduced and it limited the creative activity and innovations of social workers. There was little evolution of working methods with clients, some who may be extremely difficult, delicate, or risky.

Neither new market commercialism nor managerialism was free of disadvantages due to the substantial limitation of access, adequacy, flexibility, equality, and justice (Beresford and Croft 2001).

Ever since the command economies of eastern Europe collapsed, the Western world has been struggling to find an economic model for public services that isn't as rapacious as pure free market capitalism, yet retains some of the strengths of markets—such as efficiency and responsiveness to what people actually want (Pillsbury 2003).

A recent study (Hajnal 2005) sheds a cloud of doubt onto the claim frequently found in the literature that NPM reforms involve a replacement of “outmoded, bureaucratic thinking” with a “culture of efficiency and entrepreneurship.”

Talk by politicians and managers of making services more effective or improving their quality opens up spaces for professional and user groups, or alliances of interests between them, to argue about what 'effectiveness' or 'quality' means. In this sense, businessology creates sites for conflict between different interests through which claims to power can be pressed (Harris 2003)

In Germany and other European countries, the "social market economy" model appears to be governed by the state structure, which in the age of NPM reforms "is neither dead nor incapacitated, as is usually implied in NPM-prone ideology, and as is perhaps more visible now than it was a decade or two ago" (Drechsler 2002).

One can trace the features of NPM not only in the context of Great Britain, the USA, and all over Europe, but also in many post-communist countries, though the context here is different (Nagel and Rukavishnikov 1994). Here, social support is rationalized under the influence of a deep economic crisis, scarcity of budget funds, and a weak and unsatisfactorily determined professional ethos (Aslund 1999). It causes an increase in risks related to the deeper exclusion and deprivation of marginalized groups and a limitation of social services capacities.

In Russia it took place after the shock therapy of the late 1990s in the crisis of circumstances in economical and political life and competition for power between private oligarchs, regional leaders, and centralized power. These increased risks of exclusion and deprivation of disadvantaged groups, narrowing the field of personal social work services. With the rapid decrease in the standard of living during market reforms, the number of welfare client groups increased. Due to the ineffectiveness of the universalistic approach, the emphasis in solving welfare problems was shifted to providing means-tested schemes. That has led to the disqualification of a number of welfare client groups, and recently to compensating them via monetary means. This shift to a market welfare system and using a "means-tested" method for the distribution of welfare, including social support, characterizes the process of social policy liberalization in contemporary Russia.

In other words, the impetus for reforms, namely for the modernization of social service management, has been a part of the larger national process of transformation from a system of social welfare. These reforms have been directed towards the truncation of social obligations by the federal government by delegating responsibility to the regional/municipal level, with central control over these processes remaining. In many respects, reform is conducted top-down, by formulating new rules of the game and new strategic priorities. However, regional administrators have had to allocate new resources and adapt to elaborate models of modernization of social services, regional regulations, and standards. As a result, this process was launched at different times and at different speeds in the regions, taking on various forms and priorities.

However, this is not to say that social services in Russia are struggling for an unstable balance between an unfettered market and state domination. There is an ongoing debate

whether or not Russia nowadays is a Welfare State, a “Social State” as written in the post-Soviet basic law, the Constitution of Russian Federation of 1993, or rather *laissez-faire* arrangements. “Russia does have a market economy, but that it is a market economy of a very specific type; that is, one that bears very little resemblance to the advanced ‘social market’ economy which was once held up as a model for less developed economies to aspire to” (Barnett 1996). While a considerable part of economic resources is allocated through market mechanisms, the non-market mechanisms of resource allocation are largely maintained and widespread.

The social welfare sector in Russia covers a variety of agencies, providing direct care and support to service users. The delivery of social services places wide-ranging demands on both administrators and employees in the sector, many of whom do not possess formal qualifications in social work. Overall, the local authority sector provides the highest number of services. However, services are not delivered uniformly, with a small ratio of nongovernmental agencies providing a varying amount and specialization of services. The social service workforce in public agencies is less qualified within the welfare sector than in education and healthcare.

The ongoing process of social policy reforms in Russia is determined by the intentions of neoliberal ideologists and the government to rationalize the relationship between the citizens and state and to make these relationships more efficient and effective. A trend towards rationalization was expressed by new legislation, including Federal Law No. 122 (2005) on the reorganization of responsibilities between the levels of authorities, and the monetization of privileges.

Another aspect of these quite contradictory challenges is modernization of the social services system. The welfare sector of this system can broadly be split into family and children and adult services. Adult services include nursing homes, day care, home help, work with people with disabilities, the homeless, and job counselling for the unemployed. The main component of family and child services is work with families, which encompasses family care centers, rehabilitation facilities for children with disabilities and for children from families at risk, part-time day-care facilities, and nursing homes for children with mental disabilities. During the last few years some experiments took place in this area, in that a number were supported by international foundations and expert groups. Such innovations were directed towards an increase of the effectiveness of social services as well as their managerialization, with a great emphasis on measurable outcomes.

However, these new rationalized standards and techniques have often encountered the existing practices of performance and evaluation of quality and effectiveness of social services, as well as staff motivation and management methods. As our studies have shown, there is a great diversity of understanding about quality and effectiveness among social services employees, managers, and clients, and a great need to elaborate the instrumental tools that will work under these new circumstances. Therefore, it is

important not only to study the context of social services' modernization, to evaluate the degree of compatibility of new and existing practices, and to analyze the direct and side-effects of these new adopted practices, but also to work out how to improve and facilitate these processes in the region.

Nowadays, the trend to rationalization and modernization of social services is obvious, stimulated by the neoliberal changes in social policy and implemented by service administrators and employees to elaborate unified and managerialist standards and mechanisms of evaluation. The content of the overall reform had been determined by the emphasis on an increase in transparency of a system of social services in order to manage and optimize the distribution of budget resources. The rhetoric of widening access to social services, increasing the satisfaction of social-work clients, and achieving new goals of social policy has been weak. The main content and course of the reforms are associated with a decrease in budget costs on social support programs. This explains why these changes were undertaken.

What are the benefits, expenses, and ways to optimize the distribution expenses model of financing and social services provision among federal, regional, and local authorities? The answer to this question can be analyzed via the following aspects: what are the ways to alter the system of providing social services in order to increase its effectiveness? If not, what have been the major barriers to enhancing efficiency? How can any such barriers be overcome? How are the concepts of efficiency, effectiveness, and quality understood and used in social services delivery and evaluation? How do the new ways of management of social services effect the performance of the social services employees and how does it effect service users' well-being? How effective have been attempts to make social services accountable by the service users and how far has this influenced bureaucratic behavior? Has evaluating the social services widened the access to social services by citizens?

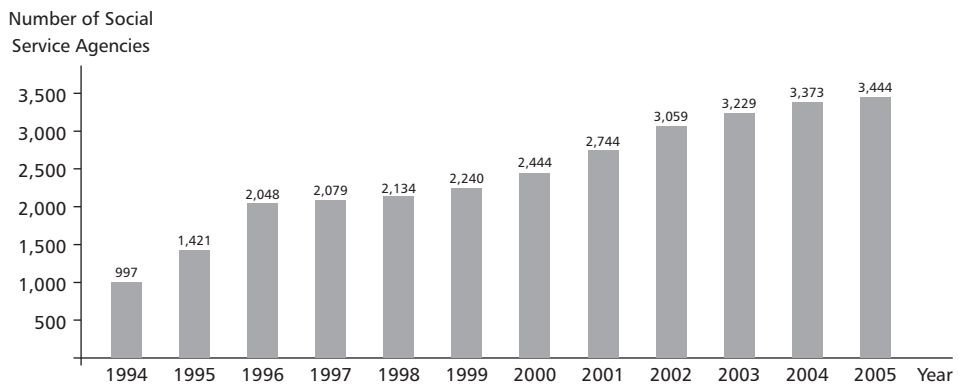
The applied nature of this report is based on a dialogue with public and nongovernmental social service agencies as well as public administration managers. This project is considered as an important contribution to the future development of the system of social services in the Saratov and Samara regions as expressed by the Ministry of Healthcare and Social Support in Saratov and the Ministry of Healthcare and Humanitarian Development in Samara. It was aimed at the applied analysis of the processes of social services market development on the regional level in aspects of administrative costs, modernization, and standardization of social services in two Volga regions, Saratov and Samara.

The following chapter offers an overview of the attempts of the authorities to improve efficiency of social services as a whole on the national social policy level. It describes an institutional shift towards NPM, the development of the rhetoric of this outcome-centered policy, and new forms of financial management of social services.

SOCIAL POLICY AND THE INSTITUTIONAL SHIFT TO NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT IN RUSSIA

The social service system in Russia covers a varied range of services, providing direct care and support to service users in sectors of social welfare, employment, education, healthcare, and housing. During the 1990s, a wide network of social services was established under the Ministry of Labor and Social Development. This social services network has been expanding rapidly during the last 10 to 12 years (Figure 1). In this paper we shall refer to social services included in this network.

Figure 1.
Dynamics of a Number of Social Service Agencies



Source: Statistics of the Ministry of Healthcare and Social Development, Moscow, 2006. Available online: <http://www.mzsrff.ru/stat/346.html>.

The workforce of social services provides care in many different settings that, according to the Social Service Federal Law (1995), includes home care; social assistance for family and children; social-rehabilitation services for children and youth under 18; helping children without parental custody; shelters for children and adolescents; psychological-pedagogical services; hotline services; hostels; day care for elderly; residential social services (nursing homes for elderly and disabled, psycho-neurological nursing homes, nursing homes for children with physical and mental disabilities); and elderly care. At the moment, residential state-owned institutions are prevalent in Russia's social services system. Similar to Ukraine (Dzhygyr 2007), this imbalance is rooted in various barriers to the development of the social services market with nongovernmental players, such as alternative, non-state providers.

According to Article 25 of the Social Service Federal Law:

The effectiveness of the performance of social services is guaranteed by the specialists, who have professional education relevant to the requirements and nature of the job, experience in field of social services, as well as inclined by their personal qualities to provision of social services.

Personal qualities often play the main role during workforce selection, service performance, and evaluation. The workforce of social services has a range of different skills and qualifications, but the majority of employees in the social services do not have a diploma in social work.

The last 12 years have seen a number of important policy documents emerge, all of which should rely on good evidence about the social services' performance and workforce, if they are to be implemented successfully. According to the Article 6 of the Federal Law on the Basics of Social Services of Population in the Russian Federation No. 195 (1995):

[...] social service provision should conform with national standards, which set up the main requirements of amount and quality of social services, the order and conditions of their performance.

In 2001, the government launched the Program for Social-economic Development of the Russian Federation in a mid-term perspective, 2002–2004 (Program 2001) which claims the necessity of performance management to improve the quality and effectiveness of social services for the population by means of the active engagement of nongovernmental organizations, the creation of social services market, competitive financing of social services, the attraction of investments from various sources, and the diversification of social services. This was planned to widen the opportunities of service users to choose between different suppliers of services, including public or private.

Then-president Vladimir Putin underlined the necessity to form the social services market; he stressed that improving quality of services is more important than rising financial investments. It will require modernization of the scheme for financing the social sphere for providing services of relevant quality and content to particular individuals (ITAR-TASS 2004).

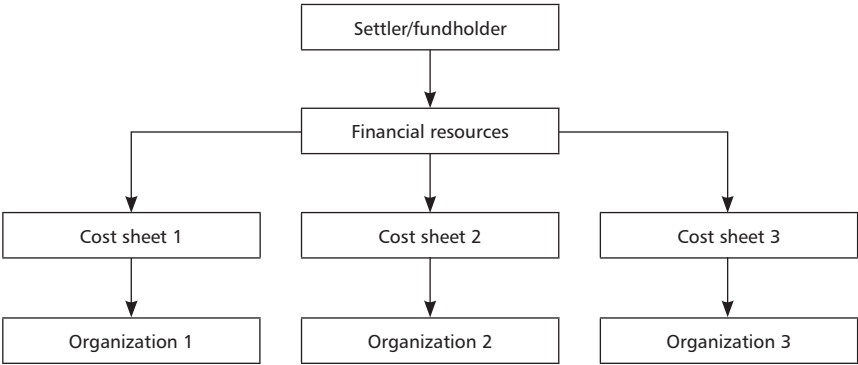
The current program for 2006–2008 stresses the priority of social services development in terms of improving quality, availability, and effectiveness, and therefore the development of insurance mechanisms and performance management of social infrastructure, including the creation of a market of social services with fair opportunities for different suppliers and the establishment of new forms of social service agencies.

The contribution of nongovernmental organizations to service provision is growing. NGOs provide social services in many regions of Russia, especially in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Nizhni Novgorod, Samara, Saratov, Perm, Voronezh, Kemerovo, and Tomsk.

Social partnership is a new concept for the developments of inter-sectoral collaboration in this field. In Samara *oblast*, more than 3,000 NGOs provide social services for the population. The competitive nature of a rising social services market is being fostered by so-called “contests on social projects”—competitions among various organizations for small grants arranged by local governments.

An analysis of the current legislation shows that in Russia it is not the activity of a particular organization (or specific types of activity, e.g., provision of social services) but the institution itself that is funded by the state budget. Statutory organizations are financed in a centralized way from the state budget through a special budget line, while others, especially NGOs, cannot receive budget funds even through tender-based procedures. The organizations and institutions within the network of social services are financed according to centralized, planned, budget cost-sheets by the Ministry, which is the settler of these statutory establishments, or the fundholder (Figure 2).

Figure 2.
Traditional System of Financing Subordinate Organizations



Such a traditional approach to financing subordinate organizations does not promote efficient spending of the budget funds or improving the quality of the social services and suffers from the following disadvantages (Chagin 2006):

- the fundholder has neither a full and clear view of what it is being paid nor the cost of an individual service;
- service provider reports only the process, but not the results;
- there is no system of mutual responsibility between the fundholder and the service provider;
- the fundholder has no idea about the standard minimum of quality services.

The reform of social services is ongoing. Along with the traditional scheme of financing, there are new options implemented in a number of regions and projects, including social vouchers and social contracts. In a “social contract” scheme, the financial resources are distributed among service providers under the competitive and contractual base (Figure 3). In a “social voucher” scheme, financial resources are distributed among the providers depending on choice of service users (Figure 4).

Figure 3.
Scheme of Social Contract

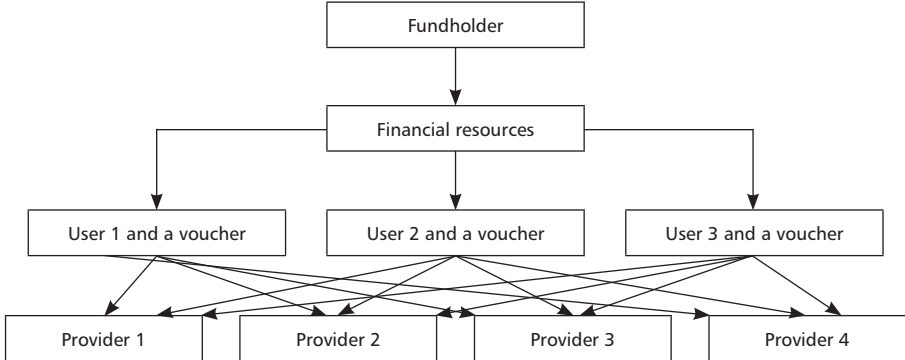
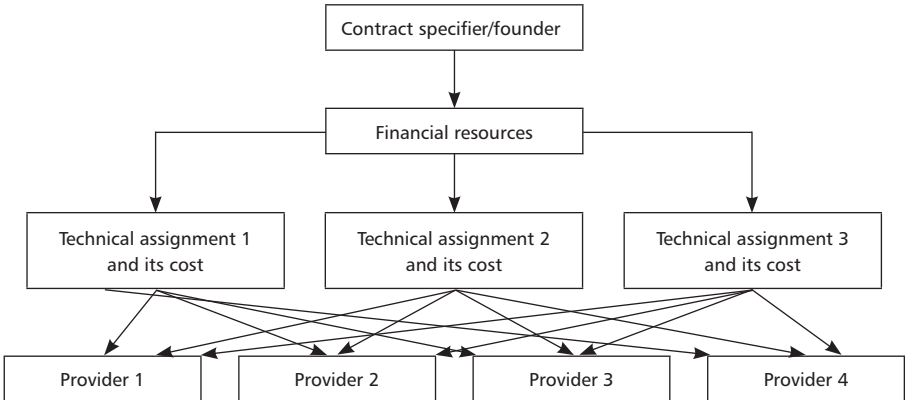


Figure 4.
Social Vouchers



The advantages of these financial schemes are as follows:

- Services are not maintained but bought according to technical assignments (social contract) or credit for service (voucher).
- The fundholder begins to clearly understand which services are funded for whom, what is the cost of each service, and what results (positive changes) they lead to.
- The social services market is de-monopolized, competition among different providers occurs, and quality of services is improved.
- Mutual responsibility is defined by a contract formed between the fundholder and provider.
- The fundholder has a chance to monitor the activities of a provider.
- A social contract is more convenient of service provision management; a social contract is valuable tool of implementation of regional social policy. It helps to promote performance management over the results.

The new methods mentioned above are being implemented in a number of Russian regions, for instance:

- Magadan, where there was a contest for a municipal social contract to perform a program of social-occupational rehabilitation of youth from at-risk groups in 2003.
- Birobijan and Kirov, where there were contests for municipal social contract to perform a program of social-psychological rehabilitation of children from at-risk groups in 2003.
- Gorodetsky and Balakhninsky *rayons* of Nizhegorodskaja *oblast*, where there were municipal contracts for subordinate agencies to deliver home-help services for elderly and people with disabilities, social-psychological rehabilitation of children from at-risk groups, and summer rest for children from 2003 till now.
- Altaisky *krai*, where there was a contest for a state contract to perform a program of social-psychological help to women who had survived domestic violence in 2004.

New schemes of social services financial management also are being realized in Tiumen, Perm, Altaiski *krai*, and St. Petersburg. At the same time, similar to Ukraine,

only part of budgetary funds are distributed through tenders, while the greater part of public expenditures and expenditures of local self-governance are dis-

tributed at the stage of drawing up and adopting budgets. Moreover, even the procedure of holding tenders for attracting budgetary funds for financing social services is characterised by a high degree of intransparency—there are no clear criteria for evaluation of bidding proposals, the order of publishing the decisions on holding tenders and on the results of tenders is not fixed, the procedure of considering bidding proposals is not transparent, there is no list of grounds for declaring the results of a tender to be invalid, and consequently—it is impossible to appeal against the results of a tender. Besides, tenders are of a closed character and there is lack of control over them (Dzhygyr 2007).

To reform the financial scheme of social service provision, it would require the re-definition of factual costs of a single social service, a transition towards schemes of contracts, vouchers, or co-payment (or full payment) by service users who have a sufficient level of income. To succeed with this change, it would be necessary to promote changes in national legislation, as well as to define common regulations of the standards appropriate for social services provision. The system of tender-based distribution of the funds aimed at financing social services needs to ensure its transparency.

CHANGES TO MANAGEMENT'S THINKING

The broader context for NPM reform in social services is administrative reform ideas concerning civil service in Russia, which may or may not be a potential catalyst for reform. The NPM conceptual framework espouses performance-based practices that aim to hold agencies and government employees accountable for results. Some authors have issued a strong caution that NPM-type reforms should not be introduced in countries that have not first successfully implemented traditional Weberian-style bureaucracy (see Schick 1998; Minogue 2000, cited in Barabashev and Straussman 2005). In this regard, Russia is a contradictory case. On the one hand, it has strong state bureaucracy, mirroring a lot of western European patterns. On the other hand, the organizational subculture reflects Soviet and post-Soviet peculiarities, including the high importance of informal relations, specific forms of street-level bureaucracy, and mistrust between the employees and service-users (Romanov 1998).

International trends have focused on proposed NPM-type initiatives that are performance based, use market-like incentive schemes, and empower managers throughout administrative systems. Some NPM ideas have been adopted by the Russian civil service. For example, the Federal Program Reform of State Service of the Russian Federation (2003–05) includes some NPM-like innovations (Barabashev and Straussman 2005).

The implementation of NPM introduces changes the way managers of social services on all levels think. Social policy documents now are designed according to the project

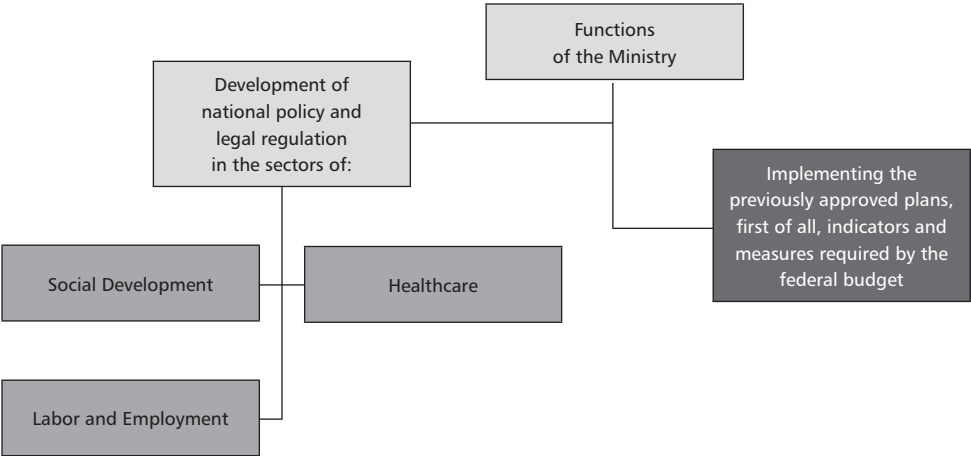
structure with strategic goals, main directions of their implementation, operational tasks and concrete actions to implement the goals, and the most important—indicators of goal attainment.

The strategic goals of contemporary National Social Policy are:

- to increase the quality and standard of living of the population;
- to build conditions for socioeconomic growth in the long-term perspective.

These goals are to be achieved in the main directions indicated in Figure 5.

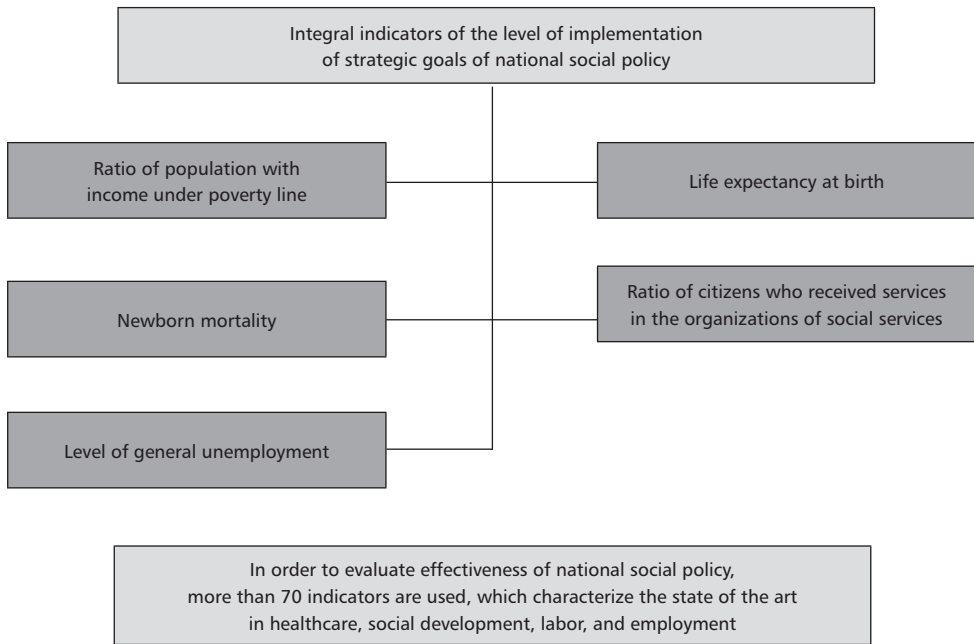
Figure 5.
Main Directions of Social Policy of the Russian Federation
under the Responsibility of the Ministry of Healthcare and Social Development
as an Actor of Budget Planning, 2006–2008



The concrete actions aimed at attaining these goals are defined in the Program of Social-economic Development, 2006–2008 (Decree of the Government of Russian Federation of January 19, 2006, No. 38-r).

Indicators of goal attainment are developed and monitored on the strategic level. The number of citizens who received services in these organizations, which are under the jurisdiction of this Ministry, is one of the main integral indicators of success in policy implementation (Figure 6).

Figure 6.
Integral Indicators of the Ministry of Healthcare and Social Development

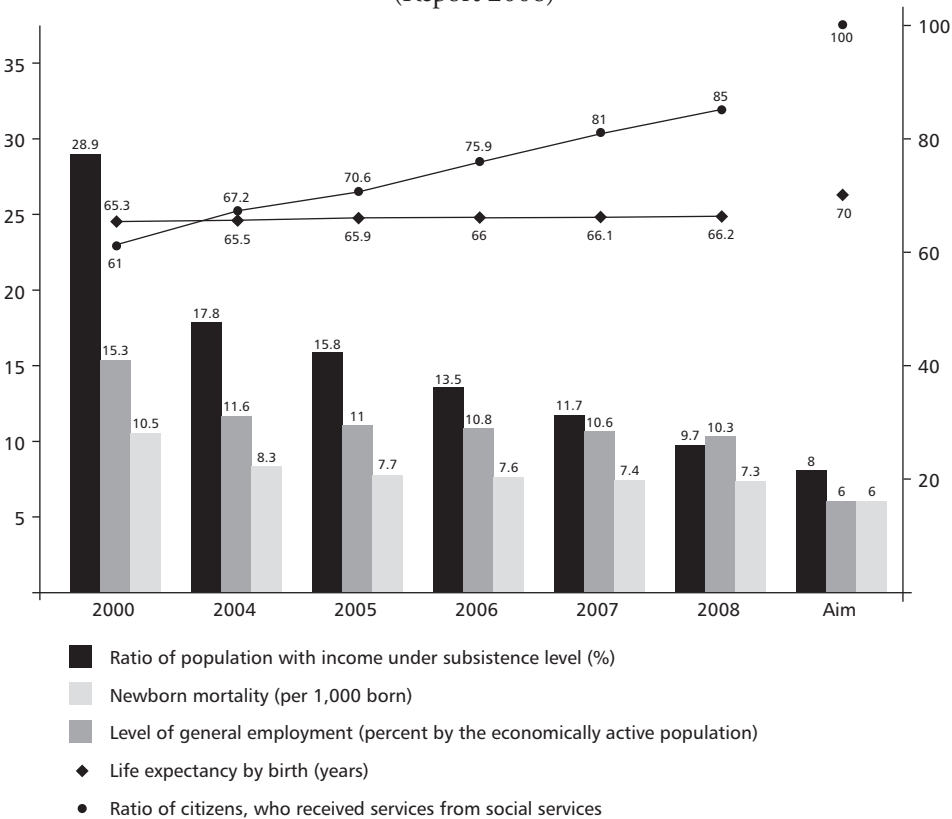


The ratio of citizens receiving social services is increasing, along with an increase in number of agencies providing those services (see Figures 1 and 7)

One of the goals in the “social development” direction is “to promote the improvement of the position of families with children, to create conditions for the development and functioning of children, who find themselves in difficult circumstances.” Operational tasks for this goal are as follows:

- to strengthen the system of social protection of family in order to keep a child within the family;
- to prevent family disadvantage, orphanhood, to introduce new methods to prevent juvenile abandonment and delinquency;
- to increase the level of state guarantees to children with disabilities, with all necessary social assistance and support;
- to arrange rest and health improvement of children.

Figure 7.
Goal Attainment, 2000–2006, and Expectations, 2007–2008
(Report 2006)

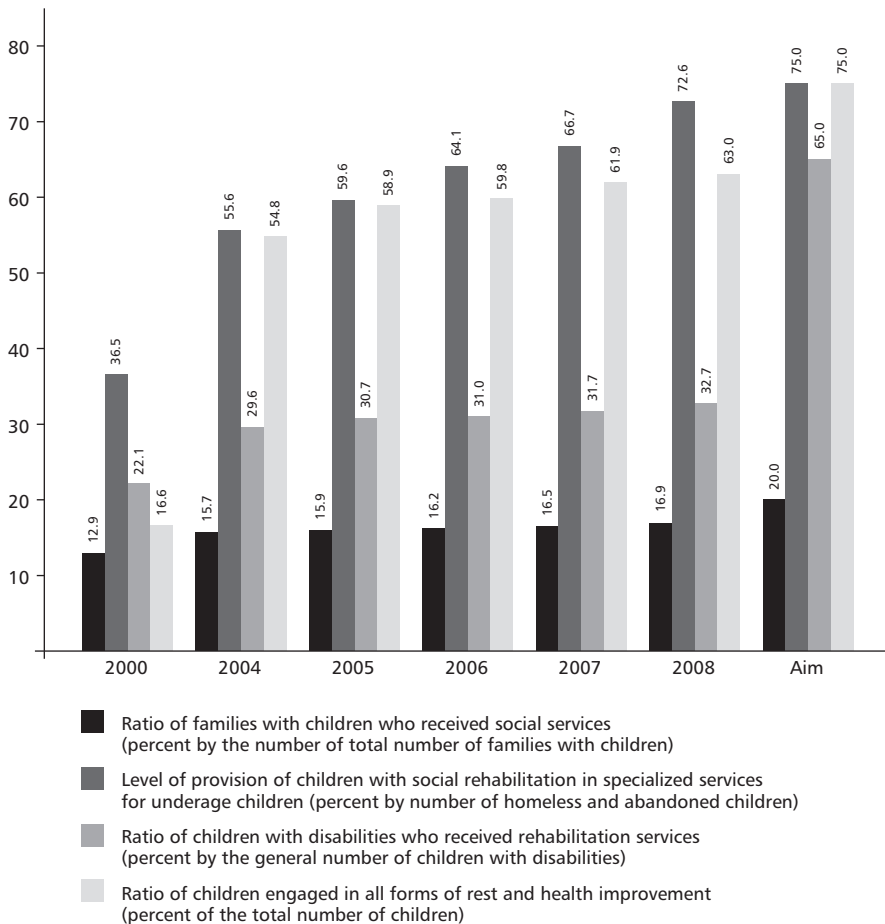


Each operational task has concrete actions, aimed on its implementation. For example, to realize the task of strengthening the system of social protection of family in order to keep a child within the family, the following measures should be undertaken:

- to arrange plans of preventive work with family through the wide network of family and children's services;
- to increase quality of social services for families with children;
- to improve adoption and other family forms of fostering children who are left without parental custody;
- to elaborate a system of measures of proactive and treatment to prevent family violence;
- to widen the participation of nongovernmental organizations in prevention work with and treatment of family and children.

These rather vague formulated outcomes are measured in numbers (“ratio” and “level”) of those who received services (Figure 8).

Figure 8.
Indicators That Measure Process Rather Than Performance (Report 2006)



The term “service” has not been defined yet. In a typical regulation about a social and rehabilitation center for underage children (Governmental Regulation of Russian Federation of November 27, 2006, No. 896), a notion of “services” is absent. Here, the word “tasks” is used to describe a center that:

- (a) provides temporary accommodation for children who find themselves in difficult circumstances;

- (b) takes part in finding and eliminating reasons and conditions promoting neglect of children;
- (c) assists in rehabilitation of social status of children at school, work, residence; assists in returning children to their families;
- (d) provides social, psychological, or other aid to children and their parents (or legal representatives) in elimination of difficult circumstances;
- (e) develops and implements social rehabilitation of children programs focused on coping with difficult circumstances;
- (f) provides protection of rights and lawful interests of children;
- (g) organizes medical service and education of children, aid in their professional orientation and acquiring a profession.

It is clear that the notion of task does not reflect service but only presupposes a possibility of solving tasks with help of this or that service.

A similar approach to defining social services as either informal aid or functional tasks of institutions is found in other regulatory documents from the federal and regional levels that define the provision of social services to the population. One factor that hamper privatization and the introduction of control in the social services sector is a broad lack of standards. At the same time, in addition to the ambiguity of the contents, the mechanism of their introduction also remains uncertain (Dzhygyr 2007). The National Standards of Social Services was started as a draft in 2003 and suffered from a lack of concrete definitions and clearly defined tools of implementation.

By 2004, two national standards came into force: the Main Types of Welfare Services (State Standard No. 52143–2003) and the Quality of Social Services (State Standard No. 52142–2003), settling upon a standard list of the kinds of social services and demands to providing their quality. Like other current laws, these standards define services as aid and total support of citizens in difficult circumstances. For example, State Standard No. 52142 uses the term “assistance to citizens in receiving services provided by social services” thus presenting a confusing definition of social services. Wide usage of the definition “social service as aid in overcoming and dealing with difficult circumstances” in statutory acts, instructions, and orders fosters misunderstanding and misuse by institutions and specialists in defining the nature, content, methods, and expected results of services. This situation restricts the transition from an assessment in terms of “bulk” to an assessment in terms of outcomes.

Much of the discussion of New Public Management regards performance management rather than marketization. The tension between the new aspirations of performance management and the old practices of bureaucracy is important to realize within the broader issues of reform of social policy in two Volga regions of Russia—Samara and Saratov—that are the subject of this chapter. These two regions are characterized by

different levels of socioeconomic growth and states of infrastructure. The situation in these industrial centers, each with a population of about one and a half million and a regional capital, each with a large number of wide-ranging social service organizations, reflects general trends in social service policy in Russia. Both regions have experienced radical changes in their institutions and economies—changes associated, on the one hand, with the abolition of central planning and the introduction of free markets or, on the other hand, with political decentralization and the introduction of local elections. These changes have led to a diversity in economic and social outcomes, reflecting differences in the central government's (inequitable) economic relations with regions as well as differing local and regional policies (de Melo and Ofer 1999). The Samara government adopted policies more consistent with the central government's support of free-market reforms, while the Saratov government pursued more cautious, protective policies. The Saratov government has been using more proactive economic policies, including interventions to save local industries. The jury is still out on what were the right social and industrial policies during the first years of reform. Samara clearly lagged on market reforms and Saratov represents a model of liberalization without institutional support.

Samara is distinguished with significant financial resources, which made it possible to develop a broad process of elaboration and implementation of regional regulations. Nowadays, *rules of procedure* in areas of healthcare and social services are published and are being actively implemented. The standards of social services are being elaborated both in Samara and Saratov. But in Samara their implementation is faster. Saratov falls behind in the area of development of administrative rules of procedure, but here another project is being implemented—electronic welfare cards. This project is designed to improve relations between individual customers and agencies, as well as the regional budget.

The Basic Law of Saratov Region of January 10, 2000, No. 7-3 SO (with alterations of April 28, 2005) is based on federal legislation and establishes one of the social protection forms as “assistance in form of service.” Article 33 of this law defines kinds of social services based on their understanding as assistance. The terminology of defining social services is of a generalized character (e.g., providing social and economic, psychological and pedagogical, medical and social, legal assistance to families with children) and in a number of cases reflects not a content of service but its form (e.g., phone consultations). The Governmental Regulation of Saratov Region of December 20, 2004, No. 283-P, provides more accurate and detailed definitions of service provision to elderly people and people with disabilities. But it also contains a lot of ambiguous, declarative, and general areas, e.g., social and psychological services including such services as psychological correction, psychological training, support of client's physical and mental well-being, etc. It is necessary to develop more accurate and differentiated characteristics of services on the local level in order to match this with the peculiarities of local social service provision.

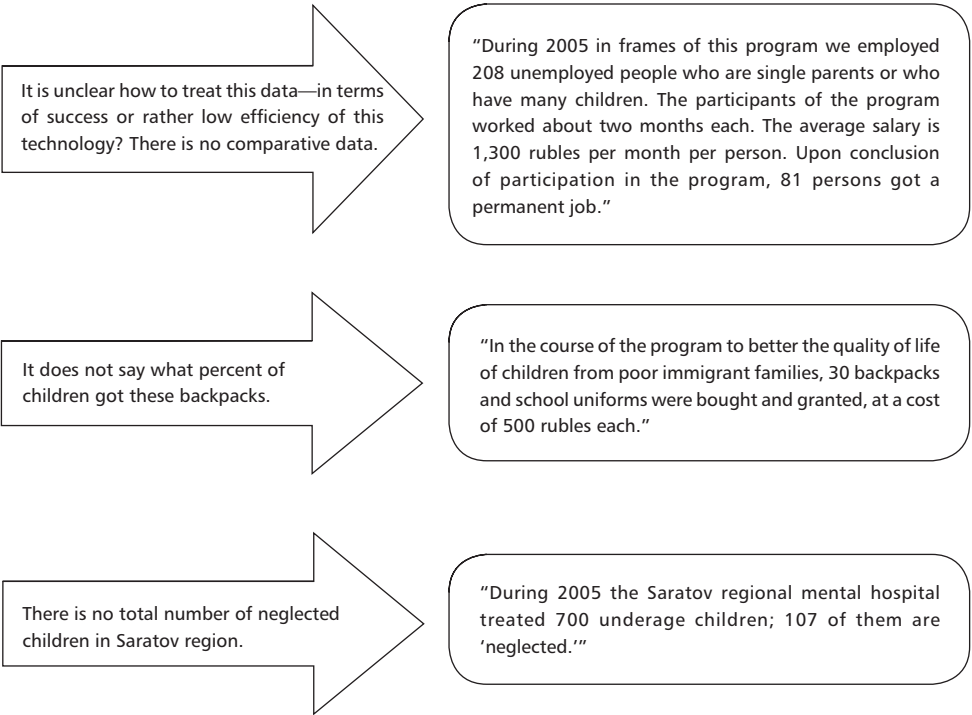
The generalized wording of *services* is typical for charters of social service agencies of all types. It is necessary to standardize the regulatory documents defining social service

provision in order to operationalize the tasks of these institutions in frameworks for implementing the set of services concerned.

Providing enough information is an indispensable component of the competitive environment and also essential to the transparent processes of decision-making. At present, neither service users, nor providers, nor the state have complete and reliable information on what the needs are in the social services market; who and how operates there; what funds are allocated for financing social services, and why, by whom, and on what conditions. Clearly, meeting the market participants' (customers') needs for appropriate information is becoming more and more important.

Reports on social services are full of information about the number of consumers, the number of grants distributed, or the amount of grants paid, but with little or no links to target groups' needs or analysis of these services' effect. Quotations from an official report of the Saratov regional office of the Ministry of Social Support concerning the welfare of children demonstrate an absence of appropriate data when presenting the achievements in the region (Figure 9).

Figure 9.
Reported Achievements of the Saratov Regional Office
of the Ministry of Social Support



It is obvious that the process of NPM implementation is underway. However, as the next section will show, on the institutional level, too, social services lack common understanding of what are service standards, as well as performance management rules of procedure, while concepts of quality and effectiveness are vague; they are developed spontaneously by the “street-level bureaucracy” under the pressure of external and internal factors. The sole examples of detailed and advanced standards are presented as an outcome of an EU-funded project (Report on ARCADIS Project 2005). The main barriers in formulating the standards of social services are connected with underdeveloped definitions and old management policies; they can be overcome by further intense efforts of international, national, and regional expert groups.

NPM IN SOCIAL SERVICES—NEW CHALLENGES AND HARDSHIPS

Among all aspects of implementing NPM into social services, we focus on the practices of evaluation and the standards (codes) of activity. This mostly may reflect issues and contradictions of rationalization in social-work services. But remember that the main criterion of social services work is satisfaction of service users as well as its contribution to societal well-being, identified by the professionals and the society at large. It requires two key possibilities for evaluation—through measuring the clients’ satisfaction and with help of an internal system of quality assurance.

We documented a tendency to rationalize and modernize the social services system; it is expressed in the development of more unified and management-oriented standards and quality assessment mechanisms on the level of separate employees and services in general.² But, as our research has shown, on the institutional level, social services lack a single set of effectiveness criteria, much less a general concept or services standards; these criteria are decentralized and developed spontaneously on a low bureaucratic level under the pressure of external and internal factors.

Businessology requires social workers to see themselves not as professionals but as micro-managers of resources who carefully control access to and ration the distribution of services. Professionals will sometimes try to use their knowledge and skills to push businessology objectives and their implementation in particular directions (Harris 2003).

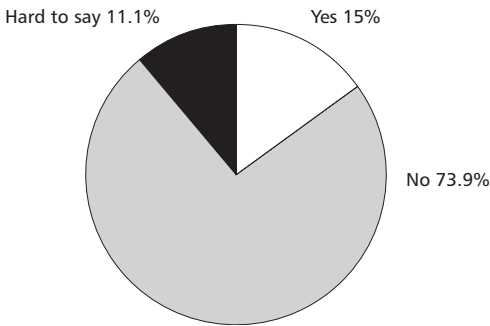
These concepts can promote or prevent the good practice of social service delivery. The issue of performance evaluation is considered important by 94.7 percent of respondents, but 49.6 percent of survey participants also said that they did not have clear criteria for quality and effectiveness in their work. Collective discussions about performance with agency personnel are 20 percent less often in Samara than in Saratov. 73 percent

of respondents said that they take part in some discussions on how to improve quality of their work, but in most cases the manager conducts the assessment (in 94 percent of cases in Samara and in 85.2 percent of cases in Saratov). In Saratov social services are more regularly assessed than in Samara (80.3 percent and 67.3 percent, respectively), while quality criteria are a little bit more clear than in Saratov (Table 1).

Table 1.
Distribution of Answers of Social Services Employees Who Agree with a Notion That Clear Criteria of Performance Evaluation Are Absent, in Percent (N=226)

	Saratov	Samara	Total
Yes	42.6	57.7	49.6
No	23.0	17.3	20.4
Hard to say	34.4	25.0	30.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Figure 10.
Quality of My Work Effects My Salary (N=226)



A low salary in the budgetary branch “social security” is a well-known peculiarity of this segment of the labor market. An issue of correlation between quality of work and reward, only 15 percent of the respondents feel that the quality of their work effects the size of their wage (Figure 10).

Table 2.

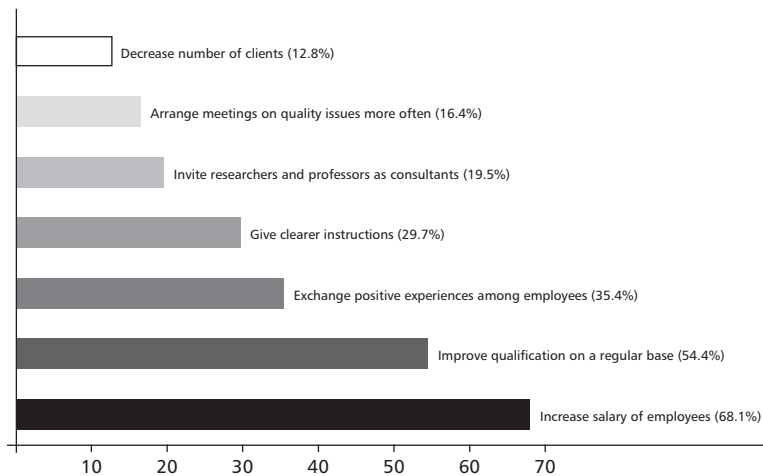
What Can Be Changed in Social Service Evaluation? (Multiple Choice, N=226)

What can be changed in social service evaluation?	Percent
Take into account clients' opinions	65.5
Establish correlation between size of wage and evaluation of performance	42.5
Openly discuss criteria of evaluation of performance with all parties, including clients	36.3
Evaluate performance of employees only within agency	21.7
Engage outside specialists for evaluation	13.7
Nothing is needed to be changed	4.0

Almost half of our informants propose changes in practices of evaluation towards correlating salary and quality assessment (Table 2), while the idea “to increase the salaries of employees” was the most welcomed among the measures to improve social services (68.1 percent) (Figure 11).

Figure 11.

How to Improve Social Services? (Multiple Choice, N=226)



The notion of customer satisfaction is defined differently in different services. It is also one of the most frequently used and the least clearly defined terms: “Quality for us means the way we helped people, and the customer is satisfied, and... well... here we can say that we... well... did it well” (Director of NGO-1, female, Samara). But there

is a question of how the voices of users of social work are to be heard. In the West, great stress is placed on “customers” by businessology and there is the potential for service users to take the businessology rhetoric seriously and insist on more meaningful participation in service provision (Harris 2003).

In Russia’s current social policy and social services, too, a significantly larger role is given to the assessment of service users. But despite different forms and methods of consumer involvement in the work of institutions and their employees, this assessment is now used only as a reporting instrument and not as a mechanism for alterations or development.

Negative aspects here are connected to the service-quality assessment of institutions. In some services such discourse takes place, while in others it is possible only on the level of separate employees, and yet in others there is no such discourse at all. Thus, knowledge and creating ideas about quality is mainly localized on the administrative level, and employees often do not take part in discourse, making decisions, or creating technologies.

Economic motivators began to appear in social services ten years ago. Hindered by a lack of financing and a duplicate system of organization and control of employees’ performance, some organizations did make efforts to create incentives. However, specialists do not doubt the adequacy of bonuses and efficiency of a performance system. They are striving to meet the parameters set by management.

Efficiency and quality assessment take place on the basis of formal and informal standards (in the main, the result of special education and level of professionalism). However, there are services where efficiency assessment is not articulated at all—where employees have seldom come across the need to assess the quality of performance and where there is almost no discussion of this problem among them.

Social services experts have developed some tools and general criteria of efficiency of performance for some departments and their employees and managers. These local initiatives should be encouraged; however, the next step should be to apply a general set of principles and strategies and a set of stable, professionally compiled instruments that can be reproduced in different services in different regions in order to generate comparative information for analysis.

Some researchers and social workers have a simple solution to this: having filled out several forms and counted the answers, it is possible to see who or what improved or worsened, what is the coefficient of efficiency of this or that specialist, and what is the success formula of the organization. The calculation is done via simple division of the problems solved by the total number of clients’ problems. By comparing the situation “before and after,” the specialist’s work is complete, but there are some serious drawbacks. Problems of different difficulty possess the same weight in this method, for example, “no documents,” “not attending school,” “hard-drinking parents,” “unemployed parents.” As a result the specialist who solved the easier problems gets more points than

the specialist who solved one of the hardest problems. Another risk here is “upward distortion,” since in order to seem more efficient the specialist just needs to formulate the biggest number of “problems” that can be solved.

In modern assessment culture, advantages in social services are mainly given to the department, the organization itself, or clients on account of the decrease of the role of independent appraisals, local community, sponsors, and the mass media; Total Quality Management fragments are very frequent (participation of independent appraisers). A number of organizations actively develop and implement different forms of target group demands, their activities, and results assessment; however, at the same time, assessment practice is characterized by vague idea about quality, effectiveness, and quality. Although social services employees are very much concerned with mismatches while trying to assess the result of their activities, internally or externally, they have no clear ideas about their activity goals, hence they cannot assess what are criteria for their performance evaluation; their expected results are formulated on quantitative procedural criteria; and there is a conflict of demands from above and executives’ directions concerning the content and criteria of performance evaluation.

Despite conditions under which the social services system is mainly directed to technical procedures like the calculation of quantitative criteria, alternative ideas about effectiveness are appearing on the level of organizations, while, today, the external assessment of services depend mainly on the reported data directed to exclusively quantitative indicators. Knowledge and creating ideas about quality is mainly localized on the administration level.

On the horizontal level many employees assess the efficiency of their work: sometimes this assessment is a part of a general discussion of performance quality, and in this case there are no opportunities for public discussion, only the unofficial assessment mechanisms over the formal regulations that come from the top. The assessment process is based on the character of the relationship between the social worker and the service user. But here, a different understanding of the content and aim of the services between the social service employees and the service users as well as different ideas about what is the ideal service is due to lack of a definite contract between the consumer and the specialist. The most structured assessments are different kinds of public surveys but in the majority of cases the formalized toolbox is unreliable. It also seems that service users lack the ability to deliver constructive feedback, so far only used like a reporting toolbox and not a mechanism for alterations to and development of public services.

Compared to municipal and state social services, NGOs are more engaged in collaboration with other organizations concerning performance management and the difference can be found in the scale of the projects realized, in the grants acquired, in the degree of flexibility of reporting, and the priority of feedback mechanisms. A number of bureaucratic NGOs, i.e., regional departments of a centralized hierarchic structure of a large charity, demonstrate more similarities with budget organizations in formalized and

quantitative aspects as well as in the procedural approach to assessment process. The following features are typical both for NGOs and municipal organizations: lack of quality ensuring system, vague ideas about the methods and notions of effectiveness assessment and any articulated need in standards; at the same time, NGOs are much more concerned with cost analysis of the services provided and the amount of effort applied. However, it is possible to develop an understanding and practice of results-oriented management. We speak in particular about the services standardization process, including their content parameter development and representation. For social standards development activity and effectiveness monitoring mechanisms, perfection lies in the field of general market rationalization processes; however, quasi-market guidelines are spread only over control means: quality and effectiveness assessment ideology comes from the business sector, while the incentives still come from the era of the planned economy.

Regional social policy is based on a contradictory combination of the principles of liberalism and paternalism. In social services the rhetoric about passive, dependent clients is widespread about those who prefer welfare to active, working independence. Only 20 percent of our respondents agreed that “services lead to the transition of capable of working welfare receivers and their families to providing for themselves, and they do not need welfare support anymore.”

Although, according to half of the respondents, the activity of their organization influences the socioeconomic condition of their clients’ behavior positively, the character of this effect is unsystematic. The changes in people’s lives often are of a postponed character and concern the time of the service rendered, the variety of external factors that can decrease the chances for positive change, and these changes are hard to assess and are not always recorded by social services. According to the survey data, knowledge of the reasons and character of social problems is actual for less than half of the respondents (48 percent). Needless to say, such knowledge is highly demanded in proactive approaches to social services.

In sectors that are less oriented to business performance measures, the application of NPM needs a better fit to those principles that are acceptable for implementation and to those that are not. Unfamiliarity with a market economy confuses social service managers and in some cases the performance indicators for social-work harm treatment processes (Malý 2000).

ANALYSIS OF POLICY OPTIONS

As a result of its intensive professional development, the Russian welfare system has managed to build a wide system of specialized welfare agencies and other social support organizations with a definite philosophy and approach to the practice of social work. The development of social services institutions is a contradictory process: on the one

hand, it was reinforced by liberal priorities and refused Soviet legacies of social welfare; on the other hand, it is based upon the conservative principles and practice implemented on the regional and lower levels. Government rhetoric and policy targeting the elaboration of social services standards indicates the eagerness of the relevant departments to reform social services within the frame of neoliberal modernization. Considering the different factors that restrict rational modernization in the Russian context, it is possible to draw different scenarios for possible vectors of reforms. Effectiveness and efficiency concepts that are defined in rational terms are the key ideas for modernization of social work according to NPM ideology. Among other things, the following options should be considered.

Policy Options in Relation to Internal Personnel Management

The general principles for assessing the quality of performance are still based on contradictory and vaguely worded criteria.

Option A. Bureaucratic Quasi-market

The **bureaucratic quasi-market** provides many opportunities for a staff policy based on employees and mid-managers' loyalty towards the administration and its current hierarchy rather than on clear-set criteria of effectiveness. As the project-oriented philosophy forms among employees in a number of services and regions, its development depends rather on personal priorities of local managers than on administration demands and conditions. A wide range of statistical indicators concerning social services performance are directed, to a large degree, towards the representation of intense activity rather than towards a reflexive reviewing of the successes and failures of certain activities, projects, and state policy in general. The policy of service administration indicates the isolation of social service performance management from business and NGO management experience. Here, social problems are concealed and discourse between civil society and the state is either impossible or restricted.

Option B. Centralized Managerialization

Some expert organizations determine national rules of procedure for social services activities by order of the government. In these rules of procedure the jurisdiction and the responsibility of services and their employees are clearly stated, as well as the effectiveness criteria of separate departments. Foreign specialists often are called to take part in the elaboration of these regulating documents.

In order to control the implementation of these rules of procedure, the national and regional committees—which have to find out about deviations from the general

course in the implementation of quality assurance in social services as well as provide for the unity of reforms in different regions and services—are authorized to conduct their policies and are independent of local administration.

A special division is established inside social services, i.e., the Quality Assurance Unit, which promotes regular control and support inside any service. The national ministry conducts centralized activity for unification of the tools to measure quality, as well as for provision of these quality units with standardized evaluation means. Among the evaluation tools there is a procedure of monitoring clients' opinions, conducted by the quality units. The findings are a part of the report of service evaluation.

For example, one of the Moscow universities gets a state order to train personnel for performance management. Having the rules of procedure accepted, the quality units' employees are obliged to undergo such training.

Option C. Co-opted Managerialization

A special Center for Social Services Quality Assurance is established on the regional level, with the task to elaborate rules of procedure of various services and standards of quality concerning different kinds of services. These standards include two components—universal (adopted at the national level) and regional. Another aspect of this center's activity is implementing these standards and reglaments in practice. Standards and reglaments are worked out and coordinated through a series of seminars with employees and administration of different types of social services, specialized on working with people with disabilities, juvenile delinquents, families, unemployed, drug addicts, etc.

In order to coordinate the reglaments and standards on the regional level, a steering committee is established, which involves representatives of NGOs, business, and client groups. The social service agencies are to establish analogous committees in their districts. Regional and district committees act as supervisory bodies and take part in consultations and expertise, both in elaborating the standards, norms, and reglaments, and in monitoring processes. Regional standards involve a system of performance management and evaluation on the level of the agency and individual. An acceptable load and type of reporting is agreed upon to reflect both specificity of service and target group.

Support groups are formed in services to engage the most active employees. These groups function to consult colleagues about the issues of performance. Different representatives of a service take part in such groups. They inspect documentation, assist their colleagues in preparation, and conduct appraisal of service employees. The composition of such groups is renewed annually. Employees who are engaged in these groups are involved in a system of regular further qualification, which is arranged by the regional Center for Quality Assurance in the form of seminars and trainings. Local specialists and experts from neighboring regions are called to instruct there.

A system of monetary and symbolic rewards is introduced for the successful implementation of innovative working techniques, quality work, and effective communication with the institutions and networks that represent clients' interests. These rewards are established for individual workers, departments of agencies, and organizations as a whole. The decisions concerning the rewards are made on a base of collegially adopted standards and regulations of performance.

Once every three years a competition is announced in a region for municipal and nongovernmental organizations in order to conduct the audit of quality and effectiveness of social services. The results are open to the public and published as a pamphlet and on the Internet.

Implementation of quasi-markets is hindered by the lack of "contract culture" both at the regional administration and agencies (NGOs and public social services). Possible risks are related to the absence of will at the local self-government level to reform.

Policy Options in Relation to National Politics

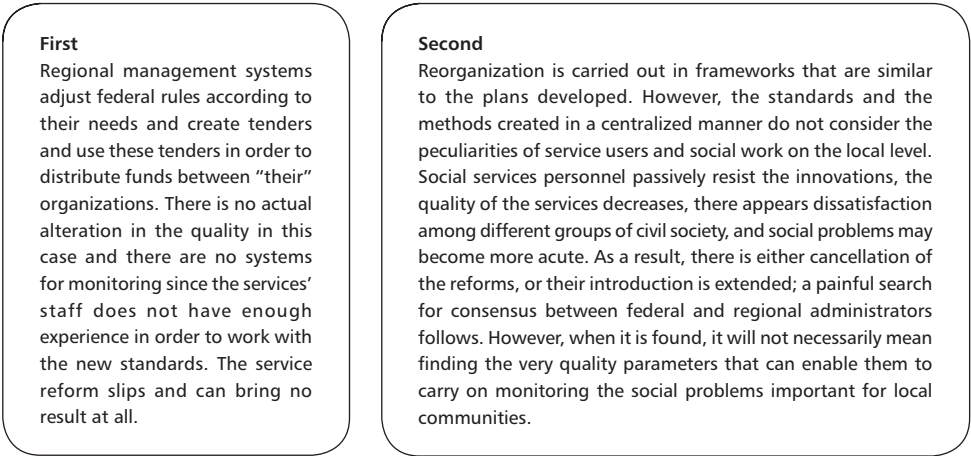
Option A. "Preserving Status Quo" or "Bureaucratic Quasi-market"

Contradictions between the rhetoric of managerialization and the juridical, administrative context are preserved under this option. Strong debate about social services quality does not take place, while the bureaucratic machinery keeps producing instructions concerning such reporting schemes that do not consider demands relevant to rationalized management. Although some distribution of financial resources among organizations takes place in the form of tenders, the selection tools of these tenders are untransparent, as their results are predefined. It is a bureaucratic quasi-market when the structures imitate market relations while key decisions are made by a narrow circle of bureaucrats.

Option B. Total Rapid Managerialization

Social services management policy is changing radically. For example, new managers have appeared in the federal Ministry of Healthcare and Social Development and begun the implementation of their new program. A small group of authors from a group of radical, liberal scientists and administrators are creating the quality and effectiveness criteria system, new detailed and precise standards, as well as management principles in frames of project demands. All state services are deprived of guaranteed financing and acquire the status of semi-autonomous organizations competing for short- and long-term tenders. Two possible ways of development can take place upon the implementation of this program.

Figure 12.
Development of Total Rapid Managerialization



National legislation hinders the transition to the new financing schemes regardless of the organizational-legal form of service provider. The unequal taxation position between the municipal and statutory agencies and other providers (commercial, non-governmental, and nonprofit agencies) are in place. The local authority (a customer) is limited in choice by the necessity of obligatory funding of subordinate budgetary organizations and has no opportunity to buy services from alternative service providers. Fundholders (local governments) have no chance to form technical assignments competently, to calculate their cost, to conduct monitoring of their implementation.

Option C. Consensus and Co-optation

The possibilities to modify and diversify social service programs on the regional level are broadening but there also is growth in demand for new technologies to manage their effectiveness. On the level of institutions, in social service agencies, there is still a lack of unified requirements to evaluation. Effectiveness as well as standards of service provision are poorly operationalized; they are fragmented and formed spontaneously by the “street-level bureaucracy” being effected by a number of external and internal factors. The models of social standards and evaluation being formed today in public agencies are competing with nongovernmental sector ideologies.

The discussion between specialists, scientists, and different groups of clients is arranged concerning their priorities and their quality and effectiveness criteria in the field of social services. The service users and service providers’ interests can thus be balanced. There is a framework of laws supplied with recommendations for the application thereof,

and guidelines to the effectiveness and efficiency monitoring principles as well as the demands of new reporting methods. There is a regional annex to quality monitoring procedures taking into account local peculiarities with the participation of local experts and specialists from other academic centers involved in this work on a tender basis. Competition-based forms of budget resources distribution first are tested on several pilot regions; both state organizations and NGOs can take part in these tenders.

The outcomes of the grantees' work are thoroughly evaluated by independent evaluators. Gradually, the number of regions increases where the new models of project management and schemes of tenders are implemented and they get financial preferences, additional budget assets, and conduct and take part in the trainings on evaluation techniques and methods of social services performance monitoring. These social project outcomes are considered at special conferences where the target groups' representatives are also present, there are public relations social projects. NPM models spread throughout Russia and gain popularity among social services personnel and management, though the process may be slow and costly.

On the national and regional levels the laws are being adopted that balance the taxation conditions for NGOs and public agencies. National and regional legislation provides local self-government with sufficient capacities to transform budgetary public agencies into forms of nonprofit organizations. Legislation is developed in such a way to promote financing regardless of the organizational-legal form of the service provider. The share of finances to be distributed through competitive procedures meanwhile grows in the regional budgets. The legal base is established to cover social services from budgetary or non-budgetary means, taking into account clearly defined social services for sharply defined groups of the population. Clear criteria to calculate the costs of concrete social services are formulated using the standards. Ways of financing of concrete services (technical assignment, social contract, social voucher) are varied in the regions depending on concrete conditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our analysis of social services and their evaluation on the regional level in two neighboring cities in the Volga region indicates the specific local barriers to implementing New Public Management strategies as well as the larger, systemic problems endemic to Russian social services. To amend this ambivalent situation, a new understanding of social services is needed among social work providers, managers, and users. Based on the research results, it is possible to suggest a package of recommendations that can lead to positive change if applied at different social services levels.

Recommendations to Social Services Management

Precision and thoroughness in formulating the objectives and tasks of social services programs determines the possible assessment of their quality and effectiveness. The performance objective of all the organization, or even one of its departments, usually is a mission, a strategic priority rather than an action plan, for instance, to “decrease the risk of child abuse in the family via neutralizing the family circumstances.” Thus tasks formulated according to social services practice should be reformulated, concretely and precisely.

Evaluation strategies should not be considered only as a tool of administrative control. They are part of a general system of quality assurance where every social services employee, irrespective of his or her position, strives for understanding the process and the result of his or her performance in order to increase quality and make it more effective.

In order for such assessment to become an effective social management tool, the following questions should be analyzed: How can we formulate the service objective in every case? What is its content? What is the service aimed at (on the level of local community, population in general)? Who is the service beneficial for? How can the expected result be formulated and its quality measured? What can be done to increase its quality?

Quality and effectiveness of social services are two sides of the same coin. Do the services reach the set objectives? Is social help provided to those people who need it? Are all the clients serviced? Are there any administrative obstacles hindering the availability of social services? What is the effect of the program for people with disabilities and society at large? What is the ratio between the results obtained and the resources spent?

- **Professional service provision of a high quality helps its clients.** And if it is performed within the frame of its resources, planned objectives, and yields the planned outcomes, then it means that the performance has been effective.
- The attempts to make social services accountable to the service users are still ineffective. However, they have already started influencing bureaucratic behavior. Special strategies can be used to **enhance the service users’ participation in evaluating the social services and widening citizens’ access to social services.** Assessment by consumers, as a mechanism of quality control, cannot be separated from the context and without consideration of other indicators. In an ideal concept of complex or Total Quality Management (TQM), not only employees or administration but also all the social service system’s stakeholders, including donors, sponsors, clients, consumers, executives, and the public, take part.
- While establishing a program’s priorities it is necessary to consider the mission and strategic plans of the organization as well as the objectives of social devel-

opment of the district, the area of this social service, and to assess the needs of potential service users. Having formulated wide target priorities, one should then narrow them for precise **goals, tasks, and results**. The expected results should be formulated in accordance with the objectives and the tasks; it enables them to mark and trace the program.

- **Preliminary, intermediate, and final evaluations** are necessary for a comprehensive assessment. Preliminary evaluation takes place while planning the project when future work is being assessed. Intermediate evaluation takes place in the course of the program or project in order to help reach the set objectives and bring about the planned results. This evaluation is carried out also in case of any problems in the course of the project. In this case, diagnostic assessment helps right the project. Final evaluation takes place close to conclusion of the project or upon it. It enables us to understand what the project is, and if its objectives and results are reached.
- While formulating the program it is necessary to **write down the objectives, tasks, and expected results in a table in order to see their correlation clearly**. At the same time, it is a good idea to ask yourself the following questions: Who is the consumer of the program? What group is it? What do we know about the consumer? What activity takes place in frames of this program? What results should this program reach?
- It is important to **plan the program implementation details in relation with the clients' needs and regional peculiarities** of the area where they live, and to think what we expect from the service user and how to measure the program success and failures during its course and upon its conclusion.
- In order to increase effectiveness of organizations activity, it is necessary to pay attention not only to the appropriateness of the initial activity plan but also to **trace the reasons for success and failures** in order to influence future management decisions, i.e., lessons learned.
- Develop methodology **for studying the needs** of current and potential consumers of social services, aiming at definition of social order; develop the standards for the quality of social services and correspondingly develop the criteria for transparent estimate of bidding proposals and implementation of the relevant methodologies; introduce social services standards enabling development of distinct criteria for assessment of bidding proposals from social services suppliers (Dzhygyr 2007).
- Evaluation provides the manager of a social service, an institution, the head of a program, or a project with vital information concerning what components of the rendered services operate effectively and what demands reorganization,

modification, or cancellation. For example, while using a new mechanism for providing services—search and clients' selection system, payment system, structure and schedule of providing this or that service—**qualitative evaluation design can help find mistakes or increase the effectiveness of service mechanisms.**

Recommendations to the Public Welfare System

In the current system, the evaluation of social service provision is aimed mainly at the process. Social protection management bodies, organizations, and institutions, while planning and assessing performance, aim mainly at such notions as the number of clients, the number of services, and the budget and off-budget resources. But it is much more difficult to assess the results of the service. In order to do so, it is necessary to answer the following questions: How did the work effect the behaviors, abilities, and feelings of the target group? Which resources, both financial and human, influenced a decrease of social tension in the community or an increase of welfare and economic independence of families-in-need?

- The evaluation of the performance of social services is an important element of outcome-oriented management. In order to introduce such a model, **formulate** the expected results for every service and **revise** the content and process of each provided service to direct the activity to reach the desirable outcomes. Actually, it means a necessity of standardization process including the development of services' content and performance parameters.
- Apart from services standardization, it is necessary to develop and finance monitoring system **to trace on a regular basis** the process of service provision, its quality, outcomes, and customer satisfaction.
- While **formulating priorities** in the field and the quality of work of social workers, the following should be considered:
 - Indicative principle of services rendering hinders possible assessment of the scope of the target group;
 - Social services cannot be fully formalized, which breaches the development of transparent and precise criteria of assessment;
 - Various external conditions can increase or decrease the possibility of positive changes; and
 - Changes in people's lives often have an extended character regarding the time of the service provision.

- In order to assess the concrete results about performance management, it is necessary to **formulate objectives and tasks** of specialists' work as well as of departments and organizations. The most appropriate kinds of activity planning in this case are program- and project-oriented policies. We can specify objectives and tasks in case of social services routine, as well, thus bringing it closer to the program-oriented policy.
- It is necessary to **trace** the project influence on target groups of beneficiaries or clients. It is also important to **pay attention** to the appropriateness of the activity plan and to **trace** the reasons for success and failures in order to influence future management decisions. During the writing of the project application, precise indicators for its effectiveness over a long-term period should be described.
- For those who will use the assessment results it is important to **understand** not only what happened and why, but also **what should be done**. So after project assessment comes the correction of the plans.
- In social work, indicators of performance quality can be **combined** in the following groups: need for services, availability of services, communication effectiveness of social institutions as well as economy of services, and the practicality of the budget.
- "Needs in services" have the following **quantitative** characteristics:
 - Demographic indicators (for instance, share of underage people in this locality, statistics of population growth);
 - Medical and ecological indicators (for instance, ecological situation in the given territory; healthcare statistics); and
 - Family and social indicators (for instance, the number of single mothers, families with disabled children, etc.).
- For accessibility, it is necessary to **account** for:
 - The number of social services departments providing services at home, children's department, emergency social assistance department, etc.;
 - Workload of institution;
 - Location (availability);
 - Facility and equipment of social services institution;
 - Institutional accessibility;
 - Informational accessibility (advertising, public relations activity, etc.).

- It is necessary to consider social, cultural, historic, and economic **contexts** of the city or region, to reveal possible difficulties and resources.
- “Communication effectiveness of social institution” is subjective yet can be **measured**, like:
 - Personnel qualifications;
 - Organization of reception;
 - Organization of home-help office, work of day-care service, assistance to families and children, etc.
- The **financial parameters** are also important for the assessment of effectiveness:
 - How much finances, staff, and material resources are invested in this or that service?
 - What is the full cost of “product” (for example, cost of one service for every client)?
 - How expensive is the result (for example, how much are the expenses for one client who has achieved the expected positive result)?
- The most important condition for the development of an effective model of social services management is the development of **transparency** in the services quality criteria. Social protection service can be considered high quality if it meets the following conditions:
 - Has a clear stated aim/goal;
 - Is provided according to modern methodological principles and technologies;
 - Is based on an inclusive, anti-discrimination approach with respect to the personality of every client. The inclusive approach promotes the social integration of all the community members and helps to avoid social segregation resulting from differences in gender, culture, nationality, religion, and individual abilities and skills
 - Is subject to constant monitoring and analysis, using independent information from clients;
 - Is provided in a flexible manner in order to consider clients’ individual needs;
 - Is important for clients and makes a visible, positive effect on their social and economic condition and/or behavior;

- Is focused on preventive activities as well as activities that assist service consumers and their families to self-provision and independence from social transfers;
- Does not raise customer dissatisfaction while rendering them.
- In order to define effectiveness criteria and indicators for social services, it is necessary to strictly differentiate between “**service provision**” and “**service.**” This question is mostly acute while developing service standards. Mixing up these notions can be very counterproductive for managers and administrators.
- The quality of “service provision,” apart from a user’s satisfaction in terms of attention, comfort, safety, and other characteristics, indirectly defines the **quality** of the “service” itself. In this case, “service provision” is the condition of providing a “service,” distinguished depending on the time of rendering and complexity.
- A **single service** is a local activity during a fixed (regulated) period of time. **Long-term services** are repeated actions over a certain period of time and can be either a periodical provision of the same service or a series of different services.
- A **simple service** is provided by a specialist whose performance leads to a recorded result. A **complex service** is rendered by one or more specialists, does not lead to an immediate result, but can have fixed intermediate results like psychological or rehabilitation services. A set of services aims to meet one or several needs. In home-help services, chopping firewood may be considered a simple service, while cooking meals is long-term simple service and cleaning the flat, buying foodstuffs, and cooking meals is a complex service.
- In the case of “services,” the differentiation of agencies and their specialization is provided on account of a final list of **services offered and service users’ needs**. Social protection agencies specialize according to *users’ needs* and distinguish this field of services from all other organizations based on *types of services*.
- Using the client-oriented social service concept, we shall define a “**service**” provided by a social protection agency as an **action** performed by a specialist (or a number of specialists) of specialized organizations with some precise consequent activity and (or) a certain decision for meeting the needs of a person limited in his or her abilities to do it alone .
- It is evident that this understanding of service includes the notions of “aid” and “assistance,” but unlike those two, it places the service’s **final result and its quantitative and qualitative characteristics**. If we consider a widespread kind of social service—like home-help—then a service defined in the regulations as

“assistance in cooking food” acquires a new sense: providing a person with quality food in accordance with some medical prescriptions and individual needs (diet, national peculiarities, local specifics, etc.). From here, we can calculate the number of services, their length and periodicity, and define what is required of the social worker who provides the users with this service.

Recommendations to Local Authorities

- Social services organized around **projects and program-oriented policies** are easier to assess: how successful was the activity, if the planned results were reached, and what were the reasons for failures, if any.
- In the narrow sense “effectiveness” means the achievement of the most objectives and/or results at the **lowest cost**. The criteria for the effectiveness of social services provision have a complex character. On the one hand, they represent a system of standards and normative indicators reflecting social services provision effectiveness, and on the other hand, a system of indicators reflecting quantitative and qualitative indicators of social and economic, psychological, and other conditions of particular individuals, families, and social groups.
- The quality assessment criteria or standards of services provision should be **coordinated** at the inter-departmental level—with municipal bodies, NGOs, grass-roots organizations, consumers, and the general population. Quality and effectiveness standards play the role of regional legislative guarantees that protect welfare system clients with due and adequate quality. However, the standards that help to assess quality of services should be revised regularly. Social workers and social services employees on the local level should be trained about the new criteria and demands.
- **All the participants** should take part in the **assessment** of service quality: the client or consumer (including department or ministry), provider (social service institution), and personnel (managers, employees), as well as social services clients and the local community that can directly affect positive or negative results of activity of social support institutions.

Recommendations to the Government

In order to develop a social services market in framework of NPM principles, it is important to perform the following tasks:

1) Stimulate a Variety of Service Providers: Financial and Administrative Issues

- In order to develop an appropriate mix of residential, day-care, and community-based services, it is important to **remove** the financial, legal, and other administrative barriers.
- The possibility to **engage** nongovernmental and private organizations should be legitimized by the Law on the Basics of Social Services in Russian Federation. All kinds of organizations should have the right to work under equal legal conditions; it is concerned with the control over their activities, accreditation, certification of services, etc.
- In order to engage NGOs in the **market** for social care services, a set of coordinated recommendations on how to improve the climate for such agencies is needed, validating, then promoting these recommendations among the key decision-makers in the government (Dzhygyr 2007).
- In order to promote **social welfare reform**, it is important to take into account the issue of quality of services, their availability, number, and diversity. To do so, a variety of organizations should be allowed to take part in the social services market.
- Enterprises providing social services cannot expect **high profits**. A task of the state is to provide them with such economic conditions that would make it possible nonprofit organizations to function. Such economic conditions can be provided through vouchers, privileged credit and taxation policies, and grants. It is important to raise additional funds from nongovernmental sources in order to solve issues of social welfare. It is possible to enhance NGOs fiscal capacity by encouraging charity by private enterprises.
- Governments can ensure **transparency** with tenders for the allocation of budget funds for social services; it must define procedures for announcing tenders and the publication of the rights of bidders, general selection criteria, procedures for appeal, and criteria for cancelling the results of tenders (Dzhygyr 2007).

2) Responsibilities in the Social Services Market

- It is necessary to **identify** which social services could be successfully delivered by private and nonprofit agencies. A private agency can provide social services only or in addition to its commercial activity (e.g., café providing free meals for poor elderly in a form of social contract with municipality). In order to avoid doubling the functions of different organizations and to ensure the availability of and widen access to social services, it would require sharing responsibilities between public and nongovernmental services, as well as having them complement each other and/or compete in the social services market.
- The government should develop a **database** of social service providers, with the responsibility for maintenance placed with the Ministry of Health and Social Development; should ensure free public access to this information; and should define the types of data to be included in the database, among them, year established, territory covered, and types of social services provided (Dzhygyr 2007).
- The **coordination** of activities in the social services market is also necessary. The state should act as an information center to assist the formation of an environment for self-sufficiency. In order to succeed, civil society should be actively engaged, including associations of entrepreneurs, representatives of small businesses, academic organizations, banks, foundations, as well as their networks and unions.
- **State control and responsibility** in the social services sector should be improved. The introduction of social services standards and licensing entails an objective control over compliance with the standards, and defines types of responsibility for organizations providing the social services along with the persons whose activity or inertia caused negative results (health injury, additional expenditures from the state, etc.). The improvement of state control and responsibility in social services sector requires the state to define its forms for exercising control over activities of social services' providers (local and field inspections) (Dzhygyr 2007)

3) Setting up Standards for Social Service Provision

- Social services should be of **adequate quality** regardless of the form of the agency—statutory or NGO—or whether they are free of charge, partially, or fully paid. An important step towards the quality improvement of social services would be to develop more precise and detailed national standards to define the content of all kinds of social services, having in mind the principle of assessment by actual outcomes. The minimum quality standards should be defined by

Ministry of Health and Social Development, in cooperation with other bodies of central executive power (Ministry of Education, Economic Development, Ministry of Justice), and involve interested organizations in the process.

- In order to develop such standards at the national level, it is necessary to reach a **consensus** between professional regulations and the needs and demands of clients. Specialists tend to monopolize their knowledge concerning social problems and their reasons as well as methods. In order to widen the perspective of social problems via standardization and the typical criteria for services quality, it is possible to establish committees that invite the representatives of services, analysts, and representatives of different target group associations (clients and consumers).
- The mechanism for the **standardization** of innovative services should be defined at the state level (when their quality requirements have not been fixed by the state or local standards), on the initiative of public organizations providing the services, along with a procedure for revising fixed standards, on the initiative of social service providers. The financial consequences of standards must be evaluated, too (Dzhygyr 2007).
- In addition, **the national minimum standards** for social services should be defined and local governments should have the opportunity to empower themselves by raising the quality requirements as needed for services not included in the national minimum standards. Here also, the financial implications should be considered so that standards do not become unfundable; linking the involvement of NGO providers could be another requirement for adopting local standards (Dzhygyr 2007).
- Government agencies should **promote** an individual and proactive approach in social services in order to mobilize users' resources to cope with crisis situations and to promote welfare-to-work approach for clients living in poverty.

4) Staff Development

- Employers need a system to improve the **ways and opportunities** for how they recruit, manage, and develop their staff. It would help to ensure that employers have the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time.
- Staff can **validate** their competences and experience. It will also ensure that their organizations' standards of competence, experience, and qualifications continue to rise as part of the agenda to train the workforce in the framework of their professional services.

- One of the factors that hampers privatization is the low level of staff capacity in NGOs—the most promising providers of social services. That is why enhancing NGOs' staff capacity is an important task that should be fulfilled not only by NGOs themselves, but also by the state, supposedly interested in establishing a competitive market for social services.
- The state should consider **revising the size** of its order for training specialists in the sphere of social services, looking at the current needs of social service providers (Dzhygyr 2007).

5) Symbolic Capital of Social Entrepreneurship

- Entrepreneurship in the field of social services requires a certain ideology and mission of **social responsibility**. To establish such an image and even social movement, it is part to reform the system of social services for the population (*About the Social Services Market* 2006).
- Neither individuals nor legal entities, being unified taxpayers, have **tax incentives** for supporting public organizations (as the amount of the unified tax does not depend on total expenses of a taxpayer). In this context, it is feasible to introduce additional incentives for individuals and legal entities to finance activities of organizations providing social services (Dzhygyr 2007).

CONCLUSIONS

The development of the market for social services, provided in Russia by state-based, private, or nongovernmental organizations, has been accelerated, giving the possibility for all types of social services to participate in the process of the budget-means distribution of social services in the framework of so-called “quasi-market” processes. In Russia, the liberalization of the social services market is limited by a lack of standards, a weak knowledge base concerning the working methods with clients and standard regulation in this field, a lack of skills in evaluation of quality and effectiveness by many public and nongovernmental organizations, as well as knowledge of how to be competitive, and how to promote good services, organizations, and methods of work. In many Western countries the nongovernmental sector is considered one of the main service providers, and the main authority's task is only the planning and organization thereof. Thus, they create competition among service providers and provide the client with choices; also they have changed the how local authorities do their tasks in this sphere: the main task is no longer to provide social services but rather to provide the citizens with the opportunity to get them. The quality assessment system of providing social services is a means of managing state (municipal) and nongovernmental organizations.

The development of social service infrastructure and modernization are related to the transfer of responsibilities to the regional level, to the nondiscriminatory orientation of social services towards the poorest groups of population, to the decrease of administrative costs, and the elaboration of standards of social services. However, as the research shows, social services are almost untouched by market reforms. This has led to a decrease in the quality of many social services, ineffective resource management, and ignoring the real needs of some groups of people. The majority of regions lack any monitoring mechanism or practice when it comes to social services. The lack of organization of social service quasi-markets in Russia is created by the inefficient participation of nongovernmental organizations and contributes to the demand of forming a new public contract in the center of the neoliberal social policy agenda.

The improvement of quality and accessibility of social services requires the development of insurance, market mechanisms, a competitive environment, partnerships with civil society organizations and businesses, as well as new models of social management. To sum up, the recommendations are concerned with the following steps:

- Develop clearly-stated, transparent, and operational standards of quality and effectiveness for social services;
- Build a consensus about quality standards and the effectiveness criteria on the national, regional, and institutional level;
- Initiate public debates on social services provision with professionals, analysts, officials, and service users;
- Make the basic framework for the service users to participate in evaluation of social service agencies, projects, and single services (elaborate appropriate procedures and tools);
- Decentralize social service provision through open competitions, grants, tenders that are all transparent and accountable;
- Increase the degree of correlation between the social service budget and the quality of service provision;
- Develop project-oriented policy and operations by local social welfare authorities and service providers;
- Contract the mechanisms of protecting the rights of social service employees in the process of implementing the NPM approach;
- Transmit the best practices of quality insurance between NGOs, businesses, and the public sector;
- Provide special training for the managers and staff concerning NPM approaches in social service modernization.

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NOTES

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- ² This part of paper based on (a) interviews with the experts, (b) a survey of social services employees to find out about the prevalence of attitudes and practices, articulated positions of actors, (c) case studies of social services, which helped to describe and analyze practices and approaches towards the evaluation of quality and effectiveness, (d) focus groups with the employees of the services, (e) interviews with employees and administrators to articulate informal practices of evaluation and forming the conditions for the discussion of these practices.