

THE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES AIMED AT THE ELDERLY PEOPLE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE SOCIAL WELFARE STATE

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Abstract

The research topic has been determined by the search for conditions necessary to improve the quality of social services for senior citizens in a social welfare state. The authors note the institutional constraints that negatively affect the achievement of the equal distribution of social and public benefits. It is possible to minimize these restrictions only if a balance of political and administrative approaches is achieved. One of the results of the implementation of the integrated approach is the coverage of social services for maximum number of citizens, including senior citizens, achieving the quality of all types of services. The Russian Federation is striving to implement the welfarism model. Executive state bodies create conditions for improving the quality of social services for senior citizens, strengthening the approach for measuring the quality assessment and evaluation. The authors of the present article analyze the social service conditions for the citizens in the Sverdlovsk region in one of the areas of Russia. In addition to the theory studying, statistical data gathered within the period of 2016-2020 based on the results of an independent quality assessment and evaluation of the social services have been analyzed.

Key words: Services, social services, elderly people, welfare state

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Introduction

The researchers from different countries during the 20th and 21st centuries are concerned about such problems as the quality of life of citizens and social services, the fulfillment of social state obligations. Scientific discussions about the viability and transformation of the model of the classical social welfare state are still being held. The researchers are looking for the conditions, the creation and maintenance of which can ensure the implementation of the

basic principles of the social welfare state, i.e. equality in the provision of public benefits regardless of gender and age, the ratio of the number and categories of recipients of social services, their resources provision. The authors of the article offer another perspective in the study of the quality improvement of the social services for the elderly people in the context of the transformation of the social welfare state, namely the study of the conditions under which a political approach is combined with an administrative approach. Only integrating these approaches will make improvements of the quality of social services for all the categories of citizens, including the elderly ones.

Methodology

The article considers the provision of social services for senior citizens, based on the political and administrative approaches. The application of a political approach within the research made allows us to study the provision of social services as the fulfillment of one of the most important obligations of the social welfare state. At the same time, it is considered as a special type of state, formed as a result of a historic compromise. In the context of the functioning of the Welfare State, the obligations are assumed by a specific government which is ultimately responsible for ensuring the basic social concerns of the citizens. The transformation of the social welfare state is understood as a kind of social change that allows adapting to some specific conditions, compensation for resulting risks. For example, if we take the demographic risk, one can see that its impact increases due to the aging of the population, the decline in the birthrate and the increase in the life expectancy. The increase in the number of elderly citizens causes an economic risk, i.e. the lack of public funds aimed at meeting social concerns and providing social services. T.Yu. Sidorina believes that there is also such a risk as the strengthening of social dependency of citizens, which affects the transformation of the model of the welfare state. The number of the citizens dependent on social support is increasing; spending on their maintenance is increasing every year as well, while the number of taxpayers is decreasing (Sidorina, 2012). This transformation also takes place under the influence of the conditions necessary for the implementation of the basic ideas of the social welfare state. This is the idea of equality, which is implemented, among other things, through the provision of social services for different categories of citizens. Their number is increasing, because in many states, not only the disenfranchised (the orphans, the disabled, the homeless people), but also fairly well-doing citizens apply for them if they have problems that the state undertakes to solve (Esping-Andersen, 2008). Changes in the characteristics of the social welfare state

are also influenced by the conditions for the implementation of the principle of democracy, including the involvement of the citizens in public administration. Thus, the citizens are involved in assessing the quality of social services. Some social states use a universalist approach towards the implementation of social policy. According to W. Beveridge, social policy should cover the majority of citizens of the state, guarantee the introduction of a unified national minimum income, provide full employment, and be responsible for achieving a decent level of welfare of the citizens (Alpatova, 2009). Currently, the principles proposed by W. Beveridge are being introduced within the model of the welfare state and the corresponding to it liberal ideas, including the idea of the free market. G. Rohrmoser believes that the social state should be developed within the framework of a free market, but at the same time observing the competition principle and regulating the development of the market by legal norms (Rohrmoser, 1996). The political approach in the model of the social welfare state is complemented by an administrative campaign, which is implemented by the state employees through the provision of social benefits to the population, legally regulated and financially secured. At the same time, according to G.E. Andersen, the citizens evaluate most of all the trust in the state and the state employees, as well as the quality of providing of some social services (Esping-Andersen, 2008). But here, too, there can be new risks that also affect the processes of transformation of the social welfare state. To the number of them belong the risk of limited resources (such as financial, logistical and human resources) necessary for the provision of the services, which determine another risk, namely, the decline in the quality of the social services, including those for the senior citizens. P. Rosanvallon supposes that the model of the social welfare state has already experienced three crises, i.e. the economic, ideological and philosophical, which led to the need for a radical renewal and modernization of the foundations of the concept itself (Rosanvallon, 1998). Many researchers share his opinion that the welfare state in the West has changed a lot, at the end of the XX and the beginning of the XXI century there was a significant liberalization of this institution. And yet, according to G.Yu. Kanarsh, one should not speak on the abolishing of the social state in Europe, but rather on its adaptation, on a significant redistribution of responsibility between the state and other actors (Kanarsh, 2020). These include public, non-profit organizations that are involved in the provision of social services. It is assumed that their active participation ensures the transition from the Welfare State policy to the Welfare mix policy (Sidorina, 2010), which is understood as a mixed system of general welfare, as a partnership between the state, the civil society and business representatives within the process of the provision of

social services. A.F. Khramtsov suggests that the model of the classical social welfare state in the countries of Western Europe is stable due to the fact that the factors of sustainability are already embedded in the history and culture of the European continent (Khramtsov, 2007). The stability of the model of the classical social welfare state is to a certain extent ensured by the state employees who perform the functions of redistribution, standardization and quality control of social services in carrying out political decisions (Kochetkov & Kochetkova 2009). There arises the following question. How to measure the degree of compliance of the social state with its obligations to the citizens, including ensuring the quality of social services, including welfare services? One of the ways to measure the degree of compliance of the social welfare state with its obligations to the citizens is the assessment of the quality of social services and conducting the monitoring using a single methodology. So, in the Russian Federation and its regions, since 2015, an independent quality assessment and evaluation of the conditions for the provision of social services has been being made. In the process of this type of monitoring, the services in the fields of education, culture, health and social services are evaluated. The executive bodies of state power follow the rules recommended in the methodology: they collect and summarize the information on the quality of the conditions for the provision of the services by the relevant organizations, use a single procedure for calculating indicators to identify the opinions of the citizens. In the surveys of the citizens, they evaluate such characteristics of services as openness and accessibility of information, comfort of the conditions for providing services, accessibility of services for the disabled people, benevolence, politeness of the organization's employees, and satisfaction of needs. For the assessment of the above mentioned parameters such sociological methods as a sample survey, focus groups are used. Let's note that the authors of the given article use the results of this type of monitoring, which was conducted in the Sverdlovsk region within the period from 2016 up to 2019 for obtaining the independent quality assessment and evaluation concerning social services for senior citizens.

2 Results and discussion

The authors hypothesize that ensuring the quality of the social services allows the state to show responsibility towards the citizens, to confirm compliance with the principles of the social welfare state. But first of all, it is necessary to answer the following question: "Does the modern Russian state meet the characteristics of the social welfare state?" There are grounds for a positive response, namely the state's obligations are consolidated in the Constitution of

the Russian Federation. The implementation of the principles of the social welfare state has been consistently expanding, which corresponds to the global trend though. At the same time, the assessment of the condition of the social welfare state in the Russian Federation is ambiguous. It is believed, that Russia is still on the path of building a welfare state. The state is trying to overcome inequality and injustice in social distribution, but not all actions are balanced and justified. And yet, despite the difficulties in the development of the social welfare state, according to the opinion of the Russian researcher V.K. Levashov, there can be seen a positive tendency in observing the social guarantees of the citizens by the state (an increase from 3% up to 32%), human rights (an increase from 4% up to 30%), personal security (an increase from 3% up to 28%), equality of all citizens before the law (an increase from 8 up to 21%) (Levashov, 2014). No doubt that the concept of “social guarantees” is a multiaspect one, includes the guarantees for the social services provision to the citizens who are in a difficult life situation. The definition of such a situation is given in federal law No. 195-FZ: this is a situation that objectively violates the vital activity of a citizen, which he cannot overcome on his own. The types of assistance to elderly citizens in the difficult life situations are specified in the standards of social services approved by the governments of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation. Different types of organizations provide services to the citizens who are in a difficult life situation. These are the crisis centers, day-care non-stationary social services, and family and childhood support services. But the present research paper is aimed at studying only the samples of the services that specialized centers provide to senior citizens in such forms as inpatient, semi-stationary, and at-home care. The list of the services includes the organization of leisure and recreation, assistance to the citizens in restoring their abilities to household, to have social and professional work, performing the functions of guardians and trustees in relation to the recipients of social services in need of guardianship or curatorship. The services for the senior citizens at home include the purchase and delivery of food and industrial goods, assistance in cooking, repairs of residential premises, etc. Note that this does not include the in-home provision of medical services: this task is fulfilled by health care institutions. Although in some countries there is a proven need to provide social services at home (especially for single elderly people), integrated with medical services (Mi Yi, Park, Cho & others, 2021). The concepts of a healthy model of aging are also proposed, which include good physical health, mental health, active participation in public life, and the ability to perform everyday tasks (Fu, Teng, Wang & He, 2021).

Let's exemplify the above mentioned facts with the materials of one of the regions of the Russian Federation, namely the Sverdlovsk region, with the way the authorities provide and assess the quality of social services for the elderly people. Its population is 4.3 million people (it takes the 5-th place among other regions). The annual budget for 2020 was 286 billion rubles. The region is home to 1,005,998 elderly people or 23.4% of the region's population (in the Russian Federation the same percentage is 22.67%). Compared to 1990, the number of elderly people has increased by 12.9 %. Currently, the country and the regions continue to have a tendency for aging population. At the same time, the indicator of life expectancy has a steady growth trend: in 2007 it comprised 64.9 years; in 2011 it was 70.3 years; and in 2018 the indicator was 74 years (On the approval of the integrated program of the Sverdlovsk region «Senior Generation» for the period of 2014-2018: Resolution of the Government of the Sverdlovsk region, 2014). The high percentage of elderly people in the population percentage means that expectations for the provision of social welfare guarantees are increasing. At the same time, the coverage of social services comprises only 98% of the elderly people among the identified citizens who need social support and social services. In the region, the principle of the liberal model of the social welfare state is observed, i.e. the conditions for the concurrence of the social services providers. Thus, the register includes 197 organizations of different organizational legal forms (state, autonomous non-profit, commercial, charitable funds). Some of them provide social services. In the Sverdlovsk region, the list of social services for elderly citizens has been expanded, thanks to the inclusion of non-profit organizations in the list of suppliers, although their growth is characterized as uneven and insignificant. They use a marketing approach, focus on the needs of their clients and offer the provision of services that are not specified in the list of state organizations, primarily belonging to the social services sphere for the senior citizens at home. But along with the achievements in implementing the responsibility of the social state, there are some problems, first of all, concerning the quality of social services, which largely depends on the level of qualification of suppliers. So, according to I.V. Mersiyanova's and V.B. Benevolensky's opinion, the non-profit organizations could provide the expected quality of social services, if they improve the level of qualification of the personnel (Mersiyanova & Benevolensky, 2017). There are also complaints about commercial organizations: many of them seek to reduce the cost of providing social services by means of reducing their quality. Therefore, public authorities need to strengthen control over the quality of services (Song, Yu & Sun, 2020). To make the quality assessment and evaluation of social services objectively, the

authorities offer the citizens-consumers to evaluate the conditions of the provision of the services. The citizens of the Sverdlovsk region, since 2015 and up to the present time, evaluate the quality of conditions for the provision of social services as quite high. Annually, the number of citizens surveyed increases. But at the same time, the respondents believe that it is necessary to repair buildings and premises, to expand the list of the services provided, to create the conditions for the Internet access, purchase computer equipment and rehabilitation facilities. But there are some restrictions on fulfilling the citizens' wishes to improve the quality of the social services. Thus, the right to expand the list of the services provided is by the entities of the Russian Federation. For example, the Ministry of Social Policy of the Sverdlovsk Region systematically updates the current standards of the social services, and then plans their financial support on the basis of per capita standards. These are the rules that are used to determine the amount of funding for the provision of social services. But the regions have different financial opportunities. Precisely the lack of an opportunity to increase the budget for the provision of social services causes the rise of the risks for the implementation of the basic principles of the social welfare state. And despite the positive results obtained earlier, there arises a serious contradiction between the ideas of the social welfare state and their practical implementation. Thus, in the Sverdlovsk region, thanks to non-profit organizations, the services not available at the state specialized centers are offered to the citizens at reasonable prices, such as the repair of clients' housing premises, the cleaning of the housing premises, the in-home delivery of food, the support to medical organizations, the assistance in obtaining legal aid, etc. But the low income level of most senior citizens prevents the provision of these services. There are difficulties in attracting the supporters' funds to fully or partially pay for the costs for providing these social services. Similar difficulties in the activities of non-profit organizations that provide home services for senior citizens can be seen in many regions of the country (Mersiyanova & Benevolensky, 2017). This conclusion is confirmed by the results of the analysis of the statistical data for the Russian Federation: the number of citizens who are ready to fully or partially pay for the additional services offered lies between 10 and 30 % of the total number of the citizens receiving social services.

Conclusion

In order to ensure the quality of social services for senior citizens, it is necessary to integrate political and administrative approaches. The state shall provide the following conditions: the

compliance of the authorities with the legislation, the development of such standards, the content of which corresponds to the current needs of the elderly people. Further, there is a need to apply the standards and to provide the social services that are actually financially secured. Quality services a priori cannot be provided in the unrepaired buildings. It is difficult to expect the quality of the social services if the supplier organizations do not have enough personnel (social workers, gerontologists, psychologists), and the level of their qualifications does not meet the modern requirements. The results of monitoring the quality of the social services, including welfare services, are not always objective, because the state employees tend to demonstrate a high level of indicators and tend not to show all the problems identified within the framework of the surveys. The needs of the senior citizens in the social services are gradually changing in accordance with the growing expectations of the quality of life. Therefore, the state specialized organizations often do not have listed the services that this category of citizens needs. At the same time, the number of senior citizens who are willing to pay for the in-home additional services offered by non-profit organizations is insignificant. If the number of these listed conditions is insufficient, and the ideas of a social welfare state have been proclaimed, then the justified distrust of the citizens will grow concerning the very foundation of such a state.

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