

THE DESIGN OF POTENTIAL INDICATORS LINKING THE REGIONAL AUTHORITIES EFFICIENCY AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE REGIONS

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***Abstract:** The need to evaluate the public administration, its effectiveness and its performance is still present. Efforts to increase the quality of public administration, to improve its efficiency and looking for new ways to do this is emphasized in the conditions of economic crisis and the lack of public funds.*

The quality of public administration and its improvement should find an echo in the quality of life of the population, which is evaluated by both economic and non-economic indicators.

This paper tries to identify potential suitable indicators monitoring the interconnection of public administration performance indicators and the relevant areas, which are based on the description of existing opinions about the effectiveness and its detection using various methods and indicators, methods of synthesis, abstraction and deduction.

The issue is specified in the terms of the Regional Authority and the higher territorial self-government unit in the Czech Republic (region). The paper shows the great difficulty of the design of indicators linking the regional authority efficiency and the quality of life in the regions. This difficulty is due to the high number of factors affecting this relationship (flow versus state variables, external influences out of the region, priorities variance, self-government versus state administration, respectively independent versus delegated powers, different input conditions, etc.).

Keywords: Public Administration, Quality, Efficiency, Regional Authority, Region.

JEL Classification: H70, H72, R11.

Introduction

The area of public administration is a very current and highly discussed theme, especially regarding the question of its evaluation, effective functioning and the issue of measuring its performance both in the Czech Republic and in other countries of the EU. A proper and reliable functioning of the public administration is an essential prerequisite for economic prosperity and social prosperity of the country.

In general, there exists in society an effort for continuous improvement of the current state of the public administration, an effort to achieve efficiency in this area and to maximize public gain.

In order for it to be possible to evaluate the public administration, measure its performance, and to propose suggestions for its improvement, it is necessary to know the possibilities and opportunities, as well as strengths and weaknesses. In order to evaluate the public administration and its improvement, managerial approaches and methods using a large number of indicators which serve to identify partial performance contribute to a large extent.

The quality of public administration, its management and its improvement is one of the pillars of success of its own functioning, and this is primarily true in relation to the public at large. In the framework of its operation, it influences the life of the citizen, and they in turn constantly develop the public administration in the form of increasing the demand for public services and expected quality. There is discovered a tendency here to compare the output of the public administration with the private goods and services and demands for efficiency as in the private sector.

However, it is more problematic and far more difficult to quantify the influence of the public administration, with regard to its efficiency on the quality of life of the citizens of a given country or a specific territorial unit.

1 Formulation of the issue

1.1 Defining the concepts of efficiency and quality in public administration

Public administration and its position, function and principles are often the subject of numerous changes and reforms motivated primarily by political and economic influences [4]. Public administration in a free-market and democratic economy should operate in agreement with the valid legislation not only in a professional, transparent and ethical manner, but also economically, efficiently, and effectively. It is in this stated sense that the term Good Governance has been used in specialized theory, which in principle means that the public administration is connected to the participation of the citizenry and fulfills the public interest (see [20]).

Public administration is the subject of interest of several academic fields (law, sociology, economics, demographics, etc.), which determines its interdisciplinary nature (for greater detail see [17] and [9]) and also makes it more difficult to achieve a precise identification of the concept of quality and efficiency.

Defining the term quality in the public administration is not an unambiguous matter and even specialized literature does not offer a universal or satisfactory answer to this question. The quality of public administration is most often connected to its management, processes, sources, employees, partnerships and performance, regarding its institutional dimension (see [19]), compared to this is the efficiency, which in a majority of cases is generally expressed as the difference between the output and the input [5], and can be approached from two perspectives: from the internal efficiency of the organization of public administration or from the external efficiency of public administration. Other conceptions of efficiency of public administration differentiate four categories of efficiency – social, technical production, user and national-economy [12].

Contemporary authors approach the evaluation process of public administration on the basis of key requirements placed on fulfilling the tasks of public administration, which illustrate the principle of the “3E’s”, which are Economy, Efficiency, and Effectiveness; and many of these supplement this [3] with a fourth “E” (Equality, for example equal access). In Czech literature, Economy is also understood as the use of public means, where the established aims and tasks are achieved with the least amount of resources used, and a condition of this minimizing of resources is that the aims and tasks are fulfilled with the prerequisite of maintaining the quality [13].

Objective indicators for evaluating the quality and efficiency of public administration, however, de facto do not exist, as predominately it is not possible to identify the final consumer as a result of the non-competitive nature of the consumption of a majority

of public services [2] and it is not even possible to adequately measure its subjective usefulness. The efficiency and quality can only be measured by accessible indicators, which will often contain “soft information” (trust, satisfaction etc.) and can be gathered through questionnaires with inaccuracies.

While specialists have a continuous discussion regarding the definition of the concepts mentioned, the legislation states a brief definition of this in the law of the financial control of the public administration. In §2, efficiency is defined as “the use of public resources, which achieves the widest possible extent, quality and benefit to fulfilling the tasks in comparison with the volume of resources expended for its fulfillment” [1]. The law further defines the concepts of Economy and Effectiveness, where both terms logically relate to the use of financial resources. Specialized discussion, as can be seen in the aforementioned text, extends beyond this economic expression and uses a number of non-financial indicators, (subjective) indicators and comparative quantities.

1.2 Defining the aims of the research

This paper is an attempt to organize the accessible indicators, stress the key areas which can be evaluated and to offer a combination of indicators which could best and most objectively evaluate the performance of public (in the case of this paper Regional) administration and in comparison to the quality of life in a region (in the case of the paper the Region).

For the purposes of illustrating the researched issue was the output which is influenced by the Efficiency of the Regional Authority (indicated by the author as ERA) and on which this efficiency has a direct influence, stated by the author by the concept of Quality of life in the Region (QREG).

Schematically the aim of this paper can be expressed in the relationship (1):

$$\mathbf{ERA} (\mathbf{a}_i, \text{ii, iii, ..., n}) \rightarrow \mathbf{QREG} (\mathbf{b}_i, \text{ii, iii, ..., n}), \quad (1)$$

where **ERA** is the Efficiency of the Regional Authority evaluated on the basis of **n** indicators of **a** and **QREG** is the quality of life measured by **n** indicators of **b**, where it can be assumed that the aggregate of indicators **a** will differ from the aggregate of indicators **b** and **n** will be varied.

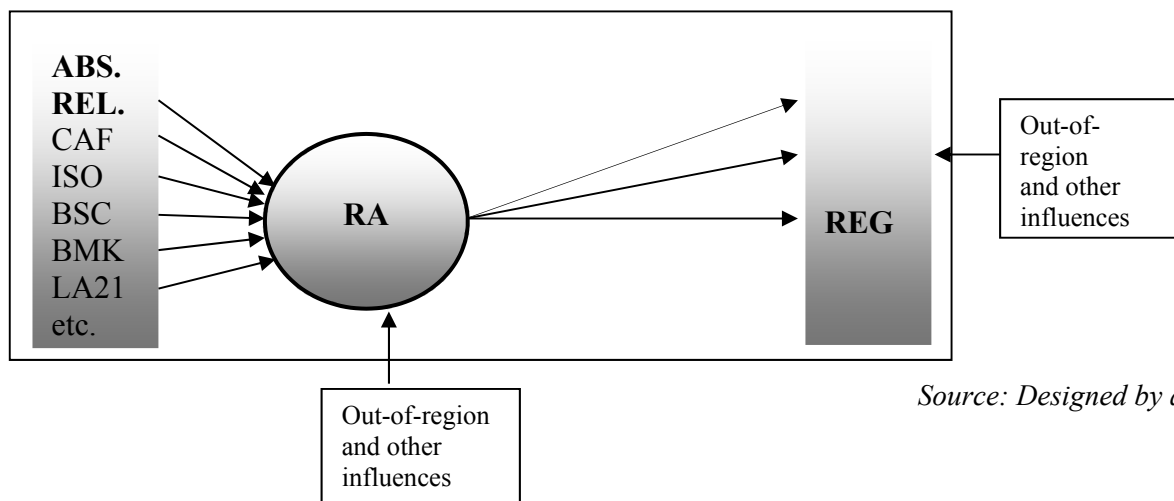
The unifying element of the relationship of the **ERA** and **QREG** is the citizen, which in its final result is also its evaluator.

The aggregate of indicators of efficiency, in the relationship (1) stated by the letter **a**, will be absolutely different from the aggregate of indicators **b** and the number **n** will also be different. The unifying element in the relationship ERA and QREG is the citizen, which in the final result is also its evaluator. The state also enters into the position of an evaluator, who through it plans, strategies, and vision express the interests of the state and intentions, respectively representatively establishing the aims and conception of the results, as well as its fulfillment.

Among the most often used indicators of the efficiency of the Regional Authority are the absolute data (number of employees, wages, etc.) and through the help of this data the relative indicators (number of acts by civil servants during a certain time period, the contribution of the state for activities carried out by the civil servant etc.). The authors, however, also consider other relative measures for the quality of the Regional Authority, such as using the method for increasing the quality of public administration and achieving the results while using these methods. The goal is therefore to determine whether indicators

of the quality of the Regional Authority, respectively the changes in the quality can influence the functioning of the Region as a whole, which is illustrated in Figure 1.

Fig. 1: Defining mutual connection of researched relationship



Source: Designed by author

2 Methods

In order to achieve the objectives, the scientific methods of analysis, synthesis, deduction and abstraction were mainly used. Description was the predominant method in the first part of the research based on the findings of current approaches to the issue in question and the achieved results, with an identification of the used indicators for evaluating the efficiency and quality of both the institution of public administration, but also the Region.

During the establishment of the proposal itself the linking of the indicators of the ERA and the QREG, the methods of abstraction and deduction were primarily used. For the confirmation and verification of the established approaches, the achieved results were synthesized and were at the same time verified by interview with selected civil servants in high positions (a majority who were Secretaries or Head of the Secretariat of the Secretary) of the eight Regional Authorities.

3 An analysis of the problem

3.1 Indicators of efficiency of the Regional Authorities

When measuring performance in the public administration, several types of measurements can be used. Determining its values can be worthless if it appears in the form of isolated, abstract numbers. The usefulness and applicability of the obtained values can be achieved in the comparison of the relevant values.

The real measure of performance in the public administration can be divided into the following four categories: (i) measure of performance (output) can be created for comparing services of an organization and tells more about the activities of the authorities than the work burden of the employees; (ii) measure of effectiveness (often expressed as a unit of costs, or as a unit of production by an employee for a unit of time) expressing the relationship between the services or products and resources needed for their production; (iii) measure of efficiency (output) illustrates the quality of performance or indicates the extent to which the aims of a given organization are fulfilled and its usual form as a measure of timeliness and level of satisfaction of the citizen; (iv) measure of productivity, despite the fact that it is rarely applied, combining elements of effectiveness and efficiency of one

indicator, for example the number of flawlessly executed requests per hour (detailed in [16]).

Methods improving the quality of public administration, and therefore the activities of the Regional Authorities, represent an aggregate of approaches and techniques of leadership for the management of the quality of the organization. This relates to methods leading to a targeted, performance, procedural and system orientated type of management [18].

Among the most significant methods for increasing quality from the standpoint of the most often applied in the condition of the public administration of the Czech Republic belongs the model of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), the norms of the set of rules from ISO, the method of Balanced Scorecard (BSC), benchmarking (BMK), Local agenda 21 and others (EFQM, Citizen's Charter, EMAS, Six Sigma, Corporate Social Responsibility – CSR).

The model CAF (Common Assessment Framework) is a complex method increasing the quality of institutions of the public sector, therefore also the Regional Authorities. The model is based on the implementation of self-evaluation of nine criteria, five of which concern the prerequisites for achieving results (the method of management, strategy, motivation) and four criteria concerning the achieved aims themselves (outputs) towards the customer/citizen, employees influence on society and the environment [15]. The evaluation of the presented evidence in the limits of the individual criteria of the model of the CAF is realized through a panel of evaluating the assumptions and panels evaluating the result in relation to 0-100 points.

The system of quality according to ISO represents system control and prevention. The system is described in certified norms of ISO 9001, increasing quality and efficiency is described as the norm ISO 9004. The fundamental principle of the norm ISO 9001 is the procedural approach, in which through the help of identification and mutual connection between the management of interconnected activities, it is possible to find the most efficient functioning of the organization.

The essence of the BSC method is a set of balanced indicators. Before applying the methods of BSC it is necessary to clarify the vision and strategic priorities and to transfer the methods of BSC into partial objective strategies, classify balance to these (for example financial conditions) and ability to quantify it [7].

Benchmarking is defined as a systematic process of measuring services, procedures and methods with the best organization in an effort to establish goals for further improvement (according to [12]). Benchmarking is a technique of constant optimization, which compares and analyzes processes (services) with the goal of ensuring the best work (practical approaches), in which the organization is measured against [16].

LA 21 represents a tool for applying the principles of sustainable development on the local and regional level. LA 21 is a process through which the increase of quality of the public administration, incorporating the public and using all available information about sustainable development in the individual areas increases the quality of life [14].

From the standpoint of territorial authority and the extent of competence of the administrative body, including the Regional Authority, there is a difference between the performance of the state administration and the local administration. In the Czech Republic, for the purposes of defining the territorial authority, the regional level is differentiated:

(i) administration of the region is established according to Law No. 36/1960 Coll., regarding the territorial incorporation of the state, as amended and (ii) the administration of the region is created on the basis of Law No. 347/1997 Coll., regarding the creation of the higher territorial self-government units.

When evaluating the efficiency of the Regional Authority, it is necessary therefore to take into account the specifics of performing transferred and independent authority and at the same time the election cycle, as a result of which the leadership can be changed (the Regional Council President, the Regional Council, the Regional Government)., while the bureaucratic apparatus does not undergo an appropriate change (which should not occur), which can be schematically described in the relationship (2).

$${}^s P\text{ERA} (\mathbf{a}_i, \text{ii, iii, ..., n})^{t=1-t=0}, \quad (2)$$

where **ERA** is the Efficiency of the Regional Authority evaluated on the basis of **n** of indicators **a**, which evaluates both the performance in independent and transferred authorities in a specific time period $\langle t=0; t=1 \rangle$.

3.2 Indicators of Quality of Life in the Regions

The Region represents from the standpoint of legislative definition of the territorial association the citizens. The criteria for evaluating the quality of life for the citizens of the region are in a majority of cases formulated on an economic basis, but also on harder to measure non-economic indicators. Among the first group belong primarily financial indicators (Gross Domestic Product per citizen of the region, income, expenditures), and into the second type of indicators such as mortality, safety, air quality etc.

It is evident that many authors formulate the indicators of the quality of life of the citizens in various ways, yet in a majority of cases they present indicators with the assistance of static quantities in a certain moment in time. After logical consideration it can be stated that comparing static quantities expressing a priori different levels of the regions is not possible. Because the regions have various “starting” positions (various levels of development, historical conditions, geographic, demographic etc.), the quality is best able to be evaluated over time, that is, with differing indicators according to relationship (3), which respectively follows the development of a given indicator over time.

$$\text{QREG} (\mathbf{b}_i, \text{ii, iii, ..., n})^{t=1-t=0}, \quad (3)$$

where **QREG** is the Quality of Life in the Region measured by **n** indicators of **b**, while it evaluates the changes in these indicators in the specific time period $\langle t=0; t=1 \rangle$.

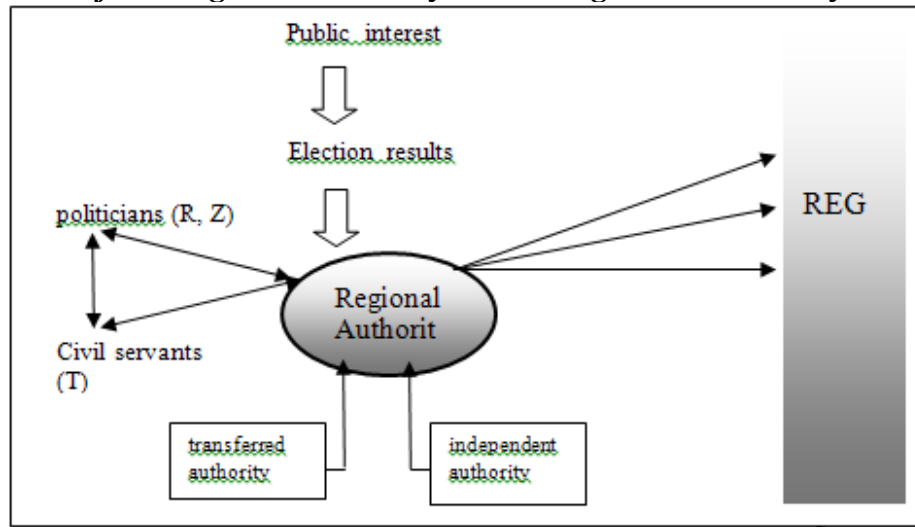
3.3 Indicators of interconnection

The aim of the research, which general part is described in this article, is an attempt of linking the indicators of the efficiency of the Regional Authorities and the Quality of Life in the Regions according to relationship (1).

A linking element of this relationship is the citizen, who is understood to be (in agreement with [14]) a so-called customer in the public administration in two roles: (i) an applicant (user) of the Regional Authority or a participant in an administrative proceeding, who expects that his application or needed service will be carried out quickly, without any legal or other inadequacies and in the required standard, and (ii) a citizen of the Region, who expects that it will lead to an increase of the Quality of Life in the Region. It is also specifically in the aforementioned definition connected to the authorized requests. Among the customers there is a limit of authority of requests given by the legal norms and standards, the requirements of the citizens are limited by the authority, financial

and other resources, conditions and legal norms and the principles of sustainable development. From this definition we can expand Figure 1 to a different perspective of the influence of mutual linkage which is illustrated in Figure 2.

Fig. 2: Influence of the Regional Authority on the Region as a territory



Source: [Designed by author]

The study [8] offers 11 indicators of the interconnection of the Quality of Life in the Region and the efficiency of the “Regional Government” (terminology used by the aforementioned authors). These are Indicator I. Investment of the Region and support for business and the civil sector (Investment orientation of the Regional budget, subsidies from the Region to business subjects, subsidies from the Region to non-profit organizations), II. Cost of operation of the Regional government (cost of operation of the Regional government), III. Quality of management of the public administration carried out by the Region (position of the Region in competition for public administration), IV. Legislative initiative of the Region (the use of the power of the local government of the Region offering proposals of laws to the Chamber of Deputies), V. Quality of administrative procedures in the framework of transferred authority to the Region (errors in the performance of transferred authority to the Region), VI. Creating conditions for the development of secondary education (index of the changes of secondary education, entrance examinations for eight, six and four-year comprehensive schools, percentage accepted to schools offering school leaving exams and students of the third year of the six-year comprehensive schools and fifth year of the eight-year comprehensive schools out of the overall number who are fifteen years of age), VII. Employment of graduates of secondary schools (unemployment of graduates of comprehensive schools, unemployment of graduates of technical schools), VIII. Creating the conditions for the development of social services (unsatisfied applicants for apartments in homes with nursing care services, the number of people waiting for space in a retirement home), IX. Foreign activities of the Region (permanent representation of the Region in Brussels, presentation events in Brussels, partnerships of the Region with foreign regions), X. Quality of the internet pages of the Region (quality of the internet pages of the region, tools preparing the region for handling questions through the internet), XI. Providing information (quality of the reaction of the Regional Authority to requests from institution for providing information according to Law No. 106/1999 Coll., quality of the reaction of the Region to electronic requests of institution for providing information without appeal to the Law No. 106/1999 Coll., quality of reaction of the Region to written requests of citizens for providing information without appeal

to Law No. 106/1999 Coll., quality of reaction of the Region to telephone requests of citizens for providing information without appeal to Law No. 106/1999 Coll., appraisal of the Region in competitions (Open closed). The study proposing these indicators classifies sources of data necessary for its calculation.

The European set of indicators for sustainable development [11] places preference from an ecological perspective: I. Satisfaction of the citizens with the local community (general satisfaction of the citizens with various features of the local administration), II. Local contribution to global climate change (emission of CO₂), III. Mobility and local transportation of passengers (daily distance of transportation and method of transportation), IV. Accessibility of local public parks and services (access of citizens to the nearest park and to basic services), V. Quality of local air (number of days with a good air-quality), VI. Travel of children to and from school (method of transportation), VII. Sustainable management of the local authority and local businesses (percentage of organizations applying environmental and social methods of management), VIII. Noise (percent of the population affected by damaging noise pollution in the environment), IX. Sustainable use of land (sustainable development, renewal and protection of land under the local administration, X. Production supporting sustainability (percentage of consumption of goods that are labeled as ecological).

The indicators proposed by Kostecký (compare to [8]) place emphasis on material relevance, which is in the sense of considering the performance of the regional administration in the stated areas and the possibility to gain objective information for measuring the performance of the regional administration. These parameters of the activities of the regional administration are:

- Cost of operation of the regional government,
- unemployment of graduates of technical secondary schools,
- quality of the internet pages,
- investment of the region and support for the business and civil sector,
- quality of management of the public administration,
- legislative initiative of the region,
- quality of administrative activities,
- development of secondary schools,
- employment of graduates of secondary schools,
- development of social services,
- foreign activities of the region,
- providing information.

The research carried out by Honus [6] rested on proposing and verifying the methodological approaches for evaluating the quality of life on the basis of the criteria of the LA21 on the level of the region.

The set of indicators was divided into nine groups: I. **Public administration, level of information, strategic development** (level of information, communication between the public administration, citizens and other subjects, system of planning and management, including urbanism, gaining external financial resources and local financial support,

regional, national and international cooperation, emergency response systems, children and student representation, others), II. **Environment** (waste, protection and revitalization of land, old ecological burdens, green space and clean public and other spaces, air-quality, noise, electromagnetic smog, radiation, drinking water, surface and waste water, energy, animals, protection of nature and biodiversity, others), III. **Healthy lifestyle, preventative health-care, medical services** (prevention of injuries, diet, movement, prevention of obesity, legal drugs – alcohol, tobacco, mental health, non-infectious illnesses, infectious illnesses, other preventative and intervention programs, events and campaigns, health-care services, others), IV **Leisure time, sport, culture, care of monuments, civic life** (opportunities for sport and local recreation, opportunities for culture and civic life, leisure time for children and youths, cultural heritage, monuments and tradition, local patriotism, others), V. **Social issues, housing, socio-pathological phenomena** (social services and consulting, national minorities, housing, preventing and addressing socio-pathological phenomena, social inclusion and removal of barriers, others), VI. **Education and awareness** (conditions for education – schools, educational facilities, libraries, educational centers, programs – Schools supporting health, Safe schools and component activities of schools, services and consulting for parents and schools, specialized education of targeted groups, life-long learning, requalification, awareness of health, transportation safety and awareness, research and development, and others), VII. **Business, economics, the travel industry** (support for business and investment, accessibility and support for local services, support for employment, management quality, travel industry and services for the travel industry, others), VIII. **Agriculture and the countryside** (care for the countryside, agro-tourism, traditional agriculture and craft production, ecologically sensitive methods of farming, forestry, support of agricultural production, forestry and the processing of local products, conditions for life in the countryside, others), IX **Transportation** (transportation network in the region and wider linkage, transportation safety and lessening transportation, public transportation, integrated transportation system and transportation service, pedestrian and cycling transportation, quality of local roads, sidewalks and walkways, support of ecologically sensitive transportation, transportation solution in cities and municipalities, including parking, others).

However, the aforementioned set of indicators and numbers, according to the author, do not take into account the time frame (uneven starting condition in each Regional Authority, and primarily the region as a territorial unit), it only determines the state in a given moments and should be adjusted according to relationship (4).

$${}^s P\mathbf{ERA} (\mathbf{a}_{i, ii, iii, \dots, n})^{t=1-t=0} \rightarrow \mathbf{QREG} (\mathbf{b}_{i, ii, iii, \dots, n})^{t=1-t=0}, \quad (4)$$

where the selected indicator of the Efficiency of the Regional Authority **ERA** and the Quality of Life in the Region **QREG** are evaluated in a specific period of time $\langle t=0; t=1 \rangle$, which should contribute to the objective relativizing of the differing starting positions.

Another problem when evaluating the efficiency of the Regional Authority and the quality of life in the Region is the difference between the “nationwide” hierarchies of generally accepted indicators and “local” indicators from the standpoint of their significance for the citizens of a given region. A suggestion is to classify the weight of indicators according to their level of importance, which can be determined through strategic materials of the Regional Authority. In the case that this will be considered, the link will be examined by the relationship expressed in (5).

$${}^s P\mathbf{ERA} (\mathbf{a}_{\alpha^*i, \beta^*ii, \gamma^*iii, \dots, \omega^*n})^{t=1-t=0} \rightarrow \mathbf{QREG} (\mathbf{b}_{\alpha^*i, \beta^*ii, \gamma^*iii, \dots, \omega^*n})^{t=1-t=0}, \quad (5)$$

where the Efficiency of the Regional Authority **ERA** is measured by **n** indicators of **a** with classified weight α , β , γ , to ω , which expresses the priorities of needs of the Regional Authority in a given time period $\langle t=0; t=1 \rangle$ and Quality of Life in the Region **QREG** is measured by **n** indicators of **b** with classified weight α , β , γ , to ω , which expresses the priorities of the citizens determined by the political process in the strategic documents of the development of the Region for a given time period $\langle t=0; t=1 \rangle$.

4 Discussion

The problems with determining objective indicators for the efficiency of the Regional Authority and indicators for the quality of life in the Regions are significant. The effort to link them will therefore, for the reason of primary imperfection be significantly difficult and always will require verification in practice.

In the area of evaluation of the Regional Authority, there are many limiting factors, the first of which is the relatively large subjectivity of evaluating efficiency. Other factors can be the level of autonomy for decision-making and often the non-existence of explicitly determined aims and the non-existence of selected systematic problems [10].

At the same time, a direct proportion cannot be set between the quantity of used methods for increasing the quality of public administration at the Regional Authority and a real increase in quality.

In the area of evaluation of the Region (quality of life of the citizens), the central problem is establishing the proportion between the economic and non-economic indicators. The differing weights of these indicators should emerge from the differing priorities of the citizens of a given region.

Conclusion

In order to evaluate the influence of the effective functioning of the Regional Authority on the quality of life of the citizens themselves in the regions, the tools do not yet exist, which would be able to measure this relationship. This difficulty originates from a lack of objective primary indicators.

The paper discusses the problems in determining the research for potential dependence. It is evident, that before it is possible to proceed to listing, defining, and analysis of the individual indicators, that it is necessary to determine the conditions for taking into consideration the standpoint of time, as well as the priorities of the Region. This fact appears from a practical standpoint to be absolutely essential.

If we will know what is necessary to achieve, where we are heading, that through the assistance of economic analysis we can easier find tools (a framework of indicators) and procedures for achieving efficiency.

The problem remains that an explicit expression and determining the desired state is not completely possible. There always plays a role here of a greater or lesser level of subjectivity. Objective determination of aims in the public administration (the Regional Authority) and in the affected territorial unit (Region) can only be theoretically defined with the stated practice limitation, which will be abstracted during the definition.

The proposed inclusion of the use of such indicators and taking into consideration the differentiated priorities through the help of classifying the weights can nevertheless help to lead to a greater verification of gained results from the research. This will continue with specifically determined individual indicators of efficiency of the Regional Authority and the

quality of life in the Region and through the mathematic-statistical methods to determine possible linkage.

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