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**Key success factors  
of social services  
organizations in the  
public sector<sup>1,2</sup>**

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**1. Introduction**

The basic goal behind any action undertaken in an organization management is the will to achieve success (Ring, Perry 1985). Nonetheless, one should bear in mind that the framework of organizations functioning nowadays is a world of no fixed rules, no universal management style, and thus of no universal success scheme (Skrzypek 2007). Key (or critical) success factors are the organization's resources, competence and qualifications that create its competitive advantage on a particular market at a given time, and are able to determine its possible future success (Flores, Fadden 2000). The factors are not static but rather changeable, depending on the situation, on the particular point that the enterprise finds itself in (Brotherton 1996). Thereby, they determine the management area of activity (Meibodi

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2010) and influence the accomplishment of the organization's mission (Sirus and Mo'attar 2006).

Due to the usefulness of the strategic management theory application in the activity of business organizations, the issues of key success factors are well described in relation to both theory and praxis of business organizations' functioning, but poorly, due to their determinants and operating rules, in relation to public organizations. The examination of secondary sources provides one with reviews of rare research concerning public sector organizations, especially the social service ones. From the pragmatic point of view, exploring these issues appears to be of the utmost importance, since it allows for evaluating the effectiveness of the organizations, the statutory goal of which is the practical accomplishment of social policy principles.

Therefore, by programming the research on key success factors of public organizations, we aspire to fill in the gap in the scope of the knowledge about success factors and their influence on constructing the public organizations' strategy.

## **2. Critical success factors - origin, sources, benefits**

The notion of an organization's success is often defined on the ground of management theory. This publication adopts P. Drucker's (2000) definition, according to which success is the organization's ability to develop in a long-term perspective. Such a specification requires identifying the organization's internal factors that, utilized properly in the process of strategic goals formulation and, subsequently, their accomplishment, enables to achieve the initially set results. The original concept of key success factors was formulated as a consequence of revising Parteo's (1897) findings; to be exact, the 80-20 rule implications for the quality of planning, as the basic source of a product's market success. The V. Pareto principle assumes that examining all the success factors is not necessary, and it suffices to focus on the essential one fifth of all factors, for it is them that determine either the success or failure of an organization. Such a reasoning might be said to be oversimplified - depending on the sector that an organization belongs to, the ratio of its resources and skills will influence it differently (Hood, 1991).

Scholarly discussion uses the notion of key success factors (KSFs) and critical success factors (CSFs) interchangeably. For J.F. Rockart (1979), key factors are the ones that provide an organization with success and competitive advantage. A similar definition is presented by Leidecker and Bruno, for whom critical factors

are the characteristics, conditions and variables responsible for an organization's success (Leidecker, Bruno, 1984). According to K. Grunert, C. Ellegard (1993), there are four possible interpretations of critical success factors:

- the requisite components of the organization's management system,
- the unique organization's characteristics,
- a heuristic tool, aimed at sharpening the managers' perception of the organization,
- a description of the crucial competence and resources necessary to achieve success at a given market.

K. Grunert and C. Ellegard (1993), by concentrating on the latter interpretation, defined key success factor as an organization's competence that it can invest in.

KSFs allow an organization to stand out from its competitors, and therefore to establish stable, strong and positive relations with the market it functions on (Dirks, Wijn 1996). J.F. Rockart (1979) points out that the success factors constitute some specific fields of organizations' activity. By reason of it, they should be constantly observed and analysed by the managers (Rockart. Thierauf claims that unless KSFs credibly reflect reality, the management's goals cannot be satisfactorily accomplished (Thierauf 2002). J. Pinto, D. Slevin (1987) emphasize how important it is to indentify these factors - without the identification, they actually become a threat to the organization. R. Dadashzadeh (1989) states that the moment CSFs are identified, they should become management goals. On account of it, any change needs to be reported to the management systematically.

F. Bartes, A. Strzednicki (2003) list four possible sources of success factors:

- the organization's own and specific conditions defined by its area of activity,
- the organization's position within a given sector,
- the organization's environment, clients' preferences, the state's economic and political factors,
- present organizational factors, the significance of which depends on the situation.

K. Sirius and R. Moghaddam (2009) distinguish yet another source of key success factors: the management specificity within an organization.

J. Rockart, A.E. Crescenz (1983), taking the time criterion into account, divide key success factors into two groups:

- current - altered in response to problems that the organization faces at present,
- planned - usually corresponding to the company's development schemes.

The number of factors in each of the groups depends on the size of the organization, on time and on the management (Rockart, Crescenz 1983).

Defining key success factors brings many benefits (Zarepur 2001):

- a decrease in the negative influence of the success factors,
- a decrease in financial risk,
- an increase in quality control,
- an increase in the ability to handle the groups, whose influence on the organization might be negative,
- a budget goals guarantee.

Two crucial practical aims of identifying KSFs might be mentioned. Firstly, the diagnostic aim – when accomplished, it enables one to explain the reasons behind different pace of organizations' development. Secondly, owing to the prescriptive aim, one can suggest a desirable manner and direction of efficient activity to the managerial staff.

### **3. Key success factors as the foundation in an organization's strategy formulation**

The key success factors concept is connected with organizations' strategic planning. The theorem is utilized in the process of strategic analysis – referred to as the examination and identification of present and future changes, together with their tendency in the organization's environment, and the organization's own potential – undertaken in order to establish what its development and competitive position potential is, as well as to formulate the strategy (Bieniok, Gruszczyńska-Malec 1996). According to A.D. Chandler (1962), what constitutes a strategy is "[the] determination of the basic long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise". In Porter's (2006) view, strategy is defined a broad formula that describes the way in which a company intends to compete.

As approached by J. Rockart (1979), no organization should take the risk of introducing and developing a strategy without having paid sufficient attention to the main and basic factors that determine success in the particular trade of business. Thus, a premise for perceiving CSFs as the foundation of strategy formulation is created.

Dirk and Wijn analyze CSFs in relation to the strategy formulation and implementation. The authors point out that originally both the CSFs definition and usage based itself on strategy implementation. Their main function was to foster the introduction of strategic activities. At the same time, the scholars claim that contemporarily utilizing CSFs in strategy formulation should serve to supply the entire strategic planning process. These are the CSFs that create the organizations' vision and mission statement. The management

and control processes within any organization should begin with the CSFs identification (Dirks, Wijn 2002).

Also K. Eisenhardt and M. Zbaraki stress the inseparable connection between CSFs and an organization's success. The authors prove that the CSFs method requires the management to enter the decision-making process with pre-established, clear goals. These goals determine, once an action is being undertaken, the value of its possible consequences. "The actors," as employees are called in K. Eisenhardt, M. Zbaraki's (1992) writings, gather information and prepare a set of alternative activities. In the end, the optimum option is chosen.

The CSFs identification is thus inextricably related to strategy formulation. It is worth stressing the fact that there are some business strategies which can foster solving social problems. A technique to be mentioned is the vendor (in the broad sense of the notion) partnership strategy, grounded on the belief that an organization needs to adapt itself to the vendor's need maximally, and to switch its own attitude from a client- to a partner-oriented one (Luecke 2007).

#### **4. Key success factors of organizations rendering social services in the public sector**

Numerous publications provide the reader with ready-made compilations of KSFs in the private sector. Among others, A. Thompson, A. Strickland's (1993) suggestion is to be mentioned. The authors propose technology, production, distribution, marketing, cooperative and organizational skills. While listing the private sector CSFs, Obłoj points out to post-purchase support and servicing, marketing and distribution, finances, staff management, technology and production (Obłoj 2011). Badri examined service and manufacturing companies in the United Arab Emirates. In both the types of enterprise, factors crucial for success proved to be: staff training, product/service design, management quality and relations between staff members (Badri and Davis 1995). The main conclusion of Hyland's research, conducted in manufacturing firms in Australia in 2000, as a part of a multinational project, was that management support was requisite to an organization's success (Hyland, Mellor, O'Mara and Kondepudi 2000). M. Terziovski, A. Soahl, D. Samson studied Australian manufacturing and services companies. According to their findings, leadership, customer focus, both internal and external, and strategic alliances with suppliers are the factors that determine an organization's success (Terziovski, Soahl, Samson 1996).

Rarely does the research on KSFs touch upon the public sector organizations. For the sake of clarity, the authors of this article decided to present critical

success factors of such organizations, as an outcome of a preliminary research, in the form of a chart.

**Table 1. Identifying key success factors of the public sector organizations**

Author, publication date	Research method	Key success factors
M. A. Youssef, M. Zairi (1995)	questionnaire survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management commitment</li> <li>• Quality policy</li> <li>• Customer satisfaction</li> <li>• Clear mission statement</li> <li>• Vendor partnership</li> <li>• Education</li> </ul>
M. S. Owlia, E. M. Aspinwall (1997)	questionnaire survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management commitment</li> <li>• Strategic planning</li> <li>• Quality management</li> <li>• Employee involvement and team working</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Design management</li> <li>• Process management</li> <li>• Information and analysis</li> <li>• Customer focus and satisfaction</li> </ul>
U. Nwabueze, G. K. Kanji (1997)	questionnaire survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management commitment</li> <li>• Customer management</li> <li>• Teamwork</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Process management</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Organisational structure</li> </ul>
P. Thomas (2004)	questionnaire survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management commitment</li> <li>• Process management</li> <li>• Data analysis</li> <li>• Supplier management</li> </ul>
A. M. M. Rad (2005)	postal questionnaire survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process management</li> <li>• Customer and market focus</li> <li>• Employee focus</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Strategic planning</li> <li>• Productivity analysis</li> <li>• Material resources focus</li> <li>• Supplier focus</li> </ul>

K. M. Rosacker, D. L. Olson (2008)	questionnaire survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear mission statement</li> <li>• Management support</li> <li>• Client consultation</li> <li>• Project implementation plan</li> <li>• Personnel recruitment and training</li> <li>• Technical tasks – availability of expertise</li> <li>• Client acceptance</li> <li>• Effective communication process</li> <li>• Emergency management</li> </ul>
B. Dexter (2010)	questionnaire survey; focus group interview; telephone and e-mail interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff management (group trust, personal needs training, proper group selection)</li> <li>• Task management; emergency management</li> <li>• Process management</li> <li>• Location and facilities</li> </ul>

Source: own work

The public social services, just like all the other public services, underlie human dignity and social justice, in that they pay full respect to each human being's rights, as defined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights as well as in international conventions, especially in the revised European Social Charter and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They serve to guarantee social, territorial and economic cohesion, by realizing the solidarity statement, especially in response to any adverse social phenomena that may threaten human physical and mental well-being, such as disease, advanced age, incapacity to work, disability, occupational instability, poverty, social exclusion, drug addiction, family and housing problems, difficulties with foreigner integration.

Apart from funding the public social services, state authorities are generally responsible for providing efficient functioning of social service organizations and for maintaining high service quality, with all due respect to organizations' subjectivity and their field of competence. In all the EU member countries, public social services may be performed by organizations that vary in their legal status, a substantial part of which are social and cooperative non-profit organisations that lie in the social economy sector (associations, mutual aid societies, cooperatives, foundations), based on all sorts of initiatives (public, charitable and benevolent, religious, private and others). These services are regulated within legal and financial activity of authorities and form a field of public management.

## 5. Materials and methods

Social services in Poland are performed within the social assistance system composed of organizations various in terms of their activity form. Social assistance system is the oldest social policy unit (Zalewski 2005), and in many countries it is recognized as one the fundamental elements of social security system (Uścińska 2005). The object of the research was the subjective evaluation of critical success factors, as viewed by Social Assistance Centres management employees in the Silesian Voivodeship. The random employee survey, in which questionnaire forms were used, was conducted in May 2012. The critical analysis of the secondary sources led to the distinction of 10 areas considered to be essential for an organisation's success, namely: service quality; funds accessibility; the knowledge of the needs; staff competence; teamwork; participation; management competence; cooperation with the environment; image, values and management philosophy; technical working conditions; terms of employment and occupational stability; inter-organizational cooperation. Each area was attributed with five items to be evaluated by the respondents, by means of seven-level Likert scale, in which successive levels reflect the level of the respondent's agreement or disagreement with a given phenomenon, opinion, belief etc.

First, the importance of particular items in all the areas, as evaluated by the respondents, was examined. Then, the KSFs characteristic for Social Assistance Centres were identified.

In the **service quality** area, the respondents rated the significance of prompt service completion the highest, as crucial to the organizations' success – the mean score amounting to as much as 6.33 points in a seven-point scale (table 2). The commitment to solving clients' problems scored almost as high (mean: 6.32 points in a seven-point scale). Among the items referring to service quality, the least important to an organization's success, in the respondents' view, proved to be the equal treatment of client's and employee's interests, yet its rating might still be described as high (mean: 5.62 points in a seven point scale). It is worth to remark that the ratings of this item were characterized by the highest diversification – standard deviation being 1.27 points (in other words, on an average, the respondents' ratings deviated from mean by 1.27 points). The range value indicated the diversification of how the particular item was evaluated. One should also notice that the general rating of all the items in the service quality area was high – the mean values of all these elements exceeded 5 points in a seven-point scale, and the total rating amounted to as much as 6.07 points.

**Table 2. The importance of service quality for an organization's success**

Service quality	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard deviation
Prompt service completion	4	3	7	6,33	1,01
Commitment to solving clients' problems	5	2	7	6,32	0,95
Service completion at the first attempt	4	3	7	6,02	1,02
Error-free clients' documentation	6	1	7	6,00	1,15
Equal treatment of the client's and the employee's interest	6	1	7	5,62	1,27
Total rating	3,6	3,4	7	6,07	0,74

Source: own work

Another area under consideration was **funds accessibility**. In this area, the highest-rated item was the importance of the organization's proper disposal of budget and assistance funds (mean - 6.29 points in a seven-point scale) (Table 3). Slightly lower did the respondents rate the importance of the ability to use various forms of assistance - the average was 6.16 points, with the lowest level of rating diversity (standard deviation - 0.96 points). According to the respondents, knowledge of opportunities to obtain additional funds was of the least importance. However, it should be noted that this item's average score was still very high (mean - 5.79 points). Moreover, the respondents' general evaluation of this area's importance for the success of an organization was very high - mean amounting to 6 points in the seven-point scale.

**Table 3. The importance of funds accessibility for an organization's success**

Funds accessibility	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard deviation
The knowledge of opportunities to obtain additional funds	4	3	7	5,79	1,25
The ability to use various forms of assistance	4	3	7	6,16	0,96
The ability to prepare documentation requisite for funds' calls of proposals	6	1	7	5,84	1,41
The disposal of budget and assistance funds	5	2	7	6,29	1,03

Reporting the results of the actions taken	5	2	7	5,82	1,38
Total rating	4,6	2,4	7	6,00	0,96

Source: own work

Almost as high did the respondents rate the importance of an organization's **knowledge of client local need and of their task environment** – the mean score being 5.98 points in a seven-point scale (table 4). In this area, the highest-rated item proved to be the ability to diagnose client expectations (mean: 6.23 points). At the same time, it is noteworthy that this item's evaluation was also characterized by the lowest diversification - standard deviation being only 0.87 points. The least importance, in the respondents' view, was attributed to the ability to diagnose vendor expectations (mean: 5.71 points).

**Table 4. The importance of the knowledge of client local needs and of task environment for an organization's success**

The knowledge of clients' local needs and of task environment	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard deviation
Ability to diagnose client expectations	3	4	7	6,23	0,87
Ability to diagnose local environment needs	4	3	7	6,00	1,06
Ability to diagnose employee needs	4	3	7	6,13	0,96
Ability to diagnose vendor expectations	5	2	7	5,71	1,06
Ability to forecast future events in the environment	4	3	7	5,74	1,08
Total rating	3,4	3,6	7	5,98	0,80

Source: own work

A strong conviction about the importance of **staff competence** for an organization's success was also expressed – the majority of rating values exceeded 6 points in a seven-point scale, and the total rating amounted to 6.27 points (table 5). The only item rated below 6 points was the staff's readiness to change their work style (mean: 5.68 points), but the particular evaluation was also the most diversified one (standard variation: 1.22 points). The highest-rated item was the experience, knowledge and skill of the staff (mean: 6.52) and their commitment (mean: 6.49), with relatively low diversity of ratings (in both cases standard deviation being less than 1 point).

**Table 5. The importance of employee competence for an organization's success**

Employee competence	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard deviation
Experience, knowledge and skill	3	4	7	6,52	0,71
Readiness to improve qualifications and skills	4	3	7	6,30	1,03
Commitment	3	4	7	6,49	0,81
Creativity	4	3	7	6,37	0,94
Readiness to change work style	5	2	7	5,68	1,22
Total rating	3,2	3,8	7	6,27	0,76

Source: own work

The respondents attach great importance to **teamwork** as well – its general significance to an organization's success amounted to 6.07 points on an average (table 6). Similarly to staff competence, most of the items in this area were evaluated on a level reaching over 6 points. The highest-rated item proved to be team trust (mean: 6.18). The respondents expressed a conviction almost as strong in case of the importance of responsibility for tasks in teamwork (mean: 6.17). One should also notice that these ratings were slightly more diversified than the ones in the staff competence area.

**Table 6. The importance of teamwork for an organization's success**

Teamwork	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard deviation
Responsibility for tasks in teamwork	3	4	7	6,17	0,89
Ability to resolve team conflicts	4	3	7	6,02	1,14
Ability to appoint team leaders	5	2	7	5,89	1,13
Team trust	4	3	7	6,18	0,97
Ability to set tasks	4	3	7	6,09	1,00
Total rating	3,6	3,4	7	6,07	0,86

Source: own work

The next area to examine was **staff participation**, the importance of which was slightly lower than that of the previous two ones – the total mean score being 5.99 points (table 7). The importance of the ability to assign tasks and monitor

their results, and that of consulting the organization's development directions obtained the highest rating (mean, respectively: 6.19 and 6.10 points), whereas the lowest rating in the area fell to the activities aimed at creating and reinforcing a desirable organizational culture (mean: 5.80 points). The item most diversified in terms of its evaluation was the management's support for the employees in their continuous development – standard deviation being 1.22 points, which means that the respondents' ratings deviated from the mean value (5.88 points) by 1.22 points.

**Table 7. The importance of participation for an organization's success**

Participation	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard deviation
Ability to assign tasks and monitor their results	4	3	7	6,19	1,00
Consulting the organization's development directions	4	3	7	6,10	0,98
Supporting the employees in their continuous development	5	2	7	5,88	1,22
Motivating and inspiring the employees and the management	5	2	7	5,98	1,18
Creating and reinforcing a desirable organizational culture	5	2	7	5,80	1,16
Total rating	3,6	3,4	7	5,99	0,93

Source: own work

In the area of **management competence**, the item of the greatest importance proved to be experience and qualifications, in terms of crisis, change, risk, competence and quality management – the mean score being 6.36 points in a seven-point scale, with the lowest rating diversification (standard deviation: 0.93 points) (Table 8). The respondents expressed significantly weaker belief in the importance of the management's ability to analyse the competitive field (mean: 5.17 points). The evaluation of this item was also clearly diversified – standard deviations amounting to 1.44 points, and the range being 6 points. The total mean score of the area was 5,78 points.

As for the area concerned with **cooperation with the environment** – the mean score of importance evaluation was 5.87 points, with the particular items' ratings similar to each other (Table 9). They ranged from the lowest mean value being

5.74 points, in case of the ability to communicate results to the individuals and organizations that influence the organization's activity, to the highest mean value amounting to 5.95 points, gained by the ability to manage relationship with individuals and organizations. It might be pointed out that the diversification of ratings was relatively high, in comparison to the previous areas – standard deviation exceeding 1 point.

**Table 8. The importance of management competence for an organization's success**

Management competence	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard deviation
Management experience and qualifications	4	3	7	6,36	0,93
Ability to design an appropriate organizational structure	4	3	7	5,75	1,13
Ability to monitor processes and their results	4	3	7	5,84	1,09
Ability to analyse the competitive field	6	1	7	5,17	1,44
Strategic planning ability	6	1	7	5,80	1,27
Total rating	4,4	2,6	7	5,78	0,99

Source: own work

**Table 9. The importance of cooperation with the environment for an organization's success**

Cooperation with the environment	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard deviation
Ability to cooperate and to compromise	4	3	7	5,82	1,12
Ability to communicate results of activities	5	2	7	5,74	1,20
Ability to manage relationships	4	3	7	5,95	1,13
Ability to identify resources	4	3	7	5,93	1,08
Ability to obtain resources necessary for the organization's functioning	5	2	7	5,94	1,15
Total rating	4,2	2,8	7	5,87	0,96

Source: own work

The evaluation of the items in the area of an organization's **image, values and management philosophy** was much the same – the mean total rating being 5.87 points as well (table 10). Despite the respondents' strong conviction about the area's importance, none of the items scored more than 6 points on an average. The rating ranged from 5.91 points, the mean rating of importance attributed to the staff and the management identification with the organization's core values, down to 5.73 points, the mean rating of the ability to formulate a strategy subordinate to the organization's mission and vision, with a strong emphasis on clear tasks and on monitoring obtainable activity results adequately to their goals. Just as in the previous area, the evaluation of all the items was clearly diversified (standard deviation exceeding 1 point).

**Table 10. The importance of image, values and management philosophy for an organization's success**

Image, values, management philosophy	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard deviation
Ability to create the organization's vision and mission statement	5	2	7	5,80	1,23
Ability to communicate the vision and mission statement to the environment	5	2	7	5,76	1,25
Staff and management identification with the organization's core values	5	2	7	5,91	1,07
Ability to formulate a strategy subordinate to the organization's vision and mission statement	4	3	7	5,73	1,16
Leadership quality	4	3	7	5,98	1,17
Total rating	4,4	2,6	7	5,87	1,00

Source: own work

Strongly were the respondents convicted about the weigh of **technical working conditions** for an organization's success as well – all the items in the area scored nearly 6 points on an average (table 11). Even though none of the mean ratings exceeded this level, the total rating amounted to 5.86 points in a seven-point scale. In this area, the item rated the highest in terms of its importance for future success was the presence of clear and comprehensible procedures, regulations and other documents defining the organization's scope and manner of its activities – mean being 5.96 points. The rating of the role of workstation

equipment was almost as high (mean: 5.90). The evaluation of the importance of facilities to the organization's prosperity was the lowest (mean: 5.77), yet it is to be stressed that the differences between the items' ratings were relatively small.

**Table 11. The importance of technical working conditions for an organization's success**

Technical working conditions	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard deviation
Location	6	1	7	5,83	1,24
Facilities	5	2	7	5,77	1,18
Workstation equipment	4	3	7	5,90	1,13
Opportunity to consult competent people	5	2	7	5,84	1,22
Clear and comprehensible procedures and regulations	5	2	7	5,96	1,08
Total rating	4,4	2,6	7	5,86	0,92

Source: own work

The next area, in which the majority of items were highly-rated, comprises of **terms of employment and occupational stability**. However, the overall rating of these elements was slightly lower than that of the previous ones (mean: 5.18 points) (table 12). With the mean being 5.75 points in seven-point scale, the greatest importance fell to the introduction of pro-efficiency management solutions. The respondents decided that employment guarantee within an organization was less significant to its future success – the item was the lowest-rated one, mean being only 3.72 points. At the same time, this item's rating proved to be the most diversified one – standard deviation being nearly 2 points, which means that ratings deviated from 3.72 points by 1.91 points on an average.

**Table 12. The importance of terms of employment and occupational stability for an organization's success**

Terms of employment and occupational stability	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard deviation
Introduction of pro-efficiency management solutions	4	3	7	5,75	1,01
Monitoring individual performance at work	6	1	7	5,61	1,15

Performance-pay dependence	6	1	7	5,63	1,52
Dependence of further employment on individual performance	6	1	7	5,19	1,42
Employment guarantee	6	1	7	3,72	1,91
Total rating	4,4	2,6	7	5,18	0,93

Source: own work

The last area to be discussed in relation to its importance for an organization's success is **inter-organizational cooperation** (table 13). Here, according to the respondents, the most significant item proved to be the ability to establish cooperation with other public organizations in performing social services (mean: 6.07 points). The weigh of the ability to establish cooperation with third sector organization in performing services scored slightly lower (mean: 5.98). The lowest rating was obtained by the ability to establish cooperation with business sectors organizations in performing services (mean: 5.39). Generally, the item ratings were diversified – standard deviation being over 1 point.

**Table 13. The importance of inter-organizational cooperation for an organization's success**

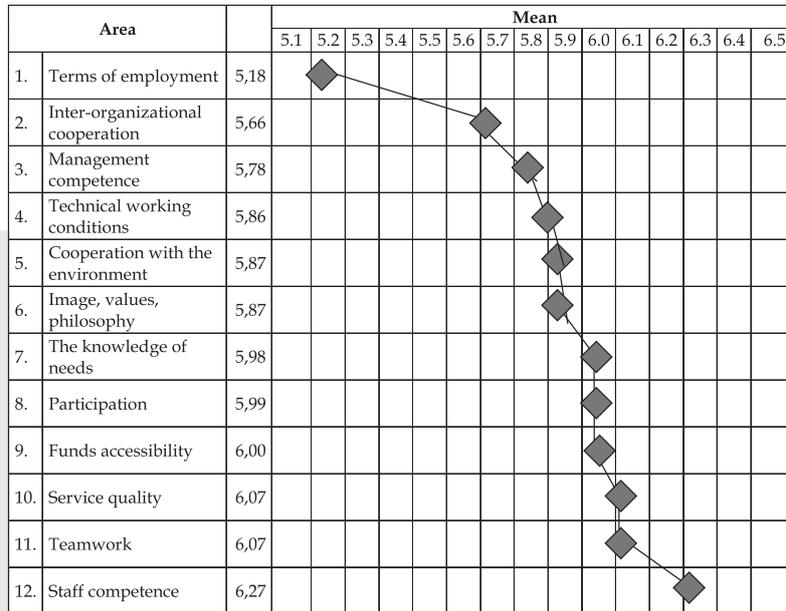
Inter-organizational cooperation	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard deviation
Ability to establish cooperation with other public sector organizations in performing social services	5	2	7	6,07	1,02
Ability to establish cooperation with third sector organizations in performing services	6	1	7	5,89	1,21
Ability to establish cooperation with business sector organizations in performing services	5	2	7	5,39	1,24
Results of cooperating with other sectors organizations	6	1	7	5,41	1,18
Quality of inter-organizational relationship management	5	2	7	5,53	1,21
Total rating	4,8	2,2	7	5,66	0,97

Source: own work

## 6. Conclusions

To summarize, the vast majority of the 60 items were perceived by the respondents as important and very important to an organization's future success. The following elements proved to be the highest-rated ones: staff experience, knowledge and skill (mean: 6.52 points), staff commitment (mean: 6.49 points), staff creativity (mean: 6.37 points), management experience and qualifications (mean: 6.36 points), prompt service completion (mean: 6.33 points), commitment to solving clients' problems (mean: 6.32 points), staff readiness to improve their qualifications and skills (mean: 6.30 points) and the disposal of budget and assistance funds (mean: 6.29 points). The items of the least importance to an organization's success are, according to the respondents, the following ones: employment guarantee (mean: 3.72 points), ability to analyse the competitive field (mean: 5.17 points) and dependence of further employment on individual performance (mean: 5.19 points). One should notice how radical is the difference between the evaluation of employment guarantee in reference to the other two lowest-rated items.

The research helped to identify a hierarchy of key success factors, as subjectively perceived by the respondents. The analysis of the overall evaluation of the distinct areas for an organization's future success (calculated as the mean of each respondent's rating of the items in the areas) demonstrated that, according to the respondents, staff competence is the most important. This area's mean rating amounted to 6.27 points in a seven-point scale. It should be stressed that the diversification of the items' rating in the area was relatively low, with the standard deviation being 0.76 points. Such a value indicates that the respondents were rather unanimous in their evaluation of staff competence as of the utmost importance to an organization's success. The items which weigh to an organization's future success was rated very highly, at over 6 points, were service quality (mean: 6.07 points) and teamwork (mean: 6.07 points). Also, the average score of funds accessibility amounted to 6 points. According to the respondents, the items of the least importance to an organization's future success proved to be terms of employment (mean: 5.18 points) and inter-organizational cooperation (mean: 5.66). However, an emphasis should be put on the fact that the respondents evaluated all the areas of the research as important, and the differences between the ratings of particular areas were relatively minor. Moreover, the diversification of these ratings might be described as low, as reflected in the values of standard variations that do not exceed 1 point, and in moderate values of range.



**Figure 1. Critical success factors' profil**

Source: own work

The contemporary organizations, functioning in a turbulent environment, face the need to meet many complex requirements. It is necessary for them to adjust to constant changes. The present situation, characterized by introducing to the market many services typical of the public sector, sets out a new manner of activity for the management of the public organizations. If the functioning of social policy organizations in the public sector is to be innovative, in the current dimension, their orientation needs to be modified – from organizing activities in terms of funds and procedures, towards achieving results in terms of the efficiency and effectiveness, including service quality (Kiežun 2000). The identification of key factors behind the public sector organizations' success should be one of the fundamental tasks of their management, for these factors determine the spheres in which strategic decisions are to be placed, as well as

the areas, procedures and processes which need to be facilitated (Munro and Wheeler 1980). These issues are crucial especially for social service organizations, which nowadays face significant difficulties regarding their efficiency of their activities. Key success factors and the strategy based on them constitute an essential potential for the organizations that complete social policy tasks, as their means to function effectively and efficiently (Grewiński and Karwacki 2009). Thus, the KSFs identification is a chance to create and harness the latent potential of institutional and social sphere, so as to develop social order.

## Summary

### **Key success factors of social services organizations in the public sector**

The basic goal behind any action undertaken in an organization management is the will to achieve success. Key (or critical) success factors are the organization's resources, competence and qualification that create its competitive advantage on a particular market at a given time, and are able to determine its possible future success. The aim of this article is to identify key success factors of the social service organizations in the public sector. The analysis of the overall evaluation of the distinct areas for an organization's future success (calculated as the mean of each respondent's rating of the items in the areas) demonstrated that, according to the respondents, staff competence is the most important (Table 14). This area's mean rating amounted to 6.27 points in a seven-point scale. It should be stressed that the diversification of the items' rating in the area was relatively low, with the standard deviation being 0.76 points. Such a value indicates that the respondents were rather unanimous in their evaluation of staff competence as of the utmost importance to an organization's success. The items which weigh to an organization's future success was rated very highly, at over 6 points, were service quality (mean: 6.07 points) and teamwork (mean: 6.07 points). Also the average score of funds accessibility amounted to 6 points. According to the respondents, the items of the least importance to an organization's future success proved to be terms of employment (mean: 5.18 points) and inter-organizational cooperation (mean: 5.66). However, it needs to be emphasis should be put on the fact that the respondents evaluated

all the areas of the research as important, and the differences between the ratings of particular areas were relatively minor. Moreover, the diversification of these ratings might be described as little, as reflected in the values of standard variations that do not exceed 1 point, and in moderate values of range.

**Keywords:** *key success factors, strategy, public organizations, social services*

### **Streszczenie**

#### **Kluczowe czynniki sukcesu organizacji świadczących usługi socjalne w sektorze publicznym**

W zarządzaniu każdą organizacją podstawowym celem podejmowanych działań jest chęć osiągnięcia sukcesu. Kluczowe, czy też krytyczne czynniki sukcesu to te zasoby, kompetencje i umiejętności organizacji, które tworzą jej przewagę konkurencyjną na danym rynku w określonym czasie i mogą zdecydować o możliwości osiągnięcia przez nią sukcesu w przyszłości. Celem artykułu jest identyfikacja kluczowych czynników sukcesu organizacji świadczących usługi socjalne w sektorze publicznym. Wyniki badań wskazują, Analiza ogólnej oceny znaczenia dla przyszłego sukcesu organizacji wyróżnionych obszarów (liczona jako średnia z oceny przez każdego z badanych znaczenia elementów, które obejmuje dany obszar) wykazała, że w opinii respondentów największe znaczenie mają kompetencje pracowników (tab. 14). Średnia ocena tego obszaru wynosiła 6,27 punktu w skali siedmiopunktowej. Należy zauważyć, że oceny tego wymiaru odznaczały się jednocześnie stosunkowo niewielkim zróżnicowaniem, o czym świadczy wartość odchylenia standardowego – 0,76 punktu. Wskazuje to, że badani byli raczej zgodni w wysokiej ocenie znaczenia kompetencji pracowników dla sukcesu organizacji. Bardzo wysoko – powyżej 6 punktów oceniono również znaczenie, jakie dla sukcesu organizacji w przyszłości ma jakość usług (średnia – 6,07 punktu) oraz praca w zespole (średnia – 6,07 punktu). Na średnio 6 punktów oceniono również znaczenie dostępności środków finansowych. W opinii badaniach, najmniejsze znaczenie dla przyszłego sukcesu organizacji mają warunki zatrudnienia (średnia – 5,18 punktu) i współpraca międzyorganizacyjna (średnia – 5,66 punktu). Należy jednak podkreślić, że respondenci

wysoko ocenili znaczenie wszystkich badanych obszarów, a występujące różnice są stosunkowo niewielkie. Ponadto, oceny te cechują się niedużym zróżnicowaniem, o czym świadczą wartości odchyień standardowych, które nie przekraczają 1 punktu oraz umiarkowane wartości rozstępu.

**Słowa**

**kluczowe:** *kluczowe czynniki sukcesu, strategia, organizacje publiczne, usługi socjalne*

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