ELECTRIC POWER SUPPLY TO KLAIPEDA REGION BASED ON SERVICE QUALITY MANAGEMENT

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Abstract  
The article structures the theoretical and practical aspects of strategic quality management in the public sector by presenting three quality management models and describing quality assessment criteria. It introduces a customer-oriented strategic quality management model of supplying Klaipeda region with electrical energy and a revised project preparation and implementation process diagram. The main priority of the strategic management of the electric power supply projects – orientation towards the consumer – is substantiated.

Keywords: public sector services, strategic quality management, provision of electricity.

1 INTRODUCTION

The importance and the main issues of the research. In EU countries modernisation of the public sector is carried out by applying the newest and most progressive models of management, the new public management among them [1]. In the 1980ies, most West European countries arrived at a conclusion that traditional centralised hierarchical management is inefficient, consuming a lot of resources and unable to transform itself, to adapt to modern society and service based public administration [2].

A number of Lithuanian and foreign authors have analysed theoretical aspects of strategic quality management. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry [3], Garvin [4], Juran, Gryna [5], and Zairi [6], Vanagas [7] have examined the development of quality management. Other important quality management issues have been extensively investigated by Dumas [8], Lampert [9] and Nave [10]. Kaplan and Norton [11-13] have created and carried out the model of the balanced scorecard system. Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders, and Wong [14] have analysed the quality assessment criteria. Colin and Vangelder [15] emphasised the consumers’ expectations as an essential indicator of the quality of services.

Changes in the global electricity market have been dissertated by Samotyj, Dollen, Hove [16], Yeager, Gehl, and Barker [17]. In approximately 2000, the restructurisation of the Lithuanian electricity sector was started: a monopoly in this sphere was replaced by the system of a few companies. Under the conditions of the monopoly, the issues of the service quality management weren’t essential; however, after the restructurisation these questions became important and urgent, because the quality of activities of separate companies was not identical. Bureaucratic barriers are the cause of numerous complaints on the part of consumers in Lithuania. A deficient, protracted process of preparing and carrying out projects to supply the inhabitants with electric power has become a major problem of service quality on the Lithuanian energy market. Besides, not a single quality management model has been carried out on this market; that is why one can judge about the quality of services exclusively on the basis of the response of the users, experts and actual documents on the process of activities.

In European countries modernisation of the public sector is carried out by applying the newest and most progressive models of management, the new public management among them. A systematic review of the legal acts that are being amended in the Lithuania shows that a normative base is being created for the entire public sector, which can be an appropriate legal basis for implementing the new public administration principles.

The scientific novelty of the present paper is an analysis of the service quality management in supplying Klaipeda region with electrical energy in a concrete private company UAB”Ispro”. On the basis of expert attitudes and documentary information, a consumer-oriented strategic quality management model of project preparation and implementation was designed. A diagram of the course of the preparation and implementation of the consumer-oriented electrical energy supply project in Klaipeda region was substantiated.

The research problem can be defined by the following problem questions: what theoretical quality management models could be recommended for the improvement of the quality of services on the electrical energy market? What strategic quality management development opportunities could be substantiated in the system of electrical energy supply of Klaipeda region on the basis of expert evaluations and document analysis?

The research subject: service quality management in supplying Klaipeda region with electrical energy.

The research aim is to formulate and validate the strategic service quality management model of provision of electricity in Klaipeda region and a reviewed diagram of the process of project preparation.

The theoretical part of the research deals with general issues of the quality management processes in the public sector and analyses three
quality management models implemented in the global quality management practice. The empirical part examines the process of preparation and implementation of the 194 projects of electrical energy supply projects in Klaipėda region and performs document analysis of the private company UAB "Ispro". On the basis of the analysis of the theoretical strategic quality management models in the public sector, the analysis of the process of preparation and implementation of electrical energy supply projects in Klaipėda region and 13 experts attitudes, a strategic quality management model of supplying Klaipėda region with electric power as well as a reviewed diagram of the process of preparation of electrical energy supply projects was developed and validated.

Tab. 1 The Development of Quality Initiatives

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<td>Statistics</td>
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The strategic aim, defined in the Public Administration Development Strategy until Year 2010, is to improve the quality of public services. The means of implementation of the strategy foresee the installation of quality management methods in the institutions of public administration, their monitoring, application of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), dissemination of the examples of positive experiences in the public sector, preparation of complex training programmes. Present legal acts in Lithuania do not foresee a compulsory installation of quality management methods, institutions of public administration have the right to choose, while the CAF is only recommended.

**The Common Assessment Framework.**

European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) was founded in 1988. The main aim of the foundation is by strengthening the role of management in quality strategies to develop and provide conditions for the consolidation of the position of European industries [18]. In order to achieve the aims and objectives, EFQM has developed a business perfection model in which an organisation is evaluated according to 9 criteria. On the basis of this model and at the request of the Council of Ministers of EU, the Innovative Public Service Group (IPSG) has developed the Common Assessment Framework (further referred to as CAF) [19], first time introduced in Lisbon in 2000. The Lithuanian version of CAF was designed in 2005 and reviewed in 2006 [20].

2 THEORETICAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT ASPECTS

Since 1960, with a wider understanding of quality, assessment of the results, quality audits and standards have been applied [3]. Quality control has become not only the evaluation of products or services, but also the assessment of processes, human resources, links with environment, society, interested groups and environmental standards [5]. To measure quality, some complex models, encompassing the development of all the aspects of activities, have been applied (see Table 1).

The management criterion is employed to assess the behaviour of all the managers of an organisation in leading the organisation to the global quality. The human criterion assesses how the organisation is using the potential of its entire staff. The strategy criterion helps to answer the following questions: are the policy and strategy regularly renewed, what are the internal and external links of policy and strategy, how much is built upon policy and strategy while making business plans, are the policy and strategy based on appropriate and exhaustive information, how much policy and strategy of an organisation are based on the conception of the global quality. The process criterion encompasses the evaluation of the level of management inside an organisation creating the whole surplus value by analysing how processes are described and, if there is a need, amended in order to ensure the development of the activities. The five above-mentioned criteria are meant to examine the level of the implementation of the global quality management.

The outcomes criteria (human outcomes, client outcomes, society outcomes, main activities outcomes) help to evaluate the results achieved by an organisation and the improvement of these results in implementing the global quality management. The human outcomes criterion analyses extra measures, connected with the improvement of staff satisfaction; it is established how the employees conceive, accept and evaluate the organisation. The client outcomes criterion assesses extra tools connected with the
improvement of the organisation users’ satisfaction; it shows how consumers conceive services, products and the relationship of the organisation with them. The society outcomes criterion examines extra tools to improve the impact of the organisation on the society and establishes how the community of the organisation understands the impact of their organisation on the society. The main outcomes of activities are assessed in accordance with the results achieved by an organisation in comparison with the planned targets, also in meeting the needs and expectations of every person. The indicator “Innovations and Learning” shows that innovations and creativity improve the activity outcomes [21].

CAF is a simple method, easily applied by public service organisations to assess their own activities, producing evidence-based assessment according to the criteria recognised in the entire public sector of Europe. It can be used periodically as a means of progress assessment. It shows the links between the aims, strategies and processes, helps to develop the spheres that have to be changed most, provides opportunities for the dissemination of good experiences, involves staff members into the process of improvement of the activities of an organisation, allows establishing the level of progress and achievements.

Quality management. In accordance with Article 10 of the Law on Public Administration of the Republic of Lithuania, the ways of public administration quality management are planning and organising the subject’s activities and control of internal administration. Quality management could be described as processes implemented with the aim of following the set quality requirements [8]. The most important thing in the quality management process is correct measurement, because it is only after things have been measured that they can be compared, assessed and proper correction actions can be applied [10]. Measurement requires tools and instruments, which would provide information in measurement units, i.e. sensors. The sensors of quality management objects are usually data bases and data systems [22].

Quality management criteria. It is difficult to define or measure quality in the sphere of services. According to Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders and Wong [14], it is difficult to establish certain quantity standards or points of reference on the basis of which it would be possible to assess the service provision process or its outcomes. Table 2 presents service quality assessment criteria, with reliability, communicability predominating.

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<th>The author(s)</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
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<tr>
<td>B. Thomasson</td>
<td>Honesty, reliability, accessibility and readiness to help, attitudes towards the consumer, competence, responsibility (6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ch. Gronroos</td>
<td>Professionalism and skills, attitudes and behaviour, accessibility and flexibility, reliability, compensation, reputation and honesty (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Zemke, C. Albrecht</td>
<td>Care and interest, immediacy and flexibility, correction of mistakes, ability to solve problems (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Reynoso, B. Moors</td>
<td>Attentiveness, communicability and flexibility, confidentiality and reliability, expedition and flexibility, helpfulness, professionalism (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Johnston, R. Silvestro</td>
<td>Attentiveness, communicability and integrity, safety and reliability, reaction, accessibility, helpfulness, friendliness, competence, dutifulness (8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>D. Gilbert, S. Vandermerwe</td>
<td>Keeping the deadlines and reliability, reaction and readiness to help, suitability and functionality (3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>K. Evans, M. Bittners</td>
<td>Flexibility and immediacy, correction of mistakes, applicability and functionality (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Berry, A. Parasuraman</td>
<td>Knowing the customer, communicability, reliability, safety, reaction and accessibility, helpfulness, competence, trust, perceptibility and functionality (8)</td>
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Tab. 2 Service quality assessment criteria

Compiled by the authors on the basis of the source: [23]

Public services and consumer satisfaction. In the UK there exists the so-called Customer Service Excellence Standard. It is meant to examine the most important spheres of public services among the customers with a focus on the factors having the greatest influence on the customer satisfaction: the speed of providing the service, information, professionalism, friendly attitudes of the staff. One of the most important regulations of the standard is customer-oriented provision of services in an appropriate way and measuring the outcomes. Institutions wishing to install this standard first of all have to meet certain criteria, to perform an audit, and to prove the correspondence of the institution to the set requirements. Then can they be certified by licensed institutions [24].

The main aspects of choosing the criteria to establish the quality of services are as follows: quality criteria have to be comprehensive, so that they reveal various aspects of perception of quality; they have to be universal enough and valid for many services; they have to be independent and not to double; homogeneous and unambiguous and the number of quality criteria should be optimal.
On 30th June 2009, Decree No. IV-339 of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania approved a methodology of calculation of the index of satisfaction of the users of public services. Consumer satisfaction measurements so far have not been widely used as a means of improvement the efficiency of activities. Orientation towards the users, measuring the quality of services they receive and their satisfaction should become an important part of the activities of public sector organisations [25]. Consumer satisfaction, which for a long time has been important only for the private sector determining to a large extent the success of its activities, with the change in the structure and the needs of the society has also become important for the public sector [26]. Consumer satisfaction is associated with experiences in receiving services and shows how the service corresponds to the customers’ expectations and needs. Consumer expectations can be used as a measure for comparison: consumers’ experience is compared with their expectations; this way an awareness of the quality of the service is formed [15].

Every consumer is guided by his/her own previous experience or that of the social environment about what the service should or could be like. The discrepancy between the consumer’s expectations and received service can be measured by using qualitative research methods: by including special user segments to “focus groups” ("a secret buyer" or “a secret consumer"), by carrying out deep interviews. The importance and the use of research aimed at finding out customers’ expectations and needs. Consumer expectations can be used as a measure for comparison: consumers’ experience is compared with their expectations; this way an awareness of the quality of the service is formed [15].

3 THE DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIC QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN THE PROVISION OF ELECTRICITY IN KLAIPEDA REGION

Strategic quality management in municipalities of Klaipeda region. On the basis of the objective of the Public Administration Development Strategy until Year 2010 “To improve the quality of public services”, Klaipeda region municipalities are trying to integrate quality management in the public administration activities, to set quality standards. Strategic plans of municipalities foresee the development of the quality of servicing as an essential condition for the coherent development of the regions [28]. This indicator is emphasised by the EU regional policy documents [29].

In 2008, Klaipeda City Municipality performed self-assessment of their activities according to the CAF model. This method has been chosen among the others due to a number of reasons: it is easy to use, doesn’t require a lot of financial expenditure, provides an opportunity to compare the outcomes with those of other organisations; it allows evaluating the readiness of an organisation to implement a more complex quality management models (e.g., ISO 9000); the staff is included in the self-assessment. Self-assessment showed other advantages of the CAF method: it is possible to compare the municipality administration with the other organisations; it helps in deciding which spheres of management should be improved first of all; it offers an opportunity to look at an organisation from the customer’s point-of-view; it allows understanding whether Klaipeda City Municipality is ready for changes [30].

In summary it could be said that strategic quality management exists in Klaipeda region municipalities. Although it is only Klaipeda City Municipality that used the CAF model, in the rest of the municipalities of the region quality initiatives are implemented and the installation of quality methods is foreseen. However, there are no periodically performed surveys of customer satisfaction with provided services, the development of electronic services is slow, and the system of “one-stop shop” is functioning only in part or is still being installed.

Restructurisation of the electricity market. The reforms on the European and global electricity market started in the 1970ies [17]. The UK and Norway are considered to be the pioneers of the process. Lithuania was the first in the Baltic countries, Russia and Byelorussia to start reforms in the electric energy sector [31]. Modernisation of the electricity system and application of electronic technologies had a major impact on the reforms [16].

Lithuanian electricity market has undergone dynamic transformations. Up until 2000, electricity was sold by a single state company AB “Lietuvos energija”. In 2000, the restructurisation of the electric energy sector started. It was essentially influenced by the European Commission regulation which has been applied to all EU member-states. The implementation of the EU requirements allowed for the more efficient activities of the Lithuanian electric energy sector. Liberalisation of the Lithuanian electric energy sector resulted in the users of electricity, the producers of electricity, a market operator, transfer systems and operators of distribution networks, public and independent suppliers. Privatisation of the Lithuanian electric energy sector has essentially changed its financing and employment of the EU support opportunities [32].

The methodology of electric energy provision in Klaipeda region. In order to identify the main causes of the inefficient preparation of the main document of electric energy projects – an inventory of specifications of designing a building – a document analysis of a private company UAB “Ispro” was carried out. The period of the analysed documents is between 2007 and 2009. UAB “Ispro” is engaged in two activities in the electric...
energy sector: consultancy and designing electric networks. The company was established in August 2007. Although designing is going on all over the country, most projects have been prepared in Klaipėda region. 194 technical projects of connecting electric energy to the distribution network of the operator has been finished.

In order to receive objective information, an expert survey was carried out: 13 experts, specialists from Klaipėda region municipalities and electric energy companies, were interviewed. While examining the process of preparation and implementation of electric energy provision projects, a participatory research in Klaipėda region was carried out: 13 sessions of the Standing Construction Committee (SCC) were attended. The research was aimed at controlling and observing the entire planning process, while the analysis of implementing good practices allowed systematising and designing a comprehensive model of the designing process.

Common strategic quality management model of provision of electrical energy in Klaipėda region. The analysis of theoretical models of quality management in public sector, the analysis of actual situation of preparing and implementing 194 electricity provision projects, the issue of an inventory of design specifications (further – IDS), an impact of other institutions on the issuing of IDS and expert attitudes reveal the main priority of strategic quality management of electric energy supply project preparation and implementation – orientation towards the consumer. To implement the priority, the strategic aims and means, presented in Fig. 1, are possible:

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<th>Strategic planning</th>
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<td><strong>Aims:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Means</strong></td>
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<td>1) To develop the internal administration of the departments of architecture and urbanisation;</td>
<td>1) Installation of quality management methods. To prepare a system stimulating motivation of the staff. To create a methodology of issuing technical specifications of IDS. To optimise the process of issuing IDS.</td>
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<td>2) To develop a service system based on the principle of “one-stop shop”;</td>
<td>2) “One-stop shop” for the whole process of electric energy supply project preparation and implementation, and not for the separate stages (issuing IDS, submission of a building permit).</td>
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<td>3) To stimulate and ensure transparency of public services;</td>
<td>3) To develop the accessibility and quality of public and administrative services for individuals and businesses by employing information and communication technologies. To unite all institutions having an impact on the issue of the IDS. 4) The analysis of the outcomes of the survey on customer satisfaction. Seminars on the quality improvement issues. Plan of actions to improve quality. Development of SCC regulations.</td>
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<td>4) Continuous improvement of</td>
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**Main priority:** Orientatio

**Fig.1 The strategic quality management model of provision of electricity in Klaipėda region**

Compiled by the authors of the paper.

In order to carry out an electricity supply project, a client is totally dependent on the local municipal institutions. In spite of the existence of various laws and regulations, setting the limits for the deadlines of issuing an inventory of design specifications and building permits, an efficient and expeditious preparation of documents necessary for the projects is not ensured leaving the door widely open for corruption.

An analysis of expert attitudes and information of SCC meetings. In the opinion of the 13 Klaipėda region municipality experts, having in mind the fact that a client, who wishes to install electricity in his farm or to increase the electric power, consults often an operator of the distribution network, it is logical to fill out applications for the issue of IDS directly in the operator’s organisation. Not all the municipality employees have technical knowledge to advise the client on how to act in a concrete situation. Experts also suggest paying attention to the fact the builders of the new electric equipment in all cases are the operator of the distribution network.

In the opinion of the experts of the joint stock company AB “Vakarų skirstomieji tinklai” (further – VST), filling out direct applications in the VST departments instead of municipalities shouldn’t cause a problem. Whether the client wants only a consultation or some additional information, s/he is given time and attention. In the opinion of one of the executives of Klaipėda region VST (an expert), laws regulating the issue of technical specifications should be changed (The Law on Construction, Technical Regulations of Construction, etc.).
An expert from Klaipeda City Municipality doesn’t agree with the idea of filling out applications in the operator’s departments. According to this expert, the builder of all the new electric facilities to connect to the operator’s network in all the cases is VST (in spite of the fact that the client covers about 20% of the estimated costs of the project). A building permit is issued to the company VST, electricity supply projects are submitted to the SCC and defended by VST. VST participates in all the meetings of the SCC of Klaipeda region municipalities. The expert from Klaipeda City Municipality sees a conflict of interests here (both the builder and the member of the commission are the same company VST), that is why he suggests adjusting the SCC regulations and other related documents. In the opinion of VST experts, in order to avoid unnecessary doubts, a VST representative could do without signing SCC meeting minutes, because electricity provision projects are coordinated before the SCC meetings. However, such cases should be foreseen in the SCC regulations.

VST experts suggest addressing another urgent problem: the requirement of the municipalities to supply servitude agreements together with the application for the building permit. According to them, before the project has been defended at the meeting of the SCC, it is not advisable to demand servitude agreements. The client suffers in any case, because every alteration of the project is assessed both in terms of time and expenditure.

In the opinion of VST experts, the situation could be changed by the information system “Infostatyba” (further – IS), on the condition that it functions well. Institutions could do distance provision of technical specifications and could observe the course of the issued specifications. The municipality experts argue that IS functions very well inside the municipalities, but it is not connected to other institutions. That is why in some municipalities, although application for the IDS and building permit can be submitted electronically, they also request the paper version of the documents. Thus the work is done twice: information is entered on the IS “Infostatyba”, but the documents are also scanned and sent to other institutions.

On the basis the results of the analysis of the 194 projects, of suggestions and
recommendations of the 13 expert’s, as well as information collected during the 13 meetings of the SCC, an optimal process of consumer-oriented electrical energy supply project preparation and implementation is presented in Fig. 2. It allows developing strategic quality management of electrical energy supply of Klaipeda region.

According to Article 14 Information Provision Deadlines of the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Right to Receive Information from State and Municipal Institutions and Organisations No.VIII-1524 of the 11th January 2000, information has to be supplied within 20 working days from the receiving of an application by an institution. In Klaipeda region, with the exception of Klaipeda City Municipality, this law is not exercised. Municipalities often issued IDS within 30 – 40 working days, while in separate cases this was done in 73 and 89 working days. Since 2008, institutions submit technical specifications more operatively, that is why in 2009 municipalities produced IDS more speedily.

The main reasons for the lengthy process of issuing IDS are as follows: not all the necessary documents are submitted; inefficient information system “Infostatyba” (the common data base is not connected with other institutions); technical design specifications are not received from other institutions in time; a lack of professionals and their substantial workload. Between 2007 and 2009, in Klaipeda region a building permit was issued in average within 90 working days. Application of the consumer-oriented electricity supply project preparation and implementation processes suggested in Fig. 2 would ensure that the consumer gets the building permit within 47 working days.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The activities of the organisations of the public sector have to be purposefully managed. Strategic quality management is important in striving for efficiency of activities and purposeful achievement of aims. Although quality management models and methods started to be applied relatively not long ago, modernisation of management of Lithuanian public sector has been noticed. Introduction of quality management methods is not obligatory for the institutions of public administration; however, the Ministry of the Interior Republic of Lithuania recommended CAF model as one of the most efficient means of improving the quality of activities and results is recommended. The Strategy of Development of Public Administration until Year 2010 defines the strategic aim to improve the quality of public services. The satisfaction of the users of public services, which for a long time has been important only for the private sector and viewed as one of the most important factors determining its success, with the change of the needs of the society also becomes important for the public sector. Orientation to the consumer demanding high quality is one of the most important parts of the process of improvement of the quality of provided services.

5 Klaipeda region municipalities are trying to integrate quality management in the public administration activities, to set quality standards, to evaluate them and to share good experiences with other EU countries. Strategic plans of municipalities foresee the development of servicing inhabitants. However, there is no concrete strategic quality management in supplying them with electricity. Quality initiatives and methods are applied in the whole municipality, and not in its separate departments or in separate functions (Klaipeda City Municipality uses the CAF). However, there is no periodically carried out research into consumer satisfaction with the provided services, the development of electronic services is slow, and the system of “one-stop shop” functions only in part or is being introduced (with the exception of Klaipeda City Municipality, where the system was introduced in 2006). Information system “Infostatyba” is also applied only in part.

In evaluating with the research outcomes the strategic quality management of the electricity supply project preparation and implementation, it is obvious that application of the quality methods, setting the quality standards would help not only to improve the quality of the provided services but would also improve the image of the municipality. Although quality management system CAF and the system of “one-stop shop” are not directly applied in electricity supply project preparation and implementation, the advantages of the CAF are felt in this sphere, too. Having assessed the actual situation, having identified the critical factors and having looked at the activities of the municipality from the customer’s point-of-view, it is easier to work with the understanding that the main aim is to work in the way that leaves the customer happy with the provided services. As a VST company expert noticed, it is only Klaipeda City Municipality that asks to speed up the issuance of the technical design specifications, while VST has to prepare all the necessary documentation within 10 working days.

The research outcomes confirmed that the main priority of the electricity supply project strategic management is orientation to the consumer. To implement this priority, the following 3 strategic aims are possible: the development of internal administration of the departments of architecture and urbanisation of municipalities, the development of the servicing system based on the principle of “one-stop shop”; ensuring the transparency of public services and continuous improvement of activities.

In summary it can be said that with the implementation of the process of project preparation and implementation as suggested in the diagram (Fig. 2), the application of the strategic quality management model to the process of
supplies electric energy, shown in Figure 1, with the departments of architecture and urbanisation of Klaipėda region municipalities being more responsible and careful in respect of the clients in implementing the requirements of the valid legal acts regarding the issuance of IDS and building permits, with the increased efficiency of the system of “one-stop shop” in respect of the process of electric energy supply project preparation and implementation, with efficient functioning of the information system “Infostatyba”, essential positive changes in the quality and strategic management of preparation and implementation of projects to supply electric energy can be achieved.

5 REFERENCES


