

ČTVRTEČNÍ SOCIOLOGICKÉ SEMINÁŘE

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Managerialisation without managerialism and market: the strange case of Czech social care reform

In this paper I discuss the mechanics and effects of quality reforms in public service as advanced by critical policy studies. Critical scholarship has identified managerialism and marketization of public services as key conditions in introducing quality reforms. The argument has been built in opposition to quality proponents who argue that marketization, when introduced to services, enhances their quality. Critical studies, on the other hand, have shown that managerialism has restructured organizational contexts of public services with quality acting mainly as a rhetorical figure. The real effects of quality reforms, they argue, are increased control over practitioners' labour process and de-professionalization. I focus on the strange case of Czech social care reform. It is a case of quality reform without marketization and managerialism, yet with similar outcomes in the form of managerialised care. As such, the case offers an insight into alternative mechanics of managerialisation. I will revisit the story of the reform, and highlight the role of 'intellectual devices' in re-organising the boundaries of care. My argument is that quality ought to be given higher credit in understanding neoliberal reforms of public services. Where critical scholars identified managerial control over professional work, this paper shows how the pursuit of quality led to re-organisation of the very content of professional labour process upon which increased managerialisation could flourish.

David Kocman is a Research Associate at the University of Leicester, UK, and a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. He has researched quality improvement initiatives in social care and healthcare in the UK and the Czech Republic.