

Governance Innovation and Social Services Provision in Greece: Towards a New Policy Paradigm?

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ABSTRACT

Performance improvement comprises the key issue of public sector reform in Greece over the past three decades. A limited public sector performance, comprises both the inherent restrictions of social capital in Greece, characterized from its particularly low rates of trust and collaboration, the centralization in decision making, the cross-sector collaboration and the failure to integrate innovative policy tools for the design and provision of social services. Such inhibiting factors of performance essentially highlight governance deficits in the organization and the provision of municipal and especially of social services in Greece. In order to resolve these performance deficits in social services provision, various initiatives for the promotion of alternative governance models, as quasi markets, PPPs, contracting out, inter – municipal collaboration and social entrepreneurship, have been introduced from central government during the last ten years. Based on the combination qualitative and quantitative empirical data, research analyzes the prospects and the comparative efficiency of alternative governance models in the distinctive environment social services in Greece, by focusing on three (3) different categories of social services provided at municipal level: mental health, employment services for vulnerable groups and pre-school education. Alternative governance models are evaluated according to specific criteria regarding the innovation and the stability of their selected organizational design model, the effectiveness of the provided services, their impact on services' accountability and transparency and the promotion of user and stakeholder engagement in decision making. Research assess the conditions under which alternative governance models could lead to the improvement of social services provision and contribute to the emergence of a new model of local governance in Greece, based on decentralization, public consultation and cross – sectoral collaboration.

Keywords: Greek public administration, local governance, social services, decentralization, cross-sectoral collaborative partnerships, public consultation

ALTERNATIVE GOVERNANCE IN GREECE: THE FRUITLESS JOURNEY OF PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM?

The history of alternative governance in Greece is probably the most typical example of the problems faced by the implementation of reforms in the Greek public administration. The implementation of the public sector reform has timelessly been degraded by increased centralisation in planning and implementing of public policies, negative consequences of red tape in the provision of services and the lack of social consensus and political support of the

reforms [Karkatsoulis 2004, Spanou 2008, Spanou & Sotiropoulos 2011, OECD 2012, Papadimitriou 2017, Goderis B eds 2015]. In essence, promoting alternative governance in the provision of public services has a long history – over 70 years, no matter how paradoxical it may sound. However, this multi-year introduction of alternative governance never constituted a sustainable and politically supported model for the reform of public sector, due to the lack of a coherent national planning, as well as strong social and political opposition [Makridimitris 2010, Makridimitris 2013]. Apart from alternative governance challenge, efficiency in the Greek social services, as a notion, comprises on its own a national paradox. Despite the fact that, throughout the past 20 years, it consists of a basic rhetoric and priority of all the reform programs and governmental commitments for the Greek government, it always ends up being incorporated into regulations of minor importance. In essence, a national void is observed in the estimation of the level of performance of Greek public services, in terms both of productivity and efficiency, so as in the presence of mechanisms and tools for efficiency improvement [Kazakos 2001, Karkatsoulis 2011, Maistros 2009, Hlepas 2013, Goderis B eds 2015, World Bank 2016]. Efficiency develops again particular interest both due to the strained financial crisis in Greece and the need that arises for cost constraint of the provision of municipal services and the simultaneous development of innovative models covering the growing needs of citizens. Questioning the operation and efficiency of the mechanisms of central government and local government, although in the majority of cases it is not an independent issue, rather one in the context of promotion and decentralization of the Greek state and democratization of local government, however, it comprises an area where, over the years, the necessity for improvement and modernization have been highlighted [Hlepas 2015, ITA 2017, MOI 2012 World Bank 2016].

The provision mechanisms of alternative service provision in Greece are evaluated as flawed and ineffective in all cases in respect of state reform, from Varvaresou's report on the Greek economy to the recent Memorandum of Understanding for the financial rescue and the promotion of economic development in Greece [Makridimitris & Michalopoulos 2000]. The ascertainment of the need for improvement and modernization of the provision mechanisms of social services in Greece is timeless. An approach however, which through the connection of the efficiency issue with the need for promoting both decentralization of central government authority in social services and the coverage of the increased needs of the beneficiaries, due to the financial crisis sharpening, resulted in the degradation of the acknowledgement of the role and contribution of the mechanisms improving and evaluating efficiency [Maistros 2009, OECD 2014, OECD 2016 World Bank 2016]. This confused view regarding the level and impact of social services efficiency in Greece and the factors of containment and constraint affect its performance, both organizational and cultural, bears the necessity for an evidenced based comparative evaluation of alternative governance models performance in social services provision, a framework of analysis which comprised the incentive and the basis for the conduct of the present study [OECD 2014, Papadakis & Spyridakis 2010, Papadakis et al 2017a, Papadakis, Fotopoulos, Kyridis 2016, ITA 2006].

Despite the significant lack of national empirical studies and evidence regarding social services efficiency and effectiveness in Greece, the results of the available reports and researches present a distinct view of limited performance, in terms of productivity and effectiveness of social service providers [Bouckaert ed 2017a, Goderis B eds 2015, Wollmann eds 2016]. This limited efficiency is reflected in the low standing that Greece holds both on a European and international level in areas such as the efficiency of municipal services provision, which are poorly rated in Europe, the operational cost of social services agencies and the association between operational cost and the number of workforce [Papadimitriou 2017, OECD 2014, 2016, Karkatsoulis 2004, 2011, Goderis B eds 2015]. Respective low rates are observed in the

operation of the Greek social services in a series of determinant factors of efficiency, such as the cost of bureaucracy and red tape, the degree of deregulation of municipal services, the quality of local governance, the adoption of change management principles and tools, the degree of fiscal decentralization, the utilization of e-governance services, the incorporation of auditing in municipalities and the management by objectives. Barriers to efficiency and innovation in the Greek local government also cause wider characteristics of the national social capital, such as public confidence in local government, inter-sectoral trust, corruption, network governance and participation in deliberative institutions [Hlepas 2013, Paraskevopoulos 2000, Papadimitriou 2017, OECD 2012, 2016, MOI 2012, World Bank 2016].

These factors compose of a model of public governance, which appears to require, apart from the necessary institutional reforms, the immediate analysis of actions for the improvement of social services provision mechanisms and the modernization of the existing model of social policy organization and regulation of local public goods. In essence, both on a theoretical and empirical level, the problem of efficiency in Greece, is predominantly a problem of governance (Karkatsoulis 2004, 2011, Paraskevopoulos 2000, OECD 2012, 2016). These governance issues include the necessity for further assignment of authorities and resources from the central to the local state, the promotion of pragmatic multi-level governance, the modernization and simplification of local government audit and supervision, and the strengthening of its strategic planning and evaluation mechanisms Reform initiatives including the incorporation of strategic planning in public sector, the evaluation of social services provision, the implementation of program budgeting, the reduction of administrative burdens, the promotion of inter-municipal and multi – level co-operation and the development of co-operation with the private sector [Bouckaert ed 2017b, Wollmann ed 2016]. Reforms focus on the improvement of social services efficiency, through the modernization of the existing governance and management arrangements at local level and the promotion of a new philosophy of social organization, adjusting to the pressures of fiscal austerity and the growing demand for quality services for citizens and enterprises [OECD 2014, OECD 2016, ITA 2017, Maistros 2017].

These barriers to the efficiency of the Greek social services emerge from the existing model of government organization and regulation, as well as from the wider resistance to change, which consist in a national characteristic [Goderis B eds 2015, OECD 2012, 2016, Bouckaert eds 2017a]. Social services restructuring in Greece is considered to be incomplete, despite recent relatively successful reform initiatives for its modernisation, most notably on a level of further democratisation and decentralisation of competences of the central government at municipal level. Maintaining centralisation especially in terms of funding, taxation, revenue and fiscal autonomy of the local government, combined with the increased bureaucracy particularly on a level of costly central control and monitoring of the of municipalities and prefectures operation, cause a setback to efficiency improvement [ITA 2017, Papadimitriou 2017, Hlepas 2015, COE 2011, CEMR 213 World Bank 2016]. Resistance to change, an aftereffect of the lack of co-operation, consultation and trust in the objectives and the reform inactions, as well as the limited administrative capacity of municipalities to implement them, lead to the perpetuation of efficiency performance [ITA 2017, Papadakis & Lavdas 2017, OECD 2014, OECD 2016 Goderis B eds 2015]. A restriction to the success of the reforms, which apart from policy design and implementation deficits, is caused from social capital limitations as the sustained low rates of trust, citizens participation, innovation adoption and governance regimes and networks performance [Bouckaert 2017b, Bouckaert 2017a, Wollmann 2016].

ALTERNATIVE GOVERNANCE IN THE MEMORANDUM ERA: AN IMPOSED CHANGE OR A NECESSITY?

Memorandum regime was imposed, among other causes', due to the constant expansion of fiscal deficits, the particularly low competitiveness of the Greek economy, the enlarged size of public sector and mainly the failure of reforms in public administration and economy. From the perspective of alternative governance policy development, imposition of the Memorandum brought for public debate, among others, the major problems of cost and effectiveness of public administration in Greece and how it impairs the competitiveness of businesses and national economy [OECD 2016, Bouckaert ed 2017a, 2017b, Goderis B eds 2015]. In this context, promotion of alternative governance in public services provision as a major catalyst of reform, was added to the quiver of the suggested and required structural changes of Memorandum. Participation of private sector, social and economic actors and civil society, was proposed and legislated in numerous public policy sectors, such as energy production, construction and maintenance of public infrastructure, employment promotion, public health, social policy, waste management and utilization of public real estate [Bouckaert 2017a, Bouckaert 2017b, Wollmann 2016, ITA 2017, MOI 2012 World Bank 2016].

In parallel with this targeted promotion of alternative governance, on the basis of implementation of the country's obligations arising from the Memorandum, the constantly intensifying limitation of available state funding of public services, led public bodies to the rediscovery of tools for the alternative provision of their services, which were available but not utilised for two decades [OECD 2014, OECD 2016, COE 2011, MOI 2012, European Parliament 2015]. Fiscal requirements combined with the "legitimation" that the Memorandum provided, which led to the gradual introduction and diffusion of alternative governance tools, as a unique and sustainable path in order to continue covering citizens' needs for public services. Especially in areas such as life-long learning, provision of social services, waste management, utilisation of public real estate and the construction of touristic infrastructure, alternative governance constituted since 2010 the main model of the provision of services, noting an increase between 60% to 320%. Apart from the apparent fiscal requirements, gradual shift of the public opinion also contributed to this change of stance of public organizations regarding alternative governance. Public opinion, since 2004 thenafter, particularly since the commencement of the Memorandum in 2010, is clearly in favour of the reform and limitation of public sector, according to the findings of relevant polls. Support of public sector reform in areas where Greek society previously opposed to and treated with taboo, such as privatisation and the development of PPPs, where citizens now appear to support them [ITA 2017, OECD 2016, OECD 2012a Goderis B eds 2015 World Bank 2016].

In this environment of forced imposition, or according to some researchers, of enhanced social awareness and comprehension of the necessity of public sector reform, positive, at least in theory, circumstances for the development of alternative governance were developed. Public organizations renewed their interest in alternative governance policy, within the environment of economic crisis and urges from the European Union for policy diffusion. In this policy environment of increased external pressures to limit operational cost and rationalise the exercised competences of public organizations, alternative governance was promoted to the three evaluated sectors of public policy, which will be analysed in the context of this research. These sectors of public policy, relating to the provision of mental health services, promotion of job - seekers employment and pre-primary education, are located to the core of public sector in Greece, while their services have always been provided through public monopolies [ITA 2017, MOE 2014a, MOEb, MOH 2011, MOH 2014, EETAA 2016]. However, this monopolistic public provision was typical for experiencing issues in all those three areas. Such problems concerned high provision cost, low quality of provided services, limited effectiveness of

policies, lack of co-ordination of participants and low degree of stakeholder satisfaction [COE 2011, OECD 2014, OECD 2016, Featherstone 2010, Papadimitriou 2017]. Ineffective provision, resulting from both centralisation and red tape in the implementation of policies, in combination with drastic limitation of public funding, accelerated the change of the current model of implementation of policies for mental health, promotion of job-seekers employment and pre-primary education [EETAA 2012, MOH 2010, MOH 2014, MOE 2014a World Bank 2016]. The basis of such model was the participation of alternative providers, the establishment of a quasi-market and the promotion of de-centralisation and multi-level co-ordination, as treatment to ineffectiveness. Therefore, reforming these three areas of policy, was connected to the development of alternative governance, aiming at insurance of their sustainability, in the scope of drastic limitation of public funding. Re-introduction to the governmental agenda occurred, through European Union pressure, on the Memorandum basis, to reform public sector, and also due to the pressure exercised by participating bodies and actors for de-centralisation and diffusion of competence of specific policies, from central state to local governance and the local socio-economic system [EETAA 2016, ITA 2017, Papadimitriou 2017, Bouckaert 2017a, Bouckaert 2017b].

Table 1: Alternative Governance Initiatives

Alternative governance initiatives brief presentation						
Policy sector	Previous model of provision	Current model of provision	Number of providers	Program's budget	Source of funding	Number of beneficiaries
Mental health	Monopolistic provision from public agencies	Quasi market model of alternative providers (2004 – 2016)	710	70.000.000 euros	European Union Funds	28.000
Pre-primary school education	Monopolistic provision from public agencies	Quasi market model of alternative providers (2007 – now)	2.702	172.000.000 euros	European Union Funds	84.000
Employment services for job seekers	Monopolistic provision from public agencies	Policy implementation through the development of local partnerships (2013 – now)	268	60.000.000 euros	European Union Funds	10.000

ORGANIZATIONAL INNOVATION AND CHANGE IN ALTERNATIVE GOVERNANCE POLICY INITIATIVES

Reforming the existing and ineffective organisational structures for public services provision comprised the main incentive for the introduction of alternative governance in Greek public administration [OECD 2014, OECD 2016]. The reform of competent public agencies administrative structure characterized from the promotion of participation of private sector and civil society organizations, and the development of collaborative partnerships for the effective achievement of policies' goals [Rhodes 1997, Osborne ed 2008, Wollmann ed 2016]. Those two types of organizational reforms, the promotion of alternative providers' participation in public services provision and the selection of partnership model as a tool for the implementation of public policies, consists the dominant model of alternative governance introduction in Greek public services. Both in the case of alternative provision by private providers or the civil society providers, and collaborative partnerships, the basic condition for the promotion of alternative governance organisational structures appear to be, apart from the

inefficiency of the existing public modes, the appearance of a valid and widely accepted system for the certification of alternative providers [OECD 2012, Wollmann 2016].

Certification of alternative governance providers, which in the Greek case appear to work as a catalyst for the transformation of alternative governance, from a tool for the implementation of pilot initiatives to a viable model for the enforcement of public policies at national and regional level [EETAA 2012, MOH 2010, MOH 2014, MOE 2014, MOH 2015]. In the assessed three case studies, the certification of organizational entities, both public, private, civil society and participatory, is a competency and conducted by the central government, under standard protocols concerning providers' facilities, infrastructure, mode of organisation, staffing, financial operation and the nature and standards of their provided services. Without such a certification, it would not be feasible to promote alternative providers participation in public services provision beyond the strict levels of public institutions authority and furthermore to bend, at a considerable level, the opposition from citizens, stakeholders and involved public agencies. A widely acceptance of certification added value to the introduction of alternative governance, despite the skepticism and the questions submitted by some of the policies stakeholders, mainly executives and employees representatives of competent public bodies.

In respect with service providers' organizational structurers, in the context of alternative governance promotion in the policy areas of mental health, employment promotion and pre-primary education, the following categories are identified: Public agencies, Private providers, NGOs, Social enterprises and Partnerships with the participation of public agencies, private providers, local stakeholders and civil society entities. Focusing on the forth category of services providers, the one of partnerships, it comprises by far the most innovative form of alternative governance mode in the provision of public services in Greece [MOH 2011, MOH 2014, MOH 2015, MOE 2014b, EETAA 2016]. Its organizational form is primarily found in the implementation of the programs promoting employment of job seekers (100% of the schemes), followed by mental health (around 25% of the schemes). It is highlighted in respect with the policy for the promotion of job seekers employment, the development of partnerships as a tool for the implementation of policy was obligatory from its regulatory framework, while in the case of mental health policy it was simply an alternative. In these partnerships models, various categories of providers – organizational entities participate from the public, the private and the third sector, including: Public agencies, Private service providers, Private enterprises, Public health authorities, Social services authorities, Municipal agencies, Social enterprises, Training institutions, Economic chambers, Chambers of commerce, Local / regional citizens / stakeholders associations, Academic institutions, Civil society organizations and NGOs.

MARKET STRUCTURE AND CITIZEN CHOICE: INCREASING SERVICE ACCESSIBILITY THROUGH COMPETITION?

Regardless of the differentiation alternative providers' organizational structure, the promotion of competition and the creation of a quasi-market for public services, comprise a significant evolution in the development and diffusion of the alternative governance in Greek public administration [Le Grand 2012, Bouckaert & Pollitt 2015, Savas 2000, Fernandez 2009]. Participation of alternative providers, beyond public agencies status and competitive selection of service providers, a change which lead to the whole reform of existing model of public policy making, at least in the selected three policy sectors. Based on these facts, the introduction of alternative governance institutional models lead to the development of a market for public services, a reform introduced for the first time in the history of Greek public administration at this extent. A national market for public services characterized from the competition of public, private, nonprofit and partnership organizations for the receipt of government funding, according to specific licensing standards and criteria. A market model for public services

provision, closer to a quasi – market model of regulated competition, since central government maintain the authority of competencies delegation, according to specific and transparent operational and financial standards. It mentioned that market model performance for the promotion of alternative governance, is determined from a series of factors including provided services complexity, private sector and non-profit sector interest and attractiveness and the complexity of licensing procedures [Fernandez 2007, 2009].

In respect of the organization of the market, sectoral variations are observed among the three alternative governance policy initiatives. Market competition observed to be effectively enforced in the case of pre-primary education policy, mainly due to the existence of a market of private providers for more than 30 years. Additionally to the previous existence of a national market of private providers of pre-primary education, the provided financial fees and incentives of the national policy for the participation of private agencies appear to have attracted the majority of the providers. Probably the most important critical success factor of pre-primary education market and competition performance was the introduction of the service voucher policy tool, which allowed to beneficiaries to select the alternative provider of their choice [EETAA 2012, EETAA 2016, MOI 2011 World Bank 2016 European Parliament 2015]. Vouchers for services, a model of alternative governance introduction leads to the launch of competition among the different providers, contribute to the upgrade of their provided services and at the same time gave to beneficiaries the ability of choice. A choice among alternative public and private providers for the receipt of pre-primary education services, mainly to the small and large urban centers, but not exclusively in these areas [MOE 20110, MOE 2014a, EETAA 2016]. A quasi market model of pre-primary education services provision, characterized from a broader public acceptance and support of competition introduction, although that a significant number of stakeholders and providers is asking the reform of the existing beneficiaries' selection and allocation model.

In contrast with the market for pre-primary education services, based on the previous existence of a market of private providers, the case of alternative governance development in mental health appear to be much more complexed [MOH 2010, MOH 2011MOH 2014, MOH 2015, OECD 2016, Goderis B eds 2015]. A complexity comes from the parallel existence for more than 10 year of dual market of public and private – non-profit providers, with important efficiency problems in both markets and maladministration and corruption problems, especially in the case of private – non-profit providers. A dual and poorly regulated market model for mental health services provision, which used as the base for the development of the examined alternative governance model in 2010 [MOH 2011, MOH 2014, MOH 2015]. According to this limited successful experience of mental health services provision, the new alternative governance model organization was based to the competitive allocation of the available state funding to certified public, private and non-profit providers. The foundation of this market model for the alternative provision of mental health services was the certification of the providers according to national operational standards and their audit and supervision from an independent private agency. A critical factor for the development and expansion of the quasi – market model in mental health was Greek government political decision from 2007 for the closure of the vast majority of public mental health units, in order to promote the de-institutionalization of the policy [MOH 2011, MOH 2015, Wollmann ed 2016, Bouckaert ed 2017b]. This new quasi-market model for mental health services provision despite its national level implementation and strengthening during the last 6 years, is still under controversy mainly to the questions raised mainly from public stakeholders regarding the effectiveness of the enforced controls to alternative providers and the quality of their provided services. Under the attack and controversy of mental health workforce of public agencies, apart from the

participation of private and non-profit companies, is also and the independent audit firm, which responsibilities are asking to return back to the Ministry of Health.

Possibly the policy for the employment of job-seekers, consist the most differentiated case of alternative governance promotion in Greece [Papadakis et al 2017a, MOE 2014, MOE 2015a], especially given the existing intergenerational transmission of poverty [Papadakis et al 2017b: 8-20]. A finding based to the appearance of two specific factors that determined the structure of the selected market model. The first factor refers to the extended failure of all the previous policy initiatives for the promotion of job-seekers employment at regional and local. A continuing policy failure set the previous model of monopolistic implementation of local employment promotion programs only from public agencies, under challenge and finally to its abolishment. Abolishment of the selected public provision model, since it appears to had a limited impact on job creation. The second factor regards to the introduction of European Union partnership principles and regulation to the design of the EU funded employment promotion policies in Greece. A set of regulations introduced in order to solve previous model problems regarding the development of partnerships and networks with local stakeholders and enterprises, a deficiency also contribute to the limited impact of the programs. A combination of factors lead to the introduction and adoption of local partnerships model as the only institutional model for the implementation of employment promotion programs at local government level [OECD 2016, Bouckaert ed 2017a, Wollmann ed 2016]. As a matter of this partnership principle regulation introduction, all the selected projects from 2014 enforced via the development of local government authorities, employment and training agencies, private enterprises and local stakeholders partnerships. An important innovation which although it promotes the creation of local employment partnerships, by the same time limits the interest of many providers due to participation and licensing obstacles that appear. So, in the case of local employment promotion policies for job-seekers market, is organized according to partnerships mode [MOE 2014b, MOE 2015b EETAA 2016 World Bank 2016].

Table 2: Assessment of Service Market Performance

Assessment of service market performance					
Alternative governance policy sector	Competition assessment	Market structure	Market supervision & audit	Competition impact to the cost of the provided services	Corruption issues
Mental health	Middle level of competition	Quasi market model	Weak	Limited impact (cost reduction 5 – 10%)	Important corruption problems
Pre-primary school education	Increased competition	Market model	Strong	Strong impact (cost reduction 12 – 22%)	Limited corruption problems
Employment services for job seekers	Limited competition	Lack of a market for services	Weak	Limited impact (cost reduction 8 – 12%)	Important corruption problems

CITIZEN CHOICE AND SERVICES ACCESSIBILITY

The possibility of providing a public service through a market of alternative providers, with real provision options for citizens, comprises one of the most critical and at the same time difficult objectives of the policy alternative governance policy [Le Grand 2007, Le Grand 2012, Bouckaert & Pollitt 2015, Stoker 2006, Osborne 2008]. A market for public services, which however often is very difficult to create, since in many cases just lead to the replacement of the

existing public monopolies with private ones, due to the lack of real competition [Le Grand 2007, Bouckaert ed 2016, Wollmann 2016]. Lack of competition and absent of a sufficient number of alternative providers, which adversely affect both provided services quality and efficiency. In the Greek case, despite the apparent lack of a competitive environment in the provision of public services in all three policy initiatives, the introduction of alternative provision was accompanied by a power of citizen choice of service provider [MOE 2014, MOE 2015a, MOE 2015b, MOH 2014a, ITA 2017, MOI 2011]. In the cases of mental health and pre-primary education policies, citizen choice based was on the use of vouchers, as a tool for the selection of provider from service' market. Vouchers and alternative providers certification, which consist the base for the development of alternative governance in mental health and pre-primary education policies in Greece.

The service voucher comprised a real innovation and change in the existing methods of public services provision in Greece and essentially, it established the necessary conditions for the creation of a competitive service market in these policy areas, through the presence of a sufficient market of alternative providers. Although the power of provider selection works in both policy sectors, it presents significant differentiations, which mainly emerge from the geographical appearance of the user, as large urban areas feature a considerably a more competitive market and number of providers. In the case of schemes promoting employment of vulnerable social groups and the job seekers, a market of services was created, however, with a low rate of competition, due to the limited number of alternative providers [MOE 2015b, EETAA 2016]. In all the evaluated case studies, the quality of competition and the power of choice and selection in respect with the service provision to users, depend on the procedures certifying the organization and performance of the alternative providers [MOE 2014a, MOE 2014b ITA 2017]. Certification of alternative providers, which is used as a licensing mechanism for providers participation to services' market and according to its' organization and standards can contribute to the creation of administrative burdens for market entry or to work as an incentives mechanism for the promotion of market attractiveness. As to the effectiveness of the provided market incentives and the efficient organization of services' market, the catalyst appears to be the introduction of service vouchers. Vouchers for services which support the market's attractiveness for alternative providers, as well as it promote the participation of users, since it correlates with the provision of choice, the most important factor according to their views [CEO 2011, CEMR 2013]

Provided services accessibility restriction, consist of the most common and serious issues of the alternative governance provision, comprising the basic accusation of opponents against the introduction of the policy. In the Greek case, tackling the issue of the restriction of accessibility to public services, provided through alternative governance models, proves to be complex. At a first level of analysis and in accordance with the quantitative indicators results, the total number of beneficiaries in both three case studies analyzed has been diminished compared to the previous public provision. A reduction at the total number of the beneficiaries, varied from 25% in employment services and up to 27% in mental health services. In the area of pre-primary education policy, the participation of private providers increased beneficiaries' number by 18%, however, the ratio between beneficiaries' selection and applicants was reduced by 21%, due to the increased demand for the service [MOE 2015b, EETAA 2016].

Nevertheless, for this apparent restriction of governance provided services accessibility, essential parameters must be taken into consideration, such as the limitation of state funding, the minimization of available services of public bodies to beneficiaries and the wider national policy for the promotion of economic viability of the enforced programs. More specifically, limiting the state funding, primarily due to the economic crisis, for the provided public services

since 2010 onwards, resulted in the gradual restraint of beneficiaries receiving the services from the responsible public authorities [OECD 2012, 2016]. A factor promoted alternative provision, in the context of the connection between the cost reduction per beneficiary and the increase of their number. Moreover, the limitation of state funding resulted in the closure of a significant number of public organizations and the understaffing and inadequate operation of the existing, a fact that further limited the accessibility to services in both three policy sectors between 2010 and 2015.

THE IMPACT OF ALTERNATIVE GOVERNANCE MODES ON SOCIAL SERVICES PERFORMANCE: EFFECTIVENESS STRENGTHENING, BEYOND COST REDUCTION?

In all the evaluated alternative governance initiatives in social service provision in Greece, a significant reduction of service provision cost of is noticed, varying between 8 to 25%. Such important limitation of cost of the provided services both highlights the comparative efficiency of alternative governance over conventional types of municipal provision, and also creates the basis for an additional analysis of the factors contributing towards the limitation of cost provision. At a horizontal level the limitation of state funding resulted in reassessing the existing monopolistic public provision models and pursuing alternative and more efficient methods of provision, based mainly on the creation of inter-sectoral partnerships and rationalization of the existing procedures of service provision [OECD 2012, OECD 2016 European Parliament 2015, World Bank 2016]. In respect with the analysis of the efficiency improvement of provided services per policy sector, highest rates are observed in policy promoting employment, while cost restriction varies between 17 to 26%. Employment services cost reduction are following by the provision of services of pre-primary education by restraining the cost of services provision between 14 to 21%, and services of mental health services, where the reduction of cost varies between 9 to 17% [MOH, 2011, MOH 2014, MOE 2014a, MOE 2014b, EETAA 2016 World Bank 2016]. Differentiation in respect with the efficiency improvement of the provided services occurs between public and private providers, where in private provision greater improvement efficiency is observed, which varies between 12 to 20%. In collaborative governance partnerships, providing services in the areas of mental health and job seekers services, efficiency proves to be higher at a rate between 15 to 25%, i.e. higher than the respective public provision, recording at the same time the highest scale of stakeholder satisfaction. Such an outcome highlights the viability of collaborative service provision, despite the deficits of inter-sectoral co-operation and the limits of trust in the provision of public services in Greece [MOI 2011, MOH, 2011, MOH 2014, MOE 2014a, MOE 2014b, EETAA 2016 World Bank 2016].

Table 3: Efficiency Gains

Efficiency gains	
Alternative governance policy sector	Cost of provision – efficiency improvement
Mental health services	Reduction of cost 14– 21%
Pre-primary education	Reduction of cost 15 – 20%
Employment services for job seekers	Reduction of cost 22 – 30%

It mentioned that the limitation of the cost of provision comprises the product of the limitation of wage cost, the creation of economies of scale, the introduction of competition and the promotion of innovation in the organization and provision of municipal services. Wage cost appears to be the basic factor for the improvement of efficiency of alternative provision (40-

45%), without being nevertheless the ultimate factor for the reduction of cost. This fact highlights the clear interconnection between the improvement of efficiency and the limitation of wage cost, a key accusation made by the opponents of alternative provision, without however being the single factor for services' cost reduction. The introduction of competition (15 - 20%) also contributes towards the limitation of cost of provision, mainly through the reduction of the percentage cost of the provided services at the stage of the tendering process, regarding the selection of external contractors. The creation of economies of scale and scope appears to comprise an important factor (10-15%) for reducing the cost of provision, as it is linked to the achievement of a lower comparative cost, as well as the supply and provision of services at a larger scale. The organizational innovation comprises the forth and perhaps more diverse factor for limiting the cost of the provision of municipal services through collaborative schemes (20 -30%). Organizational innovation introduced to the provision of services, through different forms including the simplification of services' processes, the incorporation of strategic planning and performance measurement of the provided services and the adoption of e-government tools [MOH 2014, MOE 2014, MOE 2015a, EETAA 2012, EETAA 2016, MOI 2011 World Bank 2016, European Parliament 2015]. More specifically and due to the scale of this evolving organizational innovation, in the context of the present research, it is specialized in introducing innovative tools for planning, monitoring and provision of services. Despite the differentiations in terms of the class and variety of the introduction of the tools for strategic planning and efficient provision, the empirical research illustrates a series of factors contributing to the limitation of services' cost. Such factors include the promotion of participation in designing the provided services, creation of consensus among stakeholders, rationalization of the quantity of the provided services in line with the demand for the services, the introduction of monitoring tools and finally the integration of innovative models for the provision of services [Wollmann 2016, Bouckaert ed 2017a, Bouckaert 2017b].

The analysis of the impact of alternative governance models, in terms of quality of the provided services, is by far the most complex field to evaluate due to the differentiation of the results obtained. Downgrading of the quality of the provided services is often a common aspect of alternative governance to face criticism. The introduction of criteria and procedures ensuring service quality in the alternative provision of mental health, pre-primary education and employment promotion services, comprises a significant innovation itself in the Greek public administration. Element of organizational innovation, since integration and compliance with services provision quality standards remains particularly low in the context of Greek public administration. Such quality procedures and standards were introduced in the examined alternative governance models, primary in order to achieve a more effective supervision of private providers' performance [MOH 2014b, MOE 2014, EETAA 2016 World Bank 2016]. Quality assurance of contractors provided services, which at the same time following by the broader introduction of quality standards to both public, private and non - profit providers organization and management, since it consist a regulatory framework obligation for compliance. In the examined alternative governance policies, services' quality assurance has two basic forms, the introduction of standard for provision of services and procedures measuring users' satisfaction [OECD 2012, OECD 2014, OECD 2016, Bouckaert eds. 2017b].

According to the results of the empirical analysis, quality of the provided services has improved in the case of the pre-primary education policy, while mixed results appear in the mental health policy and a downgrading of quality in the programs promoting employment. Quality of the provided services is affected by the type of service, the tools implementing quality standards and mainly, the degree of consensus and co-operation between providers and policy stakeholders. Analyzing these mixed results, while taking into consideration the phenomena of limited and pseudo compliance with the standards of provision in the Greek

public administration, in a wider scope, it emerges that the quality of the provided services through alternative governance schemes, is presented to be improved, or nonetheless unaffected. Improvement and maintenance of services quality are affected both by the previous, comparatively lower, quality of provided services by the municipalities, and the introduction of quality assurance criteria and procedures, despite the issues of limited compliance of providers. In essence, introducing procedures and tools ensuring quality through alternative governance provision models, comprises a continuous learning process for participating institutions, beyond its apparent control and audit use [OECD 2012, MOE 2015a, MOH 2014]. According to this learning process, simplicity and clarity of service provision criteria also constitute a field for consultation, contributing towards the effective compliance of the providers, as in the case of pre-primary education policy. In contrast, in the case of the introduction of quality procedures in mental health services, a number of factors restrained the quality and the compliance of the provided services. Such factors include the multi-complexity of service quality criteria and the lack of consensus regarding their selection among the responsible public authorities and the providers. Lack of consensus on quality standards selection, reflect consultation deficit on policy design and the creation of mistrust among the stakeholders. Lack of consensus and consultation, resulted to service quality standards to be viewed as a tool for the maintenance of central intervention and strict audit of the providers. Deficits of trust and collaboration which can be also viewed on the selection of alternative governance model for the provision of mental services and the lack of trust, mainly of public partners in alternative providers.

The effectiveness of alternative governance comprises, according to international experience, the most controversial issue of the policy model. Such controversy is based upon whether the alternative provision of services is eventually more economic and, more importantly, the extent to which it contributes towards the achievement of policies' objectives [Bouckaert & Pollitt 2015, Wollmann eds 2016, COE 2011, CEMR 2013]. Setting such ambiguity in the Greek case, essential accusations are made in respect with the effectiveness of alternative provision in fields such as waste management, social services, employment promotion, life-long learning and maintenance of infrastructure. The controversy concerns both the private provision of municipal services, and the provision of services through the development of partnerships with civil society and NGOs. Despite such controversy, an improvement of effectiveness of the provided services is observed in examined three case studies. Such an effectiveness improvement of provided services is achieved through schemes of collaborative governance, subject to the qualitative evaluation of their operation, which will be outlined in the next section of the research.

Improvement of effectiveness is presented to emerge by some important determinant factors of public services performance. The first of those factors concerns the obligation to provide services according to certain standards of effectiveness, particularly in the cases of the national, but locally implemented, program for the promotion of employment and job placement for job seekers [MOE 2014, MOE 2015a, MOE 2015b World Bank 2016]. Meeting such effectiveness standards is part of the contract for the services provided by the partners and the providers. In voluntary collaboration cases, as in a limited number of mental health providers and in a more extensive level in employment promotion policy for job – seekers, meeting the effectiveness standards does not simply consist of a contractual obligation, rather than the outcome of deliberation and cooperation among the involved stakeholders.

Apart from the pressure being imposed by the introduction of relative performance evaluation standards and the limitation of available funding, improvement of effectiveness emerges from rationalization of the existing processes regarding the provision of services and their redesign

according to the required goals of the provided services. Re-organization contributes towards the reduction of the cost of service provision, through the abolition – shortening of unnecessary steps and procedures and the simplification of provision channels, while it makes the provided services focus on user' needs [OECD 2012, Karkatsoulis 2011, OECD 2016]. Such reengineering of processes regarding the provision of services appears to be more effective also in the case of voluntary collaboration cases of alternative governance initiatives, due to the support of stakeholders and the relatively greater degree of innovation promotion. In the cases of pre-primary education policy and in a more limited level of employment promotion policy social support and trust comprise, according to the findings of the research, the crucial factor determining the effectiveness of alternative governance. The development of collaborative networks of provision within local economic – social and civil society institutions also appears to contribute to the enhancement of effectiveness of the collaborative governance initiatives [Bouckaert & Pollitt 2015, Osborne 2008, Le Grand 2007, Le Grand 2012, Savas 2000]. However, a significant differentiation between centrally promoted and voluntary collaboration initiatives is noticed here too. In the total of three case studies, the limitation of the available state funding is contributory both towards the introduction of effectiveness objectives, the promotion of organizational innovation and development of partnerships. Legal restrictions in funding results in finding innovative methods for service provision and limits organizational failures in order to achieve the goals of the provided services, under a reduced budget.

A particularly important criterion for evaluating the effectiveness of the alternative models of governance in Greece is the level of stakeholder and user satisfaction [OECD 2012, OECD 2016, Hlepas 2013, Bouckaert ed 2017a, Bouckaert ed 2017b]. The level of satisfaction of stakeholders and user with alternative governance models, appears to be increased compared to the previous model of municipal provision, presenting however significant rates of sectoral divergence. More specifically, a higher level of satisfaction is noted in case studies that concern the implementation of pre-primary school education policy, Such an increased level of satisfaction in terms of the effectiveness of the provided services, relating to increased participation of stakeholders and users and the voluntary choice of collaborative governance introduction, comprises the answer to the public ineffectiveness. In case studies concerning the finding jobs for job seekers, although the level of satisfaction is higher compared to the previous model, however lower rates of satisfaction are shown compared to the above mentioned case studies [MOE 2014a, MOE 2016, MOH 2014 World Bank 2016]. The comparatively limited level of satisfaction of users emerges from their diminished expectations on finding permanent employment through the programs, after the required six-month employment, and also due to objections expressed in respect with the effectiveness of the applied national policy. In the case of mental health policy and the policy for the employment promotion of job – seekers, the comparatively lower level of satisfaction emerges from the lack of cooperation and more importantly the increased bureaucracy of the central government in program approval and audit [MOH 2010, MOH 2014]. Therefore, a relative skepticism is apparent for the level of improvement of effectiveness through alternative governance models introduction, based on the partial refutation of stakeholders and users expectations and the implementation gaps of the policy. At the same time it reflects on the gap between the official presented accomplishment of performance criteria and user' views regarding the actual impact of the provided services.

The analysis of alternative provision actual impact, underlines that pre-primary education presents the highest rates regarding provided services effectiveness, while mental health and employment promotion follow. Pre-primary education policy indicates both a high rate of achievement of policy goals, more than 80%, and at the same time an actual compliance with provision standards. In the case of mental health, the achievement of policy goals reaches a

rate of 60%, however with a significant number of cases of limited effectiveness of 25%, mainly due to the failure to meet provisions' quantitative and qualitative performance standards. In contrast, in the area of employment promotion, despite high rates of efficiency improvement and improved service quality, effectiveness is limited with rates below 30%. Such a limited effectiveness of employment programs, emerges from the inability of policy's stakeholders and providers, in general, to provide sustainable jobs beyond the completion of internships of beneficiaries. This result raises essential questions, not so much as to the viability of alternative governance per se, as to the effectiveness of policy's planning and implementation and the attractiveness of programs' incentives to the private sector.

Table 4: Effective Impact Variables. Analysis

Analysis of effectiveness impact variables					
Policy sector	institutional structure of the providers	Strategic planning introduction	Service provision simplification	Innovation – service provision networking	User needs assessment and consultation
Mental health	XX	XX	XX	XXX	XX
Pre-primary school education	X	X	XX	X	X
Employment services for job seekers	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX

DISCUSSION. ALTERNATIVE GOVERNANCE EFFECTIVENESS IN GREECE: STILL SEARCHING FOR THE EXIT FROM THE LABYRINTH OF BUREAUCRACY?

From the comparative analysis of the results of implementation of alternative governance initiatives in social policy in Greece, clear prospects for the development of the new policy paradigm emerge, provided that, however, a coherent policy in the reform of the public sector is implemented. Within the scope of national policy regarding the optimisation of effectiveness of the Greek public administration and especially social policy, alternative governance may consist of a sustainable model of reform, both technically and economically [Papadakis & Lavdas 2017, ITA 2017, OECD 2012, OECD 2016 World Bank 2016]. Therefore, issues of re-determination and more effective regulation of the implementation scope of alternative governance in Greece are raised. Re-determination of the implementation scope, rules of operation of alternative governance in Greece and interventions will result in further regulating and acknowledging the role and the contribution of alternative provision to the reform of the public sector. Consequently, significant issues of codification and recasting of the regulatory framework of alternative governance in the Greek public administration emerge. Recasting of the regulatory framework of alternative governance in Greece, also impairs the sustainable and competitive market of public services, attractive to private and alternative providers.

The reconstruction of the institutional operative framework of alternative governance in Greece, should be accompanied by the parallel reform of the policy mechanisms for monitoring and supervision. The reform of monitoring and supervision policy mechanisms for alternative governance, focuses on the enhancement of the effectiveness and independence of their functions, with a view to safeguard the public interest. The introduction of alternative governance should be based on standardised criteria and conditions for its selection, against

the public provision and the rest organisational models implementing public policies. The comparative selection of alternative provision should be based on effectiveness and sustainability, so that the decision implementing policies through alternative governance schemes to actually constitute the most optimised method for the service provision.

Enhancement of the steering and watchdog role of the central state and the parallel decentralisation of service provision authority to local state, private and civil society organizations, comprise the foundation of the effective regulation and promotion of alternative governance policy in Greece. The strong steering role of the state should be based on planning and determining the strategic objectives of alternative governance policy. This enhancement of the co-ordinating role should be accompanied by rationalisation in the allocation of competences and the role of both the central and local administration and service providers [Bouckaert ed 2017a, ITA 2017]. Consultation and co-operation should be the basis of rationalisation in the allocation of the competences among participating bodies in alternative governance. Consultation and co-operation will lead to a mutually acceptable re-allocation of competence of participating bodies, in the context of implementation of the national policy for alternative governance [Le Grand 2012, Osborne eds 2008]. This participatory re-allocation of competence and the promotion of co-operation, will contribute towards the sustainability and stability of policy networks governing the provision of public services through alternative governance schemes.

The re-allocation of competence and the participating bodies' role in the policy for alternative governance, will constitute the basis for the reform and development of a substantial policy for the alternative governance in Greece. From the assessment of the discrete research questions being raised and evaluated in the context of this research, it emerges that the participatory governance can clearly comprise an alternative model in the provision of public services in Greece. This suggestion is highlighted by the results, at a level of efficiency and effectiveness of alternative provision, compared with purely public provision. Positive results in terms of the operation of alternative governance schemes, emerge both at a level of efficiency-effectiveness and quality-accessibility to the provided services. Propriety of the policy for alternative governance, as a tool to achieve the objectives of the reform of the Greek public administration, requires the implementation of a series of changes [OECD 2014]. These changes, apart from the regulation and supervision of alternative provision, also focus on a level of operational functionality and compliance of the participating bodies. Up-scaling of the operational functionality of the participating bodies and providers of the policy for alternative governance, focuses on two distinct pillars of intervention, the enhancement of the operational capacity of the bodies and the optimisation of the level of compliance [OECD 2012, OECD 2016, Hlepas 2013 World Bank 2016]. Enhancement of the operational functionality of the alternative governance bodies, requires simplification of the planning and monitoring procedures, staff training on strategic planning matters and the adoption of new tools of co-ordination and electronic governance in the implementation of policies.

Effective integration of interventions to improve the operational functionality of alternative providers of services, requires, at this level too, the adoption of consultation principles, inclusiveness and multi-level co-ordination [Bouckaert ed 2017a]. Co-ordination and consistency of the procedures for the provision of services, raises important issues in the existing model of development of the Greek policy and necessitates the implementation of institutional and operational interventions. Institutional interventions should focus on enhancing co-ordination among participating bodies of the policy, through re-determining their competence and adopting flexible and participatory tools for multi-level co-ordination. Flexible, however, solid models of co-ordination, will be aiming at the promotion of constant

co-operation and consultation among participating bodies and the adoption of common and mutually beneficial schemes for the provision of services [Osborne eds 2008, Wollman ed 2016, Bouckaert ed 2017b]. The operation of this new model of co-ordination of stakeholders for alternative governance policy, will be based on participatory planning and monitoring of the commonly agreed schemes of implemented policies.

All the aspects of policy of alternative government in Greece, are limited by increased red tape. Increased red tape, was highlighted by all stakeholders as the most significant problem in implementing the institution. Restrictions and burdens of red tape, constitute primarily a lack of co-operation and trust in alternative governance policy [OECD 2012, OECD 2014, OECD 2016 World Bank 2016]. Ineffective co-operation and lack of trust, result in the design of costly and time-consuming procedures of monitoring and supervision, which diminish the efficiency of the provided services. Despite the improvements that the efficiency of public services of alternative provision has induced, it is limited considerably by unnecessary red tape monitoring and approvals. Obviously, the complexity of the procedures of monitoring and supervising alternative providers, diminish the provision of service, while at the same time, it creates barriers in terms of stakeholders' co-ordination and increases significantly the cost of policy implementation. Increased red tape and administrative burdens, underline the lack of trust in alternative provision and the opposition of public bodies, obvious and non-obvious, against the institution. The increased red tape, limited compliance and ineffective co-operation and co-ordination of stakeholders in the implementation of the policy, reflect on the importance of culture in terms of the successful introduction and reception of the institution.

The ideo-typical characteristics of national culture and social capital, diminish the development of alternative governance in Greece. More specifically, in terms of the characteristics of national culture, lack of trust and co-operation, limited social activation of citizens, corruption and increased political and social competition, are factors limiting the development of partnerships and the promotion of changes. The lack of a culture of trust and co-operation, which governs horizontally all the operations of alternative governance policy, create significant barriers, such as increased red tape, lack of mutual co-operation and co-ordination among stakeholders, degradation of consultation and limited support of the changes.

Organisational and operational barriers to the operation of alternative governance, highlight the necessity for a change in the present culture of the public and private sector. The change in culture is a complex and time-consuming process, which, however, can be fulfilled, if a number of conditions are satisfied. These conditions for a change in the present culture of the Greek public administration, include the undertaking of a series of coherent schemes, which will be aiming at the establishment of an environment of mutual trust and co-operation among stakeholders of the institution. Such schemes start with the simplification of the regulatory framework of operation and supervision of policy, specialised in the reception of the mechanisms of strategic planning, which is accomplished through a constant participatory consultation of competent public authorities with all participating bodies and stakeholders for the institution. The introduction of principles of consultation and co-operation, must be incorporated, except from the regulation and supervision of the institution, also, to the core of the decision-making process of alternative governance partnerships. Changing the culture will improve the feeling of trust and reception of citizens in alternative governance policies, by the social-economic actors and citizens. Trust and social reception, comprise the catalyst for the evolution of alternative governance, from a simple tool for the improvement of services efficiency into a new paradigm for the organisation and performance of public sector in Greece. A new model for public services provision, where efficiency and effectiveness will be

harmonized with consultation, co-operation and social participation, comprising this way the foundation for a wider reform of public policy in Greece and the development of a new relationship between state and society.

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