

IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE IN TIMES OF CRISIS: THE CASE OF GREEK MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND FOOD

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ABSTRACT

The recent Greek economic crisis between 2008 and 2018 called for radical amendments in the public administration that ultimately affected various structures and processes. The present study endeavors to explore the determinants of administrative and organizational changes in the public administration of the Greek Ministry of Rural Development and Food during the time of crisis. Primary data were gathered through a qualitative survey with public officers and stakeholders and were gauged through a Delphi policy framework. The results of the study indicated that, according to expert's opinion, the public administration was neither prepared to efficiently confront the crisis nor the changes that followed. Stakeholders on the other hand, claim that despite all the changes that have occurred, the level of bureaucracy seems to be unaffected and that there is the need for public services to be enhanced.

Keywords: *economic crisis, organizational change, public administration, Delphi Method*

1. INTRODUCTION

The economic crisis, no matter how much it affects an economy, it has also an impact on society. Greece's economic crisis began in 2008 and it led to a recession of Greek economy and to serious consequences for society. Individuals or social groups had difficulties covering their daily needs and experienced conditions of misery or even absolute poverty. Wage cuts, 9.5% increased inflation, increases in indirect and direct taxation, describe a suffocating and negative climate for Greek society (Claessens & Kose, 2013; Caplang, 1964; European Bank, 2016; Kapiki, 2011; WHO, 2014; Kollintzas et al., 2009).

Crisis also affected public organizations and led to implementation of changes and reforms. Changes implemented in a timely manner, can more easily be accepted. But when changes are implemented during times of crisis, they often become hard and have economic, political or social cost. Greece's public administration had to

deal with problems even before time of crisis. Lack of a clear hierarchy, corruption, absence of effectiveness, multifaceted structures, bureaucracy, difficulties in integrating human resource management, limited service efficiency. In order to deal with crisis and the pathogenesis of public administration, drastic changes are required. Changes related to structures, processes, modernization, productivity, efficiency, employee training. An essential tool for the successful implementation of changes is the public administration itself

The objective of this research study is to discuss the financial crisis of the years 2008-2018 in Greece and whether the financial crisis forced changes in Greece's public administration, particularly in Greece's Ministry of Rural Development and Food. Furthermore, the research examines if administrative as well as organizational changes were introduced to public administration with the use of change management models and by changing

organizational culture. The research combined opinions of field experts with opinions of stakeholders.

The life cycle of a crisis has been studied by researchers, who have come up with different models that determine the phases that a crisis goes through. According to Coombs and Holladay (1996) organizational crisis concerns an event that threatens the normality of an organization. Mitroff, Shrivastava and Udwadia (1987) consider that organizational crises affect people, organizational structures, finance, technology and can cause extensive damage to human life, to physical and social environment. Pearson and Clair (1998) state that organizational crisis threatens the vitality of the organization. At the same time the cause, the effects and the resolution of a crisis seem unclear. The different crisis management models that researchers have developed have differences but also similarities. In crisis management models, Fink (1986) and Herrero and Pratt (1996) argue that crisis has a four-phase life cycle, while Coombs (2007) defines a three-phase life cycle. For Mitroff and Pearson (1993), crises go through five phases. Pearson and Clair (1998) use in their model the concept of a "triggering event" as a factor in the transition from the precursor to the acute phase. For their part, Elsubbaugh, Fildes and Rose (2004) incorporate in their model activities that they deem necessary for an organization, for an effective preparation and response to crisis.

Many organizational change models have prescribed the stages involved in effective change management. Kurt Lewin (1947) introduces a model of three steps (unfreezing-changing-refreezing). Kotter (1996) argues that eight steps are needed for implementing change in organizations. Other models bring up the important role of the leader and even combine it to the employees' engagement. Researches outline that a leader needs to have vision, commitment

to change, guiding coalition for changes implemented to be successful (Kotter, 1997). Winum et al., 1997 propose a model based on a more psychological approach for guiding organizational changes. According to Gill's (2003) model the way to successful changes requires vision, strategy and the development of a culture of sustainable and shared values. Schein (1990) argues that culture is also expressed in less conscious and operational values between members of an organization. Therefore, if the cultural assumptions favor change, it becomes easier to implement it. McNabb and Sepic (1995) argue that three important factors lead to effective changes: organizational culture, operating climate and organizational policies. According to Dent and Goldberg (1999) the key to change is managing organizational behavior. The change is possible only if the resistance to it is overcome. Allen (2003) argues that changes are possible due to the important role of strategic planning. Armenakis et al., (1999) propose a model that includes strategies, commitment and attributes of the organizational members.

Despite the linking of organizational change and culture in literature, there is no obvious link to crisis causing changes. Thus, this research study aims to provide empirical evidence of the links between crisis, organizational change and organizational culture.

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

The Delphi Method is qualitative method for gathering data from a panel of participants within domain of expertise. The method aims to reach consensus among the panelists upon the subject of research. The Delphi Method was developed by the Rand Corporation in U.S.A. in the 1950's by Dalkey and Helmer (Ciałkowska et al., 2008; Dayé, 2012). Characteristic for the Method is the use of multiple rounds of questionnaires for collecting data and for

consensus-building from a panel (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963; Dalkey, 1969; Young & Jamieson, 2001).

Experts participating in Delphi Method are defined as individuals who have related backgrounds and experiences concerning related to the target issue (Helmer and Rescher 1959; Anderson & Schneider, 1993; Powell, 2003). In the present research study experts invited to participate from all over Greece were members of Greek Parliament, managers and state employees of Greek Ministry of Agricultural Development and Food, managers and state employees of public services supervised by the Greek Ministry of Agricultural Development and Food, Professors in Faculties of Rural Development, Agriculture, Crop Production, Rural Environment, and Agricultural Technology.

Regarding the size of the Delphi panel, there seems to be no agreement in literature. Panel size varies from a few to hundreds or even thousands of experts (Mullen, 2003; Hallowell and Gambatese, 2010; Habibi et al., 2014). Though it seems that the number of experts involved in a Delphi process is generally determined by the representativeness of opinions expressed and the competence of the researcher in analyzing the data. In this research study the panel size consists out of 25 participants in the 1st round of experts and 29 participants in the 2nd round of experts.

In order to increase the reliability of opinions expressed by the experts' panel, another parallel research panel of stakeholders was invited to participate in the research. The stakeholders' panel consisted out of 25 participants in the 1st round and 19 participants in the 2nd round. The selection of the participants in both panels as well as the repetitive process of the questionnaires, led the whole process to consensus. Inclusion of additional panelists would not offer more to the analysis of data since consensus was reached.

The Delphi Method involves the use of questionnaires as instrument for data collection. Data were gathered through a qualitative survey with public officers-experts and stakeholders and were gauged through a Delphi policy framework. This research study has two parallel rounds for each panel and the duration was two months. Starting from April 2019–June 2019. Each panel was given two weeks time for each round of Delphi (Delbecq et al., 1975). All the questionnaires were distributed via emails. Alongside the questionnaires was a letter of invitation to the experts to participate as members of the Delphi panel, a brief explanation on the procedure and instruction on how to complete the questionnaire.

The most important thing for the researcher is actually to determine when consensus is reached. The major statistics used in Delphi studies are measures of central tendency and level of dispersion in order to present information concerning the collective judgements of participants. In Delphi Method literature the uses of median and mode are favored. A criterion for reaching a consensus may be the fact that 80% of participants' opinions coincide in the same categories on a Likert scale. (Hallowell & Gambatese, 2010). Frequency distributions are often used to define consensus together with the criterion of at least 51% responding to any given category (McKenna, 1994). Whereas in studies using yes-no response categories, the criterion for agreement was 67% of participants giving the same answer. Mean rankings and standard deviations are calculated, with a decrease in standard deviation between rounds indicating an increase in agreement. The inter quartile deviation (IQD) can also be used to determine consensus (Raskin, 1994). According to Spinelli (1983) an IQD of 1 or less is an indicator of consensus. In a Delphi process, data analysis can include both qualitative and quantitative data. Results as well as feedback are most of the times

numerical or statistical (Mullen, 2003). Criteria for consensus used in this research study are mean, median, inter quartile range and the measure of 75% of participants' opinions that coincide in the same two categories on the Likert scale.

In the first round, participants of the experts' panel were given a structured questionnaire with closed-ended, 5-point Likert scale questions in order to elicit their level of agreement with a series of statements regarding economic crisis, organizational change and culture (Table 2). Participants were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 if they agree to the statement with 1= strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3= neutral; 4= agree; and 5= strongly agree. After receiving participants' responses, questionnaires were analyzed by applying CHIC Analysis (Correspondence & Hierarchical Cluster Analysis) version 1.1 (Markos et al., 2010). The data analyzed from round one was used as an instrument for forming the questionnaire for the second round of data collection.

In the 2nd round panelists' received a questionnaire as well as feedback on the results of the first round. In the second round questionnaire panelists were asked to agree or not agree on the statements, in order to clarify opinions expressed in the first round that needed further explanation valuable for the research questions to be answered (Table 4). If differences in opinions among panelists' still existed after the second round, then the researcher had to perform a third or even more rounds in order to reach consensus.

Regarding the participants of the stakeholders' panel, they were given a structured questionnaire (Table 6) with closed-ended, 5-point Likert scale questions in the first round about economic crisis, organizational change and culture and they were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 if they agree to the statement with 1= strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3= neutral; 4= agree; and 5= strongly agree. Responses were analyzed by applying CHIC Analysis. In

the second round that followed another 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was distributed to the panelists together with feedback of the statements analyzed in the first round. In the second round the questionnaire was about expressing opinion on suggestions about improving public services (Table 8).

The degree of consensus was considered after each round. In this research study, consensus was defined on the measures of mean, median and inter quartile range as well as 75% opinions that coincide in two statements of Likert scale, in every round of both panels. Consensus is determined as "high" when quartile deviation range is less than or equal to 1 and a presence of $\geq 75\%$ of opinions coincide in two statements. A "moderate" consensus is reached when either the quartile deviation range is less than or equal to 1 or when a presence of $\geq 75\%$ of opinions coincide in two statements. There is no consensus if quartile deviation is more than 1 or when opinions do not coincide for equal or more than 75% on two statements (Table 1).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the first round of the experts' panel, participants were given a structured questionnaire with 45 statements. 18 out of 45 statements reached consensus. Out of the 18, eight statements reached high consensus and ten moderate consensus. 27 of the statements reached no consensus (Table 3). In the 2nd round, after having feedback, panelists' received a questionnaire of 14 statements and were asked to agree or not agree on them, in order for opinions to be clarified. In this second round a 100% of consensus was reached. It is of use to mention, that eight statements reached high consensus, while 6 of them moderate (Table 5).

The participants of the stakeholders' panel were invited in the first round to answer a structured questionnaire with 15 statements. 100%

consensus was reached in this round. In particularly 8 statements were of high consensus and 6 reached a moderate consensus (Table 7). The need for a second round was to assure that consensus was not random. A second round questionnaire followed with 8

statements. Again 100% consensus was reached marking all 8 statements with high consensus (Table 9).

Median and mean are used in order to define on which statements the consensus is expressed.

Table 1: Determination of consensus

| | high consensus | moderate consensus | no consensus |
|-----|----------------|--------------------|--------------|
| IQR | ≤1 | ≤1 | ≤1 |
| | and | or | and/or |
| % | ≥75 | ≥75 | ≥75 |

Table 2: Statements for the experts' 1st round

| Statements_1 st round experts | |
|--|---|
| 1 | The financial crisis caused administrative problems in public services |
| 2 | The financial crisis caused financial problems for public services |
| 3 | The financial crisis caused operational problems in public services |
| 4 | The financial crisis led to staff reduction in public services |
| 5 | The financial crisis led to a reduction in bureaucracy |
| 6 | The financial crisis led to corruption / lawlessness / disobedience within public services |
| 7 | The financial crisis caused problems between employees in public services |
| 8 | The financial crisis caused problems between employees and officers in public services |
| 9 | The financial crisis caused problems between public services and citizens served |
| 10 | The economic crisis led to better service by public services |
| 11 | The financial crisis led to a decline in the efficiency of public service employees |
| 12 | The financial crisis led to changes in management of public services |
| 13 | The financial crisis led to changes in the operation of public services |
| 14 | The economic crisis dictated changes in the service of citizens |
| 15 | The effects of the financial crisis have been adequately addressed by management using crisis management models |
| 16 | During the period 2008-2018, there were changes in the structure of the public service |
| 17 | During the period 2008-2018, there were changes in the procedures followed by the public service |
| 18 | During the period 2008-2018, the requirements to the employees from their supervisors were increased |
| 19 | During the period 2008-2018, the structures of the public service and the services offered were modernized. |
| 20 | During the period 2008-2018 there was an improvement in the productivity and efficiency of the public service |
| 21 | During the period 2008-2018 there was an improvement in the training of public service employees |
| 22 | Administration followed a plan to introduce changes |
| 23 | Changes were introduced violently, abruptly |
| 24 | The employees of the public service reacted to the introduction of a change |
| 25 | Changes introduced led to a radical restructuring of public services |

| | |
|----|---|
| 26 | Employees responded positively to the changes |
| 27 | Changes in public services were introduced during the financial crisis without consequences to be predicted |
| 28 | Changes negatively affected the performance of employees |
| 29 | Supervisors cooperated with the employees to introduce a change |
| 30 | Changes were too many to be implemented |
| 31 | Bureaucratic, standardized procedures prevailed in the public service |
| 32 | During the period of financial crisis in the public service, innovative, alternative procedures prevailed |
| 33 | Supervisors acted as consultants and supporters for the employees |
| 34 | Supervisors operated innovatively and took initiatives |
| 35 | Supervisors operated with the aim of organizing and coordinating the work |
| 36 | Supervisors operated with the aim of efficiency and competitiveness |
| 37 | The climate in public service promoted teamwork and cooperation |
| 38 | The climate was individualistic and dividing with a focus on goals and productivity |
| 39 | The climate was characterized by innovation, dynamism, readiness and initiative. |
| 40 | The climate in the public service was characterized by formal, bureaucratic procedures and rules |
| 41 | There was a mild and humane working climate. |
| 42 | There was a strict and competitive climate |
| 43 | Employees adapted and implemented changes introduced in the service |
| 44 | Despite the changes, the employees continued to operate as they did before them |
| 45 | The changes introduced during the period 2008-2018 did not affect the operation of the public service and its employees |

Table 3: Consensus measurements in 1st round experts' panel

| 1st round experts | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|--------|-------|------|-----|------------|--------|-------|------|-----|
| statements | median | mean | IQR | % | statements | median | mean | IQR | % |
| 1 | 4 | 3,958 | 2 | ≥75 | 24 | 3 | 3,042 | 2 | |
| 2 | 4 | 3,875 | 2 | | 25 | 3 | 2,625 | 1 | ≥75 |
| 3 | 4 | 4,167 | 1 | ≥75 | 26 | 4 | 3,25 | 1,75 | |
| 4 | 4 | 3,5 | 1,75 | | 27 | 4 | 3,792 | 1 | |
| 5 | 2 | 2,125 | 2 | | 28 | 3 | 2,875 | 1 | ≥75 |
| 6 | 3 | 2,542 | 1 | | 29 | 2 | 2,333 | 1,75 | |
| 7 | 3 | 2,875 | 2 | | 30 | 3 | 2,708 | 1,75 | |
| 8 | 3 | 2,917 | 2 | | 31 | 4 | 3,833 | 2 | |
| 9 | 4 | 3,375 | 2 | | 32 | 2 | 2,167 | 2 | |
| 10 | 2 | 2,125 | 2 | | 33 | 2 | 2,333 | 1,75 | |
| 11 | 2 | 2,083 | 2 | | 34 | 2 | 2,25 | 2 | |
| 12 | 4 | 3,667 | 1,75 | | 35 | 3 | 2,917 | 1,75 | |
| 13 | 4 | 4,042 | 1,75 | ≥75 | 36 | 3 | 2,583 | 1 | ≥75 |
| 14 | 4 | 3,5 | 1 | | 37 | 2 | 2,208 | 1 | ≥75 |
| 15 | 2 | 2 | 2 | | 38 | 3 | 2,708 | 1,75 | |
| 16 | 4 | 3,667 | 1 | | 39 | 2 | 1,958 | 1,75 | ≥75 |
| 17 | 4 | 3,583 | 1 | ≥75 | 40 | 4 | 4,208 | 1 | ≥75 |
| 18 | 4 | 3,25 | 2 | | 41 | 3 | 3,25 | 1,75 | |
| 19 | 3 | 2,583 | 3 | | 42 | 3 | 2,583 | 1 | |
| 20 | 2 | 2,458 | 3 | | 43 | 4 | 3,708 | 1,75 | |
| 21 | 1 | 1,75 | 1 | ≥75 | 44 | 4 | 3,542 | 1 | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|-------|----------|--|-----------|---|-------|---|--|
| 22 | 2 | 2,167 | 1 | | 45 | 3 | 3,125 | 2 | |
| 23 | 3 | 3,125 | 2 | | | | | | |

Table 4: Statements for the experts' 2st round

| <i>Statements for the experts' 2st round</i> | |
|--|--|
| 1 | Before 2008, did you consider the occurrence of an economic crisis possible? |
| 2 | Did you notice any "signs" that there would be a financial crisis shortly before its occurrence in 2008? |
| 3 | When did you realize that you were experiencing a financial crisis? |
| 4 | Have you noticed that management did systematic actions to deal with the financial crisis 2008-2018 and its consequences in the service? |
| 5 | Do you think that there was a plan into introducing changes during the financial crisis 2008-2018? |
| 6 | Do you think that proper training of employees would help introduce and implement changes during 2008-2018? |
| 7 | Do you think that proper training of managers would help to introduce and implement changes during 2008-2018? |
| 8 | Do you think that there were clear instructions for the implementation of the changes introduced in the period 2008-2018 by the leadership (political / administrative)? |
| 9 | Do you think that employees were given some time to adapt to the changes introduced? |
| 10 | Do you think that the changes introduced have been consolidated as procedures? |
| 11 | Do you think that during the period of the financial crisis 2008-2018, the public service had focused its functions on promoting the cooperation, teamwork of its employees? |
| 12 | Do you think that in the period 2008-2018 the service operated with innovation, creativity, professionalism? |
| 13 | Do you think that during the period of the financial crisis 2008-2018 the service focused on formal procedures, regulations and internal control? |
| 14 | Do you think that during the period of financial crisis the public service operated with efficiency, productivity, goal achievement? |

Table 5: Consensus measurements in 2nd round experts' panel

| 2nd round experts | | | | |
|-------------------|--------|-------|----------|------------|
| statements | median | mean | IQR | % |
| 1 | 1 | 1,345 | 1 | |
| 2 | 1 | 1,414 | 1 | |
| 3 | 4 | 3,31 | 1 | ≥75 |
| 4 | 2 | 1,552 | 1 | |
| 5 | 1 | 1,379 | 1 | |
| 6 | 2 | 1,931 | 0 | ≥75 |
| 7 | 2 | 2 | 0 | ≥75 |
| 8 | 1 | 1,138 | 0 | ≥75 |
| 9 | 1 | 1,138 | 0 | ≥75 |
| 10 | 2 | 1,724 | 1 | |

| | | | | |
|----|---|-------|-----|-----|
| 11 | 1 | 1,069 | 0 | ≥75 |
| 12 | 1 | 1,103 | 0 | ≥75 |
| 13 | 2 | 1,759 | 0,5 | ≥75 |
| 14 | 1 | 1,31 | 1 | |

Table 6: Statements for the stakeholders' 1st round

| <i>Statements for the stakeholders' 1st round</i> | |
|---|---|
| 1 | During the period of economic crisis, public services operated with the aim of citizens better service |
| 2 | During the period of economic crisis, public services operated with the aim of optimizing services |
| 3 | During the period of economic crisis, the public services operated with the aim of modernizing services |
| 4 | During the financial crisis, public services operated more with use of technology |
| 5 | During the financial crisis, the public services operated with the aim of reducing the time of service |
| 6 | During the economic crisis, the public services were friendly to the citizens |
| 7 | During the period of economic crisis, public services operated with a long delay in the provision of services |
| 8 | During the economic crisis, public services operated through bureaucratic procedures |
| 9 | During the financial crisis, public services were not operating proper |
| 10 | During the financial crisis, it was easy to contact with services |
| 11 | During the period of economic crisis, the public services operated according to the needs of the citizens |
| 12 | The financial crisis has helped make services more effective in accomplishing demands |
| 13 | During the financial crisis, the services operated quickly and adequately enough to citizens' demands |
| 14 | Public services operated better before the crisis |
| 15 | Public services operated the same as before the crisis |

Table 7: Consensus measurements in 1st round stakeholders' panel

| 1st round stakeholders | | | | |
|------------------------|--------|------|-----|-----|
| statements | median | mean | IQR | % |
| 1 | 2 | 2,4 | 1 | ≥75 |
| 2 | 2 | 2,44 | 1 | ≥75 |
| 3 | 2 | 2,28 | 1 | ≥75 |
| 4 | 3 | 2,88 | 2 | ≥75 |
| 5 | 2 | 2,44 | 1 | ≥75 |
| 6 | 3 | 3,08 | 1,5 | ≥75 |
| 7 | 4 | 3,8 | 2 | ≥75 |
| 8 | 4 | 4 | 1 | ≥75 |
| 9 | 3 | 2,96 | 2 | ≥75 |

| | | | | |
|-----------|---|------|-----|-----|
| 10 | 3 | 2,72 | 1 | ≥75 |
| 11 | 2 | 2,52 | 1 | ≥75 |
| 12 | 3 | 2,76 | 2 | ≥75 |
| 13 | 3 | 2 | 1 | ≥75 |
| 14 | 3 | 2,8 | 2,5 | ≥75 |
| 15 | 4 | 3,32 | 2,5 | ≥75 |

Table 8: Statements for the stakeholders' 2st round

| Statements for the stakeholders' 2st round | |
|--|--|
| 1 | How necessary do you consider the modernization of the services provided by the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Food? |
| 2 | How necessary is the reduction of the service time by the services of the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Food? |
| 3 | How necessary is it for the services of the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Food to be friendlier? |
| 4 | How necessary do you think it is to facilitate citizens in their contact with the services of the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Food? |
| 5 | Do you think it is necessary to reduce bureaucracy? |
| 6 | Do you think it is necessary to improve efficiency in handling citizens' requests? |
| 7 | Do you think that it is necessary to train the staff of the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Food services? |
| 8 | Do you consider it necessary to expand the services provided electronically by the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Food? |

Table 9: Consensus measurements in 2nd round stakeholders' panel

| 2nd round stakeholders | | | | |
|------------------------|--------|-------|-----|-----|
| statements | median | mean | IQR | % |
| 1 | 2 | 1,737 | 1 | ≥75 |
| 2 | 1 | 1,421 | 1 | ≥75 |
| 3 | 2 | 1,842 | 1 | ≥75 |
| 4 | 2 | 1,789 | 1 | ≥75 |
| 5 | 1 | 1,316 | 0 | ≥75 |
| 6 | 1 | 1,368 | 1 | ≥75 |
| 7 | 2 | 1,632 | 1 | ≥75 |
| 8 | 1 | 1,684 | 1 | ≥75 |

Analysis of the results showed that public officers agree that the financial crisis during the period 2008-2018 led to changes in public services provided by the Greek Ministry of Agricultural Development and Food. It is determined that the problems forced by crisis created

administrative, operational as well as functional problems in public services. Although financial crisis introduced changes that led to a radical restructuring of public services, it seems that changes were too many to be implemented. Moreover, managers seemed nor to lead

with efficiency and competitiveness nor to promote teamwork, cooperation, innovation, creativity and professionalism.

During the period of economic crisis the climate in the public services was characterized by formal, bureaucratic procedures and rules. On the other hand, state employees were not negatively affected by changes, even though they had no training at all dealing with crisis or changes.

Greece's economic crisis had no triggering effect and that might be the reason why most people did not realize they were living a financial crisis until two or more years than it started in 2008. It is obvious to all participants that there was no proper training for supervisors, managers and employees, no plan, no political or administrative instructions on implementing changes during the ten year period of crisis. There was actually no time given to employees to adjust to all changes happening. They only had to follow standardized formal procedures and regulations. That is why changes introduced have not been fixed as new procedures.

Stakeholders ascertain that during the period of economic crisis, public services had not as goal to serve better. There was no optimizing or modernizing services. Even though lot of services were provided via internet, still there were delays. It was for stakeholders relative easy to communicate with public services and they had friendly service, but bureaucratic procedures did not lead to fast and sufficient services. It is in their strong believes that things need to be changed. Therefore they suggest that there is need for modernization of the services provided by the Greek Ministry of Agricultural Development and Food. Minimization of time required to fulfill citizens requests, friendlier service, improvement of services efficiency, more expanded electronic services, training of the employees, but most of all overcoming bureaucracy are some of the stakeholders' suggestions for public service enhancement.

CONCLUSIONS

Greece's financial crisis of the years 2008-2018 forced changes in public administration. This research study made obvious that Greece's public administration, particularly public services of Greece's Ministry of Rural Development and Food, were neither prepared to efficiently confront the crisis nor the changes it led to. Administrative as well as organizational changes were introduced to public administration, but there was no use of change management models. Stakeholders claim that despite all the changes that have occurred, the level of bureaucracy seems to be unaffected and that there is the need for public services to be enhanced.

The preparation of organizations for handling crisis is of high importance, because crises are part of a normal flow of life. Greece seems to have overcome financial crisis, though it now has to confront a health crisis, this of the pandemic of covid-19. Thus, it is necessary for organizations to adopt processes that successfully avert and manage crisis.

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