

# Managing 'mixedness':

Understanding the effects of public sector reform in human service organisations<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Our government is confronted with many unintended effects of policy programs. In order to address these problems, a large number of public sector reforms have been implemented over the past decades. These reforms formed a reaction to implementation problems rather than to problems in relation to policy content: more and more, policy makers seem to have recognised that not so much the provisions that were offered, but the process of policy implementation generated its own effects and was an important source of problems. At times, high expectations existed as concerns the effects of policy sector reforms. Time and again, however, reform outcomes did not live up to expectations. How come?

These reforms were mostly aimed at human service provision: the softer sectors of the public sphere in which interaction between citizens (in their role as clients) and the state takes place, as in the field of education, the police, public assistance, health care, etc. Human service provision is of a fundamentally mixed nature: general regulations are applied to individual clients. In day-to-day business, implementation problems are the result of inherent dilemmas in human service provision. We argue that these reforms do not live up to expectations, because they cannot fully cope with the dilemmas that originate from the fundamentally mixed nature of human service provision.

In this paper we make a start with combining insights from implementation theory with research on public sector reform. We argue that this link has been missing so far in discussions on public management and public sector reform. The inherent 'mixedness' in human service provision needs to be acknowledged in order to better understand the effects of public sector reform in organisations that provide 'human services'.

This paper is structured as follows. First, we build an argument as to why human service organisations have a inherent 'mixed' nature. We discuss three levels on which this 'mixedness' is observable: on the level of the organisational environment, the level of the organisational structure and on the level of individual service provision. Second, we briefly discuss the rise and characteristics of reform trajectories in the Dutch public sector. We link the ideas and features of these reform strategies to the unique nature of human service provision in order to explain why these kinds of reform do not result in their expected outcomes.

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# 1 The inherent 'mixedness' of human service provision

Human service provision is at once a ' public' and a ' private' issue. It is the place where the private – the individual client – meets the public – the law, the official, the organisation. The process of human service provision is the process where private and public interact and there the fundamentally mixed nature of human service provision emerges. Human service provision after all implies the application of public regulations to individual cases. Human service provision applies the abstract, the general, the collective to the concrete, the specific, the individual. In this section, we argue that this fundamental 'mixedness' saturates the human service provision process and organisation.

Human service organizations are defined as the ' set of organizations whose principal function is to protect, maintain, or enhance the personal well-being of individuals by defining, shaping, or altering their personal attributes' (Hasenfeld, 1983, 1). Human service organizations (HSOs) differ from other governmental organizations in that human beings are their raw material. Human service organisations apply policies to clients. Doing so, human service organisations distribute collective means over individual citizens or apply the norms and values of the welfare state upon the individual citizen. This creates specific provision dynamics in which collective and individual norms, values, interests interact. This occurs at three levels of organisation, derived from Hasenfeld' s (1983) discussion of Human Service Organisations: 1) the organisation' s environment; 2) the organisation' s internal structure and 3) the level of actual case administration, where interaction between the individual service provider (the street-level bureaucrat; Lipsky, 1980) and the individual client takes place.

## 1.1 *The organisation's environment*

The environment of human service organisations is characterized by a multitude of actors in the task environment, each pursuing their own interests concerning the organisation' s aims, procedures and work methods. These actors possess resources relevant to the human service organisation, such as money, legitimacy, authority, clients, and complementary services (Hasenfeld, 1983, 61). In interaction, they define the organisation' s mandate, goals and resources and therefore cannot be ignored by the human service organisation.

The mandate and goals of human service organisations often remain ill-defined or contradictory in character (Hasenfeld, 1983). This can be explained by the fact that the actors in the task environment do not agree on the tasks and goals of a human service organisation. Political processes determine the formulation of the organisation' s mandate and goals. At times, disagreement on goals and procedures is translated into compromises or even

contradictory goals in legislation. For example, the law defining the goals and procedures of public assistance formulates various goals: guaranteeing a minimum level of existence, providing other types of assistance when necessary (depending on the situation of the individual) and promoting the reintegration of the applicant on the labour market (Van der Veen, 1990). The human service provider thus needs to fulfil three contradictory roles: an administrative role (determining whether someone is eligible for financial assistance), a social role (providing all kinds of assistance, such as education, counseling, etc.) and a controlling role (checking whether the applicant has made or is making an effort to find a job). It is then up to the human service organisation to prioritize the various roles. Human service organisations may try to meet the requirements set by the most powerful actors, in order to secure the organisation's survival. In sum, due to conflicting interests in the task environment of human service organisations, these organisations are left with ill-defined and possibly contradictory goals.

## *1.2 The organisation's internal structure*

The above mentioned ambiguity of the organisational goals has an impact on the organisation's internal structure. The human service organisation needs to translate contradictory goals into a service technology. A service technology can be defined as a 'set of institutionalized procedures aimed at changing the physical, psychological, or cultural attributes of people in order to transform them from a given status to a prescribed status' (Hasenfeld, 1983, 111).

Determining a human service technology is in itself a very complicated process. How to 'heal' a psychiatric patient? How to treat a sexual abuser? How to educate an academic? There is a general lack of knowledge about human behaviour which prevents the organisation to formulate a clear set of activities which will lead to goal attainment. Often, only the individual professional in an HSO commands this knowledge. As a result, he has the ultimate decision-making authority in the service provision process. Above that, the task environment often produces ill-defined and possibly contradictory goals. This contributes even more to the complications of defining a human service technology. What is more important, however, is that it limits the capacity of human service organisations to structure the action of individual human service providers. The latter have some freedom to choose from among the set of conflicting goals the environment sets.

The consequence of a lack of a set of well-defined, coherent organisational goals together with the problems attached to establishing a service technology is that most human service organisations cannot be orderly structured by means of standard operating procedures and a hierarchical system of authority. Instead, human service organisations have loosely coupled structures, characterised by little coordination and connection between the various

organisational activities; a weak system of control; and a weak, or multiple system of authority. Various parts of the organisation will focus on different actors or coalitions in the task environment, with the aim to keep those actors happy that are important to the organisation's survival. Rules or other coordinating mechanisms are of no help, since agreement on the precise elaboration of the human service technology or the exact set of goals to be attained is lacking. This has consequences for the degree of autonomy the individual service provider enjoys.

### *1.3 The level of case administration*

At the level of case administration, the human service provider and the client interact. There is interdependence between the human service provider and the applicant. Both have different sources of power and different aims when using that power: the human service provider is the gateway to (free) services (i.e. benefits, pensions, counseling, etc), while the citizen has the information required to determine eligibility. Once decided to be eligible, the status and social position of the individual changes, giving him rights and access to public services (Hasenfeld 1983).

The individual service provider finds himself in a position between client and organisation. This position is a source of stress. The applicant for a service has an information advantage over the public service provider, while the service provider can give access to a much-wanted service. Hence, the public service is a result of an exchange process, in which the applicant gives information in exchange for a service. At the same time, the service provider is expected to engage in an exchange with his organisation. He needs to supply the information the organisation needs to justify that the service or benefit is indeed disbursed. As a result, the service provider is caught between possibly conflicting demands.

This stressful position, however, also adds to the individual providers' power and autonomy. On the level of case administration we find a fairly independent, autonomous service provider. He works in an organisational structure that cannot provide clearly defined standard operating procedures. As a result, therefore, a strong hierarchical system of authority does not exist in practice. The degree of autonomy of the service provider also stems from the fact that provider-applicant interaction is required for the service (Lipsky, 1983; Prottas, 1979). The service provider is in a strong position vis-à-vis the applicant and the human service organisation. Vis-à-vis the organisation, the service provider has a monopoly over information on the applicant; vis-à-vis the client, the service provider has a monopoly over information on rules, regulations and organisational demands. His position between client and human service organisation contributes to the service provider's independent position in the human service process.

As we see, the ambiguities that exist at higher levels of organisation (in the

organisation itself and in the political environment of the organisation) are transferred to the level of the individual service provider. In the end, he is forced to weigh these demands in order to devise a decision in the case of the individual client. Human service organisations mostly exist in an environment that imposes ambiguous goals upon them; goal ambiguity entails that human service technologies are often ill defined; as a result of that, human service organisations often function as loosely coupled systems and street-level bureaucrats enjoy a high level of autonomy. This implies that indeterminate deliberations are made at any organisational level of human service provision. As a result, the performance of a human service organisation can be satisfactory on one dimension and very disappointing on another, depending on the dynamics of human service provision.

#### *1.4 The inherent 'mixedness' of human service provision*

Implementing a human service policy implies that the concrete, specific, individual is aligned with the abstract, general, collective, on all levels of organisation. To give an example: the administration of public assistance implies that the individual interest of the client (e.g. financial support) is aligned with a collective interest that is also related to the client' s position (activation, social integration, equality, fairness, or other). The individual interests of the street-level bureaucrat (work conditions, income, self-esteem) are combined with collective interests related to the way the street-level bureaucrat fulfils his tasks (cost containment, equality, fairness, reciprocity). The individual interest of the organisation (budget maximisation à la Niskanen, for instance) is aligned with collective interests related to the organisation of the field (the containment of administrative costs). The individual interests of actors in the environment of a human service provision organisation (political parties, e.g.: maximisation of votes and various ideologically inspired views on the function and functioning of public services) are aligned with the collective interests of the welfare state at large (the ' optimisation' , whatever that is, of the actual functioning of human service provision).

Therefore, fundamentally, human service provision suffers from complexities. The complexity of combining public, collective and private, individual requirements prevails at all three levels of organisation. In the environment, but in any case at the level of individual case administration a deliberation of collective and individual requirements is expressed. In the end, and necessarily so, public service organisations are to weigh and combine individual and collective interests. This fundamental complexity is exactly what causes the unintended consequences of human service implementation. If an autonomous service provider allows his own professional norms to prevail, he might not be interested in the organisation' s interest in cost containment, and thus the problem of inefficiency or inequality emerges. The self-interested applicant of a service might hide relevant information, which makes him eligible

for a service, and hence the problem of legality (and control) emerges.

To summarise, the fundamental complexity that the alignment of individual and collective interests entails stands in the way of the maximisation of an organisation's performance. Performance maximisation is impossible to a considerable extent, because the improvement of performance necessarily entails that conflicting interests are weighed against each other. Maximising performance in relation to a single policy goal, comes down to only a partial improvement of performance. And even if some policy-making actors do put forward a clear maximisation goal, there is room to manoeuvre in actual policy implementation because conflicts abide in the task environment. As a result, a clearly defined set of goals is not produced, which leaves the prioritisation of goals to the organisation. The organisation in itself is incapable of providing structured work processes and focused goals, leaving the decision-making authority in the service provision process to the individual service provider. And even if clear-cut goals are set in the upper organisational layers of human service provision, the individual service provider on his turn still needs to apply the general to the concrete, to weigh collective and individual interests, when making decisions in the individual case.

## **2 Modes of public sector reform and their effects in HSOs**

What does it mean if human service organisations are confronted with reform trajectories that aim at improving the performance of these organisations? Let us first briefly discuss the rise and character of public sector reforms in the Netherlands as well as the question how to analyse the effects of these reform efforts.

### *2.1 Public sector reform in the Netherlands*

In the 1908s and 1990s, policy makers were confronted with widespread implementation problems in human service provision and proposed reforms to battle these problems. Efficiency problems (resulting from organisations' lack of capacity or willingness to contain costs), problems of responsiveness (organisations' failure to address individuals' legitimate needs) and legality problems (failure to follow legally defined rules and procedures) were observed virtually everywhere.

Just to name a few: public employment agencies (*RBA's*) suffered problems of efficiency and responsiveness. These agencies were seen as cumbersome organs where the unemployed were obliged to register as job seekers and employers were obliged to announce their vacancies, but where nothing happened afterwards. In another field, the police suffered

from efficiency problems. No matter how much money went there, the police organisation was not able to increase the number of policemen performing active work on the streets. The police had turned into an organisation producing dossiers instead of maintaining order. The Immigration and Naturalisation Service (*IND*) suffered legality problems and efficiency problems. When in doubt, *IND*-workers were inclined to decide to the advantage of the applicant, because the refusal of applicants' requests would have serious consequences. Medical examiners for the Disability Insurance Act (*WAO*) showed a comparable pattern of action. This conflicted with legality. If *IND*-applicants' requests were indeed refused, a virtually endless trajectory of court appeals was possible that went against efficiency.

Hypothetically, policy makers could take three main routes to tackle these problems of human service provision: the reinforcement of bureaucratic, professional or market provision (Hill and Hupe, 2002; Terpstra and Havinga, 1999). Bureaucratic provision is characterised by an emphasis upon formal rules and regulations; the administration is directed towards rule conformity (of administrators and clients); and the control regime is of a hierarchical nature (Terpstra and Havinga, 1999). Professional provision is characterised by an emphasis upon substantial quality considerations in relation to the service offered; administration is directed towards differentiated action, designed to fit individual clients' needs and requirements; the control regime is based upon collegial review and feedback (*ibid.*). Market provision emphasises productivity and cost containment; administration is directed towards efficiency (normally understood and measured in quantitative terms) and the smooth functioning of the administrative process; a less pure form of market provision is based upon control targets, performance indicators and quality management (*ibid.*).

These modes of organisation aim at the improvement of specific aspects of the organisation's performance. Market provision aims at improving efficiency, bureaucratic provision aims at improving legality and professional provision aims at improving responsiveness. Indeed, such reforms of the organisational logics of human service provision were implemented recently. In Holland, all three reform modes can be identified. We saw a strong shift towards marketisation in the field of employment services: the privatisation of reintegration services by force of the Work and Income (Implementation Structure) Act (*Wet Suwi*). A shift towards market provision was also visible in the police organisation. In 2002, the Home Secretary and the Attorney General and the regional police force managers signed the National Framework Dutch Police Services 2003-2006 (TK 28.824, no. 1, appendix). The framework was to function as the base-line for regional voluntary agreements in which performance requirements and the financial remuneration were to be established. With respect to *IND*- and *WAO*-administration, reforms resulted in the limitation of professional autonomy and the reinforcement of bureaucratic control: a shift towards the bureaucratic mode of organisation. Rules and regulations were specified to such extent that the administrator's

discretion was contained. The 2000 Aliens Act was aimed at clarifying and specifying the intent of various regulations on the one hand and at limiting the appeal options on the other (TK 26.732, no. 3, p. 1-10). Various reforms of the Disability Insurance Act and disability insurance administration have also led to a specification of the disability concept (the Disability Benefit Schemes (entitlement) Act, *Wet TBA*; Eligibility for Permanent Disability Benefit (Restrictions) Act, *Wet verbetering poortwachter*) and to a nationalised, purely public administration of disability insurance under reinforced supervision (the Work and Income (Implementation Structure) Act, *Wet SUWI*).

In short, we think that a shift occurred away from professionalism, in the direction of reinforced market or bureaucratic provision of human services, with an emphasis on market and performance measurement. It was these kinds of reforms that were proposed to change the work processes of human service organisations to such an extent that more legality or efficiency in services would be achieved.

## *2.2 The expected effects of public sector reforms in HSOs*

In order to analyse the expected effects of reform trajectories on human service organisations, three factors have to be studied closely: 1 the accuracy and feasibility of the policy problem diagnosis, 2 the extent that environmental conditions for reform success are met and 3 the specific dynamics of the human service organisation the reform is aimed at. In the following, we describe three situations in which these components have a different character.

### **2.2.1 The problem diagnosis and the reform trajectory**

The accuracy and feasibility of the problems diagnosis determine reform success. Basically, three kinds of problems are being signalled in the public sector: these are the problem of inefficiency, the problem of the span of control and the problem of immunity to the environment, leading to all kinds of implementation problems. A solution to increasing inefficiency is the introduction of the market mechanism. With help of financial incentives it is believed that the efficiency will increase. A response to the span of control problem is decentralization and deregulation in combination with a clear formulation of output indicators. Instead of rules determining the organisation's work process, political actors formulate output indicators to control policy implementation. It is up to the organisation to determine how the performance is organised and achieved. A response to increasing immunity to the environment is solved by introducing a participatory model.

Given the fundamentally mixed nature of human service provision, the relation between problem diagnosis and reform trajectory can be problematic in two ways. In the first place, a clear and unambiguous problem diagnosis may indeed suit a reform trajectory that is quite one-dimensional, since each of the three trajectories of reform addresses a single

specific problem. However, these modes of organisation also have a downside (see figure 1).

<b>Performance aspect <math>\diamond</math></b> <b>Organisational logic <math>\downarrow</math></b>	<b>Efficiency</b>	<b>Responsiveness</b>	<b>Legality</b>
Professionalism	Low	High	Low
Bureaucracy	Low	Low	High
Market	High	Low	Low

Figure 1. Modes of service provision and their intended and unintended effects.

While market provision may be strong in efficiency, its outcomes in relation to responsiveness and legality are weaker. Comparably, bureaucracy scores high on legality and lower on efficiency and responsiveness, while professional provision scores high on responsiveness, but lower on efficiency and legality. Therefore, we argue, a clear and unambiguous policy diagnosis and a reform trajectory that indeed suits the diagnosis, may indeed solve the diagnosed problem, but it fails to appreciate that human service provision is aimed at a multiplicity of goals and that maximisation of performance in relation to a single goal engenders performance problems in relation to other goals.

As it appears, policy makers try to address performance problems (understood as problems of efficiency, responsiveness or legality) either by shifting from one mode of organisation to another, or by introducing elements of other modes of organisation into the existing structure. Apparently, the assumption is held that the maximisation of a single specific performance aspect (e.g. efficiency) does not affect other aspects of organisational performance (responsiveness or legality). This assumption is incorrect, however. The improvement of performance is a trade-off, and necessarily so: gains in terms of efficiency imply losses in terms of responsiveness and/or legality; gains of responsiveness engender losses of efficiency and/or legality; legality gains bring costs in terms of responsiveness or efficiency.

In the bureaucratic mode of organisation, for example, rules are imposed upon the individual worker, who is expected to apply these to clients in a neutral manner, disregarding client characteristics that are deemed irrelevant in the formal sense of the word: not recognised in the regulations. It is then to be expected that the legality of human service provision improve. However, such rule-based implementation of human services necessarily disregards conditions that may – in the material sense of the word – be relevant for service provision, while not being adequately phrased in the regulations. Hence, the responsiveness of service provision is at stake. Furthermore, the bureaucratic organisational mode does not

include an inherent emphasis upon efficiency: regulations normally grant some benefit or service to a client if the client shows some pre-defined characteristic. Also the procedure that is followed is pre-defined. As a result, there is no means and no incentive to contain administrative costs (the costs of the administrative process) or service costs (the costs of the service that is provided). Market based service provision may result in a focus on cost containment or the achievement of performance indicators. This may induce goal displacement in terms of the denial of service to deserving beneficiaries or the inadequate accommodation of service provision to client characteristics or requirements of service provision. Hence, the legality and responsiveness of service provision decreases. Professional service provision may promote responsiveness because of the high quality considerations the professional makes, but is also expensive and may conflict with the norm of legality.

The second problematic aspect of the relation between problem diagnosis and reform trajectory concerns the fact that most reform plans lack clearly and unambiguously formulated goals. As mentioned, human service organisations often exist in an environment that imposes ambiguous goals upon them. This translates into the problem diagnosis that political actors may make and the reform trajectories they propose. Hence, we often do not find a clear and unambiguous problem diagnosis to begin with. This is apparently visible, we think, in the political debate on the Social Development Act (Wet Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling, WMO) that is to replace elements of other legislation regulating the extra-mural care for various categories of less well-off citizens. As concerns the organisation of WMO-implementation and the provisions that are to be disbursed, policy-making actors have not put forward clear and unambiguous goals upon the actors that are to implement the new policy. Human service mixedness, so to speak, is integrated in the reform proposals as they are currently put forward. The new Act is a hybrid act and this results in a replacement of human service dilemmas in a downward direction: from policy-makers to service providers.

In general, we argue, a trade-off is visible between two aspects of the process of goal formulation in human service organisations. On the one hand, there might be clear and unambiguous goals but these nevertheless result in an inadequate response to the multiplicity of goals as a result of human services' inherent' mixedness'. On the other hand, most of the times unclear and ambiguous goals are set by the organisation's environment that do not really solve implementation problems, but merely replace the dilemmas inherent in human service provision downwardly. This trade-off between aspects of organisational performance is caused by the fundamentally mixed nature of human service provision.

### 2.2.2 The relation between environmental conditions and a reform trajectory

If a proposed reform would relate to the problem diagnosis, we need to consider to what extent environmental conditions for successful reform are met. For example, creating a market to tackle problems of inefficiency can only be achieved if certain conditions are met. One can think of the condition of the presence of a market structure; the presence of cheap and accurate information; the fact that the transaction costs are not higher than in a bureaucracy or other organisation structure; and the fact that clients (' purchasers' ) are motivated by financial incentives (Bartlett & LeGrand, 1993). If any of these conditions are not met, one might wonder whether the reform will lead to the expected result of increasing efficiency. The same goes for introducing performance measurement as a new coordination mode. Conditions for success are, among others, that the policy goals should be unequivocal and measurable; that the performance can be measured in quantitative entities; that the collection of information on these indicators is possible and not open to manipulation, etc (Van Sluis & Van Thiel, 2003).

If one only briefly glimpse at these conditions of success, we can see that many of these conditions are hard to meet in a human service organisation. For example, there is a lack of unequivocal goals and measurable indicators, because many human service organisations work with a so-called ' soft human service technology' in which a clear causal chain is absent. Hence, how to attribute organisational performance to specific interventions? How to quantify vague and broad terms of success? How to take into account those factors that influence performance but are not manageable by the organisation? Think for example about a deteriorating economy, which leads to an increase of recipients of welfare benefits. If the proposed trajectory cannot meet these conditions for success, we can expect specific unintended consequences to arise.

An example of this is the reform of the implementation structure of labour reintegration policy in East Town, a city somewhere in Holland.<sup>2</sup> Labour reintegration policy used to be coordinated and implemented by a mix of a bureaucratic and professional structures within the own municipal organisation. Municipal social service organisations and regional labour exchange agencies were the main actors in this field. On the national level it had been decided years ago to privatise the implementation of this policy with the aim to improve efficiency. The way the city of East Town organised and structured this reform was half-heartedly however. The conditions for (quasi) marketisation to be effective were not met, partially because the municipal authorities feared a loss of control. The authorities kept in control by only allowing block contracts with the private reintegration agencies with concern to yearly volumes of clients. The municipality itself remained responsible for assigning the

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<sup>2</sup> This section is predominantly based on Svensson & Trommel, 2004.

clients and wanted the private agencies to report regularly on their performance. This mix of various coordination modes together with an absence of some of the pre-conditions of successful market reform created an interesting, but unintended dynamic. No real supplier structure was created and clients did not have the freedom to purchase their services on an individual basis. Another important aspect was the lack of transparent and unambiguous information about the costs of the tasks to be performed. This made it impossible for the municipality to compare the performance and cost-price-indicators of the various private agencies contracted to take care of labour reintegration. This gave the private agencies quite some leeway in their operations. This example shows a lack of conditions of success in order for the market mechanism to work. This is no coincidence, since the task of these kinds of organisations is very hard to quantify or clarify. This is essential to human service organisations: the presence of a 'soft technology' is one of the most important factors that obstructs successful marketisation, since it contradicts many of the preconditions of successful marketisation.

### 2.2.3 The specific dynamics of the human service organisation under reform

Even if the proposed reform is related to the problem diagnosis and the conditions for success are met, one might still wonder to what extent the reform will actually trickle down into the organisation and the daily work processes. It is here where the fundamentally mixed nature of human service organisations once again comes into play. Even though public sector reform aims at moving the orientation of individual service providers into a specific mode of service provision, the individual provider has a variety of means to cope with this pressure and the organisational reform does not in the end solve the dilemmas the service providers faces.

Because the individual service provider has an information advantage over both the 'regulator' (public regulations, represented by the organisation the service provider works in and the regulatory action the organisation takes towards the provider) and the client, he is able to evade pressure from both directions. But the other way around, the second issue, pressures from both sides do exist and these pressures do not disappear by shifting the mode of organisation. In the end, no matter how the organisation he works in is controlled, the individual service provider still needs to apply abstract, public, general rules and regulations to the concrete, private, individual client.

Above, we argued that reform success depends upon three issues: the adequacy of reform proposals in relation to problems diagnosis, environmental conditions for success, and the extent to which public sector reforms address the specific dynamics of human service provision. The image of the layers of onion skin seems to apply: when the 'adequacy of problem diagnosis' -issue is peeled off, environmental conditions for success become relevant. When the 'environmental conditions' -issue is peeled off, the attention needs to shift to actual

service provision. We argue that the core of the onion – the core of the problem of human service provision – is indeed the actual service provision process. Since human service dilemmas cannot be fully solved in the outside skin of the onion, the individual service provider needs to weigh the public against the private in the individual case. Because it is virtually impossible to fully structure the actions of the individual service provider, time and again implementation problems return in the outer skin of the onion of human service provision. The fundamentally mixed nature of human service provision, at first primarily present at the individual level, time and again affects conditions in the outside skin.

### **3 From maximisation to optimisation: coherence as a partial solution**

Based on the above, we conclude that maximisation of one specific aspect of performance negatively affects the achievement of other performance aspects. A potential solution to this lies in a change from a 'maximisation strategy' to an 'optimisation strategy'. In order to optimise the functioning of public service organisations, Hill and Hupe (2002) argue for coherence: a coherent organisation of service provision in the three levels (environment, organisation and individual service provision) leads to the optimisation of service provision. Hill and Hupe observe three possible logics of organisation: persuasion (professionalism); market-based organisation (transaction) and bureaucracy (authority). Highly complex individual case administration requires that this level functions according to a logic of persuasion; that the organisation functions as a loosely coupled system; and that the environment allows that various views and opinions on the meaning and aims of the service come to the fore. The argument may also be made the other way around in the way that Hasenfeld (1983) did as well: a complex environment requires loosely coupled organisations and professionalism in individual case administration.

Gastelaars (2000) also makes a 'coherence argument' in her distinction between six types of human service organisations. The added value of Gastelaars' distinction is that she argues that the set of human service organisations is differentiated: there is not just one type of human service organisations. The different types are defined by the characteristics of the organisation's environment, organisational structure and the characteristics of the level of individual provision. The environmental differences are determined by the dominant frame of reference in the organisation's environment and the core values dominating the political and public debate. The organisational differences can be described in differences in management, organisation and coordination structures as well as in differences in technology. The provider level can be described in terms of the role of the provider and the characteristics of the client.

Gastelaars implicitly argues that coherence in these dimensions is important for human service provision to work. This makes this distinction of interest in the discussion about the effects of public sector reform in human service organisations. Gastelaars' distinction seems to suggest that a shift in the frame of reference and core values of the environment of the organisation could require a different organisational form for the service provision to work. With respect to public sector reform, we see a shift towards rationalisation and commercialisation and core values such as goal effectiveness and efficiency. Hence, Gastelaars seems to suggest that if these frames and values change to this direction, human service organisations should be designed more as a mass-service delivery system than as a selection bureaucracy or a professional organization.

For *some* types of service organisations, we argue, such a reform mode may be feasible. Such internal coherence is only attainable in relation to specific types of human service provision, i.e. the more simple ones. Market-oriented reform may indeed be introduced in human service organisations that are primarily characterised by 'mass servicing' or that fulfill tasks that can be easily transformed into mass delivery products. However, this can only be done if the organisation's technology is characterised by clear causal chains. The distribution of passports may be an example. For example, marketisation is less feasible if the human service organisation technology is less 'hard', for example if the organisation is a care provider or is assigned to change people.

	<b>Selection bureaucracy</b>	<b>Mass-service delivery</b>	<b>Professional service provision</b>	<b>Voluntary association</b>	<b>Care providers</b>	<b>Individual service provision</b>
<b>Frame of reference</b>	Legalisation /regulation and increased state intervention	Rationalisation and commercialisation	Professionalisation	The separation of work and spare time	The separation of work and care	Individualisation
<b>Core values</b>	Legal security and equality before the law	Goal effectiveness and efficiency	Professional quality	Voluntary involvement	Conituity of care	Right of self-determination
<b>Technology</b>	To select	To deliver	To change	To mobilise	To take care	To negotiate
<b>The service provider</b>	Street level bureaucrat	A cog in the machine	Professional	Amateur or honorary professional	Caretaker	Negotiator/ mediator
<b>The clients</b>	Stake holder	Anonymous customer	A case	Member or volunteer	Dependent client	Partner
<b>Coordination</b>	Procedures	Protocols/sales	Standard skills and peer discussion	Rules of the game and social control	Direct authority	Sales and client satisfaction
<b>Structure</b>	Hierarchy	Machine	'Islands'	Egalitarian community	Patriarchial relations	Relation-network
<b>Management</b>	Liaison First responsible	Resource allocator Entrepreneur	Protector Negotiator	Figurehead Charismatic leader	Disturbance handler + 'gezaghebbende'	Primus inter pares Spokes person

M. Gastelaars, 1997

#### **4 Complex modes of human service provision: 'managing mixedness'**

As concerns the more complex types of human service provision, the coherence argument underestimates the importance of the fundamentally mixed nature of human service provision. A coherent organisation of public services is not sufficient to overcome problems of performance when these more complex types of human service provision are concerned. In such human service organisations, parts of the work process may be standardized, but in the end, there will always remain a category of work activities that is characterised by 'mixedness'.

Together with Terpstra and Havinga (1999) we argue that even if service provision is internally coherent (same logic at all three levels) organisations will face strain. All three types of organisational logic (persuasion/professionalism; bureaucracy/authority; market/transaction) face their own problems when applied in a human service organisation. As Terpstra and Havinga argue, professionalism may engender problematic control of administrative costs; bureaucracy may entail a problematic fit between the provided service and the need that is addressed, while market may engender problems like creaming and declining fairness of the service. The logic of human service provision, as described earlier, prevents an optimal functioning of any organisation mode. For example, rule specification in the bureaucratic mode is not always possible in a human service organisation, due to 'boundary problems' (Van der Veen, 1995). Not all rules can be made 'fit' to a client's individual situation, which creates discretion to the service provider to decide for cases not specified by law. Hence, even the goal of legality is difficult to achieve. In the market mode, the achievement of efficiency can be problematic because of problems inherent to the market mode: due to information problems and information asymmetry in human service organisations the advantages of the market mode are downplayed. In the professional mode, the responsiveness of service provision can be endangered due to attempts of the professional to protect or even expand his power and autonomy (Tonkens, 2003).

All of these three organisational logics entail problems when applied to human service organisations implementing relatively complex tasks. Market, professionalism and bureaucracy all to some extent fit private and public requirements, but none of these is capable of fully aligning these pressures. Human service provision *is* the co-alignment of conflicting pressures, eventually at the level of the individual case. The logic of human service provision causes that the emphases upon cost, upon the client or upon the legal rules do not go along easily. Because of this reason, implementation problems and unintended consequences occur, whatever the mode of organisation is.

The various modes of organisation do not address the logic of human service provision: they do not solve the condition that human service provision is the co-alignment of ' private' , individual interests and ' public' , collective ones. Instead, each organisational logic merely brings forward a single specific constellation of individual and collective interests. A shift towards one of these modes is a shift away from another. To solve a partial problem implies creating another problem. The mode of organisation determines which of these interests are privileged and which are not, but does not solve the problem that not all interests can be privileged at once. Because of this reason the emphasis upon any organisational logic cannot fully address performance problems. Each of the three organisational logics creates its own performance problems, because the combined public-private requirements made upon the task (at the level of individual case administration, but possibly also at the level of the organisation or the environment) cannot be fully addressed in each of these logics. Not in any mode of organisation, for that matter. In other words, the problem of human service provision optimisation is *not* a problem of effective organisation. Performance problems are inherent to human service provision and they occur in *any* mode of organisation, because of its fundamentally mixed nature. The three modes of reform all imply a particular balance of public and private, general and individual, abstract and concrete. One may shift towards each of these poles, but one cannot fully co-align them.

This conclusion asks for a discussion of the pros as well as the cons of a specific reform plan proposed as well as attention to the ' winners'*and* the ' losers' . Attempts to minimise the costs of the losers might be one way to deal with problems in human service provision. Another way is to consciously make a political choice, which is explicitly defended in terms of benefits *and* costs. In addition, it might be worthwhile to explore whether improvements *within* a specific organisation mode according to its own specific logic are politically more desirable than a change *between* organisation modes. To what extent this is feasible is not completely clear at the moment, though. It may be, as the onion metaphor suggests, that mixing modes of organisation may not fully address the dilemmas that abide in the core of the onion: individual provision. All in all, we argue, ideas about ways to cope with the fundamentally mixed nature of human service provision cannot make this nature disappear. On the contrary, we argue for the explicit acknowledgement of the mixedness of human service provision

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