Reviewer's report

Title: A framework to assess welfare mix and service provision models in health and social welfare: case studies of two prominent Italian regions

Version: 5
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Reviewer: Stefano Villa

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Major Compulsory Revisions

The article is of great interest in its field since it touches an hot topic overlooked so far by the scientific community. Before publication the paper needs to be improved along five dimensions.

First, in the current structure of the paper it is not completely clear the role of the case studies in the overall research design. I believe you should use these two cases as a way to build, develop and fine-tune the elements of the model. In this sense, I am sure, the focus groups have provided valuable insights. Otherwise the proposal of the six dimensions seems week. For example it would be possible to argue how you did not include in the model relevant dimensions such as: (i) design and organization of delivery processes; (ii) clinical pathways or (iii) user journeys. In others words, it is important to show how the evidence from the two cases studies have helped the authors to develop and define the model.

Secondly, the definition of research goals can be improved along two dimensions:

1. The reader has a clear understanding of the goal of the paper only at page 8 (lines 173-176) when you say that: “this theoretical gap must be filled with clearly identified variables that are able to capture the main features of welfare mix with an effective methodological framework to analyze modern welfare systems, which is what we provide in the following paragraphs.”. It is important to state the goal of the study earlier in the paper.

2. It is important to stick on this goal throughout the paper: the framework you have developed is a useful model to analyze welfare systems NOT to measure their performance.

Third, your paper is based on key assumptions that need to be backed by a more in-depth literature review, in particular:

Page 3 you say “The traditional Beveridge-driven configuration of public welfare regimes as being solely responsible for social security has been replaced, especially in Europe, by institutional networks of various actors with a varied allocation of resources and responsibilities.” This is as strong statement backed only by the evidence reported in a working paper presented in a Conference.
Page 5, lines 92-94, you say: “The natural consequence of this evolution is that service management in the health and social sector is no longer limited to the dominance of the public sector, but involves a wide network of actors, which include families and private, public, and nonprofit organizations.”. Also in this case, this statement, should be supported by some references.

Fourth, I would edit the conclusions along two dimensions:
1. I would stress how your model is capable to provide useful hints also to managers and policy makers;
2. I would add some considerations about the interplay between the six elements of the model.

Finally, once authors have revised the paper as suggested, I think there is room to shorten the overall length (in total 43 pages) in order to be, as suggested by the editors, as concise as possible.

Minor Essential Revisions

Although the level of English is very good, it is advisable to ask for an overall editing from a mother language editor.

Page 4, line 85: specify what do you mean by service-based models

Page 4, line 91: better specify what you mean by “shifted from an investigation of welfare states to an investigation of welfare systems”

Page 5, line 115: the dimensions are three not four right?

Page 9, line 193: what do you mean by “research feasibility”?

Page 16, line 375: explain better how you have conducted the focus groups.

Page 25, line 599: how did you identify the population of potential users? For which reasons a high portion of these potential users did not have access to the system?

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests