

RESHAPING PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Edited by Luca Gnan, Alessandro Hinna,
Fabio Monteduro and Veronica Allegrini

STUDIES IN PUBLIC AND
NON-PROFIT GOVERNANCE

VOLUME 8

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MANAGEMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**

STUDIES IN PUBLIC AND NON-PROFIT GOVERNANCE

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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INTRODUCTION

Luca Gnan, Alessandro Hinna, Fabio Monteduro
and Veronica Allegrini

Sustainability and sustainable development are at the top of the global agenda, and likely to remain there for at least the next ten years. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals set a framework to address economic and social growth and environmental protection challenges. National governments, the private sector, non-profit organizations and civil society are all responsible for their implementation.

Public sector organizations play a focal role in delivering the sustainable development agenda. They set specific goals, adopt policies and strategies, provide public services and mobilize and allocate financial resources. They are also responsible for monitoring, evaluating and reporting strategy implementation and goal achievement. Governments may also encourage private sector organizations to take accountability for achieving some aspects of the sustainable development goals (SDGs). In the new model of sustainable development, the public sector has a full role in stimulating and supporting local, national and international economic development processes. This is a role that has often seemed to have taken a back seat under more typically neoliberal models of development.

The non-profit sector also plays a role in supporting sustainable development alone or through partnerships with the public sector. The Knowledge Hub of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy highlights that non-profit organizations have a central role in the new model of sustainable development because they pursue social, economic and environmental goals in local contexts and in an integrated way.

However, research on sustainability practices in the public and non-profit sector is still at an early stage. The scholarly debate on the subject often takes place at a macro-level of analysis. The managerial debate still seems to focus on typical managerial issues such as integrating sustainability goals into business operating systems, without exploring the distinctive and peculiar elements of public and non-profit organizations. The design of performance management

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systems is a nodal point for effective and efficient integration of sustainability goals into organizational strategy and managerial practices.

Against this backdrop, this volume aims to outline how sustainability can be integrated into the management of public and non-profit organizations through performance management systems.

This volume includes two sections that examine recent trends and the future direction of public and non-profit research on sustainable performance management.

The first section of this volume explores the relevance of human resources for organizational sustainability. It contains three chapters exploring how human resources can be managed using a sustainable approach and the impact of these practices on organizational performance.

The first chapter addresses the topic of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) in the public sector. Allegrini and Monteduro start from the assumption that an engaged and skilled workforce is a crucial resource in successfully addressing the challenge of integrating practices designed to achieve sustainable development into public organizations. They discuss how human resource management (HRM) practices can help to integrate environmental management into public organizations and improve environmental performance. This chapter starts with a conceptual review of the existing literature on GHRM. It goes on to provide some suggestions for future research in the public sector. The timely development of a field of study on GHRM in public organizations would be useful in encouraging implementation and understanding of how to actively contribute to sustainable development through people management in public organizations.

The second chapter focuses on sustainable HRM, and how this leads to sustainable competitiveness. It shows how human resources can be managed to carry out sustainable goals and the impact of sustainability on employees' attitudes and behaviours. Apostu and Gigauri have empirically investigated the dynamic relationship between human resources in science and technology and sustainable competitiveness in 35 European countries. Their results show that human resources in science and technology contribute to sustainable performance. They also suggest that a more competitive and sustainable environment contributes to human resources development in science and technology. Finally, they show that integrating sustainability into HRM leads to positive outcomes for organizational performance.

In the third chapter, Scarozza, Hinna and Ceschel explore people management issue within Italian Ministries. This chapter explores the extent of the application of public sector reforms and the quality of their implementation to answer some basic questions about individual performance appraisal systems within Italian Ministries. The authors conducted a content analysis of documents produced by these Ministries. They found solid evidence of the reforms' effects on the design and implementation of individual performance systems. They also found that there was no longer term vision in implementing individual performance appraisal systems, even though these involve some critical performance

management utilities such as training, development, fair pay and deployment of employees. This therefore raises questions about a sustainable approach to the individual performance management process in public organizations.

The second part of this volume is on integrating sustainability in performance measurement and reporting. It gathers together studies on the relevance of following a sustainability-inspired approach in measuring and reporting the performance of public and non-profit organizations.

The fourth chapter describes a scoping review by Flamini, Ceschel, Gnan and Vu of the literature on measuring and reporting sustainable performance in the public sector. The authors try to answer research questions on how and to what extent public organizations have changed to integrate sustainability reporting systems, and what are the enabling organizational factors in adopting sustainability reporting in public organizations. They found that public organizations mostly adopt sustainability indicators and reporting based on the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) framework to evaluate their sustainable or environmental performance. These organizations have little interest in how these new reporting tools affect organizational variables. The authors suggest that sustainability reporting should be seen as a vehicle for cultural change in public organizations, and a way to move them towards a more sustainable approach. The organizational impacts therefore need to be consistently considered and measured by analyzing organizational performance. The authors therefore make some suggestions for future studies on the issue.

In the fifth chapter, Siboni and Canestrini contribute to the Public Value (PV) literature on accounting by providing evidence on the operationalization of public value content through performance measurement. This chapter establishes the link with the SDGs, which may work as guiding principles of the actions of a particular public organization. Organizations include the SDGs in their strategic decisions and disclose outcomes through performance measurement and narratives. The impact of the SDGs is explored in the public value of a sample of Italian health institutes through documentary analysis of their performance plans. The authors' aim is to verify if and how the SDGs are pursued and whether the COVID-19 pandemic has affected public value content. They found that, after the pandemic, the number of SDGs incorporated into the analyzed documents increased, introducing planet and environmental protection dimensions. However, no documents explicitly mention pursuing SDGs, revealing a non-institutionalized sensitivity of managers towards these goals.

In the last chapter, Costanza proposes an application of dynamic balanced scorecards in a social co-operative active in clothing recycling and the reintegration of disadvantaged social categories. The author uses previous literature on dynamic balanced scorecards to identify two modelling strategies: the balanced scorecard-driven and the system dynamics-driven. The latter is used in the study because it is considered more flexible. It also acknowledges the role of system dynamics in supporting decision-making and fostering sustainable growth. The modelling outputs consider different perspectives than those within traditional

balanced scorecards. They contain elements of circular causality, and show how financial and non-financial performances are interconnected and co-determined.

This volume is likely to be of interest to academics and practitioners alike. It will increase knowledge about relevant issues in management and governance research on both public and non-profit organizations.

WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW, BUT IT WOULD BE WORTH KNOWING ABOUT GREEN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Veronica Allegrini and Fabio Monteduro

ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to contribute to the literature on sustainability in the public sector by discussing how human resource and human resource management can help to integrate environmental management into organizations and improve environmental performance. Public sector scholars have neglected the study of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) until now. Nevertheless, implementing such practices could lead to positive outcomes regarding awareness of environmental issues, organizational reputation and attractiveness, job satisfaction and organizational performance. The authors discuss the relevance and the necessity of developing a field of research on GHRM in public organizations. Starting from a conceptual review of the main literature on GHRM, this chapter provided some directions for future research.

Keywords: Green Human Resource Management; public sector; sustainability; environmental management; environmental performance; public employees

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, public sector organizations have been under increasing pressure to improve performance due to public resources scarcity, the requirement for ever-increasing public service quality and the attention of public opinion.

Therefore, performance management practices have spread in public sector organizations as an internal management tool and for reporting to external stakeholders. Another challenge for contemporary public organizations is a growing concern with sustainability, especially its environmental dimension. Sustainable development and environmental protection are at the top of the global agenda over the next 10 years. Even though the private sector is viewed as one of the major causes of environmental problems and it is expected to make an effort to mitigate them, the public sector also has a crucial role since it sets specific goals, adopts policies and strategies, provides public services, mobilizes and distributes financial resources, is responsible for monitoring, evaluating and reporting strategy implementation and goal achievement. In addition, public organizations themselves should set private organizations an example and should be the first to adopt behaviours that pay attention to the environmental effects besides the economic and financial perspectives in their daily activities. A lack of public sector efforts to adopt environmentally responsible practices in its operations does not communicate to the private sector a severe intent to improve environmental sustainability: alignment of environmental goals stated by governments with daily operations is essential (Rangarajan & Rahm, 2011). Nevertheless, environmental sustainability practices are a relatively new area for public administration practice and research. Even though research on environmental sustainability practices in the public sector context has rapidly grown in the last decade, it is still at an early stage. Because it is unanimously recognized that public sector activities have a significant impact on the environment, research and practices have mainly focused on sustainability accounting and reporting practices (Dumay et al., 2010; Frost & Seamer, 2002; Goswami & Lodhia, 2014; Greiling et al., 2015; Kaur & Lodhia, 2019; Lodhia & Jacobs, 2013; Manes-Rossi et al., 2018; Niemann & Hoppe, 2018; Williams, 2015), drivers of environmental reporting (Alcaraz-Quiles et al., 2015; Farneti & Guthrie, 2009; Kassim et al., 2019; Kaur & Lodhia, 2019; Lodhia et al., 2012; Marcuccio & Steccolini, 2005) and measurement of environmental performance (Adams et al., 2014; Lundberg et al., 2009). Those streams of research suggest that the concept of performance should be rethought by incorporating sustainability and environmental dimensions at all levels. Nevertheless, as stated by Fiorino (2010, p. S83), ‘although research in public administration has given some attention to sustainability issues, it does not reflect their importance in the overall processes for governance and administration’. Previous literature does not consider how integrating sustainability practices into the overall management of processes and resources can help to increase the environmental performance of public organizations. The present chapter aims to contribute to the literature on sustainability in the public sector by discussing how human resource and human resource management can help to integrate environmental management into organizations and improve environmental performance.

Scholars agree that performance improvement, including environmental performance, highly relies on employees’ behaviour and that Human Resource Management (HRM) practices have a strategic role since those affect employees’ work behaviour and attitudes. Therefore, the literature on GHRM has developed

rapidly in the last few years. GHRM, initially defined as the HRM aspects of Environmental Management (Renwick et al., 2013), currently refers to the strategic use of Human Resource Management practices to increase employees' commitment to environmental sustainability issues (Masri & Jaaron, 2017; Mwita, 2019). In other words, GHRM includes practices aimed at developing employees' awareness of environmental issues and leading to green empowerment. Until now, GHRM literature has been centred on the business world, and the study of public organizations has been neglected, with some exceptions (Al-Swidi et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2020; Rangarajan & Rahm, 2011). In general terms, HRM in the public sector has not spread as in the private sector, both as a field of study and professional practice. The reasons are found in the characteristics of the public sector, such as the recruitment process and selection criteria often regulated by stringent bureaucratic procedures, resources constraints that limit the ability of public organizations to motivate and reward employees, and high task standardization that makes difficult employees' performance evaluation and reward differentiation (Reina & Scarozza, 2021). Even though the human resource (HR) function in the public sector has been historically considered less critical than others, the traditional public service approach to people has often been criticized because it is demotivating and a barrier to improving performance (Bach & Della Rocca, 2000). In labour-intensive organizations, such as public ones, innovative behaviour and performance highly depend on the engagement of employees (Bos-Nehles et al., 2017; Vermeeren, 2017). In recent years, HRM is becoming one of the critical areas for reforming the public sector and increasing public performance (Shim, 2001). Despite these developments, GHRM, which is considered the most recent phase in HRM progress, still receives scarce attention in the public sector practice and literature. Suppose the public sector wants to successfully implement the changes required to the current challenges related to resource scarcity and environmental issues. In that case, it needs to bet on employee engagement and support. The emphasis of HRM on environmental aspects raises awareness of environmental issues, encourages green thinking and action in the workplace, and shapes an environmental-oriented culture. Therefore, how public organizations can embed environmental sustainability in their HRM deserves more attention. This chapter, starting from a conceptual review of the main previous literature on GHRM, identifies some gaps in the public sector literature and a few issues that future studies could address to advance the knowledge on the topic.

WHAT IS GREEN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT?

The basis for the concept of GHRM was laid by Wehrmeyer (1996) when he published the book titled *Greening People: Human Resources and Environmental Management* as an attempt to connect human resource management (HRM) and environmental management (EM). The book draws on the assumption that 'if a company has to adopt an environmental approach to its activities, the employees are the key to its success or failure' (p. 7). The increased employee involvement

and recognition lead to the success of environmental activities. HRM is, therefore, essential in supporting the improvement of environmental performance. Starting from Wehrmeyer's seminal work, a stream of research on GHRM has developed. Nevertheless, there is still no unique definition of GHRM in the existing literature, and different researchers provide different definitions. Some scholars identified two schools of thought in GHRM conceptualization. Based on Taylor et al. (2012), it is possible to consider GHRM as a means or an end. In the first case, GHRM is viewed as a means for implementing and supporting environment-related actions. This conceptualization is firmly based on the contribution of Wehrmeyer (1996), and it is effectively summarized by the famous definition of Renwick et al. (2013), according to which GHRM can be defined as the HRM aspects of Environmental Management. Scholars of this school of thought are numerous, so this remains the leading conceptualization of GHRM in literature. Research adopting this approach generally aims to study the effect of GHRM practices implementation on the environmental management systems' effectiveness and environmental performance improvements. In this context, Russo and Fouts (1997) recognized that environmental management is a complex process that requires effective HRM support. Drawing on the same approach, Govindarajulu and Daily (2004), Daily and Huang (2001) and Jabbour et al. (2008) identified some HRM factors, such as environmental training, employee empowerment, performance appraisal and reward system, as critical elements in implementing a successful environmental management system. They concluded that environmental performance improvement requires attention to technical and human element management. The second school of thought conceptualizes GHRM as an end since it enhances motivation and commitment towards environmental-related goals and engenders employees' green behaviour. Even though only some studies have examined the impact of GHRM practices on employees' attitudes, motivation, commitment and behaviour following this conceptualization, some relevant research has been conducted. Some scholars provided evidence for the significant impact of GHRM on job satisfaction (Chan & Hawkins, 2010; Pinzone et al., 2019). Other recent studies aimed to understand the role of GHRM in developing employees' pro-environmental behaviour. Ansari et al. (2021) developed a conceptual framework linking GHRM and pro-environmental behaviour through the mediation role of employees' green commitment. A few other scholars explored the effect of GHRM practices on the emergence of employees' Organizational Citizenship Behaviours towards the Environment (OCBE), that is, individual and discretionary behaviour by employees neither required nor rewarded that contribute to improving organizational environmental management and performance (Anwar et al., 2020; Dumont et al., 2017; Paillé et al., 2014; Pinzone et al., 2016, 2019). Some scholars saw those conceptualizations as mirrored and discussed a reciprocal relationship in which the attention to sustainability improves HRM and, as a result, HRM contributes to the organization's environmental performance (Wagner, 2011). Nevertheless, it is undoubtful that the concept of GHRM has evolved. Initially considered the HRM aspects of Environmental Management exclusively, it currently refers to the strategical use of HRM practices to increase employees'