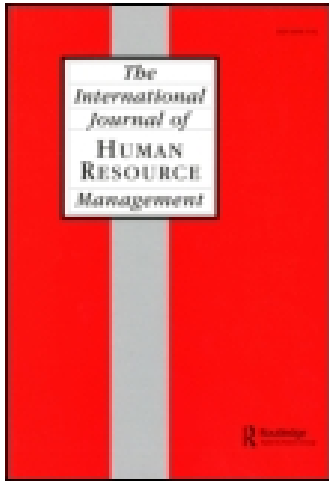


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Special issue of International Journal of Human Resource Management: Strategic human resource management and public sector performance

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Special issue of

International Journal of Human Resource Management

Strategic human resource management and public sector performance

Guest Editors

Eva Knies^{a*}, Paul Boselie^a, Julian Gould-Williams^b and Wouter Vandenabeele^{a,c}

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From the 1990s onwards the HRM and performance debate has resulted in hundreds of conceptual and empirical articles. Several studies have demonstrated the added value of HRM for organizational performance in terms of increased productivity, higher profitability and lower employee turnover rates (Arthur, 1994; Combs, Liu, Hall, & Ketchen, 2006; Van De Voorde, Paauwe, & Van Veldhoven, 2010). However, strategic human resource management (SHRM) research has been dominated by studies in private sector organizations, with the public sector largely ignored. As public organizations are now placed under increased pressure to provide citizens and service users with efficient and effective services, along with demonstrating value for money, scholars have begun to address the imbalance of public sector research by testing the effects of strategic HRM in public organizations. Private sector models have been applied in various forms to public sector organizations, as evident from shifts towards new public management initiatives (Bach & Kessler, 2007). In many countries, health care organizations, for example, are under pressure to improve service quality and safety, while at the same time optimize efficiency levels and patient well being (Veld, Paauwe, & Boselie, 2010). Similar pressures have been applied to governments at all levels, along with different types of public bodies, such as schools and universities, military defenses, museums, courts, police and international organizations (for example the UN and EU organizations) (Decramer, Smolders, & Vanderstraeten, 2013).

Based on lessons learnt from prior SHRM research conducted in the private sector (Boxall & Macky, 2009; Paauwe, 2009), HRM may help public managers achieve improved performance outcomes through the workforce. In fact, initial findings suggest that strategic HRM has positive effects on employee motivation and organizational performance in the public sector (Messersmith, Patel, Lepak, & Gould-Williams, 2011). Nevertheless, relevant questions as to what constitutes performance in the public sector remain. This is important given that public sector organizations have multiple goals and priorities which often conflict with each other due to the demands of different stakeholder groups (central government, citizens, service users, local politicians; Perry & Porter 1982; Rainey, 2009). Therefore, adopting a strategic approach to HRM may prove to be especially

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challenging under these conditions (Kessler, Purcell, & Coyle-Shapiro, 2000; Knies & Leisink, 2014). Furthermore, the mechanisms linking HR practices with both employee and organizational outcomes may differ in the public, as compared with private sector organizations, due to workforce characteristics [see for example the work of Vandenabeele (2007) and Gould-Williams et al. (2013) on public service motivation (PSM)].

On the basis of the contextual differences between public and private sector organizations, we anticipate that new institutional theories may assist in understanding the relationship between SHRM and performance (Boselie, Paauwe, & Richardson, 2003). For instance, Dimaggio and Powell's (1983) coercive, normative and mimetic mechanisms are popular in HRM and public sector research, especially in understanding strategic choices and room to maneuver for managing directors. Scott's (1995) different logics (including efficiency and professional logics) are also popular given the challenging task of managing professionals in public sector organizations. These contextual frameworks can be extended or supplemented with other theories to better understand SHRM in the public context. In particular when switching between individual and institutional levels, theories as self-determination theory (Gagné & Deci, 2005) and person-environment fit theory (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005) may be useful in explaining the behavior resulting from the interaction between individual identities and the environment. An additional perspective would be investigating the underlying mechanisms of the public sector HR value chain (Vandenabeele, Leisink, & Knies, 2013) and the possible different motives and logics for implementing HRM (such as PSM (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008) or public value (Moore, 2013)). Context also includes multiple stakeholders (e.g. citizens, interest groups, social partners and the media) that may differ depending on the specific public sector context (e.g. parents in the case of primary schools, family members in the case of elderly homes and medical professional associations in the case of hospitals). Stakeholder participation and involvement is often institutionalized in these sectors and thus a potentially important contextual factor. Thus, what are the implications for SHRM and the shaping of the employment relationship in these organizations?

We invite conceptual and empirical submissions on the topic of strategic human resource management and public sector performance drawing on a range of theoretical perspectives and diverse methodologies. We expect papers to advance our understanding of SHRM and public sector performance. We especially encourage comparative studies, including data from different national contexts and/or different types of organizations, however without being generalist and therefore lacking contextualization. While not representing an exhaustive list, the following topic areas highlight exemplary questions and research themes:

- HRM and performance in public sector organizations such as government administrations, health care organizations, schools, military services, local governments, courts and international organizations;
- strategic HRM and employee motivation (for example PSM);
- line management enactment and effective implementation of HRM in the public sector;
- new public management initiatives such as performance management and lean management implementations and their impact on performance;
- application of typical SHRM theories (for example RBV, AMO and strategic contingency approaches) in combination with alternative theories (for example self-determination theory and person–environment fit theory) in public sector research;

- linking PSM and organizational performance; and
- SHRM and stakeholder participation, involvement and agency.

Submission process and deadlines

Papers will be reviewed following the *IJHRM* double-blind review process. Papers should be submitted by September 1, 2015. The editors welcome informal enquiries related to proposed topics.

Special issue seminar: strategic HRM and public sector performance

To help authors prepare their manuscripts for submission, a Special Issue Seminar will be held on May 8, 2015 at the Utrecht University School of Governance (Utrecht University, the Netherlands). Authors are invited to present and discuss (the outline of) their papers during the seminar. Presentation at the seminar does not guarantee acceptance of the paper for publication in the *IJHRM*. Submission of a paper to the seminar is not a precondition for submission to the Special Issue. If you are interested in participating in the seminar, please send an email to E.Knies@uu.nl before February 1, 2015. Please note that the deadline for paper submissions for the Special Issue Seminar is April 27, 2015.

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