

call for papers

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Special Issue

Sustainability and Human Resource Management

Rationale for Special Issue and Issue scope:

Recently, the notion of sustainability has become increasingly popular in the field of management and specifically within Human Resource Management (HRM) (e.g. Docherty et al., 2008; Ehnert, 2009; Zaugg, 2009; Wilkinson et al., 2001). The natural, social and financial resources of the world are insufficient for all, or even most human beings, to have the material standards of living of the richest people. The access to, development of and distribution of resources to people creates challenging dilemmas for politicians, commercial interests and to the overall human race. Additionally, human resources (i.e. certain qualifications and competencies) are becoming scarce in some industrial sectors - even in the troubled economic times many organizations are searching for talented employees. The focus of many HRM activities including reward, training and development as well as employer/employee relationships appears to have become focused on immediate impact rather than long term viability. These issues make the idea of sustainability relevant for organizations and for HRM.

Historically, sustainability is a concept which emerged in times of crises and/ or when resources became scarce. Today's popularity of the term sustainability goes back to the report of The United Nation's World Commission on Environment and Development, i.e. the 'Brundtland Commission' (WCED, 1987). The objective of this report was to develop an agenda for global change and a common future for mankind. The Brundtland Commission defined 'sustainable development' as a "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987: 43). The WCED has been concerned with the question of how to advance societal and economic development without endangering natural living conditions for the majority of humanity. The Commission asserted that sustainable development at the societal level requires simultaneous realisation of an economic, ecological, and social dimension of sustainability (WCED, 1987). In addition, alternative interpretations of sustainability have emerged that focus, for example, on how organizations deal with corporate (mainly financial and economic), natural and social or human resources. We therefore welcome also other definitions of sustainability that can be used fruitfully for extending theory on HRM and for problem solving situations which academics and practitioners face when managing human resources.

Defining and clarifying sustainability are critical aspects but applying the concept to HRM is even more challenging. We believe that HRM scholars need to go beyond the "narrow" boundaries of their discipline and of the HRM concept in order to be prepared to contribute applicable solutions for solving the problems indicated above. A very few authors have used sustainability as an important contribution for HRM to develop: for example, Docherty et al.

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(2002) have proposed to design Sustainable Works Systems, Boudreau and Ramstad (2005) understand sustainability as a new paradigm for HRM and talent management, and Mariappanadar (2003) focuses on the issue of a 'Sustainable Human Resource Strategy' and on the impact of retrenchment. Wilkinson (2005) also addresses the problem of downsizing and links it to the idea of sustainability. An overview on these and further approaches shows that sustainability has the potential to become an important topic for HRM but that the concept has so far rarely been applied systematically and that empirical research is scarce.

We believe that sustainability and finding ways to manage organizations sustainably with regard to their human/social, natural and economic resources is a major challenge for HRM along with internationalization, globalization and resistance to globalization. **Possible research topics to be considered for this special edition are:**

An exemplary but not exhaustive list of issues on sustainability and HRM include:

- The impact of managing a company sustainably on the focus and design of HRM strategies and practices and new ways of considerate exploitation of human resources (for example, the design of Sustainable Work Systems)
- Ways of treating human resources inspired by the sustainability idea in times of financial crisis (for example, alternatives to downsizing from a perspective of managing corporate resources sustainably or attitudes to health, safety and work-lifebalance)
- The impact of managing a company sustainably on the way of treating human resources in HRM and on the relationship of HRM to internal and external labour markets (for example, consequences for talent management, for becoming employer of choice and for strategic HRM)
- Implications for how traditional ways of HRM on learning, training and personal development change if a sustainability perspective is considered (for example, lifelong learning, employability)
- The impact of reward (and deferred reward) on performance and distribution of resources in organisations and societies (for example, rewards which encourage sustainable or unsustainable choices)
- Dilemmas, paradoxes and tensions arising from the objective of managing human (and other organizational resources) sustainably.
- Questions about content and ideas should be directed to the guest editors.

Potential authors: Authors are encouraged to submit research manuscripts that make significant contributions to the literature on human resource management as part of the ways of managing sustainably. We welcome both theoretical and empirical submissions and we encourage both conventional and critical perspectives as well as interdisciplinary work on the intersection of sustainability and human resource management.

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Deadline: Full papers for this special edition of 'management revue' must be with the editors by **30th May, 2011**. All submissions will be subject to a double-blind review process. Papers invited for a 'revise and resubmit' are due **30th November 2011**. It is anticipated that the special edition will appear in 2012. Please submit your papers via email to *both* editors at using as subject 'management revue'.

Submission guidelines: Please follow the guidelines on the website http://www.management-revue.org/authors_guidelines.php and submit the papers electronically to both guest editors by sending a "blind" copy of your manuscript (delete all author identification from this primary document) and in a second document information that would typically appear on the document's title page (title, author names, complete postal addresses, titles, affiliations, contact information including email, phone and fax). This document may also include author biographies if you wish.

We look forward to receiving your contribution!

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