

CALL FOR PAPERS IN A SPECIAL ISSUE IN PMR

Public Sector Professionals in Crisis: a Role for HRM?

Special Editors: 1. Professor Rona Beattie, Glasgow Caledonian University, Scotland

2. Professor Yvonne Brunetto, Southern Cross University, Australia.

With the relative exception of Employee/Industrial Relations, the public sector has been neglected by HRM scholars compared to studies of the corporate sector (Beattie and Waterhouse, *forthcoming*). Furthermore, and perhaps by way of consequence, politicians and policy makers across the world are informed by the hegemony of HRM models, strategies and practices developed in the business world. This is evident in the introduction of New Public Management (NPM) reforms where governments wholeheartedly embraced business HR models to public sector organisations, often leading to damaging consequences (e.g. Brunetto et al, 2017).

A key cadre of the public sector workforce that has been especially and cumulatively affected by NPM and more recent austerity policies are the many professions represented in public sector organizations. Professionals are a type of employees who, due to their specific knowledge, skills and associated ethical codes, in addition to strict entry rules determined by a professional body, have greater autonomy to make decisions in the workplace (Farr-Wharton et al, 2011). These characteristics provide professionals an exclusive identity that establishes boundaries between themselves and others (Brown 2015). They have come to 'occupy specific, and often strategically powerful, enclaves within large organisations, within which they can be recognized as organisationally encapsulated quasi-organisations' (Ackroyd 1996, pp. 601). It is this power which has enabled them to challenge and even violate managerial directives (Noordegraaf, 2007) in ways in which other employees cannot.

However, the implementation of NPM reforms has changed the power base of professionals. They now face increased pressure from service users (e.g. Dudau et al. 2017), management (e.g. Brunetto et al. 2017a, b), politicians and the media (e.g. Beattie and Waterhouse *forthcoming*), creating a contested terrain as to their professional identity, discretionary power and freedom and the consequences for the role of HRM in supporting quality professional work in line with community standards.

The objectives of this special issue are four-fold:

1. To address the deficit in public sector HRM issues in the wider HRM literature
2. To analyse the particular challenges facing public sector professionals during the current era of geo-political and economic instability
3. To critically evaluate the role that HRM plays in supporting public sector professionals to balance their professional values with organisational demands
4. To add depth and breadth to our understanding of international public sector HRM through comparing practice in countries in different regions of the world at different stages of economic and political development.

The aim of the special issue is to increase our understanding of professionalism 'under crisis' and to build on a platform of established research that has highlighted some of the emerging challenges facing public sector professionals as we move towards the 2020s. Firstly, there is a

need to compare the work context of professionals working in core-NPM countries (UK, Australia) with NPM-laggards (Italy, France) (Pollitt & Bouckaert 2011), as well as with emerging economies and the developing world. Additionally, there is growing evidence that in some countries NPM has been implemented along with significant cost-cutting and that this has masked the impact of NPM, compromised effectiveness, whilst increasing managerial control to direct employees to do more with less (Diefenbach, 2009; Visser, 2016). Finally, there is immediate vulnerability of public sector professionals to political decisions and events (Beattie and Waterhouse *forthcoming*). For example, the UK vote to leave the EU has revealed serious concerns about the capacity and capability of the UK civil service to engage in the forthcoming complex negotiations with EU negotiators who have considerable experience of multilateral negotiations. Then, in the wake of the failed 2016 coup in Turkey, 30,000 people have been imprisoned and 100,000 have lost their jobs and many of those targeted are professionals e.g. academics, police and judges.

This special issue calls for submissions exploring the challenges facing public sector professionals, considering such issues as professional identities, power, effectiveness and consequences for all stakeholders. We also invite critiques of the HRM role in supporting public sector professionals during this era of crisis. Finally, we encourage empirical work in regions of the world less evident in the mainstream literature, so to better inform the PMR readership.

The special issue calls for papers comprising 8000 words plus references, and usually in the 6 – 8 paper range.

Timeline

1. Send 250 words abstract as an expression of interest to the special issue editors Professors Yvonne Brunetto yvonne.brunetto@scu.edu.au and Professor Rona Beattie R.Beattie2@gcu.ac.uk by 30th May, 2018
2. Notification to proceed to full paper by 30 July, 2018
3. Submission of full paper via the Journal's Manuscript Central website: 01 September 2018
4. Publication in the second half 2019

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