Addressing environmental justice and sustainability: the dilemmas of HR professionals and line managers in an organisational context

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Project Description:

This project proposal invites potential candidates to explore the role of Human Resource (HR) function in shaping collective actions addressing environmental justice and sustainability from a critical perspective. The aim of the project would be to explore and explain some of the dilemmas and tensions across organisations and beyond that inform actions of HR professionals and line managers, which are recently become apparent (Bal and Brookes, 2022; Griep, et.al., 2023).

Grand societal challenges, such as those highlighted in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, represent multi-dimensional problems that involve diverse actors to communicate and collaborate in unique ways. The HR function is often considered as a one of the important functions in any organisation that can make a significant contribution in organisations in addressing complex environmental justice and sustainability issues (Faisal, 2023; Jackson and Seo, 2010; Niazi, *et al.,* 2023; Ribeiro, 2022). There are different ways in which the HR function can contribute, including environmental training, rewards and recognition, employee empowerment and organisational culture (Issac, 2023; Vázquez-Brust *et al*., 2022). All these activities help employees to take up green initiatives through learning and development (L&D) measures (Jabbour and Jabbour, 2016; Jackson and Seo, 2010; Mandip, 2012) and creating pro-environmental culture and values (Ercantan and Eyupoglu, 2022). The literature so far highlights how employees feel engaged in environmental matters if: they feel less pressure and are empowered (Cantor et al., 2012); they can take their own responsibility and ownership for their environmental projects (Daily and Huang, 2001); and they are valued through rewards (Govindarajulu and Daily, 2004). All these activities mainly involve formal green HRM practices. However, the exiting literature is inconstant about the degree to which the HR department is able to coordinate the ethics, sustainability, and compliance teams to collaborate and develop environmental initiatives.

Despite the growing literature on formal green HRM practices promoting employees' engagement in sustainable practices at work, most HR practitioners and line managers still do not see the relevance of environmental management for HRM (Niazi, *et al.,* 2023), hence there is apathy and resistance to embrace the concept fully and to apply it to their daily activities (Jackson and Janghoon, 2010, Pallavi, 2012). Furthermore, HR practitioners require to coordinate and sustain huge pressure from multiple stakeholders, working across boundaries in order to move, change and align themselves with the current trends to ensure business sustainability and profitability (Andrianova *et al.,* 2022; Vázquez-Brust *et al*., 2022). Green HRM has the potential to be used as a form of greenwashing, particularly where the success/existence of an organisation depends on unsustainable practices (Deshwal, 2015; Kanwal and Van Hoye, 2023; Li, at al., 2022;). These can often conflict with the environmental sustainability agenda. Therefore, there is a need to problematise the mainstream managerialist view

in green HRM practices as the only one effective approach to facilitate sustainability and green employee engagement (Garavan, *et al*, 2023).

The main purpose of this PhD programme is to investigate how the HR function through its people-management policies, roles and activities addresses GSCs and can contribute towards having green and sustainable agenda and operations. Theoretically the project can be located within new materialism, new material feminism (Calas and Smircich, 2023) and/or posthumanism to bring these emerging contributions to the field of HRM.

Suggested research questions may include (but are not restricted to):

- What role can the HR function play in assisting organisations to become green and sustainable and address GSC?
- How can green HRM practices be theorised within new materialism in order to influence sustainable development at organisational level?
- What institutional, political or cultural consideration inhibit HR practitioners from actively engaging with GSCs?
- What mechanisms are available to the HR professionals to support 'greening' process in an organisation?
- What challenges and paradoxes HR professional face when addressing GSC?
- What is the role of the material context(s) and socio-historical considerations in developing different green HR practices to address GSC?

We welcome proposals with a qualitative or mixed methods approach, innovative methodologies and multi- and cross-disciplinary insights. An interest in critical theory and critical approaches to HRM and management is expected of potential candidates.

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