**Social and environmental justice within human resource management**

Kate Sang, Danielle Eiseman and Susan Sayce

**Abstract**

Academic literature is starting to consider the role that employers can have in reducing the effects of anthropogenic climate change. This has included efforts to understand sustainable logistics, supply chain management and the built environment. In addition, data suggests that companies are more likely to engage in climate change mitigation efforts where shareholders are engaged in environmental activism (Reid and Toffel., 2009).

However, attention is turning to the actions of the human actors within organisations. This field is known as ‘green Human Resource Management’ (GreenHRM). GreenHRM according to Mandip (2012) this is linked to using all employees’ interaction to promote sustainable practices and increase employee commitment to environmental sustainability. and is connected to a wider corporate social responsibility. HR initiatives includes policies encouraging low carbon activities such as e-HR, home based working, green organisational champions, car sharing and recycling schemes. This work is growing, and largely focussed on efforts to link so-called green organisational policies with organisational financial performance. In this model green HRM has sustainability embedded in its core ~~people and~~ talent management activities including recruitment, development, reward grievance, performance as well as employee involvement with communities, customers and contractors all taking on a stakeholder role. However, the literature on GreenHRM has yet to be synthesised to form a coherent analysis of the current field (Renwick et al., 2016). An allied area of academic research is Sustainable Human Resource Management (SustainableHRM) which takes a more holistic view of organisations and HRM, bringing in the social component to other forms of sustainability performance.

As with GreenHRM, SustainableHRM tends to rely on financial measures of organisational performance as drivers for increased environmental concern. As sustainability pressures increase this has seen the topic of green and sustainability issues rise up the managerial agenda where its importance has been linked to maintaining a competitive edge over other business organisations (Lerbinger 2014) Overall both GreenHRM and SustainableHRM adopt a business case argument for the consideration of climate change into human resource management. Underpinning these arguments are a belief in the continued pursuit of the dominant capitalist system. But focusing on profits alone is insufficient to achieve successes in confronting issues of sustainability and demands a wider perspective than the business case alone. As evidenced by companies such as ITC Limited in India which has a strong commitment to a triple bottom line, which includes social, economic and environmental responsibility (Mandip 2012).

More recent research, for example, Kramer (2014) has adopted a critical perspective, suggesting that the mitigation of climate change is in itself a worthwhile aim of SustainableHRM. However ,case study research has suggested that organisations may place responsibility for the implementation of GreenHRM on employees who have little understanding of climate change, or power to effect organisational change (Russo and Harrison, 2005). There is also a lack of research examining the role that stakeholders such as trade unions can play, as well as wider society in general, in encouraging and supporting GreenHRM policies. Based on a review of the extant literature, this paper presents the key themes emerging across GreenHRM and SustainableHRM. Further, the paper will draw on the diversity management literature which has begun to critique business case claims for equitable treatment of the workforce (Tomlinson and Schwabenland, 2010). We will explore the potential for the diversity management literature to offer avenues for a more holistic and critical approach to climate change and human resource management. We will conclude by proposing a research agenda which sits at the intersection of social and environmental justice, within human resource management.

References

Kramar, R. (2014). Beyond strategic human resource management: is sustainable human resource management the next approach?. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *25*(8), 1069-1089.

Lerbinger, O. (2014) The global Manager, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

Mandip, G. (2012) ‘Green HRM: People management commitment to environmental sustainability’ Research Journal of Recent Sciences 1, 244-252.

Reid, E. M., & Toffel, M. W. (2009). Responding to public and private politics: Corporate disclosure of climate change strategies. *Strategic Management Journal*, *30*(11), 1157-1178.

Renwick, D. W., Jabbour, C. J., Muller-Camen, M., Redman, T., & Wilkinson, A. (2016). Contemporary developments in Green (environmental) HRM scholarship. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*,*27*(2), 114-128.

Russo, M. V., & Harrison, N. S. (2005). Organizational design and environmental performance: Clues from the electronics industry. *Academy of Management Journal*, *48*(4), 582-593.

Tomlinson, F., & Schwabenland, C. (2010). Reconciling competing discourses of diversity? The UK non-profit sector between social justice and the business case. *Organization*, *17*(1), 101-121.