HR IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR. AN EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS OF THE ACADEMIC LITERATURE

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Abstract: Studies regarding public administration reform mostly focus on the legal framework, political or geo-political context or leadership, multi-level governance structures (especially related to the European Union), causes of success and failures, financial or technological resources, while often ignoring or undermining the importance of human resources: the civil servants who are both subject to reforms and also tasked to implement them.

The article reviews the main HR connected concepts which were approached in the academic literature in the last three decades, focusing on the public sector. Taking into consideration the exponentially increasing number of works regarding human resources in the public sector, a comprehensive literature review was conducted using a systematic mapping approach based on the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) methodology. The research data used for the analysis was extracted from Web of Science (WOS) using multiple Boolean; the database consists of over 5,000 articles, books and book chapters, conference proceedings, extended abstracts, editorials, letters, reviews and other forms of academic research which included the main concepts of interest (human resources, staff, etc.) in their abstracts.

The scientific literature is used to identify the main topics or sub-topics of interest in HR in different time periods (decades) in order to observe how the field has developed and what was considered 'important' or 'relevant' in different contexts. The territorial focus varies between the international literature, European literature, CEE studies and even the national level, depending on data availability. The paper includes recommendations for practitioners (decision-makers, policy advisors and consultants) on which HR issues to focus and how to improve human resource management in the public sector.

Keywords: human resources, public sector/administration, civil service, staff, personnel, CEE