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Rethinking Public Administration through Managers as Leaders

Mauro ROMANELLI[1]

Abstract

Rethinking public administration helps to drive public managers as agents of change who assume behaviours coherently with a leadership identity. Public administration is rediscovering the sustainability as a key source and goal for strategic and organisational change by promoting the organisational dimension that relies on enhancing the quality of people as human resources, strengthening both the public manager as a leader and public servants as employees who are committed and motivated to public service. Managers as leaders help to drive public administration as an organisation which is able to proceed towards future as a sustainable public organisation which develops the quality of human capital and improves performances, supports public trust and enhances democratic life. Rediscovering the organisational dimension helps to develop the leadership as identity and source for ethical and transformational behaviours of a leader, and enables public managers to assume coherent values, attitudes and behaviours developing the leadership as central identity. Today, driving public administration requires effective public managers who are able to behave as ethical and transformational leaders who motivate, support and drive the employees at work.

Keywords: *leadership, identity, sustainable public administration, public management,*

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1. Introduction

Rediscovering the organisational dimension within public administration helps to enhance the role of public managers as leaders and agents of change who contribute to developing the functioning of effective public sector organisations in driving behaviours of public employees in order to improve skills and task performance. Rediscovering the leadership as a key source of public management helps to promote the effectiveness of administrative actions. Rediscovering the role of leadership as central identity of public managers helps to advance ethics-oriented behaviours and promote organisational values within public administration.

The leadership identity exerts influence on human behaviours. Managers assume the leadership identity as central identity in order to achieve goals and performances through and with people who share the same vision and values. Even if there are several studies that have investigated the role of leadership within public organisations (Orazi et al., 2013), still few studies pay attention to the leadership as central identity of public managers who are agents of change within public administration (Grøn et al., 2020; Rebora, 2016).

The research question refers to understand how managers can behave as leaders in order to drive public administration in a sustainable way. The leadership identity can be a source for training and having a good and effective public manager. The study elucidates how public managers behave as leaders rediscovering a leadership-centred identity in order to drive effective public administration to become a public service-oriented organisation meeting the needs of citizens. Sustainable public administration develops the organisational dimension as a key source for future advancements, empowering the employees and enhancing human resources, driving public managers as effective leaders who support motivation at work of the employees. The study refers to literature analysis and review which concern the relationship between public management and leadership for enhancing the human resources. The analysis is narrative and descriptive. The analysis elucidates some propositions and advances some lines of action for driving programs for training leadership coherently with organisational needs of public administration (Denyer & Tranfield, 2006).

The study is articulated in five sections. Following the introduction, in the second section, the theoretical background is presented with regards to public managers as leaders who are in charge of driving changing and sustainable public administration. In the third section, leadership helps to make public management as more effective for value creation processes. Rediscovering leadership as central identity of public managers helps the

public manager to support the pathway towards sustainability and drive sustainable processes that enable innovation and change within public administration. Finally, discussion and conclusions are outlined.

2. Public managers as leaders driving sustainable public administration

The public manager as a leader helps public administrations to drive change. Public managers as leaders contribute to improving the quality of human capital. Public administration stresses and enhances the management sphere and leadership capabilities in order to align behaviours to values and goals of public organisations, sustaining loyalty, retention, commitment, identity at work and public service motivation of employees (Christensen et al., 2017).

In the future, public organisations will evolve by investing in the quality of people, skills, competences and human resources. Public managers have to develop leadership capabilities and behave as leaders in order to support motivation of employees at work and drive them to feel to be committed and contribute to public services effectiveness. Managers as leaders specify the organisational objectives and support public service motivation, revealing the importance of public mission (Wright et al., 2012). Public managers as agents of change (Rebora, 2016) assume leadership-centred behaviours to shape an organisational intelligence which helps to breed innovative and pro-active behaviours (Rebora, 2018). Public managers as leaders adopt a transformational leadership in order to support public service motivation and promote performance, communicating to employees the importance of organisational mission and goals (Wright et al., 2012; Van Wart, 2003).

Developing sustainability helps to drive change within public administration. Public organisations have to rethink how to improve the organisation of public services and enhance democratic accountability, investing in quality of human capital and managers as effective leaders taking responsibilities and acting for value-based processes within communities (Fiorino, 2010; Goodsell, 2006; Moore, 1995; Todres, 1994, cited in Romanelli & Sena, 2018).

Today, public administration works to ensure the development of democratic life and promote accountability in order to restore the trust of citizens in government, and facilitate value creation processes within communities, and following a public management view (Goodsell, 2006; Moore, 1995, O'Flynn, 2007). Responsive public administration contributes

both to public interest and democratic life, engaging citizens and promoting public value creation for citizens and communities (Borgonovi, 2001, cited in Donna, 2010).

Public administration is rethinking about how to facilitate value-oriented processes within communities, bringing together efficiency and effectiveness of public services, ethics and accountability of public service management, by fostering the organisational dimension that relies both on developing public managers as leaders who construct a dialogue with citizens to enhance public trust (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2001). Public administration as an organisation supports the development of human capital and develops human resource management policies, strengthening the role of public managers as effective leaders who promote the quality of human resources. Sustainable public administration invests in human resources and capital, and supports public service motivation of employees at work (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007; Vigoda, 2000).

3. Rediscovering the role of leadership as identity of public managers as leaders driving sustainable public administration

Public administration is rediscovering how much the behaviours related to the leadership are important for managing the effective functioning of an organisation, and enhancing leadership competences for making more effective the role of public management in driving organisations towards sustainability. Leadership helps to improve the performance of public administration and enables the public manager as a leader who is able to assume ethical behaviours at work (Hassan et al., 2014; Orazi et al., 2013). Leadership helps to align the organisation to its environment and ecosystem and refers to a process that shows outcome in efficient, effective and legal ways, sustaining the public service motivation at work (Van Wart, 2003).

Sustainable public organisations are designing ethics-oriented policies, investing in training the leadership as behaviours, identity and core competence of a public manager. Public administration is supporting an ethics-oriented organisational culture, promoting the quality of human resources and tracking an ethics-oriented pathway (Todres, 1994) by making public managers as leaders who motivate the employees and contribute to public services effectiveness and values, promoting a responsive public administration (Vigoda, 2000).

In *New public management reform*, the hybrid identity of public managers as redesigned coherently with bridging managerial logics and

legalistic view, is a relevant topic that helps to understand the relationships between leadership and management, public service ethos and ethics (Orazi et al., 2013; Van Wart, 2003).

Rediscovering the office as vocation (Du Gay, 2005) implies to focus on the identity of the public manager as a performance-driven professional working in the service of *res publica* and engaging the society for common wealth (Borgonovi, 2020), and assuming the leadership identity as central identity (Grøn et al., 2020). The leadership identity refers to leadership behaviours that contribute to developing a vision that leads the followers to commit beyond the due and requested, beyond their interests, to achieve the organisational goals of a public institution (Jacobsen & Andersen, 2015).

As a prevailing identity than others, the leadership identity makes the public manager as an effective leader able to promote commitment and achieve goals and good performances, providing support in terms of competences and vision that help to support for achievement of organisational objectives (Orazi et al., 2013). The leadership as identity supports organisational and cultural change, and enhances the transformational leadership behaviours (Grøn et al., 2020).

Public managers are becoming leaders who make the public administration as sustainable and effective organisation which is capable to meet the needs of citizens and communities within the society. Bringing together ethics, leadership, human resources and cohesion drives towards the sustainable future of organisations (Grigorescu et al., 2020). As ethical leaders, public managers support the commitment of employees to public service and exert influence on their job satisfaction, reducing the absenteeism, and enhancing the behaviours and attitudes of employees at work (Hassan et al., 2014). As transformational leaders, public managers support the public service motivation and enhance public mission commitment in order to drive processes of change, helping job satisfaction and work performance of the employees (Park & Rainey, 2008; Van Wart, 2003; Vigoda, 2000).

As an organisation, public administration supports public service motivation in order to drive the action and behaviours of employees to contribute to efficient and effective public services, meeting the needs of people (Brewer & Selden, 1998), strengthening the human capital and promoting the value of human resources, investing in professionalism of public servants (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007). Successful changes within public administration rely on rediscovering the leadership identity as central identity of public managers who support professional development of public administration, and contribute to improving the quality of human capital (Rebora, 2016). Developing leadership training and education, by promoting

human resource management policies, helps to strengthen public service motivation and to enable public managers having leadership behaviours. Reinventing government relies on designing policies and pathways for training and education in leadership that helps public employees to drive effective organisational change (Park & Rainey, 2008). As a leader, the public manager is becoming a strategic agent of change within the relationship between public sector organisation and society, empowering the employees at work, interpreting the community values, promoting accountability and being an accountable administrative officer meeting the needs of citizens and communities (Bryson et al., 2014).

4. Discussions

The future of public administration advances by rediscovering the human and organisational dimension which is becoming the main driver of organisational sustainability in terms of an effective and efficient public administration, by serving the public interest and meeting the needs of citizens and communities, ensuring good performances. Public administration contributes to public and social value creation, advancing towards sustainability by strengthening the ethical and organisational dimension of acting by investing in leadership identity as a source that helps public managers to assume coherent behaviours and values, by interacting with citizens and groups within communities.

Following the *New public management* program, the effectiveness of management reform in the public sector is the issue of investments in quality of human resources, service motivation and leadership behaviours. The role of public management reform is to continuously shape behaviors and strategies, leading public administration to addressing new ways of promoting change orientation towards a new public service as an approach to management and organisation of public administration.

Sustainable public administration strengthens people, organisation and policies, building a cultural and services-oriented change in the relationships with citizens and communities. New public managers assume the leadership identity in order to behave and act as effective ethical and transformational leaders who empower the employees at work and sustain public service motivation, leading to public administration as an organisation which is able to serve the public interest, abandoning the dark side of a managerial orientation. Rediscovering the organisational and behavioural dimension helps the public manager to develop leadership as central identity and behave as a leader able to drive public sector management reform and

value creation processes. Rediscovering the importance of human capital helps to shape the processes for change within public administration and drives public service motivation and goal-oriented leadership as central identity of public managers.

5. Conclusions

The successful evolution of public administration relies on enhancing the role of public management as the effective agent of change, leading public organisations to becoming sustainable institutions which have a dialogue with citizens in order to drive public value creation processes and serve the public interest.

This study has only elucidated a theoretical analysis on leadership as central identity of public managers. The leadership identity is a key source that enables public administration to provide a meaningful contribution to value creation within communities. Reinforcing the leadership as central identity helps public managers to develop democratic values, equity and ethics, interacting with communities in order to support public trust of citizens in public administration. Sustainable public administration is becoming an organisation which drives public managers to assume the leadership identity and behaviours in order to develop human resources, helping employees to personally contribute to a valuable service through education and training (Grigorescu et al., 2020). Public administration may select a sustainability-driven pathway developing a leadership-oriented organisational culture in work environments.

In the study there are limitations. No empirical case studies and research are presented. Future research should investigate how public administration are redesigning human resource management policies within local autonomies, following an ethics-oriented approach the role of ethics-oriented human resource management policies and practices designed for leadership behaviours that public administration has adopted within local autonomies.

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