Talent management: Current theories and future research directions

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ABSTRACT

Research on Talent Management (TM) has been lagging behind businesses in offering vision and leadership in this field. After sketching a comprehensive outline of knowledge about TM, theoretical as well as practical, we introduce the papers in this special issue and their important contributions. This introductory article contributes to filling the knowledge gap by offering a research agenda at multiple levels and in multiple contexts. We also discuss methodological issues in the study of TM, and conclude by identifying several key trends that are now, and will continue to influence the practice and study of TM in the future.

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1. Introduction

Businesses and consulting firms have been driving the practice and discourse on talent management (TM). In contrast, the academic field of TM is characterized by a lack of theoretical frameworks (Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Scullion, Collings, & Caligiuri, 2010). Research on TM has been lagging behind businesses in offering vision and leadership in this field. This paper contributes to filling this knowledge gap by sketching an outline of key theoretical and practical conceptions of TM. It offers important theoretical and methodological avenues that TM researchers might explore in the future.

The topic of TM has gained increasing attention in the last decade. Both companies and institutions have become interested in the concept. Some of these include, for example, McKinsey & Co., the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) (CIPD), the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM), Asian and European governments, governments of Arab Gulf countries, among others. To date, research has focused on current organizational practices, but it often lacks a theoretical perspective. Recent reviews have come to the conclusion that the academic field of TM is characterized by a lack of definitions and theoretical frameworks (Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Nijs, Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, & Sels, this

issue; Meyers & van Woerkom, this issue). In fact, the lack of consistent definitions appears to be the reason why there are at least three different ways of interpreting TM in practice: (1) TM is often used simply as a new term for common HR practices (old wine in new bottles), (2) it can allude to succession-planning practices, or (3) it can refer more generically to the management of talented employees (Lewis & Heckman, 2006). In short, there is neither a uniform understanding of the term "talent management," nor of its aims and scope. There are, for example, ongoing controversies about whether TM is about managing the talent of all employees (inclusive or strengths-based approach to TM), or whether it is about the talents of high-potential or high-performing employees only (exclusive approach to TM; Iles, Chuai, & Preece, 2010; Iles, Preece, & Chuai, 2010). Furthermore, there is very little focus on how TM could or needs to evolve in the future.

Topics that have been discussed in the literature on TM include, among others, identifying the talent required for international business operations (Tarique & Schuler, 2010); managing top-management talent (Joyce & Slocum, 2012); linking the strategic management of business operations and TM practices (Collings & Mellahi, 2009); and understanding TM in the context of organizational-linkage mechanisms, such as mergers and acquisitions. Studies linking TM to topics such as skilled migration and expatriation, diversity management (Al Ariss & Crowley-Henry, 2013), and managing the various generations of the workforce (Meister & Willyerd, 2010) have also started to appear. A major challenge highlighted in the literature is the failure of organizations to manage the talents of their employees effectively, despite the care taken to recruit that talent. The same applies to countries, in terms of managing their international skilled workforces

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(Turchick-Hakak & Al Ariss, 2013; World Economic Forum, 2011). Having briefly discussed some of the key trends in TM, we now move to understanding the theory and practice of TM.

2. Talent-management theory

The term TM has acquired various meanings that reflect some key HR developments in modern societies. Some of the very early focus was on recruitment, specifically for top-management positions, and the importance of attracting and selecting the most intelligent and capable talent, along with the recognition and evaluation of characteristics indicative of managerial success (Miner, 1973). Over time, however, as the HR field has developed, some more precise definitions have emerged. One of the most common definitions, although admittedly ponderous, is by Collings and Mellahi (2009). They define TM as "activities and processes that involve the systematic identification of key positions that differentially contribute to the organization's sustainable competitive advantage, the development of a talent pool of high-potential and high-performing incumbents to fill these roles, and the development of a differentiated human resource architecture to facilitate filling these positions with competent incumbents, and to ensure their continued commitment to the organization" (p. 304). The same authors recognize that TM systems should begin by identifying key organizational positions or mission-critical roles. This assumes a willingness to acknowledge the existence of strategic roles within organizations over non-strategic ones. Such an approach assumes that talent pools should be developed from which to fill these positions. Recruitment is therefore managed based on the requirements of the role in question, and it is implemented through a combination of "internal development and external recruitment" (p. 308). The authors emphasize that organizations should aim to cultivate work motivation, organizational commitment, and extra-role performance among employees to achieve the best from their talent and to avoid turnover.

With the internationalization of businesses, a more 'global' dimension of TM (i.e. Global Talent Management, or GTM) has emerged. Vaiman, Scullion, and Collings (2012) define GTM as including organizational initiatives that contribute to attracting, selecting, developing, and keeping the best employees in the most important roles worldwide. Stahl et al. (2012) sought to identify GTM principles that should be developed and adopted to best ensure organizational development and success. The authors collected data from 33 multinational corporations headquartered in 11 countries, and examined 18 companies in depth. The authors selected target companies based on their superior business performance and reputations as employers. The authors identified two distinct understandings of TM: the differentiated approach (limited to high-potential employees), and the inclusive approach (available to all employees). As a general conclusion, results suggest that firms avoid simply mimicking the practices of other top-performing companies. Rather each firm should align its TM practices with its strategy and values. For successful GTM, the authors note the following six key principles: (1) alignment with strategy, (2) internal consistency, (3) cultural embeddedness, (4) management involvement, (5) a balance of global and local needs, and (6) employer branding through differentiation.

While the convergence of principles and also practices is evident, it remains essential that firms adopt "best" practices in light of their own particular contexts. "Best practices" are a start, but ultimately each organization must adopt GTM practices that reflect "best fit." A further point worth noting about GTM is the importance of expatriation. In this regard, Shen and Hall (2009) consider GTM as having to cope with deploying the competencies and managing the talent of expatriate employees anytime and anywhere in the world. No less important, however, is the need to manage the repatriation process for the benefit of the individual as well as for the organization.

In conclusion, TM theories have been driven by the assumption that maximizing the talents of employees is a source of sustained competitive advantage (Scullion et al., 2010). This has resulted in TM becoming extensively linked to human resource management (HRM) practices in organizations in the hope of increasing business performance (Farndale, Scullion, & Sparrow, 2010). Many multinational enterprises have adopted TM strategies, with medium- and small-size companies being less involved. The way TM is conceptualized, as illustrated, reflects such performance-driven trends. Congruent with Dries and Pepermans (2012), we believe that what constitutes "talent" needs to be agreed upon by line managers, HR managers, and top managers, all of whom might have different perspectives on the sources of competitive advantage for their firms.

3. The practice of talent management

Research shows that firms have some convergent, but also divergent, TM practices (Stahl et al., 2012). A performance-driven vision of TM is very common in TM processes. Early studies on managing people indicated that organizations need to pay greater attention to internal talent, since managerial talent is just as likely to be present in those employees working their way up through the ranks as in managers hired from outside the organization (Miner, 1973). Ready and Conger (2007) explain that companies struggle to fill key strategic roles from within their organizations because of an insufficient pipeline of high-potential employees. Using the example of Procter & Gamble and HSBC, the same authors argue that TM should support the main concerns of the CEOs: "driving performance and creating an effective climate" (p. 71).

This does not mean that companies are successful in managing their internal talent. For instance, Joyce and Slocum (2012) stress that organizations are failing to "capitalize on the opportunity for strategic success that a talented management team can bring" (p. 184), and that the importance of TM is being overlooked. The authors relied on a 200-firm study, drawn from 40 industries over a 10-year time period. The firms varied in size and were both U.S.-based and global in scope. Their article examines what managers can do to manage talent, taking account of the organization's particular strategic situation, in order to achieve the highest levels of performance. Joyce and Slocum's (2012) findings show that executives are the key assets of organizations, and that their work to build and sustain talent is critical. Specifically, talent management must be understood in the context of the firm's strategic capabilities. Joyce and Slocum (2012) identified four critical capabilities: in strategy, structure, culture, and execution. They argued that senior managers should manage talent in light of the strategic needs and opportunities of their firms. Furthermore, an innovative structure will enable firms to operate effectively. Linked to this, a supportive corporate culture will provide employees with a sense of cohesion, and at the same time, deepen their understanding and practice of the norms/ideals of their organization. Finally, executing unique TM processes enables companies to gain a competitive edge, and allows them to meet or exceed their customers' expectations.

Another key dimension to TM is how employees perceive management practices. Using Psychological-Contract theory as a lens, Hoglund (2012) assessed "employee perceptions of the extent to which talent qualities are rewarded, and the effect of such perceptions on employee-felt obligations to develop skills" (p. 126). Hoglund conducted an exploratory pre-study, comprising 17 face-to-face interviews with heads of HR in Nordic multinational corporations (MNCs) (ten Finnish, two Swedish, and five Norwegian MNCs. The firms employed between 2500 and 60,000

employees). For the main study, data were collected by means of a web survey, using a sample of managers and professionals who were alumni from a Finnish business school. Results showed that managers should honor the psychological contract with employees so as not to breach their trust, fail to meet their expectations, and risk losing valuable workers. Building on this study, we recommend that researchers examine how psychological-contract obligations differ among employees who know they are identified as talent, those who know that they are not identified as talent, and those who do not know whether or not they are identified as talent. For more on this, see the papers by Farndale et al. as well as Sonnenberg et al. in this Special Issue. This is but one example of how much research remains to be done, and how much remains to be learned about this topic.

Based on this discussion, it is essential to understand how the 'global' dimension of TM is practiced in organizations. Shen and Hall (2009) suggest that the more connected the employee is to his/her job, co-workers, organization, and community, the more likely he/she is to stay and to seek intra-organizational growth opportunities upon completion of an expatriation experience. The same authors propose facilitating repatriation adjustment through a series of actions: shortening overseas assignments, enhancing the expatriation assessment and career-planning process, improving the perceived link with the home organization, and increasing the perceived cost of leaving. To a large extent these actions can be accomplished by providing developmental support, such as mentoring, coaching, and counseling to the employee, his or her spouse, and children during expatriation and repatriation. The repatriation process can also be enhanced by facilitating home visits, company-sponsored networking activities, by providing information through regular company newsletters, and by creating expatriate networks and facilitating communications with back-home mentors and colleagues. Research shows that it is essential to ensure that the HR executives responsible for international moves have a full understanding of international assignments. The role of HR in GTM is clearly a crucial element. Vaiman et al. (2012) argue that there is a shift towards increasing the contribution of the HR function by including it in organizational decision-making. To do that, effective decision making in TM should be tightly linked to the strategy and corporate culture of the firm.

An increasing number of academic voices are calling for a shift away from the U.S.-centric focus of TM. In this vein, Kim, Froese, and Cox (2012) turned their attention to the recruitment of talented individuals in foreign markets with a study of Japanese companies in Vietnam. Based on a survey (in Vietnamese) of 326 university students in Vietnam, 31 percent had a friend or a relative who worked in a Japanese company. The authors selected extrinsic organizational characteristics such as pay, reputation, and organizational culture to consider the interactive effects among different organizational factors. Personal characteristics considered included: work centrality, money orientation, risk aversion, and individualism. Kim et al.'s findings show that work-centric, money-oriented, and collectivistic job-seekers were more attracted to Japanese companies. These results support the Attraction–Selection–Attrition framework and Person–Organization Fit theory in an Asian setting. To recruit talent in Vietnam, the authors argue that it is necessary to have a deep understanding of individual dispositional factors.

In another study, Iles, Chuai, et al. (2010) and Iles, Preece, et al. (2010) researched TM perspectives and practices in seven multinational corporations (MNCs) in Beijing. For most companies studied, TM seems to promise new and different approaches to traditional HRM practices. Iles, Chuai, et al. (2010) and Iles, Preece, et al. (2010) suggest that TM needs to be studied as embedded in its particular social and organizational contexts – and we agree. Having reviewed some of the ways that TM is practiced, the

following sections introduce the papers in this special issue, as well as offer suggestions for future research on this topic.

4. Papers in this issue

The collection of papers in our special issue begins with a review by Nijs, Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries and Sels under the title "A multidisciplinary review into the definition, operationalization and measurement of talent". This paper fills a void, as the field of TM – both from a theoretical as well as a more practitioner-oriented perspective – will benefit from an overview of the variety of perspectives on talent, as well as related definitions of and ways to operationalize and measure it. The authors do this in a very thorough way by integrating insights fragmented across four different disciplines – the HR literature, the giftedness literature, and literatures from vocational psychology and positive psychology. In total they review more than 150 papers. The resulting overview provides a very helpful guide for both construct as well as predictive validity; it will no doubt help to speed up the study and practice of TM.

Based on the well-known distinction between exclusive and inclusive on the one hand, and developable and stable on the other hand, Meyers and van Woerkom distinguish four distinct talent approaches (e.g., exclusive/stable; inclusive/developable) that underpin the practice of TM in their paper entitled, "The influence of philosophies on talent management." They outline each of the four philosophies, including underlying assumptions, related TM practices, opportunities, and challenges. The insights they generate will be of value to practitioners, making them more aware of the effects of the underlying assumptions of each approach. This is particularly relevant once they consider shifting their approach, for example, from an exclusive to a more inclusive one. Researchers will benefit from the propositions that the authors develop for each approach.

In the paper "Balancing individual and organizational goals in global talent management: A mutual-benefits perspective" Farndale, Pai, Sparrow and Scullion develop a kind of balancing act between organization-assigned expatriate assignments and self-initiated assignments by employees. Combining the literature from global talent management and expatriate management, they develop a mutual-benefits perspective that combines organizational-level talent-management policies with individual interests for an expatriate assignment. Psychological-contract theory appears to be a useful avenue for reconciling the two perspectives. Two qualitative pilot studies generate further insights into the possibilities and pitfalls for combining the two, and generate propositions for further research, but also valuable recommendations and points of attention for practice.

Sidani and Al Ariss's paper, "Institutional and corporate drivers of global talent management: Evidence from the Arab Gulf region", explores the influences on TM of institutional and corporate drivers. Studying TM, specifically how practices are identified and used, within the context of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the authors draw from the huge resources of institutional literature available. This work represents an important contribution to research on TM internationally since the Gulf region is one relatively uncovered by the literature to date. It also offers a context, with aspects and issues, outside and unfamiliar to the much-researched Western world. Organizations are challenged to balance the legal constraints of 'localization' rules specific to their local context with their efforts to achieve economic survival and success. This is reflected in their TM policies and practices, which cannot always follow an international model without some adaptation. In conclusion, the paper offers a framework depicting the TM process and the factors that shape it in emerging regions.

Cooke, Saini and Wang, in their paper, "Talent management in China and India: A comparison of management perceptions and human resource practices", focus on TM in China and India. The paper is based on the experience of 178 non-HR managers from firms working in these two countries. The authors look at the different understandings of 'talent,' the various TM practices deployed, and the hurdles experienced. Their research reveals the significance in both countries of a materialistic value system that is manifest in relationships between employee and employer. They also identify the requirements for building capacity relevant to HR, but respective to each country, as well as the general necessity, both in theory and in practice, to approach TM with an eye to its specific context internationally, rather than accepting a perspective that can be applied universally.

In their paper, "Talent management and career development: What it takes to get promoted," Claussen, Grohsjean, Luger, and Probst examine an under-researched topic in management, namely, the managerial promotion process. Using a sample of more than 7000 promotions to middle management, and more than 3100 promotions to senior management in the video-game-development industry, the authors reported some surprising findings. Based on arguments grounded in human and social capital theories, they found that an increase in human capital (i.e. experience and expertise) improves promotion odds for middle- and senior-management positions. The positive effect of a manager's network size, however, only applies to promotions to middle-management positions. These findings have direct implications for individual career development as well as for talent-management programs.

The next paper, "Talent management and expatriation: Bridging two streams of research and practice," highlights the overlap in these two distinct fields of study. The authors, Cerdin and Brewster, argue that a convergence of the two can lead to important and useful results pertaining to both theory and practice. They suggest a number of ways to bring these two lines of research together, and devote particular attention to the range of different avenues to which the various understandings – more or less specific – of TM might lead. Their definition of GMT, as presented in the framework proposed, involves the development of high potential along with that of international careers. In this paper, the authors seek to stimulate further theoretical investigation into a TM-minded strategic approach to managing expatriation, as well as its practical implementation.

In a similar vein, David Collings examines the topics of "Integrating global mobility and global talent management: Exploring the challenges and strategic opportunities." He argues that while global mobility represents an important element of many multinational enterprises' (MNEs') global talent management systems, the two areas of practice have largely been decoupled in research and practice. Using human capital and social capital theories as theoretical frames to integrate these two areas, he argues that global talent pools and routines for managing global staffing flows are key organizational routines that can maximize the contribution of global mobility to the MNE. One means through which the global mobility function can increase its visibility and status in the MNE, and to demonstrate its strategic value, is through the development of key metrics, such as the cost of turnover among repatriates. Collings argues that early intervention of the global mobility function in the international assignment process in imperative, as is the development of an appropriate HR architecture to support the globally mobile population.

In a conceptual paper, "Generational challenges to talent management: A framework for talent retention based on the psychological-contract perspective," Festing and Schäfer examine a novel aspect of TM programs, namely, generational differences in

responses to them. They develop a theoretical framework and testable hypotheses, and use it to propose that the strong interest of Generations X and Y in training, development, and career advancement makes highly engaged and extensive TM activities even more crucial for retaining talented individuals than is the case for the Baby-Boomer generation. The authors also offer a rich agenda for future research in this area.

Whether one is part of the exclusive talent pool or not, and the consequences of that, is the topic of the empirical paper by Sonnenberg, Zijderveld, and Brinks, entitled, "The role of talent-perception incongruence in effective talent management." With a sample that includes more than 20 organizations, they investigate the issue of talent-incongruence perception. This occurs when the organization's executives perceive an individual as talent, but the individual is unaware of this, and the other way around as well. Incongruent talent perceptions play an important role in degree of psychological-contract fulfillment or violation. Hence TM practices serve as communication practices that signal to employees the expectations of the organization. Organizations need to ensure that the TM practices communicate the right message to the target group and that the target group perceives these 'signals' as intended. Based on their empirical results, exclusive TM strategies are more successful in generating talent-perception congruence than inclusive TM strategies.

Finally, in "From talent management to talent optimization," William Schiemann asks the intriguing question, "How can we know when talent investments have been optimized?" To address that issue, he presents and illustrates the People Equity framework, comprised of Alignment, Capabilities, and Engagement (ACE). He then demonstrates how that framework serves as a global bridge between important individual and business outcomes – such as turnover, financial performance, quality, productivity, and customer retention – and organizational processes and policies that drive high or low talent optimization across the talent lifecycle. Schiemann concludes with a set of practical recommendations for organizations and the managers who make them work.

5. Where to go from here? A research agenda

In the interest of making TM more comprehensive and better understood, given the distinct lack of frameworks currently available for research in TM, we offer the following suggestions for future research. First, we urge researchers to understand TM as a relational construct. That requires researchers to take into account relationships among individual, organizational, institutional, and national/international contexts that shape the management of talent (Al Ariss & Crowley-Henry, 2013). The individual dynamic comprises the subjective experience of the individual. For example, this includes the perceptions of managers and employees about how their talents are being managed in their firms. A second feature of this perspective is the intermediary role of organizations where TM policy and practice takes place. A third is a country's institutional context that enables/constrains TM, such as norms, values, and regulations. Either consciously or unconsciously these impact TM policies and practices. Finally, the national/international and even sectoral contexts account for the transferability of TM process across business sectors and national boundaries. Table 1 illustrates how TM might be implemented at various levels and in various contexts.

We will provide examples of the different levels and how they are interlinked. In doing this, we also highlight trends/topics for future research. At the organizational level, TM remains largely confined to skilled individuals expected to fill key managerial positions in organizations. Criteria for the selection of those who can be part of TM programs include attributes such as being skilled and belonging to a certain key managerial category in a company.

Table 1
Key levels and contexts that define TM research.

Key levels	Specific themes
Individual level	Individual or personal agency, strategy, and experience, such as work-life, impacting upon talent development.
Organizational level	Firm-wide policies and practices – both conscious and unconscious – and HRM strategies that shape TM.
Institutional context	Legislative, political, and legal frameworks at regional, national, and international levels that institutionalize TM in employment, education, and other fields both formally and informally.
National/international/sectoral context	TM analyzed with respect to its context; recognition of how TM practices can transcend (or not) national borders among different industries, networks, and organizations.

Of course, the hidden assumption is that such individuals are able to accumulate social, cultural, human, and other forms of capital that provide sufficient personal characteristics for them to be part of TM processes. In practice, such an elitist approach to TM impacts the individual level of TM. It excludes individuals who are in lower ranks in organizations, such as technical and operational workers who did not have the chance to accumulate the various forms of capital mentioned. On the one hand, they will have little chance to progress within their organizations. On the other hand, their organizations might miss the opportunity to develop people who may have played key roles in areas such as innovation, technical expertise, and also management. Thus, we argue for broader inclusion of less-privileged employees (in terms of their skills, jobs, positions in organizations, as well as other factors such as physical disabilities), who also constitute an important element in the workforce. Furthermore, TM processes might also consider various forms of diversity, such as gender or intercultural competencies that internationally mobile professionals possess. With respect to gender, for instance, there is unequal representation of women in science, technology, and engineering professions across the world (Servon & Visser, 2011).

At the intersection of the organizational and individual levels, barriers to women accessing leadership positions relate to lack of mentors, challenges in male-dominated environments (e.g., oil exploration, cargo movement), and more family responsibilities than male counterparts. Ng and Burke (2005) focused on understanding women and ethnic minorities' career choices when seeking leadership positions. They collected data from a survey of 113 MBA job seekers, all MBA students from a mid-sized university located in Ontario, Canada, representing a mixture of gender, ethnic minority, and immigrant status. They concluded that women and ethnic minorities consider diversity management important when accepting offers of employment. Furthermore, highly skilled immigrants rate organizations with diversity management as more attractive. There appears to be a need to place a higher emphasis on diversity management in order to attract women and minority applicants. Such diverse individuals prefer to work for more progressive organizations. More broadly, at the national/international level in emerging economies such as India, China, and Russia, McDonnell, Collings, and Burgess (2012) propose that companies need to link TM more closely to diversity management, especially with the multicultural workforce, but also with increasing numbers of female employees. In such cases, business leaders and HR managers could do a better job in leveraging existing talent.

From our discussion, we believe that in order to address TM challenges and opportunities, TM agendas should take into account the broader national and institutional contexts rather than focusing exclusively on organizational performance. In addressing this, an enhanced understanding of TM is possible. If it is to be redefined, building on the definition of TM given by Collings and Mellahi (2009), we conceptualize TM as "activities and processes that involve the following: (1) systematic identification of positions that differentially contribute to an organization's sustainable competitive advantage; (2) the development of a diverse talent pool to fill these roles, and the development of a differentiated human resource architecture to facilitate filling them; and (3) continued commitment to the organization and to the well-being of societies, while taking local and national contexts into account." Thus, we envision that TM programs need to move beyond the performance-based discourse traditionally found in organizations if they are to generate positive impacts on society as a whole and address the linkages among the different levels and contexts shown in Table 1. For example, Tymon, Stumpf, and Doh (2010) examine the challenges in attracting, managing, and retaining talent, especially in the developing regions of the world where "economic activity has outpaced the availability of skilled employees". They developed and tested a model of TM across 28 Indian firms involving 4811 professional-level employees using a stratified random sample. Tymon et al. suggest that focusing on corporate social responsibility in the context of emerging countries creates a sense of pride in the company and helps managers and HR professionals to make effective use of their talents (see also the work of Vaiman et al., 2012.).

6. Methodological issues

Regarding methodology, and specifically the collection and analysis of data, we advise the use of multiple methods and data sources in TM research for the sake of greater accuracy and to avoid mono-method bias (McEvoy & Richards, 2006), In line with Dries and Pepermans (2012), we propose that there should be more information gathered empirically (such as evaluation reports, data retrieved via assessment centers, or from observation/participation) in order that the means by which organizations are currently seeking to recognize talent are better understood. One suggestion might be to employ qualitative and longitudinal methods of research alongside quantitative, cross-sectional research, thereby diversifying the sources.

Quantitative data serve an important purpose in supporting the theoretical arguments that build into generalized conclusions (Howard & Borland, 2001), but they do not permit a deeper and richer understanding of individual experiences. It is qualitative data that yield information beyond statistics alone, regarding, for example, the quality of the processes under examination (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Qualitative, in-depth interviews, for example, can contribute details that enable the evolution of a more solid theory. Field notes taken during this process enhance this value even more. These include notes on the tone of voice, facial expression, and interaction provide information that would go entirely unacknowledged in the traditional interview process itself. Such notes add a great deal of contextual, supporting information relevant to the analysis, evaluation, and interpretation of interviewees and their accounts. Detailed documentation can be of great value in evaluating TM practices, and in identifying avenues for organizations and individuals to be more effective.

7. The future of talent management

We envision that in the next 5–10 years the landscape for TM will change drastically, especially through the availability and use of social media. Innovations in technology, like Taleo's talent

market and Linkedin, can significantly improve the ability for companies to find talent quickly throughout the world and to match talent supply with demand more effectively. We also note the increased popularity of crowd sourcing and open sourcing that allow companies to source brainpower for free (or at a very low cost), in addition to increased internal mobility and tapping of talent on demand. For example, HSBC has a pool of 450 people it can deploy globally to work in any function to help the bank fluidly move skills to where they are most needed at any point in time. We foresee the following trends:

- Global abundance but local scarcity of talent;
- Fewer young people and more older people, many heading rapidly towards retirement. Of course this will depend on national demographic contexts;
- More differences across generations at work, as well as similarities (e.g., the need for respect, supportive bosses, and credible, trustworthy leaders);
- More diverse, remote, and virtual workforces with different attitudes toward work; and
- New methods of working and new relationships between users and suppliers of talent.

These trends will impact the future shape of TM. The organizational setting/context will change dramatically. We will discuss in more detail the kinds of changes we can expect in the years to come. As far as worker dynamics are concerned, we foresee that workers will increasingly be in control of their own talent. For example, some may decide to work for multiple organizations at the same time. Talent can come from anywhere in the world. The focus of TM will shift from an employee focus to a focus on globally available talent. Talent can be sourced flexibly from a time and location perspective. Workers are not necessarily part of the organization, but knowledge is. At the same time, we see more freedom for employees to manage their careers. In some instances, only a small group of core employees will remain in the organization. The definition of "talent" will shift to the talent an organization needs *at a specific time and place*. Based on the crucial importance of TM, the CEO will become the Chief Talent officer. Talent Management will therefore be combined with marketing and supply-chain management. Finally the Talent Management Function/Department will be the provider of talent guidance, tools, and coaching to enable workers to own responsibility for their personal development. Practices will be customized to the individual level and often defined by workers themselves. This might result in the following guiding principles for TM:

- Technology will serve as an enabler for effective TM;
- (Prospective) employees, temporarily linked to the organization, are customers too. Thus TM will increasingly be based on marketing and supply-chain principles;
- Fewer boundaries, as the TM function focuses on a global labor market; and
- Taking into account the increased diversity of people and employment relationships, it will be very important to create unity within diversity by emphasizing shared organizational values.

This special issue takes a broad look at TM, now and in the future, in its various forms methodologically and theoretically as it appears in numerous contexts across the globe and in different fields. There are a number of significant implications for both TM research and its practice, which open new approaches to understanding and evaluating TM in organizations. We hope readers will enjoy the contents of this issue, and that the papers in it will suggest further research to explore novel issues relating to talent management. Van Rooij (2012) suggests several topics that remain under-researched, for example, TM of older workers, since the study of training and career development opportunities for older workers is lacking. Of course, there are many other TM topics that need to be explored. Future research might focus on issues such as the following. (This is non-exhaustive list.)

- What further theoretical insights might contribute to the future development of talent management? How could this push the boundaries of international business and management?
- What models of TM might evolve in the future?
- What are the effects of inclusive and exclusive approaches to TM, and how are they perceived by employees who are/are not considered to be "talent" by the organization?
- What mechanisms might foster linkages between global diversity management and TM? How? What might be the benefits to businesses?
- What are the individual, organizational, and macro-contextual barriers to TM in the present and future, and how can these be overcome?
- What roles might HRM managers and organizational leaders play in fostering ethical and sustainable local, regional, and global TM?
- What forms does TM take in medium- and small-size organizations, and how are these models likely to look in the future?
- What theoretical bridges exist (if any) between expatriation and TM? How might these diverge/converge in the future? What impact might such developments have on international business and management?
- In terms of improving employee engagement, what can be learned from cross-national and cross-organizational comparisons of TM policies and practices? What are the challenges and what are the best methods to address them?
- What is the role of stakeholders such as corporate leaders, governments, NGOs, universities, and international institutions in shaping TM? How is it possible to take their interests into account in improving TM?

Acknowledgement

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