

**The Implementation of Talent Management Practices in  
U.A.E. Organizations**

تنفيذ ممارسات إدارة المواهب في المؤسسات الإماراتية

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

In contemporary business, talented individuals are considered as one of the most important assets and the key to the success and continuity of any organization. Companies worldwide from many different industries have adopted numerous practices/programs to attract, promote and retain talented employees. These practices/programs are often referred to as “Talent Management”. In general, the main goal of any Talent Management at any organization is to ensure having the right talented people for the right positions, all the time. The challenge, as evident from many studies, is that talents are not easy to find and/or not easy to maintain.

The main purpose of this research was to investigate, through primary and secondary data, the views and perceptions on the topic of Talent Management, and also the challenges associated with it in general. Based on that, the aim was to develop a comprehensive conceptual framework for the Talent Management process/model that can be applied in different organizations. In the first stage of this dissertation, after the review of the literature on the subject, an initial conceptual framework was developed. The framework comprised of eight stages; stage one is the alignment of Talent Management objectives with business goals. Stage two is the alignment of Talent Management programs with the Human Resources function. Stage three is the identification of pivotal and key positions in the organization. Stage four is creating a talent pool that includes talented individuals from internal and external sources. Stage five is about the enhancement of talents capabilities and competencies for current and future roles. Stage six is taking great measures to motivate and engage talents. Stage seven is the output from the process – having right motivated and competent talents all the time. The final stage, stage eight is the outcome – as a result of the previous stages, organizations will have a sustainable competitive advantage, better performance, and more profits.

In the second stage of this dissertation, the aim was to study how UAE organizations practice and implement Talent Management. Interviews were conducted with five organizations within the UAE that are implementing Talent Management programs. Based on the findings from the interviews and the discussion in this dissertation, it was concluded that, if considered, these three factors will add great value to Talent Management processes. The factors are; a) Communication, b) Knowing the needs and ambitions of the talents, and finally, c) The Readiness of Managers. Accordingly, the conceptual framework was modified to include those factors.

في الأعمال المعاصرة ، يعتبر الأفراد الموهوبين أحد أهم الأصول ومفتاح نجاح واستمرارية أي مؤسسة. فقد تبنت المؤسسات في كافة أرجاء العالم ممارسات وبرامج عديدة لتحفيز جذب المواهب والمحافظة عليها. وهذه الممارسات والبرامج يشار إليها غالباً بإدارة المواهب. وعموماً فإن الهدف الرئيسي لأي برنامج إدارة مواهب في أي مؤسسة هو التأكد من الحصول على أشخاص موهوبين لتولي المناصب المهمة في جميع الأوقات. والتحدي كما هو واضح في العديد من الدراسات، هو أن إيجاد الأشخاص الموهوبين ليس سهلاً وأيضاً ليس من السهل المحافظة عليهم.

الهدف الرئيسي من هذا البحث هو التحقيق ، من خلال المعلومات الأولية والثانوية ، في وجهات النظر والتصورات حول موضوع إدارة المواهب ، وكذلك التحديات المرتبطة بها بشكل عام. وبناءً على ذلك ، كانت الغاية تطوير إطار مفاهيمي شامل لعملية / نموذج إدارة المواهب الذي يمكن تطبيقه في أي منظمة أو مؤسسة.

في المرحلة الأولى من هذه الرسالة ، وبعد مراجعة الأدبيات حول هذا الموضوع ، تم تطوير إطار مفاهيمي أولي. يتكون الإطار من ثماني مراحل ؛ المرحلة الأولى هي التوفيق بين أهداف إدارة المواهب مع الأهداف العامة للمؤسسة. المرحلة الثانية هي التوفيق بين أهداف برامج إدارة المواهب مع أهداف إدارة الموارد البشرية للمؤسسة. المرحلة الثالثة هي تحديد الوظائف المحورية والرئيسية في المؤسسة. المرحلة الرابعة هي إنشاء وجود قاعدة بيانات للأفراد الموهوبين الموجودين داخل وخارج المؤسسة. المرحلة الخامسة تتعلق بتعزيز قدرات وكفاءات الموهوبين للوظائف الحالية والمستقبلية. والمرحلة السادسة هي إتخاذ إجراءات فعالة لتحفيز وتشغيل المواهب. والمرحلة السابعة وهي ناتج العملية – هو وجود موظفين متحفزين و موهوبين طوال الوقت. والمرحلة النهائية ، المرحلة الثامنة وهي المحصلة النهائية من عملية إدارة المواهب ، وهي أن تكون لدى المؤسسة ميزة تنافسية مستدامة ، وأداء أفضل ، والمزيد من الأرباح.

وفي المرحلة الثانية من هذه الرسالة ، كان الهدف هو دراسة كيفية تعامل وتنفيذ المؤسسات الإماراتية لبرامج إدارة المواهب. وقد تم عمل مقابلات مع خمس منظمات تقوم بتطبيق مفهوم إدارة المواهب. وعلى أساس ما بينته هذه المقابلات والنقاش الذي عرض في هذا البحث، فقد تم التوصل إلى أن ثلاثة عوامل سوف تضيف قيمة عظمى إلى عملية إدارة المواهب. وهذه العوامل هي: أ. الاتصالات الإدارية ب. معرفة احتياجات وطموحات الموهوبين، ج. جاهزية المدراء لتقبل وتطبيق برامج إدارة المواهب. وطبقاً لذلك تم تعديل الاطار النظري ليضم هذه العوامل.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

The term Talent-Management was first emerged in 1998 after when McKinsey & Company published a paper titled ‘The War for Talent’ (Assets Skills, 2013). The paper pointed at a major challenge that big organizations were facing in the US at that time, which was the difficulty of attracting and retaining talented and experienced people – especially for the senior executive/leadership roles. Following that, other studies indicated that lack of talent will be a problem that most of the organizations around the globe will face sooner or later. This prophecy started to come true, when a dramatic boom in the world economy happened between the years 2001 and 2007, many new companies were founded, and the demand for talented people was increased. Many companies during that period have recognized and experienced the challenge of not having the right number of talented people to fill critical vacant positions. Instead, they had no choice but to recruit candidates not competent enough just to keep the business running.

Organizations worldwide, in the past few decades, have realized the importance of the ‘Human Resources’ (in particular talented employees) to the success and continuity of their businesses, hence, the focus of the organizations has shifted from capital & machinery to the human factor. The human resources are, if not the most, undeniably considered as one of the most important assets of any organization. According to Gardner (2002) for the organizations around the globe to remain competitive, they need to consider their human capital as their key asset. Similarly, Kehinde (2012) stated that for organizations to be more effective they need multiple resources such as men, money and machines, however, the most important resource is the people.

Upon realizing the importance of human assets, organizations around the globe have taken certain measures to ensure the availability of talented employees occupying all the critical positions at any time. To do so, organizations have adopted a “Talent-Management” programs that foster the attraction and the retention of the best talent.

Although the aim of the Talent Management practices implemented by the organizations around the globe is the same, the approaches differ from one organization to another. This research will aim at studying different Talent Management models adopted/developed by organizations in various sectors in the U.A.E.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Many researchers have highlighted the significance of Talent Management in meeting organization's goals, however, since the early 2000s and till today, there is neither a clear definition, nor a standard model for the subject "Talent Management". The definition of the term Talent Management provided by the experts and organizations was based on their perceptions on the subject, and the models developed and practiced was simply what has been thought as ways for enhancing the exercise of attracting and retaining employees.

The purpose of this research is to explore the perceptions and views of professionals on the topic of Talent Management and the practices associated with it, and then propose a comprehensive standardized model, that will add value to the existing models, which can be adopted by the organizations in the U.A.E. and the organizations worldwide in order to improve the effectiveness of their talent management practices.

The main concern and focus of this research will be the implementation of Talent Management practices in the UAE. The so-called 'war for talent' is a continuous war, and world economy is now more challenging and changing than ever before. The UAE is considered one of the most developed economies in Asia, and it is the destination of many new investors. This research will try to identify whether the organizations in the UAE of various sectors, through its current Talent Management strategies are able and successful in attracting and retaining talents?

In 2012, the Oxford Economics (Oxford Economics 2012) published a paper showing/forecasting the mismatch between supply and demand for talent trend in the year 2021 for more than 40 countries around the globe. The trend was showing positive for the UAE (0.2% surplus), however, the report did not take into consideration some of the unforeseen huge projects such as World Expo which was announced on 27<sup>th</sup> of November 2013. The UAE has won the bid to host the World Expo in Dubai in the year 2020, and it is expected that this event will attract more than 25 million visitors and investors. Hosting this

huge number of visitors and investors will definitely require a lot of efforts and resources to build and ensure the readiness of its infrastructure and facilities. According to Khaleej Times (2014), the achievement of this project will require the creation of an approximate of 277,000 new jobs, which means the need for 277,000 capable and talented employees. Will it be easy for the UAE organizations to attract and higher such number of employees in the coming months?

Moreover, the economies of some of the surrounding countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar, are booming, which may cause employees to move from UAE organizations to the organizations in these countries if offered better salaries and/or benefits, especially those who might be considered as extremely important because of their skills, knowledge, speciality and experience. So, in order to avoid what so-called "talent raiding" (the attempts to attract and hire employees from a competing company (Gardner, 2002)), UAE organizations must adopt strategies to ensure their employees' retention.

In general, having people to fill empty positions is not that difficult, however having right people for the right positions at the right time is something not easy to achieve, and it requires strategic planning and many efforts. There is always ups and downs in the world economy. Sometimes organizations are having the luxury in the talent pool, other times organizations are unable to attract nor are they able to prevent employees from leaving to work in another organization or with a competitor within or across borders.

### **1.3 Importance of the research**

This study will add to the body of knowledge on Talent Management. The researches and studies conducted on the topic 'Talent Management' are still considered very little, and still, it needs further exploration in order to achieve further clarification on the meaning and concept of Talent Management and its overall goals.

This research is the first to identify and analyze the effectiveness of Talent Management practices that are adopted in major industries in the United Arab Emirates. This research will attempt to present a comprehensive Talent Management model, which will assist organizations within UAE on how to manage talents in order to have a superior advantage in attracting and retaining talented people. And, will provide general recommendations that will reinforce the Talent Management implementation.

## 1.4 Research Aim, Objectives & Questions

The main purpose of this research is to have a deep insight into Talent management practices in various industries in the United Arab Emirates, and presenting recommendations for better Talent Management solutions. Based on that, this research objectives and questions will be as follows:

1. A deep look into the subject of ‘Talent-Management’.

### Main Questions:

- What is Talent Management?
- Who is considered as “Talented” and who is not?
- Why is Talent Management important? It's impact on the organizational performance.
- What distinguishes Talent Management from Human Resources Management?
- Why now there is more emphasis on the Talent Management in the organizations than before?
- What are the benefits of Talent Management to individuals and organizations?

2. Investigate Talent Management practices implemented in the UAE industries.

### Main Questions:

- How are talents identified and recognized in UAE industries?
- Are the concept and the function of Talent Management clear to the employees and the management of the UAE companies?
- Do the Executives and Managers of UAE companies understand the importance and the need for Talent Management?
- What are the dimensions of Talent Management function in UAE organizations.
- What is the level of success of the current practiced Talent Management strategies in the UAE companies?

3. Provide possible solutions (recommendations) to the Talent challenges in the UAE and elsewhere?

### Main Questions:

- How can Talent Management practice add value to the organizations?
- What should be the key components of Talent Management?
- How can organizations attract, recruit and retain talents?
- What are the best process/techniques in identifying talented people?
- What is the best approach to implementation of Talent Management programs?

## **1.5 Research Methodology**

The research methodology used in this dissertation was based on the collection of both primary and secondary information/data. The primary information, both qualitative and quantitative, was collected via a semi-structured interview using a set of both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The interviewees were individuals heading or in-charge of the Talent Management section in their respective organizations. The organizations surveyed were of different sectors in the UAE (Semi-government and Private sectors). The aim of the interview was to gain insight about how Talent Management practices at UAE organizations are implemented and to measure the impact of Talent Management programs on the achievement of the overall strategic goals of the UAE organizations. The secondary data was mainly collected from the literature on the subject of Talent Management, both qualitative and quantitative, from various sources such as textbooks, academic journals, organization's reports & databases, internet webs and so on.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 The Definition of ‘Talent’**

The first thing that should be looked into before any further investigation about Talent Management is the term ‘Talent’. Organizations before implementing any Talent Management activities should first define Talent and the people who are considered as talented (Zhang and Bright 2012, cited in Stefko & Sojka 2014). This will provide clarity about what resources will be needed for the Talent Management activities and where they should be targeted.

There are different views presented in literature on the meaning of Talent by researchers and scholars. One view has defined Talent as the high potential and high performance. For example, Tansley et al. (2007, NHS Leadership Academy 2014) argue that Talent is referred to those individuals that demonstrate the highest potential and contribute positively to the improvement of the organizational performance, in both short and long terms. Similarly, Ford et al. (2010, cited in Asset Skills 2013) identified Talent as the attributes of the individuals who through their immediate or long-term contribution make difference to the organizational performance. The second view has translated Talent into the real meaning of the word ‘Talent’, the word ‘Talent’, according to the Encyclopedia Britannica is defined as a native aptitude (natural ability to do something) for a specific kind of work, and it signifies quick and easy acquisition of a particular skill in a specific area of activities or knowledge. So, basically in this view, talented people are those with exceptional natural ability, also called “innate talent” which exist from birth (Tasley, 2011). For example, Asset Skills (2013) identified Talent as the natural ability distinct from skills and knowledge learned, and can be developed further via practice and learning. Similarly, Thorn & Pelant (2006, cited in Stefko & Sojka 2014) defined Talent as someone who has more ability than others and can easily use it. Also, Davis et al. (2007, cited Rodriguez & Escobar 2010) referred to talent as special attitude and/or high mental ability. Likewise, Bhati & Ashokkumar (2013) defined Talent as the inborn capability of an individual which allows him/her to do things in different ways, and distinguishes him/her from others. The third view has referred Talent to those with high quality of leadership/ managerial skills, who are holding or will be occupying key positions

in the future. For instance, The Society for Human Resources Management – SHRM (2007, cited in Stefko & Sojka 2014) defined Talent as a group of leaders, technical specialists and key contributors who drive the organizational performance forward. The fourth view sees that Talent is referred to the specialists and subject matter experts. For example, Ford et al. (2010, cited in Asset Skills, 2013) mentioned that talented individuals are usually associated with leadership, technical and specialist positions. Also Hansen (2007, cited in Al-awamleh 2009) mentioned that talents in the organizations are the core workers and leaders who drive the business forward. The fifth and final view considers everyone has talent and the challenge is how to manage these people to deliver they higher performance (Iles et al., 2010).

So, how should organizations define Talent? According to NHS Leadership Academy (2014), the way organizations define Talent is influenced by the unique experience of each organization. Each organization is unique in terms of its operations and business needs, thus the definition of Talent should be on the basis of adding value to the achievement of organization’s strategic short and long-term goals.

## **2.2 The Definition of Talent Management**

There is no unified definition of the term “Talent Management”. Lack of consensus on the meaning of Talent Management is noticeable in the literature of the subject. The majority of the publications on the Talent Management did not offer standard definition or concept for Talent Management. Lewis & Heckman (2006) mentioned that it is difficult to identify the exact meaning of Talent Management due to the confusion in its definitions and assumptions made by the authors who wrote about it. The term Talent Management was first coined by McKinsey & Company in the year 1997, and it was reflecting the changes in Human Resources needs and actions required to win the so-called “war for talent” (Collings & Mellahi 2010). Since then there was a continuous interest and research by scholars and organizations on the subject of Talent Management and many different definitions were developed in order to illustrate its meaning:

- Davis et al. (2007, cited in Rodriguez & Escobar 2010) defined Talent Management as a strategic approach that includes a set of activities such as recruitment, retention and development of talented people who are able to achieve outstanding performance.
- Stahl et al. (2012, cited in Brown, 2014) defined Talent Management as Human Resources functions of identifying, retaining and developing of high potential people for the future senior positions (managerial positions).

- According to Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development – CIPD (2012, cited in Asset Skills 2013), Talent Management refers to the process that helps in identifying, developing, engaging, retaining and deploying of organization's superior employees who are occupying critical positions or with high potential for the future.
- Mathis and Jackson (2008, cited in Brown, 2014) stated that the overall objective of the Talent Management is to sustain leaders in order to achieve organizational success.
- Rodriguez & Escobar (2010) defined Talent Management as a strategy motivating the employees to exploit their full potential to accomplish a superior performance for the organization.
- Duttgupta (2005, cited in Dries, 2013) defined Talent Management as the strategic management of the flow of talented people through the company, which ensures the availability of supply of talents to align right people with right positions at the right time based on the company's business strategy.
- Cannon and McGee (2007, cited in Asset Skills 2013) defined Talent Management as the approach to release the potential that exists in the employees of any organization.
- The US Society for Human Resources Management (Lockwood, 2006), defined Talent Management as an integrated strategies or systems-designed implemented to increase the productivity of the organization through the development of enhanced processes for attracting, developing, retaining and utilizing people with desired aptitude and skills to meet the current and future corporate requirements.
- Schuler et. al (2011, p.507, cited in Nijveld, 2014) referred to Talent Management as the systematic use of HR policies and practices adopted by the organization around the globe to manage the talent challenges.
- According to Jerusalem & Hausdorf (2007, cited in Dries 2013), Talent Management is the process of identifying and developing high potential employees to be upgraded to higher positions in the future.
- Stephenson & Pandit (2008, cited in Poorhosseinzadeh & Subramaniam, 2012) defined Talent Management as having a right number of people at right place and time with right skills and levels of motivation.
- Collings & Mellahi (2009) explained Talent Management as a set of activities and processes that systematically identify key positions that contribute to the organization's sustainable competitive advantage, the development of talent pool

which include high potential and high performance employees who will be occupying those positions in the future, and the HR architecture that facilitates their smooth movement into the new positions.

- Garrow & Hirsh (2009) defined Talent Management as doing best things to your best people to increase their strengths through developing and building their potentials.
- According to Ganapavarapu & Sireesha (2014), Talent Management is a range of HR functions that focus on attraction, retention and development of high-quality employees.
- According to Kehinde (2012), Talent Management is the implementation of strategies systems which are designed to improve organizational productivity by developing enhanced methods for attracting, developing and retaining employees with required aptitude and skills to meet current and future business needs.
- Smith et al. (n. d.) simply defined Talent Management as the planning and execution of recruitment, development, promotion & retention of employees which is in line with the organizations strategic current and future business objectives.
- According to Macaulay (2009), Talent Management is the strategies and practices required to identify, attract, develop and retain skilful employees of value to an organization.
- Development Dimensions International – DDI (Wellins et al. (n.d.)) defines Talent Management as a critical process that ensures the existence of right quantity and quality of employees in the organization to meet it's current and future business needs.
- The American Society for Training & Development – ASTD and The Institute for Corporate Productivity – i4cp (ASTD 2008) define Talent Management as a holistic approach to optimize human assets that will enable organizations to achieve short and long-term results through integrated talent acquisition, development and processes that aligned with business objectives.
- Thota (2013) defined Talent Management as the integrated strategies/systems designed to increase employees' productivity and performance by developing processes to attract, develop and retain people with certain skills and aptitude in order to meet organization's current and future needs.

From all the definitions above, is it obvious that there is an ambiguity about the real definition of Talent Management. There are some similarities in some of the definitions

presented; however, there is no agreement on one definition. All providing different interpretation for the term Talent Management, based on different perspectives (Al-awamleh, 2009) and according to the different needs of the organizations (CIPD, 2009).

This research proposes the following brief comprehensive definition for Talent Management:

*“A set of strategic/systematic activities and processes that ensures the availability of talented, motivated, engaged, high potential, high performance people, with right skills and abilities, to fill the right critical/key positions at the right time, in order to contribute to the achievement of the organization’s current and future needs”.*

### **2.3 Different Approaches to Talent Management**

The Asset Skills (2013) research report in the year 2012, identified different approaches to Talent Management used by the practitioners; the approaches included:

- I. **The ‘Inclusive’ approach** – everyone in the organization is included in the Talent Management program.
- II. **The ‘Exclusive’ approach** – Selected group of individuals are included only. This approach is further categorized into the following sub-approaches:
  - a. **‘Executive Talent Pool’ approach** – focus of the program is on the senior positions.
  - b. **The ‘Future Leaders’ approach** – focus on the people with potential for becoming leaders of the future.
  - c. **The ‘Succession Planning’ approach** – focus is on key roles/positions in the managerial level. People with special skills and abilities to fill the positions when the current holders retire or leave the organization.
  - d. **The ‘Blended’ approach** – combination of two or more of the above approaches.

The end goal of the organization’s Talent Management program determines which of the above approaches will be more suitable or beneficial for the organization. In other words, the inclusiveness or exclusiveness of the Talent Management approach should be determined based on the unique needs of the organization.

A recent research shows that different companies have adopted inclusive approach to Talent Management, simply to avoid labeling only certain percentage of employees as Talent or talented (Ford et al, 2010). This research support the exclusive approach – although the inclusive approach may sound fairer and removes any sense of inequality between employees; in reality and as it is evident, a few percentage of employees have the highest impact on the business and its outcomes. Thus, logically companies should have more focus and dedicate more time and resources on these individuals, rather than everyone. Of course, organizations should train, develop and provide opportunities to all their employees, but not all in the same way and same level or amount of attention.

## **2.4 Talent Management Vs Human Resources Management**

There is confusion about the differences between Talent Management and Human Resources Management. Many researchers argue that Talent Management is same as Human Resources Management but with a new name – old wine in a new bottle (rebranding) (Adamsky 2003, cited in Iqbal et al. 2011). This is quite true in the sense that Talent Management functions are the same as HR functions such as recruitment, training & development and employee performance management. In contrast, there are researchers who argue that despite the similarities, the focus and the mindset of Talent Management are different from HRM (Chuai et al. 2010, cited in Iqbal et al. 2011; Stefko & Sojka 2014).

Below are some opinions on the differences between Talent Management & HRM:

- According to Capelli (2008, cited in Poorhosseinzadeh & Subramaniam 2012), Talent Management and HRM both use the same instruments, however, Talent Management emphasizes on talented people, both in and outside the organization.
- The differentiation between employees is the key difference between Talent Management and HRM (Collings & Mellahi 2009; Boudreau & Ramstad 2005).
- According to Iles et al. (2010), Talent Management is fundamentally similar to HRM. It includes all the HRM activities, therefore it is a rebranding of HRM with a focus on how to manage talents strategically.
- Heinen & O’Neill (2004, cited in Al-awamleh 2009) claim that organizations with no Talent Management program in place, implicitly implement Talent Management system within their other HR functions.

- HRM covers more functions than Talent Management, HRM emphasizes equality between employees and Talent Management emphasizes segmentation (Chuai et al. 2010, cited in Iqbal et al. 2011)
- HRM and Talent Management are integrated with each other in all functional areas including recruitment, retention, development and succession planning. However, the main difference in both practices is due to the progress of tactical HRM and strategic Talent Management (Iqbal et al. 2011).
- HRM focuses on all employees, but Talent Management focuses on the top, talented, key employees whose performance continuously exceeds expectations (Morgan and Jardin, 2010, p. 24., cited in Stefko & Sojka 2014).
- Inkson (2008, cited in Dries, 2013) mentioned that the main reason behind adopting the name Talent Management is to shift the mindset of the organizations, from looking at humans just as “resources”, same as any non-human resources, to most valuable and precious part that requires special extra attention.

This research concludes the differences between Talent Management and Human Resources Management as follows: Talent Management is part of the Human Resources Management, the ultimate common goal of both is to have the right people at right positions at the right time, and the right approach to managing them in order to optimize their performances to the levels desired. However, Talent Management, some (not all) of its activities are similar to the HRM activities, which are addressed to those who have been identified as talents or talented people, within or outside the organization.

## **2.5 Talent Management Importance**

A study conducted by Brookings Institution found that in the year 1982, 62% of an average firm’s value was attributed to its physical assets such as facilities and equipments, and the other 38% to its intangible assets such as intellectual properties and most of all its employees. Almost 20 years later, percentages nearly flipped-flopped, 80% of the firm’s value was contributed to its intangible assets and the remaining 20% to its tangible assets (Wellins et al. (n.d.)). Many literatures have considered the Human Resources as the source of organization’s sustainable competitive advantage, which is tried with the capabilities of its talented employees (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). According to the NHS Leadership Academy (2014), the achievement of any organization’s strategy will be difficult without having the

right skilled people at the right place and right time. Studies have shown that organizations with Talent Management practices are more successful than those without (Dhanabhakym & Kokilambal 2014; Kehinde 2012). Thota (2013) stated that Talent Management is the primary factor for the success of any organization. Also, Bhati & Ashokkumar (2013) argued that Talent Management has a direct impact on the company's functioning and its competitive position, therefore it is conceived as a most critical aspect of Human Resources Management. Also, they have mentioned, that they believe in the importance of Talent Management distinguishes the high performance organizations from the average performance organizations.

The Talent Management is considered now as the top priority for the organizations around the globe (Hartmann et al. 2010, cited in Beheshtifar et al. 2012; NHS Leadership Academy 2014). Attracting and retaining good talented people is not as much easy as it used to be two decades ago, and it is becoming increasingly more challenging due to the globalization, demographic changing and psychological contract trends (Tucker et al. 2005, cited in Dries 2013; NHS Leadership Academy 2014). A study has shown that 85% of HR executives considered that creating and maintaining the ability to compete for talent as the greatest challenge in workforce management (Kehinde 2012). Also, a research conducted by Hewitt Associate and Human Capital Consulting (2008), indicated that responses of nearly 700 HR and business leaders identified attraction and retention of skilled and professional employees as the challenge that mostly impacts their organizational strategy. Therefore, The pressure to attract and retain talented employees in the past five years have led organizations to invest more energy and resources on talent related initiatives (Human Capital Institute, 2008, cited in Dhanabhakym & Kokilambal, 2014). Organizations who do recognize the importance of Talent Management and its integration with business strategy will achieve business excellence (Iyria, 2013) and will outperform their peers (Aleron & Boyden, 2012).

Talented employees are the key assets of any business; therefore, strategies such as Talent Management must be adopted in order to ensure having right skilled and capable employees, striving towards achieving business success. Neglecting talent or inability to manage talent will have a consequence on the organization's current and future performance.

## **2.6 War for Talent – A Global Issue**

Lack of Talents is a global issue and is not specific to a particular country or region (Gardner 2002), with difference in the degree of the matter from one country to another. A survey of about 33 thousand employees in 23 countries around the world, reveals that 40% of the organizations are struggling to find and hire qualified candidates (Ganapavarapu & Sireesha 2014; Lockwood, 2006). Other surveys have predicted that, due to future economic trends, many countries will face the problem of supply and demand of qualified and talented people. For instance, a survey conducted by Global Economics (2012), predicted a dramatic jump in demand for talents in some emerging markets such as Middle East/Africa (13%), Latin America (13%) and Eastern Europe (10%). Another survey conducted by Oxford Economics (2012), expected a mismatch between supply and demand for talented people in the year 2021 for more than 20 countries of both developed and emerging economies. In the year 2014, Towers Watson (2014) conducted a worldwide workforce survey of over 32 thousand employees, the survey indicated that more than 50% of the companies worldwide are facing the challenges of recruiting and retaining top performers and high potential employees.

## **2.7 Difference between Talent Management & Global Talent Management**

The concept of Talent Management and Global Talent Management is same, which is, to attract, select and retain the best employees in the most critical and strategic positions to achieve organizational top priorities. The main difference is that the Global Talent Management is of a global scale, and that it is used within different cultures, all over the world (Nijveld, 2014; Scullion et al. 2010, cited in Kim & McLean, 2012). International organizations should know how to deal and manage their employees who are from different backgrounds and cultures, as often cultural differences and issues impact the performance of employees and the integrity of their work.

## **2.8 Global Talent Management Drivers**

There are few factors/drivers which are forcing organizations around the globe to compete over talented people (Global Talent Management) in order to avoid any shortages that might affect their business's profitability or continuity. These factors are:

- a) The globalization of the world economic; Organizations are investing overseas to increase their profit (Guthridge & Komm 2008, cited in Kim & McLean 2012), this is either to reach more customers beyond borders and/or to reduce operational cost by moving/expanding to developing countries where the wages and expenses are lower.
- b) Changes in the mindset of the current workforce – employee expectations; People are continuously looking for better jobs with higher salaries, positions and benefits. Employees are increasingly interested in having meaningful and challenging jobs and more concerned about having work-life balance (Wellins et al. (n.d.))
- c) People's Mobility from one country to another; Due to globalization, many people migrate across the cultural and geographical boundaries (Baruch et al., 2006, cited in Beechler & Woodward, 2009) and change their place of residence for a better lifestyle.
- d) High demand for employees with special skills (technical, soft and managerial); surveys have shown the linkage between the level of talent and level of organizational performance (Wellins et al. (n.d.)). Lack of talents with critical skills is one of the major factors why the talents demand is high globally (Zheng 2009, cited in Kim & McLean, 2012).
- e) Demographic changes; many developed countries such as the USA and Western Europe will face the problem of an ageing workforce. The number of the aged employees who are about to retire far exceeds the number of the younger generation who are supposed to replace them (Dries, 2013).
- f) The emergence of new companies; often new companies try to recruit and attract talented people from other peer or larger sized companies (Kravtsova 2012). Talented employees who are not satisfied with their current organizations have more opportunities to find better options elsewhere (Thota, 2013).

As a consequence to the facts above, organizations have adopted Talent Management programs that of global scale. Organizations have developed policies and practices that support the attraction, development and retention of worldwide talent, which guarantees sustainable global competitive advantage (Boudreau & Ramstad 2005; Lewis & Heckman 2006, cited in Kim & McLean 2012; Schuler et al. 2011, p. 507). According to Marquardt et al. (2004, cited in Kim & McLean 2012), global talent identification, acquiring and retention requires new types of competencies, employment strategies, development methods and reward management that is different from the domestic setting.

## **2.9 Linking Talent Management Practices with Business Objectives**

It is important to understand that there is no one single best practice for Talent Management (Boudreau & Ramstad 2005, cited in Dries 2013). A Talent Management practice would only be considered as “best” when it is linked with the strategic objectives of the organization, therefore any Talent Management approach should be based on the objectives of the business (Stefko & Sojka 2014). According to Vatne & Torgersen (2014), both academics and practitioners are confident that strategic Talent Management leads to organizational success in terms of organizational performance, market position, productivity and profits. Researches have shown that organizations with Talent Management aligned with their business strategy have an average higher project success rate than those which are not (Project Management Institute 2013, cited in Dhanabhakym & Kokilambal 2014). Numerous companies have recognized that in order to achieve organizational excellence, their Talent Management strategy must be integrated with business strategy (Rodriguez & Escobar 2010). The Chartered Institute of Personal Development – CIPD (2012) argue that successful organizations follow a Talent Management approach, which is interlinked with the crucial business objectives.

Alignment of Talent Management practices with the business goals should be a top priority in any organization. To ensure that the organization is moving in the right direction in terms of its Talent Management practices, first there should be a clear understanding of the organization’s objectives and goals, then it should be determined whether the Talent Management practice will support the achievement of those objectives and goals (Hewitt Associate & Human Capital Consulting, 2008).

## **2.10 Role of Human Resources Department in Talent Management**

Evidently, in the majority of the companies around the Globe, the Human Resources department owns the Talent Management function, and very rarely Talent Management section or department is considered as a separate entity from Human Resources department. In both cases, the HR plays a vital role in the implementation and success of the Talent Management practices. Gardner (2002) argues that HR function should be decentralized in order to be more in-touch with the labor market dynamics and be ready to track and

adequately respond to the challenges that may arise. Thota (2013) argues that the accountability of the success of the Talent Management strategies is generally lies over the shoulders of the Human Resources department. The Human Resources responsibilities towards Talent Management lies usually in; 1) Explaining the importance of Talent Management, and what value it will add to the organization, to the top management and the CEO, and to ask their full support (Beheshtifar et al. (2012)). 2) Taking the role of business partner, working closely with all areas to attract, recruit and retain talented individuals (Lockwood, 2006; Al-awamleh, 2009). 3) Ensuring that Talent Management policies and practices are in-line with the business strategy, and that Talent Management systems and processes are integrated (Head-Light, 2014).

## **2.11 Talent Pool**

According to Rodriguez & Escobar (2010), Talent Management strategy is about creating a talent pool that gives the organization a sustainable competitive advantage. The talent pool can consist of people from within or outside the organization, or both; people with a set of skills and traits that qualifies them to be considered as high potential for future critical and/or senior roles. In some organizations, the talent pool is classified into different talent pools, for instance, in one organization the talent pool is segmented into: emerging leaders, rising starts and exceptional talent for executive roles (Tasley, 2011). The majority of organizations rely on both internal and external talent sources. Davis et al. (2007, cited in Iyria 2013) argue that the internal sources of talent are the best to create talent pool since the employees are well aware and familiar with business processes and they can easily be integrated into any new position. According to many studies (Kim & McLean, 2012), too much emphasis on attracting external talents may cause undesired consequences to the organization, thus many organizations around the globe have changed their strategies from hiring outsiders to developing and preparing insiders. However, this does not mean that external sources should be completely ignored, in fact in some cases, external talents will add more value to the organization by bringing in new ideas, knowledge and expert that will positively affect or improve the current operations of the organization. Attracting external talents is not an easy task, many measures should be considered in order to attract the best talents. One of the most important measures for attracting external talent is ‘Employer Branding’, which is about developing an organization’s image and reputation that is good enough to attract people

(Iyria, 2013). External sources, for some of the organizations, does not always means hiring the best fit for the wanted positions, but it also about finding the high potentials for the future, such as students and fresh graduates. Recruiters should be able to reach and market the organization to the students – understand what will motivate them and communicate what opportunities the organization will offer (Kravtsova, 2012). Induction programs for a period of one year, that covers technical, functional and behavioral areas, with support and guidance of a mentor, will help graduate trainees to quickly understand company’s core values and adapt to its culture (Bhatnager, 2008).

## **2.12 Identification of Pivotal Positions**

One of the most important aspects of Talent Management program is the identification of the pivotal or key positions, which are critical for the current and future success of the organization (Rodriguez & Escobar, 2010). According to Rothwell (2010), key positions are those positions that have a critical influence on the organization’s operational and strategic activities. Rothwell in his book highlighted six ways to identify key positions:

- 1- *Consequences resulting from existing vacancy*: a vacant key position causes an uproar because important activities are placed on hold until occupied by the right talent to make the right decisions and achieve results.
- 2- *By organization Charting*: preparing the organization chart showing all the positions. For each position the following questions to be asked: 1) What does this position contribute the origination’s mission? This will tell if the position is important or not. 2) Could the position operate effectively if the leader is absent or not available? If the answer is no, then this is an indication that the leader or the senior position is critical.
- 3- *By Questioning*: asking the senior executives/managers, who are very well familiar with their areas of responsibilities, about the positions which if left vacant will cause serious problems in achieving results.
- 4- *By Historical Evidence*: using past records of crises, which the organization experienced due to unexpected departure of key position incumbents.
- 5- *By Network Charting*: a technique used in communication analysis – to trace the path of communication during any decision-making. The key assumption is that decision-makers will seek information mainly from employees who are occupying important and trustworthy positions.

- 6- *By Combination*: a combined approach of two or more methods of the above approaches, in order to verify the information obtained and for double-checking.

Another approach is given by Mark Huselid (2005), who based his classification of key roles on the level of impact on the achievement of the strategic goals of the firm. He classified roles as *A-positions*: has a direct impact on business strategy, *B-positions*: indirect strategic impact on business – supporting the strategic positions, and finally the *C-positions*: has little impact on business strategy. There are other approaches presented by other researchers, however, it is recommended to use the approach(s) that is easy to implement and less time-consuming.

Identification of pivotal/key positions will contribute to the understanding of which functions should always be occupied with talented individuals – with specific knowledge, skills and attitude. However, that does not mean talents should only be utilized for such positions only, in fact, there are other less critical positions that could/should be filled with right individuals, which are associated directly with the key positions.

## **2.13 Identification of Talented Individuals**

As mentioned above, Talent Management is not only about individuals occupying or will be occupying a key position in the organization. It is about every individual that in one way or another will contribute significantly to the organization's current and future success. The identification of talented employees/individuals is not an easy task, and usually, requires more than one method/approach. The following are some methods/approaches used in identifying talents as mentioned in some research journals and articles:

- 1- **Assessment & Development Centers**: Organization's assessment centres and/or external third party assessment centres can play an important role in providing a comprehensive and detailed analysis of individual's performance and future potential for different roles (Macaulay, 2009).
- 2- **Performance Management Systems**: Organizations are realizing the importance of performance management systems in identifying high performers (Macaulay, 2009). Performance Management Programs usually consist of 'objectives' and

‘competencies’, where the individuals are evaluated and rated for each objective and competency.

- 3- **Competency-Based Approach to Identify Talent:** This approach involves the identification of core competencies required for each employee to be successful in his/her position. Employees who achieve above average against these competencies are perceived as talented (O’Berger & Berger 2004, cited in Ross 2013).
- 4- **Psychometric Tests:** Psychometric tests can provide a realistic basis for making decisions on capabilities and potential, when used by qualified and expert people (Macaulay, 2009).
- 5- **360 Degree Feedback:** Feedback of multiple sources can provide useful information about individual’s behaviors and skills (Macaulay, 2009). Ratings from a direct supervisor, peers and direct reports will be used as an indication of individual’s current and future capabilities and success.
- 6- **Korn Ferry Four Dimensions of Leadership and Talent:** The assessment consists of four dimensions; the *competencies and experiences* that measure the skills, the other two dimensions are *traits and drivers* that measure the cultural-fit. According to Korn Ferry, assessments, which measures cultural-fit beside skills, are 96% more predictive of individual’s success (Gochman & Storfer, 2014).
- 7- **Nine-Box Grid:** In this approach, individuals are evaluated against their performance and potential. A nine-box grid with two axes is formed, each axis has three levels, the horizontal axis represents the performance from low to outstanding, and the vertical axis represents the potential from low to high. Each individual will be placed in one of the nine boxes according to his/her perceived performance and potential score (Ross, 2013; Campbell & Hirsh, 2013).
- 8- **Management Feedback:** Many organizations rely on management judgement to identify and spot talent (Campbell & Hirsh, 2013). Managers usually identify talents based on their abilities, skills and motivations (Silzer & Church 2010).

The above-mentioned methods/approaches are only a few ways to identify talents. However, there are other ways, presented in literature, which also can be adopted. Organizations can produce methods/approaches, which are organization-specific. This research suggests the use of a combination of methods/approaches to obtain better and more reliable results. Also, this

research supports the suggestion of Silzer & Church (2010), that a combination of internal assessment and external assessment will increase the objectivity of the judgements.

## **2.14 Transparency – Talented / Not-Talented**

One of the challenges that the organizations face in regard the Talent Management process is whether to tell or not tell their employees, who are considered as talented and, implicitly, who is considered as not-talented (Al-awamleh, 2009). According to Bjorkman et al. (2013), if talents are not recognized publicly then this will lead to frustration among the high performers, in contrast, if publicized, the motivation of those who are not considered as talent may drop. Bjorkman et al. also stressed that retaining high performers with rare and valuable competencies is crucial for any organization, and their study about the difference between those who identified as talent and those who are not, showed that employees who are identified as talented are more committed to increasing performance, build competencies that are valuable for the organization, actively support organization's strategic priorities, and less likely to leave the company.

Labelling employees as talented or not talented will definitely affect the work environment. In general, most of the organizations label a few percent of their employees as talented, making the rest to psychologically suffer from what appears to be a sort of discrimination and/or disparity in treatment. This research supports the idea that employees should know that they have been recognized and identified as potential for future roles; in order to increase their motivation levels and make them stay with the organization for the longest period possible. For those who are not selected as talented, the organization should clearly communicate with them and let them know that the selection was based on certain criteria, and in the future, matching these criteria will qualify the employee to be recognized as talented.

## **2.15 Talent Performance, Motivation and Engagement**

Talent Management is not only about having the right talented people at the organization, but it is also about having the right talented people who are delivering and performing to the level expected from them. An organization may have the best talents but fail to achieve its goals – simply because it fails to make its' employees committed and dedicated to its success. In

order to ensure that employees will work to their full capabilities and produce their best performance, organizations should make sure that their employees are highly motivated and highly engaged. According to Schuler, Jackson & Tarique (2012), highly motivated and highly engaged employees are more productive and contribute more to the firm than those who are less motivated or engaged.

### **2.15.1 Talent Motivation**

Motivation, according to Robbins & Judge (2015) is the individual's intensity, directions and persistence of efforts towards achieving a particular objective. According to Hold-DiDio (2016), motivation is often divided into two categories – intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is the internal drive, to perform and go beyond our best ability, which will lead to a feeling of satisfaction. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is the external drive, such as rewards, bonuses and promotions. It is evident from the literature that there is no consensus on which type of motivation is better, however, most of the contemporary studies emphasize the importance of intrinsic motivation over the extrinsic motivation. This research supports the view that both types of motivation are important, and the organizations should consider both if they wish their employees to perform and excel, however, the intrinsic motivation will influence their decisions in terms of remaining or leaving the organization.

### **2.15.2 Talent Engagement**

Employee Engagement is defined as a level of commitment and involvement that an individual has towards his/her organization and the values of that organization (Anitha 2014, p. 308). This level of commitment and involvement is achieved when there is an emotional connection between the employee and the employer, when employees' values are aligned with the values of the organization, and they feel their success is intertwined with the success of the organization (Juengling, 2014). According to Frank et al. (2004), employees with low engagement are more likely to leave the organization than those with high engagement. Similarly, Lockwood (2006) mentioned that engaged employees are 87% less likely to resign from their jobs, and they usually perform 20% better than those who are poorly engaged.

## 2.16 Talent Management Components

One of the challenges that organizations face is defining the components of their Talent Management programs. The components usually vary from one industry to another based on the philosophical understanding of Talent Management concept of that particular industry. Nevertheless, all Talent Management components should be aligned and best support organization's strategic goals. This section will explore some of the Talent Management major components as identified by scholars and professionals:

### 2.16.1 Talent Management Main Components

From the definitions presented in section 2.2 above, it is clear that Talent Management has three main components: talent attraction, talent development and talent retention. This research considers talent development as a sub-component of talent attraction or talent retention or both, as the development of employees could be a reason to attract talents to the organization and also to retain talent. Thus this research identifies talent attraction and talent retention as major/main components of Talent Management. These two components are described below:

- 1- **Talent Attraction:** adopting techniques and strategies to attract, select and recruit right talented people with specific traits and skills that fit the culture and values of a particular organization (NHS Leadership Academy 2014; Iyria 2013; Abraham 2011, cited in Dhanabhakym & Kokilambal 2014). There are many factors that contribute to employee attraction such as; Salary, Job security, Career progression opportunities, Learning and Development opportunities, Nature of work and Organization's reputation (Towers Watson 2014). Organizations develop 'talent pool' to meet the current and future demand of talented employees. The talent pool usually consists of people inside and outside the organization with key skills and competencies that supports the organization's current and future business needs. Some organizations target those who are not yet ready to fill the desired positions, such as students and fresh graduates, where scholarship programs are provided to student and special programs are developed for fresh graduates as they are considered as high potentials for future.
- 2- **Talent Retention:** efforts by the organizations to keep its needed employees for the longest period of time (Bhati & Ashokkumar, 2013), who contribute to the

achievement of the organizational objectives. It helps to avoid any unwanted loss of employees and increases the engagement and stability of the organization (Herman 2005, cited in Al-awamleh 2009; Poorhosseinzadeh & Subramaniam 2012). Retention, according to Macaulay (2009), is about creating a climate in which the talented individuals desire to stay and use their skills. Talent turnover affects the performance and the productivity of the organization; therefore measures are taken to encourage employees to remain with the organization for the longest period of time (Iyria 2013). According to Vaiman et al. (2008), employee retention can be achieved through extrinsic and intrinsic incentives. Extrinsic intensives are the financial rewards which satisfy the 'physiological needs' of the individual, while intrinsic incentives refer to the non-financial rewards which satisfy the 'psychological needs' of the individual.

### **2.16.2 Talent Management Sub-Components**

The following are some of the sub-components of the two main components of the Talent Management as identified and mentioned by researchers. In general, these components could be considered as a sub-component of either talent attraction or talent retention or both, however, they do identify more with one of the main components than the other based on their characteristics:

- 1) **Leadership/Management Involvement:** the talent mindset needs to be embedded all over the organization, starting with the head of the organization (Kehinde 2012), the effectiveness of Talent Management initiatives depends on the involvement of the leadership, which help to translate these initiatives into specific organizational value-based behavior (Beheshtifar et al. 2012). The Managers need to own parts of the Talent Management process and function as partners (Wellins et al. 2011). The senior management plays a crucial role in the Talent Management programs, they identify and focus on high potential people, and determine their current and future needs, also they inspire, mentor and transfer knowledge (Dhanabhakym & Kokilambal 2014). The line manager's responsibilities for Talent Management lies in (Head-Light 2014);  
1) Implementing the Talent Management on the ground and ensure the adherence to

Talent Management policies and procedures within their area of responsibility. 2) Ensuring to have right people in the right places and at the right time. 3) Ensuring achieving sustainable performance aligned with the overall goals of the organization. According to Macaulay (2009), Talent Management process will not be successful unless the organization makes every manager involved and part of his/her job to identify and develop talents.

- 2) **Learning & Development:** Al-awamleh (2009) argue that organizations that embed development into their very core, are more likely to attract more talents, retain them for a longer time and have better performance over long-term. Davis et al. (2007, cited in Iyria 2013) mentioned that in order for any organization to a competitive advantage, it should up-skill its employees through planned and unplanned training and development activities. This is usually done through a systematic approach where gaps in skills and competencies of the employees are identified and then different methods are used to enhance and strengthen those skills and competencies. Berger (2004, cited in Al-awamleh 2009) argues that organizations should develop a list of competencies and assessment tools to measure the level of these competencies for each individual, then develop training and development activities to support these competencies, and finally prepare action-plans to ensure that competencies are developed. Different assessment tools/methods can be used to identify gaps in competencies of individuals; examples are: supervisor's observation, technical tests, annual performance rating, interviews, third-party assessment and so on.
- 3) **Performance Management:** Dhanabhakym & Kokilambal (2014) defined performance management as a process that enables supervisors and their direct reports to have a good understanding of work objectives and expectations, review work progress, identify knowledge/skills that need improvement and finally evaluating performance results. Aguinis et al. (2012) defined performance management as a continuous process of measuring the performance of individuals and teams, developing their performances and ensuring that their performances are aligned with the strategic goals of the firm. Aguinis et al. (2012) recommended the following to make the performance management an effective tool to retain top talents: 1) Creating and maintaining development plans for each individual, 2) Ensuring that work is

meaningful, very interesting and very challenging, 3) providing a clear progression opportunities, 4) implementing contingent rewards.

- 4) **Succession Planning:** a systematic approach in identifying and developing future potential successors for target positions in an organization. It helps retaining expertise and knowledge within the organization; older workforce contributes in passing the knowledge and developing next generation of leaders (Grant Thornton 2012). The traditional notion of Succession Planning was only taking into account the managerial roles, but now with Talent Management strategies, succession planning could be expanded to be looking into all levels and function (Smith et al. n.d.). Organizations should identify talented successors for the people in critical roles; determine what special traits/skills/competencies are required to be developed by the successors, and to provide all the supports and opportunities that will enable them to acquire these traits/skills/competencies.
  
- 5) **Career Management:** planning the growth and progression of employees in the organization through an organized set of formal and informal activities such as official training, job rotation, shadowing and job enrichment. Career progression programs allow the employees to have a vision of expectations, goals and progression (Allen 2005 cited in Iyria 2013). According to Towers Watson (2014), career advancement is considered one of the top reasons why people join or leave an organization; a global workforce study showed that 41% of employees believe that joining new firms is the key to their career advancement; around the same percentage 40% of employees who have been recognized as high potentials by their organizations believed that joining new companies in a way to advance their career. If the organizations want to retain their key talents through the difficult times, they should be offered career opportunities (CIPD, 2009)
  
- 6) **Compensation and Rewards:** All forms of benefits that the employees receive in return to their services and contribution to business success. Rewards are usually categorized into; 1) Fixed Rewards: such as monthly salary, housing allowance and education allowance. 2) Variable Rewards: such as annual bonus and annual merit increase. Also there is other type of non-financial rewards which greatly impacts the performances of the employees, such as acknowledgement, appreciation, job

enrichment, training and development opportunities. According to Sireesha & Ganapavarapu (2014), rewards help to retain and improve the performance of the talent employees. Many researches have shown that employees who are satisfied with their organizational rewarding systems are far more productive than employees who are dissatisfied. Talented employees are expected to add special value to the organization, thus they deserve to receive special kind of rewards; meaning that all employees in the organization should have opportunities to be entitled for rewards, however, something extra should be reserved for the talented ones. However, only rewarding a few selected groups of employees and ignoring the “average employees” could lead to demotivation and underperformance (Macaulay 2009). Kravtsova (2012) argue that talented people are more motivated intrinsically rather than monetary incentives; they are usually motivated by the work itself and the provided opportunities for development and growth.

- 7) **Onboarding/Induction:** an important step in integrating successfully new hires into the organization (Bauer n.d., cited in Dhanabhakya & Kokilambal 2014). Onboarding can be as simple as one day induction or it can be a comprehensive, intensive, and well-planned program that includes orientation, familiarization and specific training programs. Onboarding is not only the responsibility of the HR, it is a shared responsibility between all departments in the organization, and top management involvement in the onboarding process is considered essential. Successful onboarding facilitates the process of integrating new hires into the organization - which accelerates their readiness to perform and become productive, and reduces the turnover rates. According to Bauer (2010), it takes 90 days for new employees to prove themselves in a new job, hence, the faster they feel welcome and prepared for their duties, the faster they will be able to contribute successfully to the organization’s mission.

The sub-components mentioned above are only a few among many others highlighted by researchers and scholars. In order for the organizations to achieve their Talent Management goals, it is necessary to consider as many as possible of those components, which increases the chance of attracting and retaining more individuals that are talented.

## 2.17 Talent Management Models and “Best” Practices

There is an endless literature on the topic of ‘Talent Management Best Practices’ presented by practitioners and scholars. Some have presented theoretical models and many others have presented guidelines on how to have strategic Talent Management practices. This section will highlight some of the suggested “best practices” of Talent Management:

**DDI’s View** – the Development Dimensions International identified 9 best practices based on their extensive research, which are believed to serve as a foundation to any Talent Management system (Wellins et al. 2011).

**Best Practice (1):** *Start with the end in mind-Talent strategy must be tightly aligned with business strategy.* The eventual aim of any organization is to achieve its goals; therefore any Talent Management system must serve in achieving those goals.

**Best Practice (2):** *Talent Management professionals need to move from a seat at the table to setting the table.* For successful Talent Management, the involvement and partnership of HR professionals and Leaders are more than essential. The most successful Talent Management programs are usually initiated and driven by HR professionals with enthusiastic support from CEO and senior leaders who provide resources, budget communication and necessary support for success.

**Best Practice (3):** *You must know what you are looking for-the role of success profiles.* Several studies have shown that organizations with better financial performances are using competencies as basis for succession management, external employing and internal promotions. A research conducted by Hewitt Group indicated that top global organizations normally apply competency models across the organization which are aligned with the business overall strategies. Using the ‘Success Profiles’ will broaden the power of competencies by adding other complementary components which include personal attributes, experience and knowledge.

**Best Practice (4):** *The talent pipeline is only as strong as its weakest link.* Many organizations have associated Talent Management with senior leadership succession management, however, it is not only senior managers who add value to the business, but there are other individuals who contribute to the success of the business. These individuals also need to be considered as key talents or key players, and organizations should take measures in order to develop and promote them.

**Best Practice (5):** *Talent Management is not a democracy.* Many organizations use resources to develop equally their employees in a democratic way, but, the real focus should be on the individuals and leaders with high potential who create value for their organizations – and return the most on any development investment.

**Best Practice (6):** *Potential, performance and readiness are not the same thing.* Organizations fail to distinguish the differences between potential, performance and readiness. Potential is the early sign of future ability, and those who are considered of high potential, need a lot of effort in form of training, mentoring, countless hours of coaching and years of practice, before considering them as ready to compete and equipped to success. High potential doesn't necessarily mean high performance. People may have the potential and the ability to perform, but, their level and consistency of performance depend on some aspects such as; continuous encouragement, recognition and involvement in challenging assignments.

**Best Practice (7):** *Talent management is all about putting the right people in the right jobs.* Assigning highly competent and skilled people to positions where they best fit is far more efficient than assigning people who are less competent and then spend a lot of time and resources to develop them.

**Best Practice (8):** *Talent management is more about the “hows” than the “whats”.* Focusing on the “whats” and ignoring “hows” will not guarantee the success of the Talent Management system. DDI has identified 5 realization factors for sound execution; 1) Communication – the vision behind Talent Management activities and what will be the outcomes. 2) Accountability – roles of individuals in the Talent Management initiatives. 3) Skill – right skills to be developed through mentoring and coaching. 4) Alignment – aligning Talent Management initiatives to business drivers. 5) Measurement – measuring the effectiveness of Talent Management initiatives.

**Best Practice (9):** *Software does not equal talent management.* Is it useful to use the software as an integrated tool that supports the Talent Management system, however, knowledgeable experts are required to evaluate what is working and what is not?

**Hay Group** identified the alignment of six key activities as a way to effective Talent Management. The six activities are (Hay Group 2011):

- 1- Define what talent is needed: defying the type of talent required – current and future skills and roles needed – to fulfil organizations goals.
- 2- How to attract the best people: Adopting different strategic approaches in attracting talent. For example sufficient rewards and branding.
- 3- Selecting the best: Identifying potential candidates (internal or external) who will fill the new roles, and determine right criteria for selection.
- 4- Developing future leaders: Adopting systems for the development of future leaders/talent and measuring their performances impact on the business performance.
- 5- Engagement – and enablement – bringing results: Following the selection and development, organizations to ensure having best results through engagement and enablement of their talent.

**Sireesha & Ganapavarapu (2014)** in their paper, suggested that ten basic truths about employee behavior needs to be addressed and considered as principles for successful Talent Management:

- 1- Respect Employees: Managers need to regularly communicate with their employees about their jobs and what the organization can do to assist them in achieving their goals.
- 2- Clarify Objectives: it is very important to communicate what is expected from the employees to accomplish in their jobs. This is can be done in many ways. One way would be setting strategic organizational goals by leaders, and then cascading these goals to the employees.
- 3- Increase Awareness: Providing performance feedback to the employees will increase their awareness of what they need to change and the importance of that change. Feedback is not supposed to be about what individuals need to do to improve performance, but it must be inspiring and encouraging to be more effective.
- 4- Develop an integrated, proactive Talent Management strategy: Strategy of having integrated Talent Management depends on four principles: **R**espect, **O**bjectives, **A**wareness and **D**ialogue. They represent the ROAD for creating productive employees and the key foundation of effective Talent Management.
- 5- Maintain Accountability: This can be achieved through creating a connection between what employees do at work and what they receive from the firm. For example, linking the employee performance to rewards such as pay, promotions and other

opportunities. Through this act, the organization will be perceived as fair and equitable, which leads to an increase in the level commitment among the employees.

- 6- If it doesn't measure business impact, it's just a distraction: Organizations must measure the effect of their Talent Management programs on the business performance. Any program or process that appears untied with the tangible business performance must be eliminated.
- 7- Build adaptable skills. Prepare future leadership for any situation: For decades, organizations focused on generic leadership skills such as superior communication skills, driving results and overcoming adversity. But, recently and after the financial crisis, organizations realized the importance of having leaders with adaptable skills, who can lead and encourage employees to perform under any situation.
- 8- Simplify performance management: There is no doubt about the connection between employee's performance and organization's outcomes. A clear communication between the manager and the subordinate will provide clarity on employee role, responsibilities and objectives.
- 9- Support people at different phases of career growth: People in their career life usually pass through four stages: Stage-1) People in their early to mid-twenties, search for a job that best suit their talent and interest. Stage-2) Focus on career advancement – develop specialized skills and move to positions of more responsibilities. Stage-3) Employees between 30s to 40s of age are in the phase of career stabilization due to commitments outside the workplace such as raising a family. Stage-4) Employees gradually divert their focus away from work to other interests outside the company. In this stage, they may not want to retire completely, but also not to be involved in jobs that stop them from engaging in other life pursuits.
- 10- Evaluate potential and experience: It is important to predict what people will be doing in certain positions in the future, and to do so, there are two possible ways. One is to look at people's past performance and based on it predict the future performance. Another way is through assessments, which are considered as accurate predictors of future performance.

**Schuler, Jackson & Tarique (2011)** have highlighted in their article the importance of the Talent Management globally. Talent Management is a challenge that faced by the organizations worldwide and not just in a particular region or country. They have presented a

framework (see Figure () below) which is as claimed ensures having a right number of talents at the right time and positions with the right price.

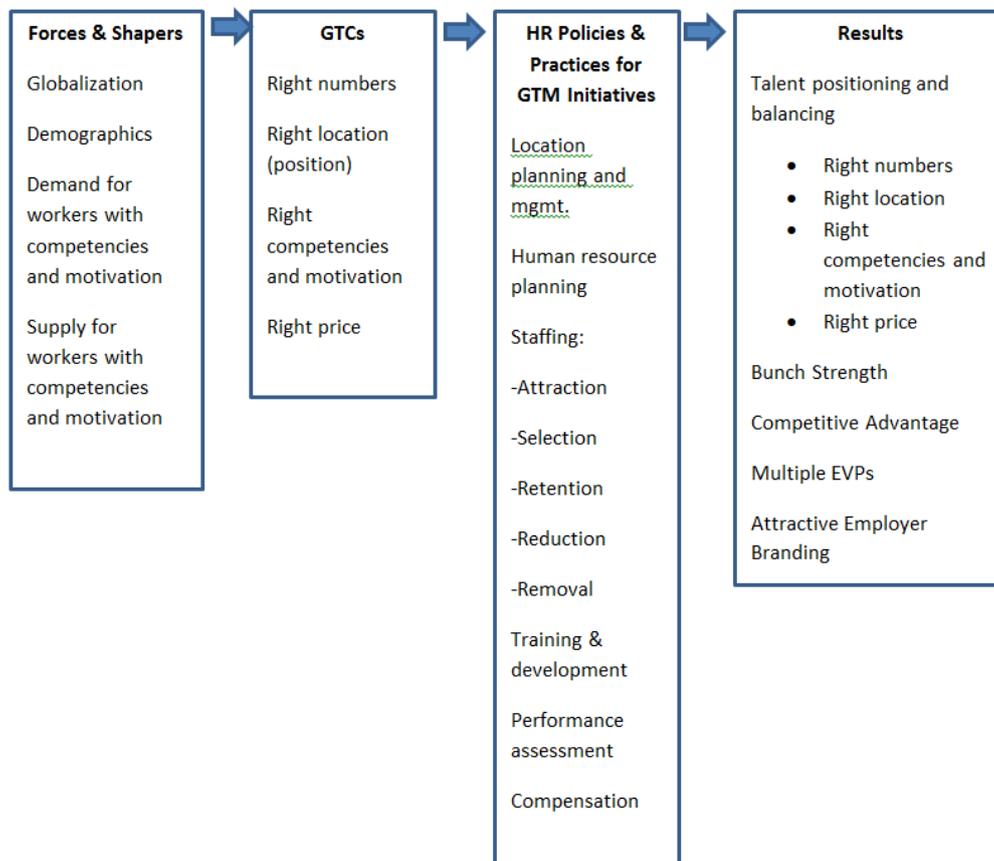


Figure (1): Own making, inspired by (Framework for Global Talent Challenges and Global Talent Management Initiatives (Schuler, Jackson & Tarique, 2011, p.44))

They suggested that in order to ensure successful Talent Management programs with desired outputs, firms should first confront the global talent challenges, and then identify the major forces and shapers of these challenges, and then finally adopt a set of HR policies and practices to address these challenges. The forces and shapers identified are; 1) Globalization: expansion of world trade, competition to reach the highest number of customers around the world and the array of individuals which form global labor market. 2) Changing demographics: population shrinkage in the developed economies such as western Europe and Japan, and the population expansion in the developing economies such as India and China. 3) Demand for motivated and skilled workers: search for employees with high technical

competencies, who are motivated to be productive and willing to work under any circumstances and conditions. 4) Supply of motivated and skilled workers: a shortage of desired workers with desired competencies and right compensation (wages). Consequently, the HR policies and practices suggested are; 1) Location planning and relocation management: considering why and where to establish, expand and relocate. How and when to expand the operations; ourselves or outsourced. 2) Human resources planning: an estimation on the number of skilled manpower required for various locations – using “scenario planning” to predict and be prepared for various scenarios the firm might confront. 3) Staffing: attracting and selecting employees who are competent to perform a variety of jobs at the existing salary rates, adopting strategies to increase retention and decrease turnover rates, and reduction of manpower expenditures by reducing working-hours/pay/benefits or removal (permanent job loss) of some manpower. 4) Training & Development: adopting T&D programs to improve and enhance to quality of the talented employees and at the same time will increase organization’s image as an employer. 5) Performance Appraisal: combining business results with the values and behaviors of the organization to evaluate employees technical and behavioral competencies which results in improving competencies, motivating employees and identifying the T&D needs. 6) Compensation: compensating talents with pay and benefits of international levels, as the competition to attract global talented valued contributors are becoming more serious.

Tarique et al. have suggested that the consideration of who is supposed to be included as “talent”, depends on firm’s degree of inclusiveness – including everyone (highly inclusiveness) to only the top five percent and so (low inclusiveness). For the low inclusiveness, they have referred to Huselid et al. (2009) philosophical approach in classifying employees (using alpha terminology) into “A” players, “B” players and “C” players based on their valuable contribution. In the same manner, they have classified positions into “A”, “B” and “C” positions where the “A” indicates to the positions which have the most significant impact on the organization’s strategy. They suggested that organizations should devote not all but most of its resources in their global Talent Management practices to the “A” – “A” combinations.

**Collings & Mellahi (2009)** argue that Talent Management is the identification of key positions in the organization which provides organization’s competitive advantage. Key

positions, as they claimed, should not only be considered as top management positions, but also other critical positions which are pivotal to the continuity of the organization. These key positions should be filled by high performers and the Talent Management should be aimed at these individuals rather than all employees in the organization in order to differentiate between “Talent Management” and the conventional “Human Resources Management”.

Collings & Mellahi developed a theoretical strategic Talent Management model (see Figure () below) which was based on their definition and understanding of Talent Management.

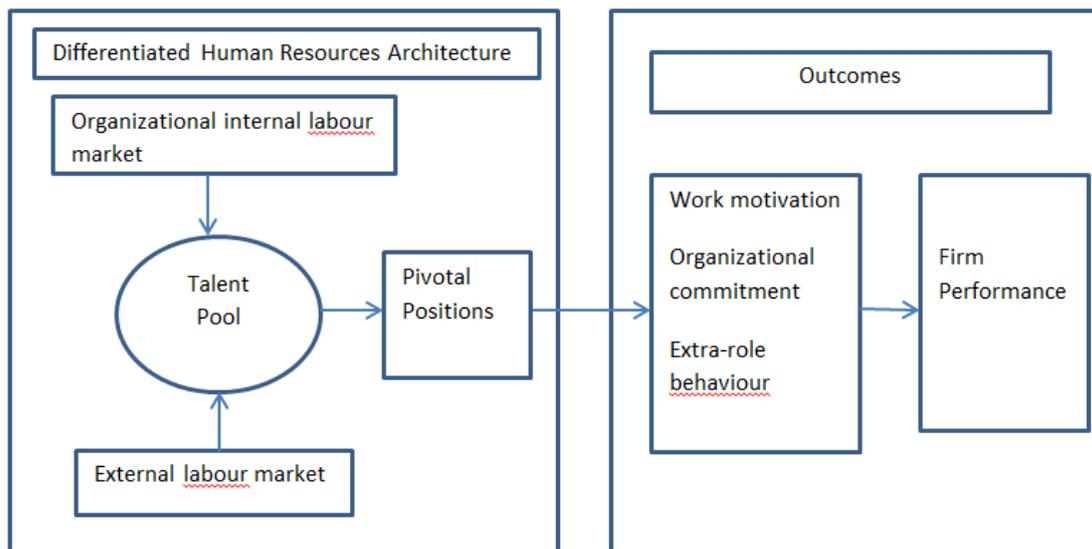


Figure (2): Own making, inspired by (Strategic Talent Management Model (Collings & Mellahi, 2009, p.36))

They argued that the first stage of strategic Talent Management should be the identification of key positions in the organization. The second stage is the creation of talent pool which includes high-potential and high-performance candidate from the internal and external labor market to fill the key roles. The third and final stage is creating a differentiated HR practices which help to build the development, commitment and motivation of those in the talent pool, resulting in having extra-role performance – positive behavior – that plays as reinforcing factor for organization performance.

There is no one solution or best practice that will suit all organizations around the globe. According to Yllner & Brunila, organizations are not same, thus Talent Management cannot be applied in the same way for all organizations. This research supports the argument of Heinen & O'Neill (2004) that the best Talent Management practice is the one which is firm-specific and responds to its unique business and human capital context.

Organizations invest precious and enormous resources in developing and implementing Talent management programs, therefore, in order to ensure that their investment is not wasted, it is important to review their Talent Management practices from time to time, to measure and diagnose their effectiveness. Identifying the strengths and weaknesses, and taking actions to enhance the current practices.

## **2.18 Conceptual Framework**

The following conceptual framework (Figure - 3) is constructed based on the literature review of this dissertation. The model represents a comprehensive framework, which can be applied by any organization regardless of its type of industry.

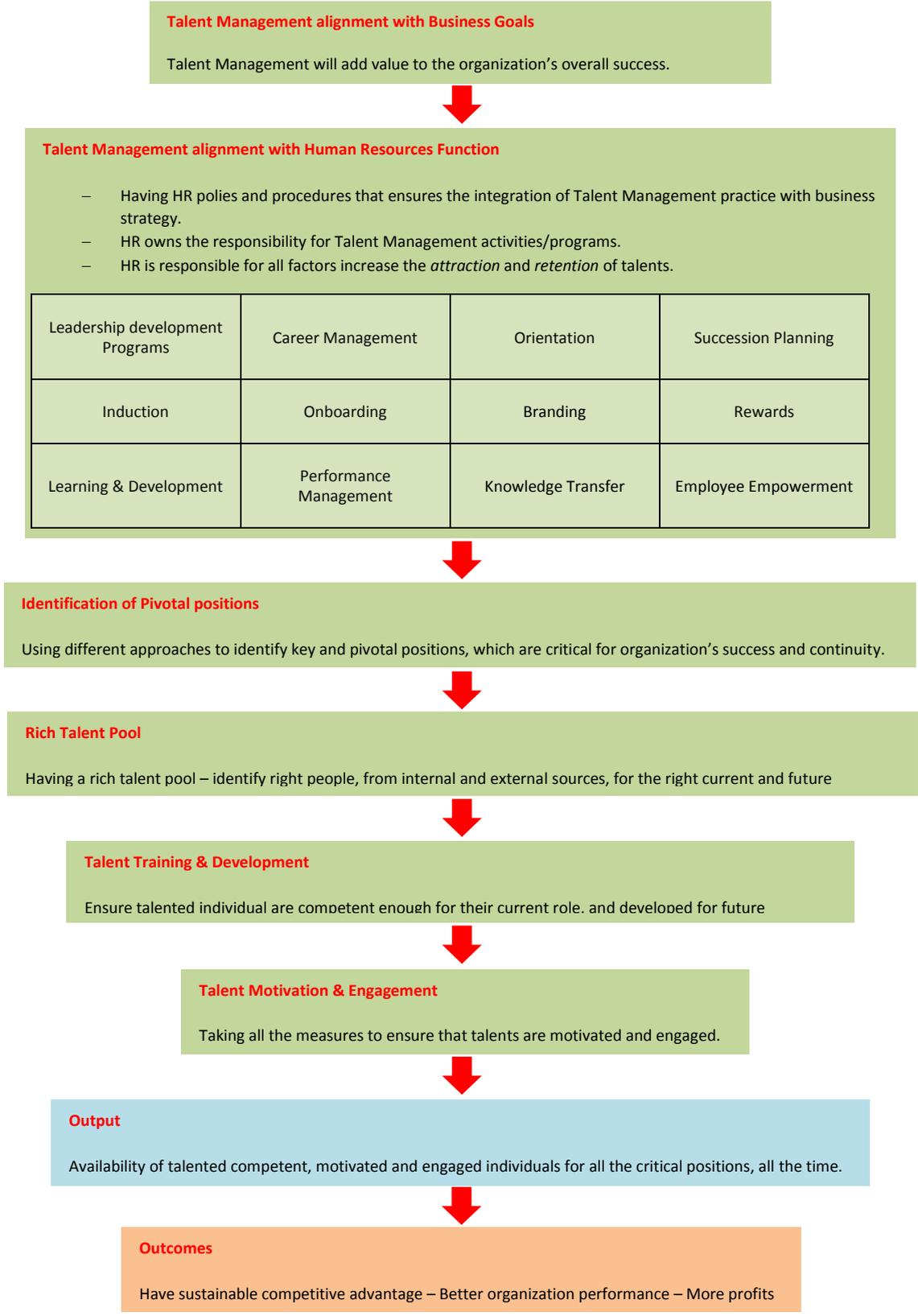


Figure (3): Comprehensive Talent Management Conceptual Framework

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter details the methodology used in the research of this dissertation. Research methodology of any study is usually considered as the backbone of the research. The selection of research approach has a significant impact on the quality and the results of any research (Sekaran& Bougie, 2010).

#### **4.1 Research Approach**

Irny & Rose (2005) defined research methodology as a hypothetical or systematic analysis of data collected through different techniques for the subject under study. In general, research methodology is divided into three types: qualitative, quantitative and the combination of both – qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative approach is exploratory in nature, whilst the quantitative approach is confirmatory in nature (AlMerri, 2017). The selection of the research approach depends on the purpose of the research and the questions that it aims to answer. According to Flick (2014), right research methodology is the one that serves research objectives.

The objectives of this dissertation are centered on exploring the meaning and concept of Talent Management, understanding why it is important and what value it adds to organization's performance, and to identify factors and steps that may improve Talent Management programs effectiveness. These types of questions require an in-depth understanding of the subject, systematic collection/arrangement of information, and proper analysis and interpretation by the researcher. Therefore and in order to satisfy the objectives of this study, a qualitative approach was selected and identified as most appropriate to fulfill the purpose of this research.

The qualitative research approach differs from the quantitative approach in that open-ended questions are used in gathering data and it uses less structured data gathering tools (William et al., 2007). The strength of qualitative research approach is; its high level of flexibility in the process of research, the research is usually carried out in natural settings and it can provide a deep understanding of the informants' world (AlMerri, 2017). Also, in qualitative

research method, the sample size is usually small, thus less resources are required (Lewis, 2014).

## **4.2 Scope of the Study**

This study sought to investigate Talent Management practices in the United Arab Emirates organizations in general without any specific type of industry. Organizations which have departments/sections for Talent Management and/or those with no specific departments/sections but somehow practicing Talent Management.

## **4.3 Research Sample**

Sampling is the process of selecting a number of samples that represent the larger group of the targeted population. The technique used to select the sample is called “sample method”. The selection of sample method should be based on its appropriateness to meet the requirements of the research (AlMerri, 2017).

For this research, a purposeful sampling method was used. The meaning of purposeful sampling is when the researcher intentionally selects the samples based on their knowledge about the subject under investigation (Light et al. 1990, cited in Oh, 2017). The sampling of this dissertation was based on the level of knowledge and experience that each person possess about the topic of the study. All the individuals interviewed for this research were involved and in-charge of Talent Management programs/function in their organizations.

## **4.4 Research Tool**

The Research tools in qualitative research include Participant Observation, Interviews, Focus Groups, Case Studies and some other techniques. Researcher can use one or more of these tools to gather data based on the nature and type of the research.

For this research semi-structured interviews were used to reveal participants’ views, opinions, and experience on the subject of the study. Interviews are widely used in social science investigations. It is estimated that up to ninety percent social science investigations are done

through interviews (Briggs 1986). Mainly there are three types of interviews: Structured, Semi-structured and Unstructured. For this research, semi-structured interviews were selected because of the following (AlMerri 2017):

- The interviewer can probe beyond the answers received from the interviewees.
- The flexibility of reordering interview questions during the interviews.
- Possibility to adjust the level of language if necessary.
- Typically is more adequate for the qualitative type of researches.

The interview questions were mainly open-ended questions, as the open-ended questions can extract a lot more deep and critical information from the interviewees that cannot or difficult to be obtained through closed-ended questions. A very few closed-ended questions, as necessary, were also incorporated into the interview questionnaire.

#### **4.5 Interview Process and Duration**

Initially, fifty potential organizations across UAE, from various sectors, were identified through an internet search. All fifty organizations were contacted via email and requested to conduct a face-to-face interview for the sake of collecting information relevant to this study. To whom it may concern letters issued by “BUID” were attached to the emails sent.

Out of fifty, four semi-government organizations and one private organization responded positively and provided access to their management/employees for the interview. The five interviews held at the workplace of the interviewees, and each interview lasted between 30 minutes to 1 hour. All the participants were in senior/lead positions of Talent Management function. The nationalities of the interviewees were four from Arab countries and one from Europe.

Before the start of the interview, each interviewee was briefed about the research and about the purpose of the interview. This was done to break the ice and to generate some sort of trust. Also, each participant was asked if he/she wishes to keep his/her identity anonymous or not? The purpose of offering anonymity was to make the interviewees more relaxed and comfortable to share information that may be considered sensitive or confidential that is not supposed to be revealed or shared with anyone else such as competitors. The interviews were immediately transcribed verbatim on the questionnaire form. Voice and video recorders were

intentionally avoided and were not used to record the interviews, the reason for that was to make the interviewees feel relaxed and to express their opinions without stress or fear that their recorded words might be shared with others and/or somehow be used against them.

## **4.6 Data Collection**

For this research, a number of data collection methods were used. The data collection was based on a combination of both qualitative and quantitative data from both primary and secondary data resources.

### **4.6.1 Primary Data**

The primary data was collected through Face-Face Interviews: an in-depth semi-structured questionnaire, using both open and closed-ended questions, were conducted with candidates occupying senior managerial positions in the field of Human Resources and/or Talent Management, to obtain as much as possible information/data on their Talent Management practices and their own perceptions on the subject. The reason for choosing such respondents is that they possess a comprehensive and deep knowledge of the subject of interest (Holme & Solvang, cited in Kravtsova 2012). This type of interviews may be very costly and time-consuming, however, it has many advantages such as:

- It gives the interviewer the opportunity to rephrase the questions in case of misunderstanding or misinterpretation.
- It gives the opportunity to probe for more in-depth and more detailed information.
- Also, it provides flexibility to interviewees in how to respond to questions (Baartvedt, 2013)

The selection of the organizations for the interviews was on the basis of organization's reputation and the existence of Talent Management practices in those organizations. Also, the selection was neither based on any particular type of organization (private, semi-government and government) nor any business sector.

More than fifty large organizations were contacted and requested for permission to conduct interviews for the study. Five organizations based in Abu Dhabi and Dubai accepted to be interviewed.

#### **4.6.2 Secondary Data**

The secondary data is the data which has been collected or produced by other researchers and which are available for use by others. The secondary data for this research was collected from various sources such as:

- Internet webs
- Newspapers
- Textbooks
- Research papers & articles
- Organization's reports
- HR consultancy firms and the like.

The secondary data was of both quantitative and qualitative data, mainly from academic articles which were published in international academic journals and conferences. The secondary data is usually not as much reliable as the primary data, however, it is much easier to obtain, available at lower cost – inexpensive, save great time and efforts, and it can be considered as valuable data if collected from reliable and trustworthy sources.

#### **4.7 Validity of the Qualitative Research**

Research validity is the way to identify how well a research conclusion, concept and measurement is written, and how much it exactly corresponds to the real world (Minbaeva, 2014). According to some qualitative researchers, validity is not applicable for qualitative researches; however they do agree that some sort of validation is required to measure the quality and trustworthiness of the qualitative researches.

There are many researchers who have developed and recommended various ways to judge and evaluate the accuracy of any qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003). For instance, according to Maxwell (1992, cited in Thomson 2011), there are five types that can be used to

judge the validity of any qualitative research. The categories identified by Maxwell are; descriptive validity, theoretical validity, evaluative validity, interpretative validity and generalizability. Another researcher, Sarantakos (1994, cited in Bipor (n. d.)) has identified other types namely cumulative validity, communication validity, argumentative validity and ecological validity. Also there are other researchers who have suggested different forms of validation in the context of qualitative research validity.

In order to examine and judge the validity of this qualitative research, the following validity types are addressed and assessed:

- ✓ *Descriptive validity*: descriptive validity is about the accuracy of reporting data. This is obtained through accurate transcription of answers from the participants. During the interviews, deliberately the researcher repeated the answers of the interviewees in order to ensure the questions were well understood and to confirm the correctness of the answers.
- ✓ *Triangulation validity*: triangulation is defined as multiple ways of data collection and/or data analysis to ensure the quality of the scientific findings of a research (Golafshani, 2003). In this research the triangulation is achieved through the use of both quantitative and qualitative data from both primary and secondary sources.
- ✓ *Generalizability*: generalizability means that the outcome from the study can be applied universally. This validity is satisfied as the recommendations and the comprehensive conceptual framework developed can be applied in UAE organizations and also organizations around the globe.
- ✓ *Interpretive validity*: this refers to correct understanding of participants' intentions, feeling, ideas and thoughts (Schultz & Strommen, 2015). The interpretive validity was achieved by repeating the answers given by the participants and checking the meaning of answers of each question from the participant's perspective.

Based on the above, it can be said that the validity of this dissertation is high and the conclusions and outputs are corresponding to the real world.

## **4.8 Data Analysis**

This dissertation employs inductive methodology. As mentioned above, this research has adopted qualitative research approach based on its objectives. The qualitative research

approach usually tend to be inductive and follow bottom-up reasoning – meaning moving from specific to generic/comprehensive (Al Matrooshi, 2016).

In this research, inductive content analysis approach and interpretivist approach has been adopted to analyze collected data and to generate new theory about the phenomena.

Content analysis is used for both quantitative and qualitative data, in either deductive or inductive way (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). Content analysis is used to analyze verbal, written and visual messages (Cole, 1988, cited in Elo & Kyngas, 2007). In the past, it was used to analyze newspaper articles and political speeches, but now it is widely been used in many fields such as psychology, sociology, and business. Content analysis is usually used to build a model and/or conceptual system/map (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). The inductive content analysis is recommended when there is no much information about the phenomenon and/or if the knowledge is fragmented (Lauri & Kingas, 2005, cited in Vimal & Subramani, 2017). In this research the aim was to build a comprehensive conceptual framework for Talent Management, hence inductive content analysis approach was most appropriate.

The interpretivist approach of data analysis is usually based on researcher's subjective analysis of data gathered. According to Oun & Bach (2014), interpretive techniques are the most popular method in analyzing qualitative data. In this research, the interpretive analysis was done on secondary and primary data. The secondary data obtained from the literature review, were deeply analyzed and interpreted, from which the initial conceptual framework and the questions of the research generated. The primary data obtained from the interviews, were also analyzed interpretively based on the themes emerged from the interviews. Conclusions were then drawn based on the common themes that emerged from the data.

## **4.9 Ethical Considerations**

According to Oppenheim (2003), the basic principle in data collection of any research, is that it should ensure no harm will come to the participants due to their participation in the research.

In this research, the ethical implications were very carefully considered. The identity of the participants and the organizations details are kept anonymous. The information gathered during the interviews was only used for the purpose of this study and never been used for any

other purpose. The participants were treated respectfully and their right to privacy was clearly discussed before the start of the interviews.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### 5.1 Research Participants

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior staff members who are in-charge of the Talent Management function in their respective organizations. A total of 17 questions (see Appendix-A) were asked to each interviewee and the duration of each interview was between 30 to 60 minutes.

This research has decided to keep the name of the participants and the name of their companies confidential because of the following reasons; 1) disclosing names will not add much as this research targeted random organizations and not any specific sector or industry. 2) Due to time constraints, the accuracy check of the interviews transcripts was not requested from the interviewees. This research carefully considered the accuracy of the collected data during the interview sessions, however, not receiving confirmation on the accuracy of the information collected, makes this research to choose not to reveal the names of the participants to avoid any undesirable problems that may occur. 3) To respect the wishes of some of the participants for keeping their names anonymous.

The interviews in the following sections are referred to in codes, e.g., Company (1) and Company (2) (see the table below). The table contains minimum info about the interviews to minimize the chances of identifying the interviewees.

<i>Company</i>	<i>Company Type</i>	<i>No. of Employees</i>	<i>Interviewee Designation</i>
Company (1)	Semi-Government	>26,000	VP Learning & Development
Company (2)	Semi-Government	>3,000	Global Head of TM
Company (3)	Semi-Government	>1,500	Snr. Director TM
Company (4)	Private	>13,000	Global Coaching & Leadership Director
Company (5)	Semi-Government	>16,000	Manager Talent Management

Table (1): Background of companies and the role of the interviewees

## 5.2 Interview Findings

The interview questions addressed to the Talent Management function owners of the respective five companies were directed around the main themes that emerged from the literature review. The following are the main themes covered in the interviews:

### ➤ **Inclusiveness and exclusiveness of Talent Management programs**

All the five companies have adopted an exclusive approach to talent management. A few percentages of employees selected as talents. In company (1) the percentage of people considered as talent is 6%. Company (2) didn't have an exact figure but the estimate is between 20-25%. Company (3) only considered 5% of its employees as talents. Company (4) said that the talent pool is only 20% of the senior positions. And company (5) said that only 2% of leadership/management positions are considered as talents

### ➤ **Talent Management and Emiratisation**

Three out of five companies claimed that Emiratisation is part of their Talent Management programs. Company (4) doesn't have any special program/section for Emiratisation, and company (5) mentioned that there are no special programs for the Emiratisation, however, Emiratis are included in the Talent Management programs if they are identified as high potential or high performers.

### ➤ **The owner of the Talent Management function**

The custodian of the talent management function in the five companies is the Human Resources department.

### ➤ **Main goal(s) of the Talent Management Function**

According to company (1), the main goal of the Talent Management is to ensure having right talents for all critical positions all the time. Company (2) also very briefly explained the main goal as having talented expats and Emiratis in the key positions in the company. Company (3) answer was more detailed, it mentioned that the main goals of the Talent Management department are to identify key positions, identify high potential individuals to be developed for their future roles and to be successors for the current key positions holders. Company (4) & (5) answers were

very similar, their talent management main goal is to identify high potential employees, develop them for the future leadership/managerial positions.

➤ **Criticality and the success of the Talent Management program**

According to all five companies, Talent Management plays a critical role in business continuity. As for the success of their Talent Management programs, Company (1) claimed that their Talent Management strategies are linked with the business strategies, and it is supporting the business in achieving its strategic goals. Company (2) answer was yes. Company (3) mentioned that they never faced a problem of not having right people in the key positions, meaning that their Talent Management program is successful. Company (4) said that Talent Management is absolutely and definitely supporting their business. Finally, Company (5) said that there are some indications that their Talent Management program is successful, however, since it is relatively new and just recently been adopted, it cannot be said for sure whether it is successful or not.

➤ **Identification of Talented individuals**

There are different methods/tools used in the process of identifying talents by the five interviewed companies. According to Company (1), 9-box grid, performance management input, leadership assessment, psychometric tests, and direct interviews are methods/tools used to identify talents. Company (2) uses 9-box grid, Psychometric test, Hogan leadership assessment, presentation and case studies. Company (3) mentioned that they use Corn Ferry potential model, measuring three dimensions which are Ability, Commitment, and Engagement. Company (4) said that they have three assessment tools; 360-degree evaluation, Psychometric test and Emotional Intelligence test. Company (5) said they coordinate with area managers to identify individuals with the quality required for future leadership roles.

➤ **Transparency – who is talented and who is not**

According to Company (1), they do not reveal to their employees who are identified as talent and who are not. They are hesitating due to the fear that some may consider this as a promise for promotion. However, they are moving towards transparency in order to encourage their talents to be more engaged with the business. Company (2) said that they formally inform the talents about their selection, and special

development programs are developed for each of them. This is to ensure they will stay for the longest period and do not leave the organization. Company (3) believes that their population is not mature enough and such classification may cause unnecessary reactions from employees. However, they informally tell people that they have potential growth and the company will be investing in their development. Companies (4) and (5), very similar to Company (3), they do not officially inform their employees but indirectly yes they do.

➤ **Talent Management key stakeholders**

According to Company (1), the key stakeholders of the Talent Management process are the T&D department, HR business partner and Managers. Company (2) & (4) identified division heads and department heads as key stakeholders. Company (3) said the stakeholders are Human Resources department, Training team, Business partners and Executives. Company (5) mentioned L&D department, Business leaders, HR division, and Recruitment.

➤ **Identification of pivotal positions**

According to Company (1), post holders positions – area owners, positions in some divisions such as Compliance & Audit and Safety & Security, and positions that are operation critical are considered as pivotal positions. Company (2) said that the critical positions are identified with division heads. Any position that if left unoccupied will cause fall and crash to the business, it is considered as a critical position. Company (3) said that pivotal positions are those roles that generate revenue, manage large teams and those who face the customers. Companies (4) & (5) said that the area owners decide which positions are critical and which are not.

➤ **Attraction and retention of talents**

According to Company (1), from a salary perspective they are not attractive, however, their type of industry and the international exposures make it attractive. They provide full scholarship programs for students and the fresh graduates will have a huge diversity of specializations available to choose from. Company (2) said that their set of values, domestic and international awards won by the company, wages, and benefits which is competitive with the market, make people attracted to the company. Company (3) mentioned that they provide a great place to work in, adopted happiness

programs, having facilities in the workplace such as gym, flexible working hours, generous offers, and above all they offer a career (opportunity for growth) and not only a job. Company (4) said that branding, healthy work environment, support of innovation and the support of career growth make people attracted to the organization and not willing to leave. Company (5) mentioned good salary, very high benefits, brand of the company and being multination company are the reasons for talent attraction and retention.

➤ **Challenges with replacing talents**

According to Company (1), in general, they do not face any challenges, however, there are some difficulties when it comes to replacing talents in some roles which are business specific and not available much in the market. Company (2) mentioned that they normally do not struggle and manage to find a replacement for all the positions. Company (3) said they have successors for all the critical position; therefore they do not face any problem or challenges. Company (4) said that there are always challenges, not with finding replacements for the existing talents, but, challenges with the cost of hiring new employees. Company (5) said there is no challenge at all.

➤ **Main Challenge(s) with Talent Management implementation**

All companies agreed on one common challenge, the managers and leaders are not doing what they are supposed to do as part of their roles in the Talent Management process. Company (1) said that often managers subjectively select talents and reject the real talent. Company (2) said there is no buy-in from the managers and most of the time they do not believe in the process. Company (3) said that some managers find it difficult to consider Talent Management part of their responsibilities. Company (4) mentioned that the direct managers are not cooperative in developing talents, also they do not allocate enough budget for talent development. Company (5) sees the main challenge as leadership capability of identifying and managing talented individuals.

A summary of the interviews findings is presented in the table below:

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<i>The organization has adopted exclusive approach to Talent Management.</i>	5	0
<i>Emiratization is part of Talent Management program.</i>	3	2
<i>Human Resources Department is the custodian of Talent Management Department/Function.</i>	5	0
<i>Talent Management focuses on critical positions.</i>	3	2
<i>Talent Management focuses on managerial positions only.</i>	2	3
<i>Talent Management is critical for business success and continuity.</i>	5	0
<i>The organization reveals the names of the selected talents.</i>	1	4
<i>Pivotal/critical positions are identified via specific criteria.</i>	0	5
<i>Some attraction measures are taken.</i>	5	0
<i>Some retention measures are taken.</i>	5	0
<i>Difficulty in replacing talents.</i>	1	4
<i>Managers are willing, ready and competent to manage talents and contribute to Talent Management practices.</i>	0	5

Table (2): Summary of Interview Findings

### **5.3 Discussion**

The interviews were conducted to gain better understanding and knowledge of the ways that companies in the UAE practice and implement Talent Management programs. The results, to some extent, obtained from the interviews were expected. There are positive signs that organizations in the UAE are adopting approaches that support talent attraction and retention. The evidence from this research study informing the above assertion resides in the positive responses of the five companies regarding the success of their Talent Management programs. However, there are few measures which might increase the effectiveness of the organizations in terms of Talent Management, which this research consider very important to be highlighted.

#### **- Criticality and importance of Talent Management**

One of the main issues that this research aimed to investigate is the importance of the Talent Management practices in the UAE organizations. The interviews revealed a consensus opinion among the participants. All mentioned that Talent Management is very critical for their business continuity and very crucial for business survival. This shows how much organizations are aware of the importance of Talent Management and how much value it is adding to their organizations.

#### **- Custodian of the Talent Management**

The custodian of the Talent Management section in the five companies, as it was expected, is the Human Resources Department. This is considered ideal as many functions of Human Resources are similar to Talent Management functions. This will eliminate unnecessary redundancy in staffing and any extra expenses associated with it. What organizations should do is to ensure that their Talent Management is very well integrated with their Human Resources Department, and that its policies and procedures are in-line with Human Resources policies and procedures.

#### **- Exclusive or Inclusive Talent Management**

Results showed that companies have adopted an exclusive approach to Talent Management. Meaning some are considered talented and the rest are not. This can be, and usually is interpreted in a negative way by the employees, which consequently leads to unwanted and undesired psychological behavior, such as fear of losing job or anxiety of not being

considered for any future promotions. Having an inclusive approach to the talent pool, will cost more, but will be better for the psychological well-being of the employees. It doesn't mean that all should be treated the same, but a segregation between employees based on clear criteria with clear communication and awareness of Talent Management program will be more understandable and more acceptable by the employees.

- **Identification of talent**

The five companies have identified a number of ways to identify talents in their organizations. Companies (1), (2), (3) and (4) are using different tools in the process of identifying talented individuals. On the other hand Company (5) is depending only on managers to identify talents. Using one source or only one tool to identify talents may lead to incorrect assumptions. Therefore the use of more than one tool will increase the accuracy level of the assessment of the individuals. Using all available tools are very time consuming and very expensive, thus organizations should identify the tools which are more effective and more suitable.

- **Revealing who is talented.**

Company (2) explicitly tells its employees about their selection as talents in the company. The other four companies are cautious about revealing who is considered as talent in the organization and who is not. Company (1) doesn't communicate at all, and other three companies inform but indirectly/unofficially. This cautiousness is understandable as it may cause real problems. However, on the other side, keeping it secret also will/may cause greater problems. For instance, if the individual doesn't know about his/her status in the organization, he/she might look for other opportunities elsewhere and leave the organization. Also, as it is evident, such information is usually cannot be kept secret for long, one way or another, employees will know. Hence, it is better for the organization to reveal such information to its employees rather than knowing about it from indirect sources.

- **Pivotal positions identification**

This study revealed that companies identify pivotal positions based on different criteria and opinion. However, none of the answers showed an appropriate/systematic approach in identifying key positions. While some try to identify key positions based on the impact of these positions/functions on the business, others are relying directly on managers/leaders feedback. Managers and executives can provide useful feedback/info about the importance

of each position in their department, however, there is no guarantee that managers and executives will always act objectively and avoid subjectivity. Therefore, it is better for companies to use some systematic approaches and tools as mentioned in section 2.2.8 which will provide more accurate information about the value of each position in the organization, and managers/executives views and feedback can be considered as an addition/supplement to the results obtained.

#### - **Talent Management main goal(s)**

What was notable from the interviews, is that the companies view about the main goal(s) of the Talent Management function were divided into two distinct views; Companies (1), (2) and (3) have associated the main goal of Talent Management with the key positions in the organization, whereas the other two companies associated Talent Management main goal with the leadership/managerial positions only. Of course, there is no right or wrong here, after all the main goals of the Talent Management function should be goals that support the achievement of the organization's short and long-term goals. According to Kim & McLean (2012), misunderstanding happens when management/leadership development is considered same as talent development, seeing managers/leaders equal to talents, this should be the case only if the position is critical for the firm and has an impact on its revenue and sustainable development.

#### - **Talents attraction and retention**

When it comes to attraction and retention of talents, the five organizations have taken some measures to be attractive and to retain talented individuals. They have considered both financial and non-financial measures. It is not possible to say what measures are effective and which are not. Because some measures may have an impact on some people and may not have any impact on others. Organizations must understand that people are not all same. The needs and the ambitions of people defer from one person to another. Organizations should adopt methods to understand the needs of each individual talent. Understand what will make them join the organization and what will make them stay for the longest period. The methods may include questionnaires, interviews or any other suitable source.

#### - **Talent Management key stakeholders**

The answer to the questionnaire (question-9): who are the key stakeholders to the Talent Management process? None of the participants from the five companies mentioned the “talented individuals” as a key stakeholder. Different posts and departments were mentioned, but the talented persons were never included. This was to some extent shocking, because this research believes that for organizations to succeed in their Talent Management, they should not treat and consider their talented employees as objects for experiment. But they should be treated as part of the team that will make difference and contribute to the overall success of the Talent Management program.

Also one of the things which this research considers essential is the understanding of the needs and ambitions of the talented people. Organizations should not only identify talents but also they should identify what talents are looking for, currently and in the future. As mentioned in the literature review section, people have intrinsic and extrinsic needs they tempt to fulfill. At the early stage of anyone’s career, the person will strive to achieve extrinsic goals, but after some time, which usually comes at the middle stage of individual’s career life-cycle, the person will start to attain the intrinsic goals. Organizations may find the right person for the right position, but whether this person considers this position/career as the ideal job, this is something that should be examined. In reality, the majority of people choose their field of study based on the market requirements and not based on their talent or interest. Thus, most of them at some stage will move towards achieving their intrinsic needs. Hence organizations need to understand their employees’ preferences and to take this into consideration when making a selection.

#### **- Talent Management main challenges**

This research tried to identify the main challenges that companies in the UAE face with the implementation of Talent Management practices. The participants identified only one main challenge, one common challenge which is related managers’ involvement in the Talent Management process. According to the five companies, managers are not getting involved enough, they are not contributing to the process to the level expected from them, they are sometimes biased and subjective, and they are not competent enough to effectively take care of and manage talents.

The involvement of managers in the Talent Management is vital to its success. This was stressed in many previous studies as indicated in the literature review section. However, it seems like for some reasons managers are not doing what they are supposed to do in the

Talent Management process. Of course, generally speaking, not all managers are the same, and in this context, the managers can be classified into; 1) Competent and willing to participate. 2) Not competent but willing to participate. 3) Competent but not willing to participate. 4) Not competent and not willing to participate. So, the challenges associated with managers in Talent Management can be categorized into two main challenges – *Capability Challenges* and *Psychological Challenges*. The Capability challenges can be met through proper training and guidelines. Organizations should not be deceived by thinking that, because managers are in senior positions, they are capable of handling matters related to Talent Management. It is evident that people most of the time reach managerial positions because of their capabilities in their fields of specialization, and not because of their capability in managing people. Therefore, organizations must invest in training managers to be effective in their role in Talent Management. The Psychological challenges are more complicated. Organizations should understand the mentality and the mindset of their leaders and managers. Managers for various reasons may act in a way which is contrary to the objectives of their roles. Some of the reasons could be for instance; they believe that this is not part of their jobs, that they are too busy with their day-to-day responsibilities and that they have no extra time for what they consider as additional job, also the fear and anxiety that the new talents will threaten their positions at any stage, and so on. Organizations should take some actions to overcome this concern; for example, communication can be a good tool to pass the right and positive message to managers. Through communication, organizations can convey the strategic needs of Talent Management, why it is important and how it will impact the organization and in turn will impact individuals – managers included. Also, through communication, any misunderstanding can be cleared. Moreover, organizations via communication can promote their commitment and good intention towards their management team. Organizations can enforce reward system for managers – for example their contribution to be part of their annual performance appraisal. Certain managers can be stubborn and refuse to cooperate whatsoever. In such cases the organization should set policies and regulations which will force managers to adhere to Talent Management programs.

#### **5.4 Revised Conceptual Framework**

Based on the findings and discussion in sections 4.2 and 4.3, it can be concluded that three factors will add a great value to the Talent Management process/implementation if

Proper and effective communication to be established from the beginning.

considered. These factors are: 1) *Communication*: this is very critical and important over the whole process. 2) *Needs and ambitions of the talents*: knowing what they really want to achieve in the short and long terms. 3) *Managers readiness*: managers are competent and willing to participate and contribute.

As a result of what has been mentioned above, this research proposing some modification on the comprehensive conceptual framework presented in section-2 as illustrated in the figure (4) below:

**Talent Management alignment with Business Goals**  
Talent Management will add value to the organization's overall success.



**Talent Management alignment with Human Resources Function**

- Having HR polies and procedures that ensures the integration of Talent Management practice with business strategy.
- HR owns the responsibility for Talent Management activities/programs.
- HR is responsible for all factors increase the *attraction* and *retention* of talents.

Leadership development Programs	Career Management	Orientation	Succession Planning
Induction	Onboarding	Branding	Rewards
Learning & Development	Performance Management	Knowledge Transfer	Employee Empowerment



Ensure managers are ready for the TM process

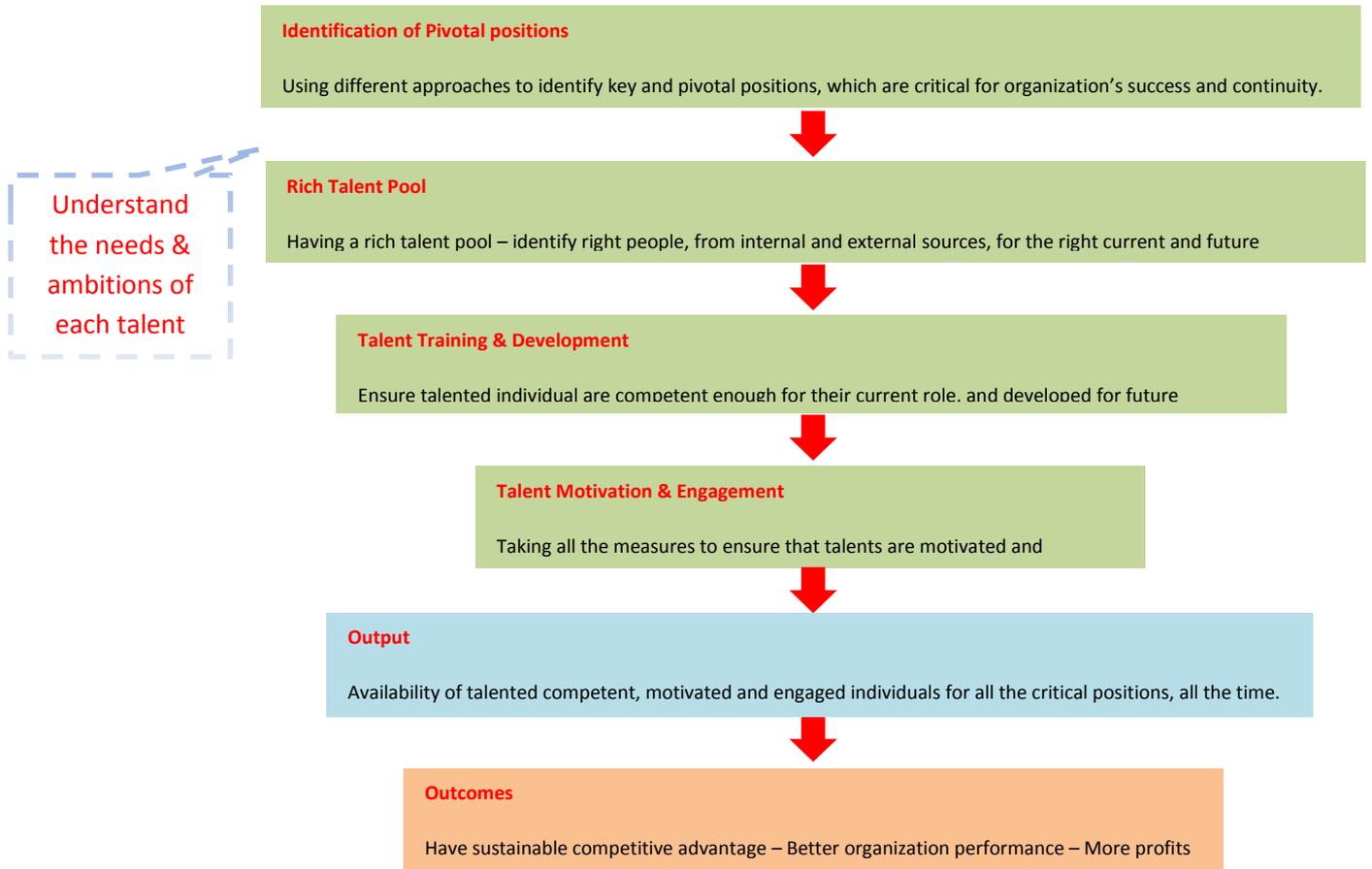


Figure-4: Modified Comprehensive Talent Management Conceptual Framework

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATION & FUTURE WORK

#### 6.1 Conclusion

Talent Management has become one of the priorities in many organizations in many countries around the world, as well as in the organizations in the UAE. It aims to ensure having the right talents with the right skills and experience for the right positions, all of the time, which, in turn, will reflect on the overall performance of organizations. This research dissertation explored the implementation of Talent Management practices in a sample of UAE organizations, and examined their practices compared with practices elsewhere, and as proposed and recommended by practitioners and experts in the Talent Management field. The main aim of this research was to develop a comprehensive conceptual framework for Talent Management that will help organizations in the UAE and worldwide to better implement their Talent Management programs. The initial framework was presented in Chapter-2 and later it was modified based on the analysis of the findings in Chapter-4.

This research is based on interviews and data collection from five large and well-known organizations in the UAE. The results obtained from the interviews revealed a generally positive outcome from Talent Management practices adopted by the five companies. The five companies stated that their Talent Management practices are strategically linked with their business goals and that it is very successful. Through the analysis of the findings, a few factors were identified as obstacles or hindrances to the achievement of complete success of the Talent Management programs. The factors identified are; '*Communication*', '*Managers' readiness*' and '*Understanding the needs of the identified talents*'. Communication should be one of the priorities in the Talent Management process. Managers must be highly capable/competent and psychologically willing to positively contribute in Talent Management. The owners and managers of organizations should understand that talented individuals have different needs that must be addressed if the organizations want to retain their talents over the long term. This research suggests the above three factors be examined and discussed thoughtfully before the implementation of any Talent Management programs. which will consequently have greater influence on the successfulness of Talent Management.

## **6.2 Recommendation**

Based on the literature review, the conceptual framework presented and the analysis of the findings from the interviews with five companies, this research suggests the following recommendations to enhance the Talent Management programs/processes:

### **6.2.1 Recommendations Related to Senior Management**

- CEOs and Executives must take an active role in embedding Talent Management effectively in their organizations from top to bottom (Warren, 2008). They should personally announce the launch of Talent Management programs, as this will signify the importance of Talent Management to the organization and the employees (Nancy 2006, cited in Beheshtifar et al. 2012). Their involvement will make a big difference and will have a great effect on the employees emotional commitments, which in-turn will reflect on their performance in relation to Talent Management programs.
- Organizations should identify set of competencies related to Talent Management for all managerial positions in the organizations. Each manager should be assessed against each of these competencies, and if the competencies are not to the level desired, the organization must take initiatives to raise his/her competency levels. This of course will ensure the readiness and efficiency of the managers in managing Talent Management related activities.
- Organizations should encourage their business units/departments to collaborate, cooperate and share resources when it comes to implementing of Talent Management. The success of Talent Management depends on more than one person's/department's effort. There are many stakeholders of Talent Management who can influence the success of Talent Management programs. The internal stakeholders such as staff and managers from the different sections/departments will have more direct role in Talent Management than the external stakeholders. Therefore their contributions are heavily influential on the whole process of Talent Management.

## **6.2.2 Recommendations Related to Communication**

- Organizations should use different communication methods, tools and channels to convey the real objectives of the Talent management, in order to minimize any misunderstanding or any confusion about it. Choosing the right tools and channels will help to spread the right messages to the right people at the right time in an efficient and effective manner. This will eliminate any potential doubt and/or ambiguities that might arise from the whole Talent Management process.

## **6.2.3 Recommendations Related to Retention of Talents**

- Organizations should adopt useful e-learning systems such as LMS to easy track the development of their talents and to provide easy and accessible learning platform. As mentioned above, training and development is one of the important aspects of Talent Management. It can be considered as a factor for attractions and/or retention. Using useful systems that ease the training and development processes will have a positive impact on their effectiveness.
- Last but not least, organizations should not only focus on building skills and competencies. It should also focus on the motivation, satisfaction and engagement factors that will influence employee's attention towards their work and responsibilities. As evident from many research publications, these factors will increase employees' commitments toward the organization, and also will increase their retention within the organization.

## **6.2.4 Recommendations Related to Transparency and Fairness**

- Since the Talent Management function falls under the Human Resources department, the organizations should empower the HR department, as they have more important role in activating the Talent Management in the organization (Al Suwaidi, 2014). The Human Resources department as the custodian of Talent Management function and as a neutral party can ensure that the selection of talents is done in a transparent and fair way.

- Organizations should ensure fairness in the Talent Management process. If there is any doubt about the criteria for selection of talents by the employees, and the impartiality of development opportunities, complaints will arise and the top leaders (CEOs or EMDs) will doubt its effectiveness (Kim & McLean, 2012). Fairness will increase the level of loyalty and engagement of the staff, which ultimately will result in increases the retention of the talents.

### **6.2.5 Recommendations Related to Alignment of Talent Management with Business goals and values.**

- Organizations invest precious resources on Talent Management, thus it is important to monitor and measure the degree of its effectiveness and successfulness from time to time, and to execute necessary changes to improve and increase its effectiveness. Talent Management programs should be strategic – meaning it should achieve what it supposed to achieve, otherwise it will have a negative impact on the business.
- Organizations should ensure that their Talent Management practices are aligned with their culture and values. Generally people tend to work in organizations with values that match their own set of values, and when a policy/procedure/practice is not aligned with organizational values, people will feel discomfort and very likely to search for another job elsewhere. For instance if one of the organization’s core value is “transparency”, and the organization is not transparent in sharing the names of selected talents.

## **6.3 Limitation of the Study**

This research interviewed five participants serving in lead positions in the Talent Management function in their respective organizations. The number of the participants that this research managed to interview is considered very small considering the number of organizations having/practicing Talent Management in the UAE. A larger sample size may result in more significant findings and more accurate information closer to reality. The conceptual framework presented was based on literature review and the findings from the interviews. This framework would have been more sophisticated and more enhanced if other

stakeholders such as “talents” in these organizations were also interviewed and surveyed. Investigating the perception and opinion of all parties involved in the Talent Management will present more thoughtful insight and more expressive conclusions.

## **6.4 Future Work**

There are various opportunities for future work on Talent Management. Further research could target a larger sample from within United Arab Emirates, and/or greater geographical location – for example GCC countries or the Arab World, in order to obtain more information. Examining the opinion and views of other parties who are directly impacted by Talent Management such as executives and managers of the units, people who are identified as talents, Human Resources managers and professionals who are in-charge of the Talent Management process, will definitely add more to the understanding of Talent Management impact on individuals and the businesses. In addition, looking into the opinions of others who are indirectly impacted by the Talent Management, such as employees who are not considered as talents, will reveal how Talent Management practices impact their morals and attitude.

Furthermore, since there are many activities that can boost the Talent Management system performance, studying which activities are more effective will allow organizations to decide what to apply and what not to.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A - The Questionnaire:

### Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire

#### Section A - About the participant

Organization name:

No of Employees:

Type of the organization:

Interviewee name:

Interviewee designation:

#### Section B – Interview Questions

Q1: Describe the TM department structure in your organization?

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Q2: What are the main goals of TM department in your organization?

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Q3: Does your TM practice supports the achievement of the organization's strategic goals?

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Q4: Do you think TM is crucial to your organization's continuity and survival?

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Q5: At your organization, what percentage of employees are considered as "Talent"? Does your organization consider everyone as Talent? (inclusive or exclusive)

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**Q6: Does your organization reveal who is considered as talented and who is not? If so, in what way Formally or informally?**

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**Q7: Does your organization classify talented employees into different groups?**

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**Q8: Who is responsible for your organization's TM program?**

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**Q9: Who are the key stakeholders of the TM process?**

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**Q10: Considering "talented" employees as individuals occupying pivotal positions - How does your organization distinguishes between pivotal and non-pivotal positions?**

**Pivotal positions:** are those you consider as critical for your business either strategically or operationally or both.

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**Q11: What method(s) are used to identify talented employees at your organization?**

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**Q12: What are the techniques/ideas used to increase talent attraction?**

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**Q13: What are the techniques/ideas used to increase talent retention?**

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**Q14: What do you consider as the main reason(s) for losing your key talents?**

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**Q15: When key talents leave the organization, how challenging it is to replace them?**

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**Q16: How easy it is to attract domestic and international talents?**

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**Q17: what are the main challenges to Talent Management?**

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END