

Journal Article Critique

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Executive Summary

The following business report is a critical analysis of the article:

Collings.D. and K. Mellahi. 2009. Strategic talent management: a review and research agenda. *Human Resource Management Review*. 19(4): 304-313.

The topic of discussion under the article is relevant to practitioners and scholars of human resource management. The critical analysis will discuss the merits and limitations of the article before espousing on conclusion. To determine the credibility of the article, the professional status of the authors and the journal in which the article was published will be reviewed.

Similarly, past literature on the topic and relevance of talent management in human resource management will be assessed. The article shows high level of credibility because of the high standing literature used to support the arguments, the professional standing of the authors and the journal. Due to the practicability of the arguments espoused by the authors of the article, the article has contributed immensely to the domain knowledge of talent management and the overall discipline of human resource mangement.

1. Introduction

The contemporary business environment is characterized by cutthroat competition. Business organizations are embroiled in talent wars to attract and retain the best workers to drive business strategies as research indicates effective human capital facilitates business organizations achieve competitive advantage. According to Ashton and Morton (2005), effective talent management helps business organizations differentiate, enhance strategy execution and operational success, thus gaining competitive advantage over peers. Lockwood (2006) also asserts that, for a business organization to gain competitive advantage in the present competitive global marketplace, an organization needs to attract, hire, develop and retain best talents, therefore effective talent management is critical for organizational achievements.

However, effective talent management is a challenge facing business organizations across the globe. The case is worsened by little and scanty research on the topic of talent management. Therefore, there is a need to analyze literature on talent management. This business report will critically analyze an article written by Collings and Mellahi (2009) on strategic talent management. The report examines the relevance of talent management in human resource management, critically analyses the article including merits and limitations. Lastly discusses recommendations and areas for future research.

2. Relevance to Human Resource Management

In today's dynamic business environment, talent is crucial to business success. Human resource practitioners, therefore, focus on talent management to add business value and promote organizational success. Lockwood (2006) observes that organizations are realigning their human resource management from reactive practices to proactive practices, which is explained by

human resource personnel activities to harness talent. The scholar explains the critical role of talent management in human resource management by citing a talent management survey conducted by the Strategic Human Resource Management Institute in 2006, according to the survey cited by Lockwood (2006); more than 53% of surveyed companies have in place talent management programs. Human resource personnel in seventy-six percent of the companies that have talent management initiatives state that talent management is a top priority. In addition, in 85% of the companies, talent management strategies are implemented with the support of senior management.

Morton (2005) observes that though business organizations hold diverse views on the definition of talent management, they unanimously support that talent impacts bottom-line of the business. Talent management strategies facilitate attracting, selection, developing and retaining employees, critical activities in human resource management, more so at this time when human resource personnel are grappling with shortage of talent to drive business. In addition, talent management play a critical role in enhancing diversity among employees. Despite the critical role talent management plays in facilitating effective deployment of human capital, human resource personnel report it is the greatest challenge in human resource practices. According to Lockwood (2006), 85% of human resource practitioners agree that the greatest challenge facing human resource units of business organizations is the ability to create systems to attract t and retain talent, which are pillars of talent management.

3. Critical Analysis

3.1. Credibility

3.1.1. Authors

To ascertain the credibility and reliability of the information advocated by the authors, it is prudent to assess the authors' professional experience in the field. According to Conkin (2005, p. 183-186) to establish the believability, reliability and authenticity of a text, the reader should ascertain that the author is familiar and knowledgeable on the topic he is covering. The article to be analyzed is written by two authors, David G. Collings and Professor Kamel Mellahi.

According to details, appearing in a book, he co-authored titled "Global Strategic Management" Fynas and Mellahi (2011) indicate in the authors' section that David G. Collings works at the Sheffield University Management School as a lecturer in the department of Human Resource Management and Organizational Behavior. He also teaches International Management at the National University of Ireland, Galway. David Collings is an editor of the Human Resource Journal. In his human resource teaching, he has written and edited numerous journals and books on international business management and human resource management. Professor Kamel Mellahi is the second author of the article. According to Warwick Business School (2013), Professor Kamel is distinguished professor of strategic management at Warwick Business School in University of Warwick and teaches University of Sheffield Management School. Professor Kamel is a distinguished author on research issues of international business strategy, strategic management, and non-market strategy. He has co-authored several books and tens of scholarly articles that have been published in leading international business journals such as Strategic Management Journal, Journal of International Business Studies, Journal of Management Studies

and Academy of Management Perspectives. He currently serves as Co-Editor-in-Chief of the international Journal Management Reviews.

Looking at the authors' field of study, research and teaching, which include extensive studies on strategic management and human resource management, the authors appear credible and to have a reliable authority on the topic of strategic talent management. Therefore, the results and inferences made in the article are reliable and credible because of their extensive research and numerous teaching experiences on issues of strategic management and human resource management.

3.1.2. Journal

The article is published in the journal Human Resource Management Review. Elsevier (2013) indicates that The Human Resource Management Review is a quarterly journal that focuses on publishing scholarly articles, which address micro and macro human resource management and related issues such as organizational theory, labor relations and organizational psychology. In addition, Meta analytical reviews contributing to the conceptual and theoretical knowledge of the body of human resource management are also published by the journal. Articles published in the Human Resource Management Review are of high credibility because they are taken through a rigorous process of peer review and editorial screening. Due to the meticulous vetting of articles submitted for publication, Elsevier (2013) indicates that the journal has an impact factor of 2.375, and in 2011, the journal was ranked using journal ranking indicator, placing it position 14 out of 81 on the subject topic of organizational behavior and human resource management. The journal is said to provide a platform for ideas on or related to human resource management that will lead to empirical study and analytical evaluation of existing models, theories, framework and concepts on human resource management and related issues. Given the stringent publication

rules, it is probable that articles appearing in the Human Resource Management Review are reliable, credible and practically applicable to the field of human resource management.

3.2. Merits

As evidenced by the professional background of the authors and ranking of the journal that published the article, it can be assumed that the sources are credible and applicable to human resource management. The article opens up with an abstract detailing the information being discussed in the article. The abstract is concise and precise to the point highlighting the topic of interest, which is talent management, and summarizing the finding of the study. According to Conkin (2005, p. 183-186) a good journal article should contain an abstract introducing and summarizing research findings on the topic of interest. In this case, in the abstract, the authors discuss succinctly strategic talent management, stating that the article will contribute to the body of human resource management by providing a concise definition of strategic talent management and developing a theoretic model of strategic management model. The article credibility is affirmed by the applicability of the findings to solve existing problems. Conkin (2005, p. 183-186) observes that studies should identify a research problem, define the problem and find solutions to the problem. In this case, Collings and Mellahi (2006) identified two problems that exist in human resource management and then developed solutions. The two problems identified by the two authors are one, strategic talent management lack a concise definition; and secondly, the lack of a theoretical model of strategic talent management. Similar observation on the need to develop a definition for strategic talent management are echoed by Lewis and Heckman (2006) who state that, though research on talent management has been on an increase from 2004, there is a lack of a clear definition of talent management, scope and goals of talent management. Lewis and Heckman (2006) continue to state that there is a paucity of conceptual frameworks, models

and theories supporting talent management. Similarly Aston and Morton (2005, 30) assert that lacks “a single consistent or concise definition of the term talent management”. By concisely defining talent management and developing a theoretical model of strategic talent management, Collings and Mellahi (2006) fill a gap that existed in the field of talent management, thus supporting the credibility and applicability of the article

According to Conkin (2005, p. 183-186) a research study should review existing literature on the topic of interest to evaluate similarity and contrasts that exist among scholars researching on the topic of interest. In this case, Collings and Mellahi (2006) have incorporated theories generated by other scholars who have done prior studies on talent management. The existence of prior studies on the topic of talent management gives credibility and merit to the article done by Collings and Mellahi (2006). In reviewing earlier studies on talent management, the authors reviewed the three key concepts of talent management espoused by Lewis and Hackman (2006). The three lines of thoughts assert that talent management is not a surrogate term for human resource management, talent management focuses on developing talent pools and management of talented work force. The credibility of the article is enhanced by the authors stand to deviate from prior studies’ assertions. For example, Collings and Mellahi (2006) in defining talent management argue that talent management emphasis on developing talent of high potential workers. It involves identifying strategic jobs that give the business organization sustainable competitive advantage and giving those jobs to high performers after rigorous vetting of all employees to differentiate high performers and low performers. The authors’ view argues that A performers should hold key jobs. However, Smart (1999) earlier asserted that all positions in an organization should be filled with A performers or talented employees, in what is termed as top

grading. The authors of the article also contrasted Michaels, Handfield-Jones and Axelrod (2001), who report McKinsey consultants approach that proposed managing out C players out of the organization.

3.3. Limitations

Just like all studies, Collings and Mellahi (2006) article had limitations. According to Conkin (2005, p. 183-186) a research study should identify areas that future researches should focus on. Though talent management is an area of human resource management, it lacks a clear and concise definition of the term and a theoretical model of strategic talent management. Therefore, it is a topic bound to elicit interest among human resource practitioners and scholars trying to understand and contribute to the body of knowledge of human resource management, particularly talent management. Collings and Mellahi (2006) should have directed areas that future studies should focus based on the research gaps they have established in the course of their research. Instead, the authors recommend future researchers use the theoretical model of strategic talent management they developed to assist them expound knowledge on talent management.

Research studies encounter problems that affect the validity and accuracy of the research study. Conkin (2005, p. 183-186) agrees that limitations are a common occurrence in a research study and the researcher should highlighted and discuss how they were delimited in the study. Collings and Mellahi (2006) article, however, does not discuss of the limitations encountered in the course of study. Though the statement that there is a lack of clear definition of talent management may be construed to be a limitation, it is not true because the study was concerned with concisely defining the term talent management. Moreover, Collings and Mellahi (2006) do not disclose assumptions or relationship of variables used in developing the theoretical model of strategic

talent management, unlike Boselie, Dietz and Boon (2005) who in developing AMO framework gave a relationship of equation that stated that employee performance (P) is a function of three variable, employee's ability (A), motivation (M) and opportunity to perform (O).

$$P = f(A, M, O)$$

4. Discussion

Talent management is a growing topic in human resource management. However, scholars have not yet developed a clear definition of the term or a theoretical model to help scholars in the study of talent management. The article by Collings and Mellahi (2006) prove to be a useful guide to form a groundwork for the infant and fledgling field of talent management. The article has developed a concise definition of the term talent management based on earlier studies on the topic. Given that the study by Collings and Mellahi (2006) did not suffer from significant errors, it is probable that the findings found in the article are credible and reliable and will form a basis for future research on talent management.

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