

HR Practitioners' Perspectives on Talent Management in Thailand : Quantitative and Qualitative Studies มุมมองของนักบริหารทรัพยากรมนุษย์ต่อการบริหารจัดการคนเก่ง ในประเทศไทย : การศึกษาเชิงปริมาณและคุณภาพ*

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้มุ่ง (1) ศึกษาถึงการนิยาม และความเข้าใจเกี่ยวกับคนเก่ง และการบริหารจัดการคนเก่ง ตามแนวคิดของ Lewis และ Heckman (2006) ที่ได้รับการอ้างอิงจากนักวิชาการด้านทรัพยากรมนุษย์ทั่วโลก แต่ยังไม่มีการศึกษาวิจัยเช่นนี้ปรากฏตีพิมพ์ในประเทศไทยเลย และ (2) เพื่อนำเสนอปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อการจัดการคนเก่งอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพในองค์กรไทย ตามมุมมองของนักบริหารทรัพยากรมนุษย์ ด้วยเหตุนี้ มุมมองของนักบริหารทรัพยากรมนุษย์ในประเทศไทยที่มีต่อคนเก่ง และระบบการบริหารจัดการคนเก่งจึงเป็นประเด็นที่น่าสนใจแก่การศึกษาเป็นอย่างยิ่ง โดยการวิจัยนี้เก็บข้อมูลจากแบบสอบถาม จำนวน 400 ชุด

และสัมภาษณ์เจาะลึกนักบริหารทรัพยากรมนุษย์ และ ผู้ที่เกี่ยวข้องกับประเด็นดังกล่าวในองค์กรภาครัฐและเอกชน จำนวน 40 คน ทั้งนี้ผลการศึกษาที่สำคัญพบว่า การบริหารและพัฒนาคนเก่งโดยใช้พรสวรรค์ส่วนบุคคลซึ่งเป็นประเด็นที่นักวิชาการทั่วโลกกำลังให้ความสนใจ เป็นองค์ความรู้ที่ยังขาดหายและเป็นที่ต้องการมากในวงการบริหารทรัพยากรมนุษย์ไทย นอกจากนี้ นักบริหารทรัพยากรมนุษย์ต่างประสงค์จะได้รับความรู้ในประเด็นการจัดการนี้จากนักวิชาการและนักวิจัยเป็นอย่างยิ่ง ดังนั้นประเด็นนี้จึงควรจัดเป็นวาระเร่งด่วนที่นักวิจัยไทยควรให้ความสำคัญเพื่อสร้างองค์ความรู้ที่เหมาะสมแก่ทิศทางการพัฒนาประเทศต่อไป

Abstract

This study (1) investigated Thai human resource (HR) practitioners' perspectives on talent management in terms of their definition and understanding; and (2) proposed key factors that influence effective talent management in Thailand. To determine this, four hundred structured questionnaires were disseminated to 400 HR practitioners and forty out of these

were interviewed. The study discovered that talent management is still a new and challenging HR issue in which the succession planning was recognized and utilized as the foundation of talent management in both public and private organizations. The majority of in-depth interview participants suggested that they wished to manage individual talent as such encouraging and

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unleashing employees' potential, but they did not know how and where to begin the process.

These problems significantly discouraged HR practitioners from proposing any creative ideas about managing talent to their top executives. Thus, the participants mutually

agreed that to provide some promising scientific information is an urgent HR agenda. There are currently few empirical investigations in the field of talent management in the Thai business context.

Introduction

Since the phrase "war for talent" was coined by McKinsey in 1997 (Axelrod, Handfield-Jones, & Michaels, 2002; Michaels, Handfield-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001), the term "talent management (TM)" has received a remarkable degree of practitioner and academic interest (Berry, 2007; Birschel, 2006; Jenkins, 2006; Maxwell & MacLean, 2008; Powell & Lubitsh, 2007). Trends for talent management, talent wars, talent raids and talent shortages, talent metrics retention and concerns for talent strategy have been introduced in literatures across the continents and countries such as The USA, Europe, The UK, Australia, Japan, China, India and other countries in Asia (Bennett & Bell, 2004; Chugh & Bhatnagar, 2006; Kuptsch & Pang, 2006; Yeung, 2006;). Since the environment for most organizations today is global, complex, dynamic, highly competitive and extremely volatile, organizations both locally and globally recognize that they have a critical responsibility to recruit, develop, deploy, manage and retain their most valuable asset-talent (Cappelli, 2008). In this regard, recent research found that chief executive officers (CEOs) are increasingly involved in the talent management process, with the majority of those surveyed spending over 20% of their time on talent issues, while some spent up to 50% of their time on talent issues (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2006). The study also

revealed that most CEOs explicitly pointed out that talent management was too important to be left to the Human Resources (HR) alone. A Boston Consulting Group (BCG) (2007) report identified talent management as one of the five critical challenges for HR in the European context.

Talent management is also a significant HR agenda in the Thai business context. Leading organizations have established talent management departments and programs. For example, Siam Cement Group (SCG) has a talent management department under the supervision of the central HR office, while Charoen Pokaphan Group (CP) has established its own business institution for higher education, the Panyapiwat Institute of Technology, in order to educate, train and supply its talent pool. A survey in 2009 by researchers of training programs offered by the consulting firms - APM Group, PacRim Group and Thailand Productivity Institute - found that every consulting firm offers various programs involving talent management for different levels of employees. In addition, in telephone interviews with consultants, most of them stated that many leading Thai firms from both public and private sectors are significantly increasing their focuses on talent management such as The Bank of Thailand, The Stock Exchange of Thailand, Betagro Group, PTT Public Company

and multinational companies operating like Pfizer (Thailand). The main reasons are that: (1) Thailand is welcoming global competition as one of the World Trade Organization (WTO) members; and (2) multinational corporations (MNCs) usually penetrate the Thai market with huge capital, ready to secure top talent to help gain market share and sustain competitive advantages. Therefore, Thai organizations need to be alert and prepare for highly organized talent management systems in order to compete. As mentioned earlier, talent management seems to be a priority for HR issue in Thailand, but a 2010 search of the term talent management on Google (accessed on 3 March) revealed 29,600,000 hits, with talent management solutions, talent management tools, talent management software and talent management guides dominating various HRM periodicals and websites. Only 125,000 hits appeared in Thai websites or items related to talent management in Thai organizations, accounting for only 0.0004%. Most articles found were professional works discussing talent management in terms of definition, concept, system, procedure and perspectives on talent and talent management. There is no scientific-based study in the survey. No academics and HR practitioners discuss talent management in the Thai business context scientifically. Most of them posited their discussions on their consulting experiences and employed international case studies as their references.

It is clearly seen that the global conquerors in the knowledge-based economy are those who possess more scientific, concrete information (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Green, Wu, Whitten, & Medlin, 2006). Similarly, Thai organizations cannot compete in a highly competitive situation without such information,

and thus both professional insights and scientific-based information are needed to empower Thai organizations to compete in the war for talent. Less academic attention has been paid to talent management in the Thai business context (Petison & Johri, 2007; Piansoongnern, Anurit, & Bunchapattanasakda, 2008). Thus, this study should prove valuable and beneficial to both public and private organizations as well as HR practitioners, academics and policy makers, such as the Thai Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Thai Industries, and the government agencies, in the preparation of policy and planning for competing in the war for talent effectively. This study is one of the pioneer empirical studies of its kind in Thailand conducted with HR practitioners specializing in the area of talent management.

Objectives of the Study

(1) To investigate Thai human resource (HR) practitioners' perspectives on talent management in terms of their definition and understanding.

(2) To proposed key factors that influence effective talent management in Thailand.

Literature Review

What is talent?

Many researchers provided various definitions of the term "talent" in different perspectives. Buckingham and Clifton (2001) points out that talent refers to a natural recurring pattern of thought, feeling or behavior that can be productively applied. Talent naturally exists within people, while skills and knowledge must be acquired. They preferred the term strengths, which are made up of a combination of knowledge, skills, and talents.

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People's talents are innate, whereas skills and knowledge can be acquired through learning and practice. When talent is augmented with knowledge and skill, the results become individual strengths. Rath and Conchie (2008) will that natural talents are stable over time and are the key to effectiveness. Buckingham and Clifton (2001) emphasize that it is never possible to possess strengths without requisite talent.

Morton (2004) defines talent as an individual who has the capability to make a significant difference to the current and future performance of the company. Goffee and Jones (2007) support Morton's definition that talent is a handful of employees' ideas, knowledge and skills which give them the potential to produce the disproportionate value from the resource they have available from them. Tansley, Harris, Stewart, and Turner (2006) state that talent can be considered as a complex combination of employees' skills, knowledge, cognitive ability and potential. Employees' values and work preferences are also of major importance. The problem however is that everyone could be considered as high potential at different points in time in different organizations. In some organizations, an individual may need to reach a certain level in the organizational hierarchy in order to be considered high potential. For this reason, it is every organization's interest to make a decision for themselves how and who to label as high potential.

For some researchers, talent may be defined as a critical ability set that is difficult to obtain in the labor market – a scarcity of skills. For example, Ingham (2006) considers people who are in a key position with talent, particularly as a leader team, to be an individual who has

a specific of capabilities or contribute to an organization. Phillips and Roper (2009) narrowly define talent as a core group of leaders, technical experts and other key contributors that are quickly becoming an organization's most important asset. Groysberg, Nanda, and Nohria (2004) also calls such talent in an organization as a star—those who was ranked as one of the best in industry. An organization should focus on growing talent from individual employee within the organization and do everything possible to maintain the status as the star. Huselid, Beatty, and Becker (2005) define high performance employees who are placed in strategic positions as "A" players or talent. They describe that a business needs to adopt a portfolio approach to workforce management, placing very high performing employees ("A" players) in strategic positions ("A" positions), good performers in support positions and dismissing nonperforming employees and jobs that do not add value. Ready and Conger (2007) define talent as a group of employees who have above average knowledge and skill, and are ready to be promoted to executive positions and thus are the best people in an organization.

In summary, literature review on the term "talent" suggested that most definition of talent refers to potential, in particular high potentials, which were classified by both practitioners and academic publications into two main definitions: (1) individual potentials (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001; Rath & Conchie, 2008; Tansley et al., 2006); and (2) potential people (Goffee & Jones, 2007; Groysberg et al., 2004; Huselid et al., 2005; Ingham, 2006; Morton, 2004; Phillips & Roper, 2009; Ready & Conger, 2007). First, talent is something inherent in people, recurring patterns of thought,

feelings and behavior that are innate in them. Importantly, maximizing talent drives people to perform in their jobs. Second, talent is defined as people who are in the key position, the team leader and the individual who has a unique capability or makes particular contributions to an organization. On the one hand, a group of employees having above average educational qualification, skill and performance, entitled to be promoted to executive positions, are also defined as talent because they are the best performers in the organization.

What is talent management?

There is no single consistent or concise definition of talent management because the terms "talent management strategy", "succession planning" and "human resource planning" are often used interchangeably (Aston & Morton, 2005; Lewis & Heckman, 2006). Lewis and Heckman (2006) identify three perspectives on the concept of talent management. First, talent management is merely a substitute for the label talent management for human resource management. In this perspective, empirical studies often focus on some particular HR practices such as recruitment selection, leadership development and succession planning. The contribution of this literature is relatively limited in the stream of the strategic HR literature, as it largely amounts to a rebranding of human resource management (HRM). Second, talent management is still the rebranding of HRM, but emphasizes on the development of talent pools focusing on projecting employee/staffing needs and managing the progression of employees through positions (Lewis & Heckman, 2006). Studies in

this perspective classically build on earlier research in the succession planning literatures. While adopting a relatively narrow focus, studies in this tradition at least provide a degree of differentiation as to what talent management is relative to its HRM counterpart.

The last perspective of talent management focuses on managing talent according to performance and it is viewed that it as an undifferentiated good that emerges from humanistic and demographic perceptions (Buckingham & Vosburgh, 2001). In this aspect, talent management is considered "generic" and does not focus on specific positions or boundaries because people may have more to gain by developing and leveraging their natural skills than by trying to repair their weaknesses (Roberts et al., 2005). Critical to this line of thought is the ability to manage people to their highest potential toward a high performance organization. It includes the development of people and managing that process. This all requires cooperation and communication among managers at all levels (McCauley & Wakefield, 2006; Redford, 2005).

In summary, TM is mainly viewed in three perspectives: (1) traditional HR functions and practices; (2) a new term of succession planning; and (3) the management of people's natural capability or learned skills that benefit an organization. The first two perspectives are deemed re-branding of HRM which do not advance understanding of the strategic and effective management of talent, while the last perspective is placed in this challenging area that HR practitioners should underline because it involves the development of people and management of the process that requires cooperation and communication among managers at all levels.

Talent management in Thailand

Few empirical studies (Petison & Johri, 2007) in the area of talent management and high performance employees in Thailand are found in the peer-reviewed literature. The link between HR practices and organizational performance can be found in the study of Wattanasupachoke (2009). This research focused on how HR strategies of Thai enterprises can influence business performance. The findings indicated that extra pay and profit sharing schemes significantly influence non-financial performance. The extra pay and profit sharing scheme lead to a sense of belonging and greater commitment of staff because their wealth would be directly linked to their firms' financial performance. For the non-financial performances, the only influential group of variables is positive inner characters consisting of positive attitudes and politeness. The employees with these characters tend to be dedicated, faithful and committed to firms and customers. The link between HR practices and talent management has also been signified and examined in comparative studies across Asia. In this regard, Zheng, Soosay, and Hyland (2008) examined the issues relating to recruiting highly skilled managerial and professional staff experienced by multinational companies (MNCs) manufacturing in six Asian countries, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand. Data collected from 529 MNCs were used to examine critical HR planning and recruitment concerns of companies operating in high growth economies called "Dragon" and newly developed economies called "Tiger". The study examined differences in recruitment practices between manufacturing and service companies and the issues related to how manufacturers maintain an adequate skills basis. There appears to be a considerable amount

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of competition for talent among Dragon and Tiger economies with the latter required to be more aggressive as they attempt to sustain growth. Manufacturing companies are experiencing a higher demand for more job-related managerial and technical capabilities while competing with service companies that are also in need of more talent. To succeed, manufacturing MNCs will need to adopt a strategic approach for recruitment and retention as well as the internal capability to train and maintain their skilled employees in order to sustain competitive advantage. Zheng (2009) further surveyed 281 service MNCs in six Asian countries as discussed earlier in order to test the link between HR practices, employee retention and service firm performance. The findings confirmed that there were statistically significant linkages between HR practices, talent retention and firm performance. In particular, various skill training and development programs are seen to be significantly associated with the capacity to deliver quality service and firm growth as perceived by managers surveyed. Informal recruitment methods that are used more by Asian-bred firms have contributed to better retention rates. Not all formalized HR practices lead to talent retention; and the degree to which HR is perceived to have impacted on firm performance varies.

In the micro perspective on the talent management literature, Japanese companies in Thailand have attracted scholars with particular concentration on the implementation and transferability of Japanese managerial styles. Onishi (2006) examined the transferability of Japanese HRM to Thailand. Attitudes towards life-time employment, seniority system, consensual decision-making, quality circles and house unions were considered. The results indicated that all five practices except seniority

are transferable. The Thai employees have more positive attitudes towards consensual decision-making, quality circles and house unions than the Japanese managers in the Japanese manufacturers in Thailand. Some Japanese managers think that consensual decision-making and quality circles are not appropriate or accepted in Thailand. This belief may limit the implementation of these practices. Regarding seniority, both the Japanese managers and the Thai employees agreed that performance should be evaluated by achievement, but years of service should be part of any evaluation criteria. Peterson and Johri (2007) also support that trust and respect are significant factors that influence the development of local talent in Japanese subsidiaries. Their findings demonstrated that the challenges and solutions in developing local employees for managing subsidiaries-implementation of Thainization philosophy in Toyota Motor Thailand (TMT), the management had to demonstrate respect for local employees and build trust between Thai and Japanese employees. Once the employees interacted each other on the basis of mutual respect and trust, it was relatively easy to collaborate and find the solutions.

In summary, the research in the topic "talent management" in Thailand is focused on the link between human resource practices and organizational performance and the factors affecting talent management. These empirical studies demonstrate a high value of human resource practices in managing talent through macro and micro perspectives. Data from different Asian countries were analyzed, while Japanese companies were mainly employed as the significant data source. This data developed an interesting question: Do Thai firms distinguish talent and talent

management? Yet, a comparative study between Thai firms and MNCs in different industries and countries regarding talent management were left unaddressed.

Methodology

Quantitative and qualitative research methods were triangulated and divided into two phases, given that the term "talent management" has no clear meaning and has been used in different manners and is often a means to highlight the "strategic" importance of a HR specialty (recruiting, selection, development, and etc.) without adding to the theory or practice of that specialization (Lewis & Heckman, 2006, p. 141).

The quantitative research was originally inspired by the discussion of Lewis and Heckman (2006) that "it is apparent the term "talent management" has no clear meaning. It is used in too many ways and is often a means to highlight the "strategic" importance of a HR specialty (recruiting, selection, development, etc.) without adding to the theory or practice of that specialty (p. 141)". Thus, the main objective of the quantitative study was to investigate Thai human resource (HR) practitioners' perspectives on talent management in terms of definition and understanding. Data were collected on Thursday, March 19, 2009 in a conference on trends in Human Resources Management (HRM) organized by a university in Bangkok, Thailand. This one-day conference was selected as a site of data collection because approximately five hundreds HR practitioners from both public and private organizations participated in the conference. In this regard, four hundred structured questionnaires were distributed by the researchers from 8.30 a.m. until 17.30 p.m. A structured questionnaire with Cronbach's

Alpha of 0.756 was developed as discussed by Lewis and Heckman (2006). Sixteen questions were asked and focused on HR practitioners' perspectives on the definition and their understanding about talent management. In addition, in-depth interviews were also conducted in order to understand the reasons behind the answers obtained from the questionnaire survey. Interview consents were verbally proposed by the researchers to questionnaire respondents who demonstrated friendly cooperation. Forty HR practitioners, or ten percent of the questionnaires distributed in the quantitative study, were interviewed about the definition of talent management and its application in their workplace. Each interviewee was interviewed by means of face-to-face and telephone interviews lasting for 30-45 minutes. All interviews were anonymously diagnosed to protect the privacy of the respondents. Questions prepared were utilized as a guideline for the research because the interviews chiefly aimed at investigating what interviewees expressed in their own words about talent management. The data collected during the qualitative study was transcribed. Throughout the data collection and analysis process of the study, interviewees were willing to talk openly about talent management rather than providing politically corrected answers, while the researcher kept viewing the experiences under study from the interviewees' perspectives by practicing active listening and abstaining from using preconceived ideas or existing theories to interpret the experiences. Constant comparative method was used as a key method in data analysis for comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences regarding interviewees' perspectives on talent management of their organizations.

Findings

In the quantitative phase, data from the survey revealed that respondents were working in three types of organizations: (1) Local-private (199 people, 49.8%); (2) Public (108 people, 27%); and (3) Multinational (93 people, 23.3%). Of these 358 respondents (89.5%) were involved in HR jobs and positioned in middle to high managerial levels in their organizations (69.8% or 279 respondents) such as senior HR manager, HR manager, training manager, organizational development manager and so on. Only 10.5% or 42 respondents worked in other departments or at junior managerial level (121 respondents, 30.3%). The majority of respondents had extensive experience in HRM and HRD jobs with 257 people (64.3%) working for more than 5 to 10 years. In the minor group, only 30 people (7.5%) had working experience of less than 3 years.

Regarding talent management in organizations, a major group of 381 people (95.3%) of questionnaire respondents indicated that their organizations have talent pools, but were not titled talent management programs, while 19 people (4.8%) indicated that their firms have talent management programs. The findings also revealed that 377 of respondents (94.3%) indicated that they never seen or read any empirical studies about talent management conducted in Thai organizations. Only 23 people (5.7%) had ever read or seen such a study. Regarding Thai HR practitioners' perspectives on talent management, the majority of the questionnaire survey's respondents agreed that talent management is an emerging hot human resource management issue in Thailand, but scholars have been paid very little attention to talent management. In respondents' perspectives, "talent" is a person who demonstrates higher

performance than others, and has a readiness to be promoted to an executive position. Respondents also pointed out that talent management in Thailand is the rebranding of HRM practices, particularly succession planning. Human resource departments should not be entirely responsible for managing talent in an organization.

In the in-depth interview phase, interviewees participating in the study came from various Thai organizations. The largest group were in banking and financial business (11 interviewees, 27.5%) followed by property development business (7 interviewees, 17.5%), construction business (5 interviewees, 12.5%), automotive business (5 interviewees, 12.5%), computer/electronic parts manufacturing (5 interviewees, 12.5%), retailing/consumer product distribution (4 interviewees, 10%), and healthcare and medical services (3 interviewees, 7.5%), respectively.

Talent was divided into two definitions by forty interviewees. First, it was mainly defined as a group of employees who demonstrate higher performance than others in an organization. Second was that individual talent such as employees' expertise or employees' talent, including a recurring pattern of thought, feeling, or behavior can productively be applied. In this definition, there were not many interviewees that responded to the question automatically. The researcher was a key person guiding them to recall this meaning by asking them about their opinion because most respondents automatically began their answers with the first definition. The main reason why the first definition was automatically expressed was high performance employees were a group of employees who were ready to be promoted to managerial positions because they had intensive experience and

were trained by both their predecessors and external development programmes. Also, this group of employees is normally deployed in every strategic position in an organization. In this regard, executives can clearly view a talent management plan proposed by the HR department, since they realize and understand several reasons why an organization has to invest such a huge budget for those employees identified as a group of talent. For this reason, the sentence "every employee possesses his or her own talent" seems to be unclear for executives, because it is difficult to identify individual talent, particularly how much talent they have and how to motivate them to perform by utilizing their talent. Thus, talent management is more easily said than done in the view of the interviewees' perspectives.

However, talent management was a challenging HRM issue. It is not traditional succession planning or management; it is more than managing people for filling managerial positions in the future. Talent management should be the process of helping high performance employees to fully perform their jobs. However, interviewees also indicated that succession planning or management is an infancy stage of talent management. It is therefore fair to say that talent management is not a totally new HRM issue, but should mark that it is an incremental concept of succession planning. Every department must be responsible for the process of talent management because employees classified as having talent work in every department. Line managers should also be responsible in at least one process such as the identification of talent. The HRM department should be positioned as the centre of talent management, particularly talent management projects including distribution of talent management concepts to employees

involved. However, some interviewees pointed out that talent management jobs are one of the significant functions of the HRM department, and thus it should be kept separately as an individual department as well as other HR departments, such as organizational development and training department. At the same time, another interviewee group revealed that succession planning is a fundamental of talent management, it is therefore unnecessary to split HR department's jobs into a new one. Since this requires a large amount of investment, it might be necessary to acquire some number of HR specialists to manage its process. However, this opinion proposed that talent management specialists should be recruited and work under the HRM department. Traditional HR staff should not be assigned to manage this new challenging issue as it needs an alternative knowledge and skill to handle the subject properly.

From a global competition perspective, every interviewee agreed that talent management is one of the critical organizational issues particularly in the current turbulent global economic situation. Currently, every organization manages talented employees carefully in this economic condition because of two main factors: (1) lack of talent supply; and (2) fierce competition from both domestic and international organizations. Even though Thai universities offer various degree programs ranging from bachelor to doctoral degrees, the number of highly qualified candidates is still insufficient to meet the demand. Newly graduated applicants usually find it difficult to apply their knowledge to perform the task. This one crucial issue may answer the question "why talent management has been seen as an important issue?"

The interview of HR practitioners revealed that talent management's demand

came from two major sources. First, talent management is an internal demand emerging from an organization itself because every organization needs intelligent, diligent, hard-working and high performance employees. Thus, an organization needs to manage these employees appropriately and systematically. Second, some organizations initiate the talent management program because of an external demand. Almost half of interviewees indicated that their organizations launched a talent management program because other competitors in the same industry did. A highly competitive economy is another factor affecting talent management in organizations. Interviewees working in Thai organizations viewed global competition as a monster of HRM, because multinational corporations have sufficient resources and are ready to hunt talent from domestic markets as quickly as they have demand. HR practitioners have to improve and tailor HRM programs constantly in order to prevent and protect the penetration of global firms. Surprisingly, some interviewees also revealed that the talent management program sometime came from the annual HRM program offered by HR consulting firms.

Conclusions and Discussions

Talent management is a challenging issue in both public and private organizations in Thailand (Berry, 2007; Cappelli, 2008; Maxwell & MacLean, 2008). Every organization has its own talent management program using different names, with some firms using the name "talent management program" directly, while other firms do not. Succession planning is recognized and utilized as the foundation of talent management in both public and private organizations. The word "talent" is automatically and mainly defined by HR practitioners as talented employees—a group of high

performance people who are deployed in current strategic positions rather than individual talent (Goffee & Jones, 2007; Morton, 2004; Rath & Conchie, 2008). These findings are supported by Lewis and Heckman (2006) who pointed out that talent management is primarily concentrated on the concept of talent pools—a set of processes designed to ensure an adequate flow of employees into jobs throughout the organization.

However, talent in the terms of individual talent is also important as well as talent in terms of a group of high performance employees, but these people must be given the first priority because the concept is practical and measurable. Performance appraisal has been widely employed in talent identification because the HR department needs minimal effort to organize a new talent management program to measure complicated issues like individual talent or what an individual's strong points may be. However, the majority of in-depth interview participants suggested that they would like to manage individual talent, including encouraging and unleashing employees' potential, but do not realize how and where to begin the process. These problems significantly discourage them in proposing any creative ideas about managing talent to their top executives. In addition, the participants mutually agreed that scientific information should be an urgent HR agenda, because there are currently few empirical investigations in the field of talent management in the Thai business context.

Thus, a lack of scholarly investigation into talent management seems to be an

important HR agenda that Thai scholars should urgently discuss. Scholars should investigate effective solutions for talent management in organizations in order to guide and assist them on how to appropriately manage talent both as a group basis of high performance people and an individual talent. Cultivating and managing individual talent should be given more attention. If organizations believe that talented employees and individual talent are the most valuable assets in global competition (Cappelli, 2008; Collings, & Mellahi, 2009; Green et al., 2006), Thai scholars should contribute significant effort to determine effective solutions to manage such talent, constructing a fit within the Thai business context to leverage the competitiveness of Thai organizations in the global quest for talent.

Limitations

(1) According to the definitions of talent and talent management, they are unclear and often used interchangeably. HR practitioners sometime need to be educated about the concept in order to relate their ideas and opinions about talent management before responding to a structured questionnaire and in-depth interview.

(2) Due to the fact that the topic of "talent management" is a sensitive issue, HR practitioners usually are afraid to express their opinions and ideas about it, since most strategic plans that relate to talented employees are kept as mostly confidential information. Thus, an in-depth study in some firms may be difficult.

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