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Talent Management Implementation Within Organizational Context

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**KTH Industriell teknik
och management**

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by

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Master of Science Thesis INDEK 2017:09
KTH Industrial Engineering and Management
Industrial Management
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Genomförande av talent management i organisatoriska sammanhang av

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Examensarbete INDEK 2017:09
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Approved 2017-04-10	Examiner Charlotte Holgersson	Supervisor Marianne Ekman Rising
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Abstract

Talent Management has gained high popularity during past two decades among organizations. Currently it is nearly at the top of HR agenda among every industry around the world. However, in both practitioners' and academic world, the definition of talent varies, and Talent Management is always characterized by a lack of clarity regarding definition, scope and overall goal. Scholars have suggested that this ambiguity requires more study to understand Talent Management implementation within its corresponding organizational context, whereas there is a limited amount of studies contribute in case-by-case analysis.

To contribute in making up for the deficiency in literature, this study is with a purpose to develop further understanding of Talent Management by placing it into organizational context, trying to explore how different organizational contexts differentiate the view on talents and affect the implementation of Talent Management. 4 companies from diverse industries, organizational culture, background etc. were studied to gain a picture on the research topic. Furthermore, qualitative data collection method was used and the main empirical data source was 4 key interviews conducted with senior HR professionals from each companies. Literature was used to gain a broader understanding of the research topic, as well as provide a guidance of logic in analysis.

The studies finally verified that the definitions of talent and Talent Management are various among each and every organization, and they are rather context-specific. Business type, organizational structure, operation mode, industry, business objective, organizational culture and control structure are identified as factors that leave significant impact on the perception of talent and shape different Talent Management approaches. One distinct tension that is found to be dominant regarding the view of talent and talent management is inclusive vs. exclusive, which shows profound effect on the approach organization take for Talent Management, and furthermore determine Talent Management implementation.

Key words

Talent Management, Organizational context, Talent Management implementation.



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Sammanfattning

Talent management har vunnit hög popularitet under senaste två decennierna bland organisationer. För närvarande är det nästan högst upp på HR agenda bland alla branscher runt om i världen. Men i båda arbets- och akademiska världen, definitionen av talang varierar och Talent Management alltid kännetecknas av en brist på klarhet när det gäller definition, omfattning och övergripande mål. Forskare har föreslagit att denna tvetydighet kräver mer studie för att förstå genomförandet av Talent Management i dess motsvarande organisatoriskt sammanhang, medan det finns en begränsad mängd studier som bidra fall till fall analys.

För att bidra till att gottgöra bristfälligheten i litteraturen, är syftet med denna studie att vidareutveckla förståelsen av Talent Management genom att placera detta in i organisatoriska sammanhang och försöka undersöka hur åsikter på talang skiljs samt genomförandet av Talent Management påverkas i olika organisatoriska sammanhang. Fyra företag från olika branscher och organisationskulturer samt bakgrunder etc. studerades för att få en bild om detta forskningsämne. Vidare användes kvalitativ datainsamlingsmetod och bestod den huvudsakliga empiriska datakällan av 4 nyckelintervjuer med ledande HR-personal från varje företag. Litteratur användes för att få en bredare förståelse av forskningsämnet, samt ge en vägledning av logik i analysen.

Studierna verifieras slutligen att definitionerna av talang och Talent Management är diverse mellan varje organisation, och de är ganska sammanhangsspecifika. Affärstyp, organisationsstruktur, driftläge, bransch, affärsidé, organisationskultur och kontrollstrukturen identifieras som faktorer som lämnar betydande inverkan på uppfattningen av talang och formar olika metoder av Talent Management. En tydlig orolighet, som funnits vara dominerande när det gäller åsikt på talang och talent management, är inklusive vs. exklusiv och den visar djupgående inverkan på den strategi som organisation tar för Talent Management, och dessutom bestämmer genomförandet av Talent Management.

Nyckelord

Talang, Organisatoriska sammanhang, genomförande av Talent Management.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

HR	Human Resource
HRBP	Human Resource Business Partner
HRM	Human Resource Management
LM	Line Manager
PDPs	Personal Development Plans
TM	Talent Management

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1. Introduction

This chapter will present the background of the study, identified research problems, raise the purpose and the research questions to achieve the purpose. In addition, delimitation, contribution and the structure of the thesis will follow after.

1.1 Background

Since 1997, the first time a group of McKinsey consultants conducted the paper “The war for talent”, the concept of talent management has become burning. The following two decades, “talent” and “talent management” have always been popular terminologies among organizations, since talent is pointed as a critical drive of corporate performance, and a company’s ability to attract, develop, and retain talent has become the competitive advantage that race ahead of other competitors (McKinsey & Company, 1998). The chase for talent and the effective way to manage talent has never stopped.

One study that conducted by the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) together with World Federation of Personnel Management Associations(WFPMA) from year 2010 through 2015 convincingly demonstrated the strategic importance of talent management in practitioner’s world. The research was conducted among 83 different countries and markets, captured the views of more than 4,700 executives within the field of human resources management. The result has shown that there are eight topics demand the most immediate action and the greatest attention within human resources filed, namely Managing globalization, Becoming a learning organization, Managing demographics, Managing work-life balance, Managing change and culture transformation, Transforming HR into a strategic partner, Improving leadership development and Managing talent (BCG, 2015). Among these, as Figure 1 shows, Managing talents is the one that with the highest future importance. BCG (2015) further claims, managing talent lays nearly at the top of the agenda in every industry and perceived as one critical future HR challenge by executives in all regions around the world (BCG, 2015).

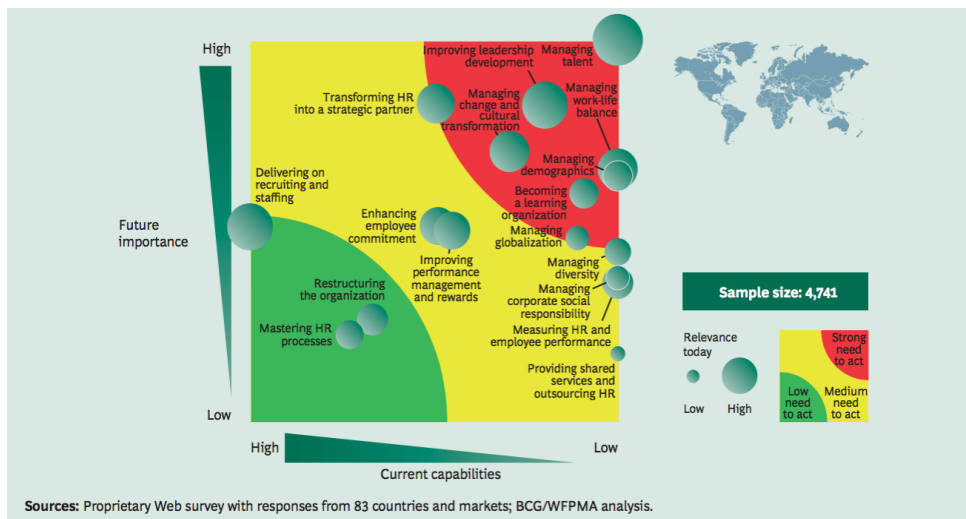


Figure 1. Topics demand the greatest attention within the field of HRM, from the Boston Consulting Group, 2015

Practitioners' strong interest has been the driving force of talent management, while in recent years the interest towards this topic has been growing quickly among academic world as well (Thunnissen, Boselie and Fruytier, 2013). According to Thunnissen et al. (2013), three dominant themes have been identified through a comprehensive literature review on talent management since 2001, which are the definition of talent and talent management, the intended effects and outcomes of talent management, and the talent management practices. However, compared with the attention of consultancy and business practice, the discussion around talent and talent management in academic world seems lagging behind offering of vision and leadership (Al Ariss, Cascio & Paauwe, 2014). One consistent debate remains almost two decades is the boundaries of talent management (McDonnell, Collings, Mellahi and Schuler (2017). Even though scholars contend that a single definition of talent management is neither desirable nor required, it is still of great importance to explore the meaning of talent management and the different perspectives taken by organizations in various business contexts (McDonnell et al., 2017).

1.2 Problematization

While there has been substantial research undertaken on the theme of talent management, people are rarely precise about what the meaning by the term "talent" in organizations in practice, as well as the implications of defining talent for talent management practice (Tansley et al., 2007). Tansley (2011) argues that there can be a number of ways to choose a definition of talent within a particular organization. Overall, practitioners and researchers contend that there is no single definition of talent exist; neither desirable nor required (McDonnell et al., 2017). Correspondingly, talent management is also characterized by a lack of definitions and theoretical frameworks as well (Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Scullion, Collings, & Caligiuri, 2010; McDonnell et

al., 2017); according to Lewis & Heckman (2006, p. 139), “there is a disturbing lack of clarity regarding the definition, scope and overall goals of talent management”.

The ambiguity leads one dominant research theme in the field of talent management is around the definition of talent and talent management (Heckman,2006; Thunnissen et al., 2013). Scholars agree on that organization context has impact on the exact and precise description of talent and talent management. Factors such as organizational environment, the type of work, the internal and external circumstance of an organization are claimed to lead to differentiated view toward talent management (Ashton and Morton 2005; Lewis and Heckman 2006; McCauley and Wakefield 2006; Tansley 2011; Gallardo-Gallardo et al. 2012). However, the academic research under the theme is mostly conceptual; there is a limited amount of research engages in case-by-case analysis on the definition of talent and talent management under specific organizational context (Mellahi & Schuler,2017).

Standing on the point of practitioners, the understanding of talent holds vital implications for the application of talent management in practice; It has been shown that there are diverse ways of defining talents, which in turn influences talent management approach, and finally entail difference consequences for talent management practices (Meyers, van Woerkom and Dries, 2013). Scholars claim that papers providing guidelines on how an organization's talent management system can be shaped in accordance with their respective talent definition are particularly useful to practitioners (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Lewis & Heckman, 2006). Bolander, Asplund & Werr (2014) is one of the representative work within this direction, which contributes in understanding talent management in practice and verifies that the view towards talent affect the way talent management is approached. However, according to the author’s knowledge, there are quite limited number of paper contributes to context-specific understanding of Talent Management. Thereby, more research is expected in this direction to enrich the knowledge.

1.3 Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this thesis is to increase the empirical research on Talent Management, explore how companies implement Talent Management in practice. The ultimate objective is to develop further understanding around Talent Management by placing it in organizational context, trying to explore the effects that different organizational contexts bring about which differentiate the view on talents and the approaches of Talent Management.

The objective of this research will be achieved through answering the following research questions:

RQ 1: What are the different perspectives on talents and TM?

RQ 2: What are the factors that determine company's choice of TM approach?

RQ 3: How are TM practices affected by the choice of TM approach?

1.4 Delimitation

Firstly, the study is conducted with the empirical of four Swedish organizations, so it naturally delimitates the broad culture and social circumstance are under the reality of Sweden. However, culture is not taken as the main focus point to be studied in this study, thereby in this paper the national and culture contexts is neglected.

Secondly, in order to achieve the objective of the study, the author intends to investigate how the studied organizations themselves define talent and talent management, and describe the processes and practices involved within. Thereby, the paper projects an organizational perspective, rather than individual/ employees' perspective. This delimitation has further influenced the empirical data generation method, which will be motivated later in methodology chapter.

Thirdly, as Lewis & Heckman (2006) claimed there is a disturbing lack of clarity regarding the scope of Talent Management, therefore, when analyze Talent Management implementations, a certain scope need to be delimited in advance by the author herself. In this paper the four aspects of Talent Management implementations proposed by Bolander et al. (2014) are mentioned and analyzed, namely Identification of talent, Talent development, succession planning and career management.

Lastly, even though the paper subjects to some discussions regarding the Talent Management operation in Multi-national companies, this paper discusses talent management in a general sense, leaving the focus on the particularities of Global Talent Management.

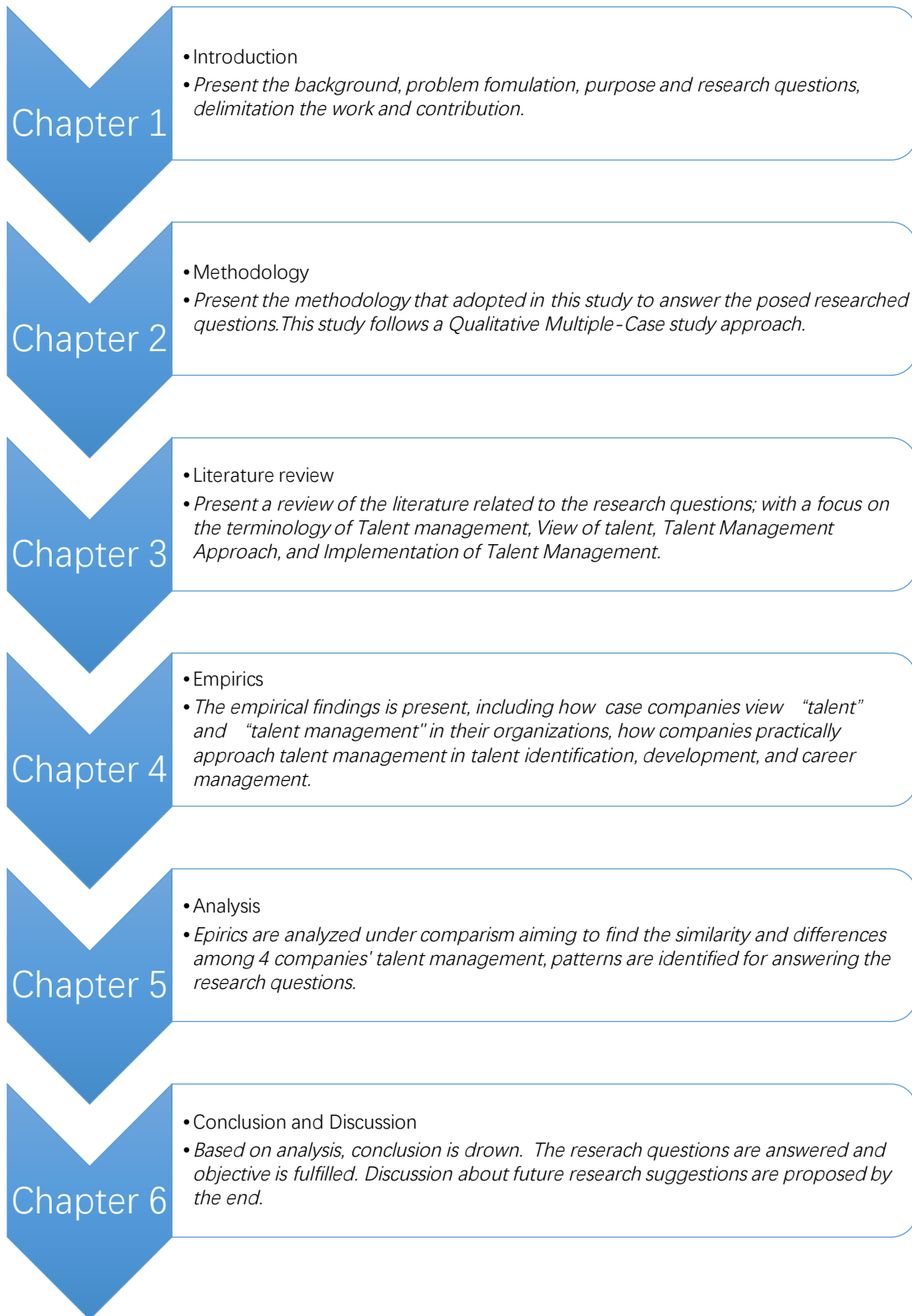
1.5 Contribution

From an academic perspective, this thesis offers a context-specific study on Talent Management, which contributes in making up for the deficiency in literature. In addition, it presents a line of logic for linking the organizational characteristics with the talent/Talent Management definition and the choice of Talent Management approach. Thereby attempt to provide a clue to navigate the field of Talent Management, which was claimed to be full of vagueness by many scholars.

For the readers as practitioners, the thesis shows the real cases of four Swedish companies' practice on talent management, interprets their views towards talents and Talent Management and the approach adopted within certain organizational context. These empirical findings and interpretation can be taken for reference when new practitioner considers adopting talent management in their own organizations, especially benefit the ones that share similar organizational context attributes with case

companies. Even though there does not exist a universal “best practice” regarding Talent Management, however the knowledge from the thesis will somehow benefits new practitioners to foreseen some potential consequences and risks when similar talent management approach is planed to be implemented.

1.6 Structure of the thesis



2. Methodology

Following the introduction chapter where the background of this research was introduced and the research questions were raised, this chapter will present the methodology that adopted in this study to answer the posed researched questions.

2.1 Research approach

The purpose of this study is increase the empirical research on Talent Management, explore how companies implement Talent Management in practice. Since there is full of vagueness regarding the definition and boundary of Talent Management in the literature, the research is of an exploratory nature. According to Collis and Hussey (2014), exploratory research is of the focus to gain insights and familiarity with the subject area for more rigorous investigation at a later stage; and as Saunders et al (2009) illustrate, an exploratory research is superior when it comes to seeking for new insights, understanding and clarifying phenomenon. Thereby, an exploratory approach is suitable for this study.

RQ 1: What are the different perspectives on talents and TM?

RQ 2: What are the factors that determine company's choice of TM approach?

RQ 3: How are TM practices affected by the choice of TM approach?

To answer the three research questions “*What are the different perspectives on talents and Talent Management?*”, “*What are the factors that determine a company's choice of TM approach?*” and “*How are TM practices affected by the choice of TM approach?*”, an inductive qualitative approach is suitable, since the answers are expected to be discussed in general inference, which involves moving from individual observation to statements of general patterns (Collis and Hussey, 2014). To the main topic -- Talent Management, the author regards its nature as something socially constructed and with multiple appearances among different organizational contexts. Thereby, an interpretivism paradigm is held. According to Saunders et al (2009), qualitative, in-depth investigation and small samples is proper and mostly often used for this paradigm. Thereby, the author decided to conduct a qualitative research by using a multiple case study approach. And the quantity of the case was not pointed to be large.

2.2 Research design

Blomkvist and Hallin (2015) illustrate that the research design is a model of how to make the problematization researchable; When choosing a research design approach,

the researcher need to think about what type of empirical material can help to understand a certain phenomenon.

Based on the nature of this research, an exploratory multiple case study approach is chosen for this study as previously mentioned. According to Yin (2014), a case study is *“an empirical inquiry that investigate a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.”*

Building on the case study definition by Yin (2014), the author’s choice of the case study design can be justified by the type of research questions which are trying to be answered. This research questions show a requirement for some extent of analytical generalizability, and the answers are expected to be broad and exploratory. Robson (2002:59) mentions in an exploratory study, in-depth interviews can be very helpful to find out what is happening meanwhile seek for new insights; especially semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews are frequently used in relation to an exploratory study.

Thereby, under this anticipation, the main method for collecting data in this study is semi-structured interviews. Saunders et al (2009) raise that during case study, the data collection techniques can be various and likely to be used in combination, multiple sources of data are triangulated. In this research, besides qualitative data generated from interviews, secondary data in form of written statement such as annual report, company strategies and vision, company background are also being reviewed as a complement in order to provide with a comprehensive overview. Meanwhile, source as LinkedIn and company’s employee pages are used to obtain a glimpse of interviewee’s work scope within Talent Management, which not only helps the author to be better prepared for the interviews, but also provide supplement data for empirics.

Concerning the case study methodology, Saunders et al (2009) mention that case study strategy can incorporate multiple cases, and the rationale of this strategy focuses upon the need *“to establish whether the findings of the first case occur in other cases and, as a consequence the need to generalize from the findings”*. As a study that would like to explore rather than solving problems, multiple cases are chosen to enrich the study by comparing the similarities and differences between Swedish celebrated companies’ practice under the same term -- Talent Management, in this way to give the study additional depth and somehow pave a way to further research suggestions. Moreover, it is thought that if similar practices among multiple cases are found, it may lead to an analysis and discussion with higher generalizability than a single case could achieve. According to Collis and Hussey (2014), the main stages in a case study are Selecting the cases -- Preliminary investigations -- Data collection -- Data analysis. This process will be used to guide the next part of methodology.

Meanwhile, another important aspect to this research is its iterative nature, Blomkvist and Hallin (2015) referred to this as: “continuous feedback”; the authors interpreted it as: the research phases overlap each other. In this study, continuous data analysis and literature review were intertwined in the middle and late phase.

2.3 Case selection

In order to conduct an exploratory nature case study on the topic of talent management, the basic criteria for the case company selection is the terminology of “Talent Management” has been referred and implemented in practice. Through initially online searching, the author found companies implement Talent Management are the ones with a certain size -- usually MNCs. Due to the geographic accessibility and the limited timeframe of conducting a master thesis, it was decided that the contacting focus should lie on large enterprises with headcounter in Sweden, preferred Stockholm. However, a particular industry was not appointed. One reason that the industrial section of the case companies did not be limited was due to the difficulty for author to gain the access to the companies that are suitable for this research topic, besides it is supposed to be one part of the research to investigate whether the practice of talent management implementation is influenced by industry clusters. Since the research questions of this study stands on organizational perspective, the author proposed the case study to be multiple cases, which contain key interviews with senior HR professionals --who describe in detail about what is going on within Talent Management specifically in the companies they work for. By this way, the author strives for the maximized empirical input she can have access to.

2.4 Data collection

2.4.1 The interview process

As the most commonly used method in generating empirical in qualitative study, interview acts as a suitable research method when there is an interest in developing a deeper understanding of a phenomenon, and discover new dimensions under the topic of the study, which is of an open nature that may lead to pose new and different questions (Blomkvist and Hallin, 2015). As the main method that generates primary empirical data in this research, the author conducted four key semi-structured interviews with senior HR professionals from companies positioning in 4 different industries (detail information about the companies will be provided at the beginning of empirics’ chapter); each and every interview forms a case to show one talent management practice implemented in one company from one HR professional's perspective.

The position of four respondents and contact methods was summarized in table 1 showing below. Two of four interviews were conducted face-face in respondents' organizations, one through Skype video and one through phone call. One week before each and every interview, an interview guide was sent to respondent with the description of the aim, the topic and themes of the interview, meanwhile declared confidential statement of the study. All the respondents were offered anonymity choice before the interview, which aiming to create a comfortable conversation environment around the subject and thus make the speaking openly. And finally all the respondent chose to be anonymous in this research, and the organization names according to their request are also referred as company A, B, C, D.

Table 1. *Interview forms of four respondents*

Companies	Respondents' Positions	Contact method	Interview Form
A	A-Senior VP Human Resources	Contacted through company's online request form	One-hour Face-face interview
B	B-Head of Talent Management	Contacted through one PhD student's network	One-hour Face-face interview
C	C-HR Manager Global Talent & Mobility	Contacted through own network	One-hour Phone interview
D	D-HR & EHS Manager	Contacted through supervisor's network	One-hour Skype interview

The interviews were semi-structured, which left the room for interviewer to ask follow-up questions and explore more. By the end of each and every interview, material related to the topic were required, meanwhile the respondents were asked if there were any other people at their organization might be able to complement further insights. However, unfortunately none of the respondents suggested further contacted person. The author of the thesis interpreted the reason as the period the interviews were conducted was at the end of company's' fiscal year, it was quite busy within organization. Meanwhile, all the respondents showed confidence in providing sufficient information for the research topic, only bits of information or additional material was provided as a supplement.

2.4.2 The interview guide

According to Saunders et al (2009), in semi-structured interview the researcher will have a list of themes and questions to be covered, although these questions can be varied from interview to interview. A general interview guide was prepared after the initial literature review was done, covering themes in accordance with the theory and

theoretical framework in chapter 3, for instance the concept of talent & talent management, talent identification, talent development, career planning etc. The interview guide is featured in Appendix 1. Open-ended questions were prepared to ensure the respondents to have the space speaking freely around certain theme thereby providing opportunities for the interviewer to probe questions. The interview guide was customized before each and every interview after scanning the background of respondents and the targeting organizations, prepared the interviewer to be familiar with organizational context. Some questions may omit in particular interviews, given a specific organizational context encountered in relationship to the research topic (Saunders et al, 2009). Even though a uniform interview guide may increase the ability to replicate the study, to a study with an exploratory nature it is also important to be flexible and embrace further findings. Thereby, the actual content of interviews was usually more sufficient than the interview guide shows. It provides the author abundant data to chew and build further analysis on.

2.4.3 Documenting the interviews

During four key interviews, recorder was permitted to use in order to record the conversations. Meanwhile, a printed interview guide was carried with to mark and make note on. After each interview, the transcript was soon created and the focus or interesting findings were distinguished and marked, which was organized as the primary data for analysis.

2.4.4 Generating secondary data

As previously mentioned in research design, documentary secondary data in form of written statement such as annual report, company strategies and vision, talent definition, talent management processes were generated from companies' website or required from respondents after interviews. They are perceived as a compliment to provide with a comprehensive overview of the interview context and deliver additional material for analysis. Besides written material, interview record and video shows on the topic of talent management on company's websites were also viewed. Consultancy reports on the topic of talent management acted as a useful source in this research, which inspires the author to think wide and be critical. The source used usually comes from notable consulting group, which help to keep a high credibility of source.

2.5 Data analysis

After obtaining sufficient first and secondary data, the author began to review, sort and further interpreted, analyzed the data. As mentioned previously, the research was

designed with an exploratory nature, so the data generated first was aiming to be rich and broad. According to Collis and Hussey (2014), no matter which method is used to analyze the data, reducing data is always one critical step. Sorting and reducing data was done in a phase that further literature review was doing, thereby the process was iterative. The logic of analysis emerged after the conceptual framework was identified; then the research questions were reformulated to be more specific. After doing so, the data which is irrelevant was discarded, and the findings are restructured and displayed accordingly to the conceptual framework.

According to Collis and Hussey (2014), when analyzing the data, the purpose is to find the answers to the research questions. To answer the first research question, “*What are the different perspectives of talents and Talent Management?*”, primary data from interviews provides the base. Further analysis was build with the assistance from literature, mainly based on Dries, N. (2013). The second research question “*What are the factors that determine a company's choice of TM approach?*” calls for an integrated interpretation of the whole context of each and every organization together with their TM approach. Thereby, the primary data generated from the interview together with secondary data which reflect the the context of the organization was analyzed associatively. The third research question, “*How are TM practices affected by the choice of TM approach?*” was build on the primary data generated from interview together with analysis on the prior two research questions. Through the analysis, the overall patterns among the data – the apparent similarities and differences are identified as valuable points that contribute to deepen the analysis and further increase the analytical generalizability for this research.

2.6 Limitation

The main limitation of the research method stems from the difficulty to get access. According to Saunders et al (2009), the reasons behind it maybe the research is lack of perceived value in relation to the work of the organization or individual and the nature of the topic is potentially sensitive or of concerns about the confidentiality. In the author’s interpretation, this research is of a nature of exploratory, thereby there is no obvious benefit that company can obtain. The initial idea of this research is to conduct a thoroughly case study in one company involving more respondents with perspectives of HR, line manager and employees respectively, however the negotiations went problematic. Company contact person who refused to accept this research held the reasons like their talent management process was under implemented, or the HR function was lack of workforce at that moment to organize and support for contacting. It could be assumed that a research topic like Talent Management is not that attractive or welcome. In contract, when the author began a conversation with HR professionals who worked closely with diversity or inclusion, it became easier to get access to. However, they refused to recommend professionals working with talent management for further contact. Finally, the research was designed to be conducted with four senior

HR professionals and gaining their perspective towards talent management only. This lead to a limitation to generate diverse set of points for analysis.

The qualitative nature of the research design brings about several limitations. The qualitative method especially with limited sample may affects the validity of the investigation. According to Yin (2011), “*a valid study is a one that has properly collected and interpreted its data, so that conclusions accurately reflect and represent the real world that was studied*”. According to Saunders et al (2009), there may exist interviewee bias as well as response (interviewer) bias. When the author of the thesis asked question by using a certain terminology, such as ‘talent management’, the respondent may have different interpretation towards that -- such as automatically make it equal to HRM, this may lead the interviewer to interpret responses with bias, which may lower the internal validity of the result. In order to minimize personal misinterpretations, face-to-face interview and probe questions to clarify the answer is essential. In addition, after each and every interviews’ transcription, respondents were contacted by email if the author felt unsure about any answer’s meaning.

Another limitation relates to response bias in this study, which refers to the potential subjective of respondents. Since all the respondents were senior HR professionals in their organizations, when talking about talent management strategy and practices within their organizations, they tended to show partial ‘picture’ full of positive aspects that supported to build a strong employer brand. Likewise, when using the secondary data such as company report or website information it should always bear in mind that this publication also has an aim for promotion. Under this circumstance, it created difficulty for the researcher to detect the real issues that exist under “best practices”. Trying to avoid this bias, anatomy was provided and open questions were asked aiming to get honest answers as much as possible. In order to keep critical and objective, outside source such as review sites or forums and articles were used in addition to detect controversy issues around the topic as reference. However, there is no doubt that due to the qualitative and exploratory nature of the study, some certain of response and interviewee bias are unavoidable.

2.7 Reflection on the research quality

To reflect the quality of research, the *validity* has been discussed as before. When discussing about *reliability*, for a qualitative research composed of limited sample but in-depth semi-structured interviews, the reliability has to compromise. Since even though the interviewee followed a prepared interview guide, questions emerged during the conversations were probed and open-ended questions were sometimes answered based on the spontaneous reaction of the respondents. In order to ensure the reliability as much as possible, notes relating to the research design was made and retained, the reasons underpinning the method choice were illustrated, and the findings through the conversation were documented. Finally, since in this research only four cases were

obtained, the criteria of *generalizability* were achieved by analytic generalizability, which will be further discussed in discussion session.

3. Review of Literature

This chapter will provide a review of the literature related to the research questions; with a focus on the terminology of Talent management, View of talent, Talent Management Approach, and Implementation of Talent Management.

3.1 Talent Management

Talent management concept becomes burning from the paper “The war for talent”, which is conducted by a group of McKinsey consultants in 1997. In that paper, consultants of McKinsey address the differences of “the old reality” and the “new reality”, and critically point out for organizations attracting and retaining talent will always intensify (McKinsey & Company, 1998).

In academic world, it seems talent management reveals a high degree of debate of its concept boundaries. The terminology of talent management various among researchers and institutions. The US Society for Human Resource Management (Lockwood, 2006) explained talent management as: “...*the implementation of integrated strategies or systems designed to increase workplace productivity by developing improved processes for attracting, developing, retaining and utilizing people with the required skills and aptitude to meet current and future business needs.*”; Tansley et al.(2007) define talent management as “*the attraction, identification, development, retention and deployment of individuals with high potential who are of particular value*”; Blass (2009) defines talent management as the additional management, processes and opportunities that are made available to people in the organization who are considered to be “talent”; CIPD (2010) describes and defines the process of talent management as “*the systematic attraction, identification, development, engagement, retention and deployment of those individuals who are of particular value to an organization, either in view of their ‘high potential’ for the future or because they are fulfilling business/operation-critical roles.*”.

Regarding the concept of talent management, Lewis and Heckman sum up three research perspectives that around it. The first one is, talent management is regarded as a kind of substitution of traditional Human Resources terms, like a rebranding of HRM, but with minor differences (‘doing it faster or across the enterprise’). The second one is, talent management focuses on the development of talent pools which concentrating on “projecting employee/staffing needs and managing the progression of employees through positions” (Lewis and Heckman, 2006), resemble succession planning or human resource planning with a specific position intention. The third one is, talent management focuses on talents generically without fully regarding specific positions. Within this perspective, two different views exist. One focuses on the recruitment and development of the ones who are regarded as high-performing or high potential talents (usually be named ‘A-performers’ in organization), the another one regards all the

employees in organizations have their own talent and HR should help everyone to achieve high performance. Conclusion: debate exists and the research directions varies.

In addition to the above three perspectives, Collings, & Mellahi (2009) add a fourth stream of perspective on talent management, which focuses on the identification of key positions that influence the competitive advantage of the firm. This perspective is also shared by Boudreau & Ramstad (2005) in their research. Boudreau & Ramstad (2005) argue that HR focus must be extended to a “decision science” which called “talentship” that includes *“talent segmentation, identifying pivotal talent pools where the quality and/or availability of human capital makes the biggest difference to strategic success.”* This perspective is a vital supplement to the three perspective above, which also arouses a new branch of research as strategic talent management, which focus on a club of employees who are included in the organization’s pivotal talent pool and who occupy, or being developed to occupy, the pivotal talent positions (Collings & Mellahi, 2009).

3.2 View of Talent

Talent is a word never explicitly defined, as the preface notes in the book of The War of Talent, *“A certain part of talent elude description: You simply know it when you see it.”* (Mckinsey & Company, 2001).

Mäkelä et al. (2010) provides a view of how most major MNCs define talent. They refer the talents as *“those employees who are high performing and continuously improving within their current position... are mobile and have the potential and the willingness for further growth in the other key positions.”* He emphasizes two important qualities of talents in MNCs: current high performance and future potential. Start from organizational perspective, the CIPD (2014) defines talents as consisting *“of those individuals who can make a difference to organizational performance, either through their immediate contribution or in the longer term by demonstrating the highest levels of potential”*.

At a more general level, Ulrich (2012) synthesized general talent discussions into a simple formula: Talent= competence * commitment * contribution. (Ulrich, 2012)

The formula could be further unfolded as

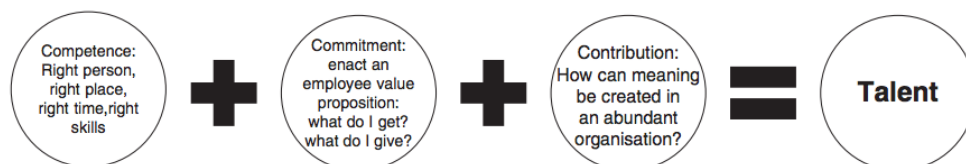


Figure 2. The talent formula. From Ulrich (2012)

According to Ulrich, in the talent equation, the three dimensions are multiplicative, not additive, which means any one of them is necessary and couldn't be replace by the two

others. This perspective takes talents beyond their strategic positions and status in an organization hierarchy, and ultimately combine individual employee value proposition together with organization performance. By taking this perspective, everyone in an organization should have the same foundation to be assessed as talent.

Tansley (2011) takes a three levels of explanation discussing talent in organization context. She argues that in organizational level, compared with accepting universal definition companies find great value in formulating their own meaning of talents, even in different part of the organization there contains different shapes of talent without highly inter-correlated competence. At group level, she recognizes there is paradoxical nature when organizations group their talent; as positive connotations, it helps organization recognizing strengths and better utilize resource; as negative connotations, it may arouse the resentment of co-workers which further impacting on performance. At individual level, she summarizes 5 branches of cognitions: talent as certain behaviors, as high potential, as high performance, individual talent as a combination of high performance versus high potential and talent as individual strengths.

Through the discussion of respondent practical talent management issue, Dries, N. (2013) identifies and summarized five tensions in literature about talent, which provides perspective from more conceptualized classification of the view of talent.

Table 2 *Tensions in literature about talent. From Dries, N. (2013).*

Tensions in the literature about talent.

Key point of discussion	Practical TM issue	Tensions	Implications for TM policies and practices
What (or who) is talent?	What should TM manage?	Object Subject	Competence management, knowledge management Organizational career management, succession planning
How prevalent is talent in the population?	By which principle should organizations allocate their resources?	Inclusive Exclusive	Strength-based approach Workforce differentiation
Can talent be taught (and learned)?	How can organizations tackle labor market scarcities?	Innate Acquired	Selection, assessment, identification Development, experience, learning
Is talent more about ability or motivation?	What should organizations select for?	Input Output	Effort, motivation, ambition, career orientation Output, performance, achievement, results
Is talent conditional on its environment?	Should organizations recruit externally or internally?	Transferable Context-dependent	Recruitment—identification prior to entry Fit—identification only after a certain socialization period

Objective vs. subjective perspectives on talent regards the discussion about who should be regarded as talent, or what makes talents. Subjective perspectives on talent has a focus on the identification and development of “talent people”. Objectives perspectives on talent emphasis to identify and develop the “characteristic” of talents. In practice, when an organization takes objective approach to TM, competence management and knowledge management are the main practice that integrated into TM system (Vance & Vaiman, 2008). When subjective objective approach is chosen, succession planning and career management are involved as generic part of TM.

Inclusive vs. exclusive perspectives on talent. According to Dries, N. (2013), the inclusive perspective on talent refers to an assumption that all the employees are regarded as talented; exclusive perspective, on the other hand, in built on the premise that some people are inherently more talented than others. Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, and González-Cruz (2013) also clarify the subjective approach in their framework to further include this tension, inclusive versus exclusive perspective. This tension is

claimed to be the main debate on the view on talent (Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Tansley, 2011). An inclusive definition of talent is typically link to a strength-based approach to talent management, which focuses on recognizing where employees' nature talent lies and figuring out how to develop each employees' job-related skills and knowledge, which turns the talents into performance. In contrast with strength-based approach, that is gap-based approach, which focuses on "developing the needs"; such as weakness. (Buckingham & Vosburgh, 2001, p. 22). Bothner, Podolny and Smith (2011) points out by treating everyone equally, inclusive approach can achieve "Mark Effect" which creates a pleasant and motivating working climate. However, some scholars also criticize inclusive subjective approach make talent management hard to differentiate from strategic human resource management (SHRM) (Garrow & Hirish, 2008), in some cases it is even just a re-label of HR—or do it faster and better (Lewis & Heckman, 2006). Also, this approach is criticized as create unnecessary high cost of HR investments (Lin, 2006).

Innate vs. acquire perspectives on talent. Innate perspective on talent shed more on a focus of identification, assessment and selection of talent. On the other hand, acquire perspective on talent implies more on training, educating and developing talent.

Input vs. output perspectives on talent. Input perspectives on talent focuses more on effort, motivation, career orientation in assessment of talents. In the contrary, output perspectives focus more on performance, output and result, that is what the talents achieve.

Transferable vs. context-dependent perspective on talent. Transferable perspective assumes that talented person shows their talent regardless of the circumstance. Whereas the context-dependent perspective assumes that talent has some kind of interaction with its context, according to Dominick and Gabriel (2009), this interaction determines whether underlying talent emerges/ is recognized or not.

Dries (2013) stresses that the perspectives and tensions above are not completely independent from each other. Tansley (2011) further claims that the definition of talent is influenced by the industry the organization in and the nature of internal work dynamic. Thereby, it can be concluded from the literature is that in organization talent is a concept that is not fixed to an ultimate definition.

3.3 Talent Management Approach

Bolander et al. (2014) illuminates that according to academic research, Talent Management can be approached in different ways by different organizations; and the reason why Talent Management looks so different relate to the focus and orientation of the Talent Management practices present in different organizations. For instance, Festing et al. (2013) recognized that Talent Management may vary significantly in

different companies and national contexts, and identified the concentration of Talent Management initiatives are distinct.

Dries (2013) reveals that it is the different tensions how organizations position regarding talents affects the design of Talent Management practices in respective organizations, as introduced in the previous section. Meyer et al. (2013) further state that this causes differences in the emphasis organizations have on specific Talent Management practices; for example, as Dries (2013) questioned whether the focus of Talent Management is on talent identification or development activities. Building on Dries (2013), Bolander et al. (2014) develop three approaches, namely *Humanistic approach*, *Competitive approach*, and *Entrepreneurial approach*, which bring interpretation to the view on talent and its impact on Talent Management implementations. The study demonstrates how tensions from Dries (2013) on the perspective of talent affects the construct of Talent Management (Bolander et al., 2014), to the author's understanding it provides a vital logic in explaining Talent Management implementation basing on corresponding organizational context. Thereby, in this paper, the three approaches are used as guide to lead the analysis of empirical findings in analysis chapter.

Humanistic approach to Talent Management is based on an inclusive view towards talents, that every employee is believed to have some kind of talent. Rather than focusing on identifying and developing a number of select "top" talents, humanistic approach is aiming to keep Talent Management as concrete and simple as possible and support each employee's development. Regular talent review and communication between line manager and employee is conducted with a purpose to find proper placement for employees within the organization, instead of using explicit criteria to select only. The development-oriented view on talent is what characterize humanistic approach, ability is regarded as part of talent, however, individual's interest and desire are seen to be more important. Thus, development opportunities did not equate with vertical promotion, developing within the span of one's current role is appreciated and encouraged as well. In the work with succession planning and career management, humanistic approach is not pointed to make use of well-structured career paths, almost all the careers within the organizations who takes this approach were designed to start with a relatively simple job. And usually, more advance leadership program or senior recruitment within these organizations are only open to those who had a background that once enrolled the job "on the floor". (Bolander et al., 2014)

Competitive approach to Talent Management on the contrary identifies only certain amount of employees as talents. More exclusive view is involved that talent is perceived as stable inner trait that follows individuals regardless of the position. Talent identification is viewed as the principle practice of the approach, which is an ideally objective process, contains a formal and highly elaborated assessment method. One common identification process is to evaluate all employees' performance and potential, through which the progress of one's current role and the readiness for promotion is

reflected. The few employees standing out under evaluation will be admitted to talent pools and be moved up, however when the advance of level accomplished, the talent term will no longer be applicable. Talent development within a competitive approach is seen as an organization's responsibility. Program-based development opportunities that are designed to follow a clear defined career path for leaders or specialists are offered to the ones who are nominated as talents. The participants of these programs are expected to advance successively vertically, or increasingly taking more complex leader roles. It is noticed that in a competitive approach, central structures and processes are designed to ensure the formalization of Talent Management activities. Talent Management is always tied to organizations' business objectives and strategic development plan. (Bolander et al., 2014)

Entrepreneurial approach to Talent Management holds a particular inclusive view on talent. An employee is defined as talent if he/she proved him/herself to be one, through ambition and performance rather than ability. Thereby, the individual's motivation and ambition to identify themselves and pursue new challenges is viewed as the most important aspect in talent identification, whereby the organization ascribes less responsibility within it compared with other two approaches. In line with this way of identification, talent is developed by being offered a wide range of successively challenging tasks and projects. The employees who would be considered as talent take responsibility to claim more responsibility and accumulate complementary practical experience. Careers for talents are not uniformly designed in long-term; each new career step is planned after the prior project is accomplished, and it is up to the employee to show willingness and ambition to advance. (Bolander et al., 2014)

3.4 Implementation of Talent Management

3.4.1 Overview of talent management implementation

One research that was done by Chartered Management Institute and Ashridge explored multiple TM practice cases in organizations, and offered six strategic perspectives that companies should consider when designing and reviewing their talent management systems in strategic level, which affect on how companies choose to approach TM in practice (Blass, 2009).

- **Process perspective:** All processes needed to be aimed to enhance people within an organization; managing and cultivating talent should be part of everyday processes in organization life.
- **Cultural perspective:** TM should be a mindset for organization. Every employee is dependent on his/her own talent, which will achieve success for him/herself. Alternatively, these organizations set an environment to allow everyone to develop talents freely.

- Competitive perspective: Focusing on identifying “talents”, understanding their needs and wants before they enter competition. This is usually the default perspective.
- Development perspective: Focusing on the development and cultivation of high potentials, who is planned to be the only group that receive accelerated growth.
- HR planning perspective: Make the right people at the right job in the right time and doing the right things. TM initiative is succession planning. The perspective often applies for the company grows fast.
- Change management perspective: TM is used as a driver of change. And the TM system is designed as part of strategic HR initiatives to support and lead the organizational change.

Based on these six perspectives above, the researcher also concluded 18 dimensions that in operational level support the implementation of TM in case studies. Within which six dimensions contribute in talent identification and defined, seven dimensions for talent development, five dimensions’ impact on the structure and systems that support the talent management process.

Table 3 *Dimensions in operational level support the implementation of TM in case studies. Derives from Blass (2009)*

Identifying talent	Developing talent	Impact on TM process
Size of talent pool	Development path How are the talents developed?	Performance management
Entry criteria	Development focus What is the focus of the development activities?	TM processes To what extent are the processes understood by the employees?
Decision process Who decide who is to be labeled as talent?	Support How much support is given to the talent pool?	Use of technology Which role does technology have in supporting the system?
Permanency of definition How long do you stay as a talent?	Organizational values How do the values of the organization motivates the talents?	System flexibility How static is the application of the system?
Transparency Do you tell the talents and the organization who is considered as a talent?	Influence on career Who influences the career of an individual?	Ownership of the talent Where is the talent owned in the organization? Locally or shared?
Recruitment as a source of talent From where do you recruit to the key roles?	Connected conversation How many persons can the talent discuss his/her career with?	
	Risk How much risk can the organization take regarding the TM system?	

In this paper, the author takes some part of this research as a tool for interview guide design, and for further literature exploration. Meanwhile, some dimensions also serve as points inspire analysis and discussion.

In the following section, a near glimpse of practice areas that supposed to be important for successful talent management implementation will be taken; Deriving from Bolander et al. (2014)'s framework, the literature review next will be around three dominant practices in talent management implementation, which are talent identification, development, succession planning and career management.

3.4.2 Talent Identification

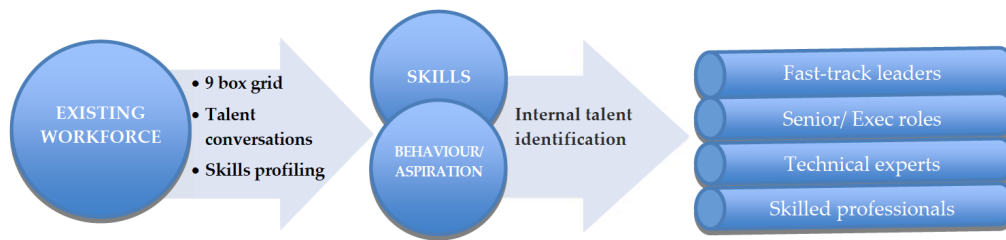
Once a company has determined their definition of talent and talent management, it begins to decide what kinds of job roles or people should it focuses on, and what kind of process it need to identify, develop and manage the talent. Identifying talent is always regarded as the first step and the foundation of other process in talent management (SIOP White Paper, 2013).

Talent are defined differently among different companies. But according to literature, in a lot of companies' practice, the word "talent" is usually defined in terms of "high potential" for senior roles, which mostly have several aspects or criteria that need managers and HR to look at when identify such talent. Potential is usually rated based on the ability to either take a broader range of work and leadership roles, or ability to be promoted to a higher level position. In addition to examine employee's ability, rating potential should also include considering about employee's own interest and willingness to develop and advance (SIOP White Paper, 2013).

Ready, Conger and Hill (2010) share a view that high potentials share a basic anatomy that with three essential elements: deliver strong results—credibly; master new types of expertise; recognize that behavior counts. Besides that, there are four "X" factors that are intangible and not usually shown on the list of leadership competencies or on performance review forms, but counted as real differentiators of high potentials, they are

- A drive to excel
- A catalytic learning capability
- An enterprising spirit
- Dynamic sensors

A common talent identification process is summarized as below based on the study of IES (Institute for Employment Studies) (Campbell and Hirsh, 2013).



Source: IES, 2013

Figure 3 Talent identification process. From IES, 2013

Similarly, UNC’s study presents 4 steps of conducting systematic, criteria-based approach to identify talents in organization (Kelly, K.,2013).

- Step 1: Plan for the future. Anticipated leadership roles and positions should be identified. Which includes the C-suite, senior leadership positions, hard-to-fill jobs and the ones meet organization’s near and long term strategic needs. Once identified, each role should be profiled.
- Step2: Define high-potential criteria. Terminology such as potential, performance, readiness and fit should be defined. Special criteria for specific roles and positions should be specified.
- Step3: Make the high potential criteria measurable. Different assessment procedures are used by different organizations. According to Azzara, the most sophisticated approach is the “criteria-based approach”. Assessment tools usually used in the process include 360-degree feedback, assessment centers, role plays and scenarios (Azzara,2007).
- Step 4: Identify high-potential candidates. Structured talent review is used to screen, assess talent’s performance based on the criteria.

One widely used approach or tool in identifying talent is the nine-box grid, which is also called The Performance and Potential Matrix. The grid has two axes, with assessing performance on axe X and potential on Y. The vertical column of the grid identifies an employee’s growth potential within the organization, and the horizontal rows rating whether the employee is below, meet or exceed the expected performance in his/ her current role (Web source). Besides using for identifying talent, Nine-box grid is also used as the reference to make career-planning decisions.

3.4.3 Talent Development

“Grow star talent, don’t chase it.” Many scholars as well as practitioners seems agree on developing own talents in-house is better than acquiring talents out side of company, due to various reasons such as the talents are not “one-size fit all” among different companies, buying talents is somehow unsuccessful at worst and expensive at best (Burkus and Osula, 2011; Groysberg, Lee & Abrahams, 2010).

To enable talent development, Kaye (2002) conceptualizes talent development as a three-way process. She claims that the individual, the manager, and the organization all should account for talent development, but with division of the work. The organization provides resources, tools, values and culture to embed TM. The managers assess organizational needs and clarify the goals. Further they support the process of development, provide feedback and monitor. Then, employees take the accountability to set their own career goals, seek development opportunities and implement development action plans for them.

There is little published research paper that defines the scope of talent development, however it is acknowledged that talent development represents a significant component in talent management or global talent management (Scullion and Collings, 2011; CIPD, 2011). From the organizational perspective, according to Garavan et al. (2012), talent development is defined as a series of activities that aligned with organizational talent management processes in order to ensure the organization has both the current and the future supply of talent to meet strategic objectives (Garavan, Carbery and Rock, 2012); In individual perspective, according to Gibbons (2006, p.6)'s review and summary, talent development is identified as one top driver of employee engagement.

Gandz (2006) raises a notion of talent development pipeline architecture. Within which he defines developmental pathways as “experience, exposures and challenges.” Experience is highlighted as a central element in the design of talent development pathways (Carpenter et al., 2000). Exposure, which means the opportunities of working in different contexts through job rotation, secondments, projects and international assignments (Evans et al., 2011), providing talents the chance to develop technical expertise, enhance strategic thinking and decision making ability, thus achieve high performance (Yost and Mannion-Plunkett, 2010). Developmental challenges are another important component of talent development. On organization side, real-work challenges can be a way to assess potential talent early and manage their career actively (Gandz, 2016). On the talent side, challenges or challenging assignments allow employees to address blind spots, learn from mistakes and recognize personal limitations (Garavan et al., 2012).

3.4.4 Career Management

Since 1990s, scholars and business practitioners have advocated that since the organizational transformation, the definition of “career” has been taken away from the traditional view as linear path, to new models that are notable as protean or boundaryless career (Hall & Moss, 1998, Hess, Jepsen, & Dries (2012)). It seems a traditional organization career, which is described as the “logic of advancement” --

employees move up to the ladder through a sequence of work positions in the organization's hierarchy-- has somehow goes to demise under new workforce realities.

But according to Clarke (2013), from an employee perspective the organizational careers are still of an attractiveness, as they still want job security as long as they choose to stay, and they want identifiable career path as well as the support that their employer and manager offering in managing and developing their career. For the employer, the new organizational career models could bring various outcomes. Since the transactional employment make it easier for company to be more flexible to quickly respond the changes. However, meanwhile it reduces the loyalty and commitment of employees.

Clarke (2013) proposes that new organizational career combines characteristics of both bureaucratic career with the boundary less career (as show in the figure below). It can be recognized that new organizational career need for more flexibility, adaptability and individual responsibility. To cope with this context, both employer and employee will need to take responsibility in career management and employee development. Employees are expected to in charge of developing their career goals/plans, seize all kinds of available opportunities to achieve the goals, through both organizational development programs/trainings and external qualification upgrading and so on. Meanwhile, the employers are expected to support the employees to achieve their career planning and goals, by providing mentoring and job rotation.

3.4.5 Succession planning

Don Ruse, the Senior Vice President at Sibson Consulting claims that the best talent strategies are those significantly support business strategy; accurately forecast talent needs and gaps; provide information on human capital programs to allow correct decision-making; and leads continuously upgrading of organizational talents' portfolio (Sandler, 2006). All this in turn leads to succession planning in organizations (cite from Blass, 2009).

Succession planning/management has been defined as a means of identifying critical management positions, starting at the levels of managers and extending up till the highest positions in the organization (cited by Rothwell, 2010). But according to Rothwell (2010), it need not to be limited to management positions, it should address the need for critical backups and individual development in any job category. The aim of Succession planning/management is to match the organization's present available talent to its future needed talent, to support the organization facing the strategic and operational challenges by preparing right people for the right places at the right times and aiming for getting the right result (Rothwell, 2010). Thus many researchers regard succession management as an integral part of TM (McDonnell, Lamare, Gunnigle, & Lavelle, 2010). They share similar insight as Hills, SP&M is a smart talent management strategy that can drive the retention of talent throughout the organization—and ensure the organization to have the capability it needs responding to rapidly shifts (Hills, 2009).

Hills mentions a succession strategy will predictably be a mix of buying and self-building talents. But she argues that building seems to be a win-win situation for both organization and employees. By promoting people within organization, it increases the likelihood that talents will be engaged, stay and further explore where their next opportunity is inside the organization rather than leaving and going out (Hills, 2009). But she also mentions that for the business that meets rapid technological development or in a dynamic business environment with changing need, “buying” talent seems more efficient. This idea is also shared by Cappelli (2008), who raises an insight that company should adopt a talent management philosophy inspired by supply chain management. There are four principles he proposes for it;

- Make and buy to manage risk—undershoot the estimate of talents and plan the outside hire of talent when the filling is easier;
- Adapt to the uncertainty in talent demand—arrange talent resource according to need, e.g. break up development programs into short units and based on function needs;
- Improving the return on investment in developing employees and let them to share the cost of development;
- Preserve the investment by balancing employee- employer interests in advance decisions.

The research of Cohn, Khurana and Reeves (2005) relates several practical cases which shows how famous companies successfully implement succession planning and integrate it as the central part of Talent Management. The research suggests leaders from across organization should try to strike a balance between the supply of talent – the rising stars and the demand for talent on critical positions (Cohn et al., 2005, p6), and make a difference between long-term and short-term talent development plan to meet diverse business need.

4. Empirics

In this section the empirical data generated from 4 in-depth interviews with HR professionals who work actively with talent management is presented. The empirical findings include how companies view “talent” and “talent management” in their organizations, how companies practically approach talent management in talent identification, development, and career management. The empirics is presented with the order of company A, B, C, and D, so as to lead reader to engage in the implementation of TM in one organization’s context one time. By the end of this chapter, a table is used to summarize the major findings from all the four cases companies.

4.1 Organizational context of 4 interview companies

Company A is now the global market leader in door opening solutions. It sets up as a Scandinavian local company since 1994 and now it operates over 70 countries with 46,000 employees around the world. Company A has a culture as to be fast-paced, ever-changing, technology-driven and global; it believes in the power of individual and the strength of collective. Under its decentralized organizational structure, company A declare that it provides a work environment where people can make a difference; employees have the freedom to act and to be accountable for their actions. It is up to each employee to take the responsibility for his or her professional development and career path. There is a basic principle about Company A’s recruitment policy is to give priority to internal candidates provided they have equal qualifications to external applicants. All job vacancies are advertised on company’s intranet to encourage and facilitate the internal movement. Company A shares the Employer Value as: “Trusted responsibility; Open and equal; Supporting your development.” (Company A’s Website)

Company B is a big player in Swedish food retail and wholesale industry. It wholly owned the store chains of two notable supermarkets, comprising 263 stores in all. It has core values as: The store is the stage; We dare; We are aware; You are important; Together we are strong. For employee strategy, it concentrates on attracting, retaining and developing employees; building value-based leadership, “employeehip” and a distinctive company culture; it ensures it maintains a customer-centric organization with a strong entrepreneurial spirit. Company believes its employees reflect the diversity of the group’s customers, and everyone should have the same opportunities to develop. The company shares the idea that the strength lies more in the collective body of employees rather than a chosen elite. (Company B Annual report, 2015)

Company C is an automobile company founded in 1997, specializing in the development of future cars in C-segment. It acts as integrated part of a private automobile enterprise from China, but now it stands as an independent Swedish

company with its headquarter and develop center based in Gothenburg. It currently consists of 1900 people and is growing fast. Company C has a value of accountability, they have faith in the individual's ability and desire to take on responsibility. Meanwhile, a Can-do-spirit is valued, as a learning organization, they utilize the experience they gained and constantly expand the capacity to create great results, which contributing to their vision to create history and the perseverance to confront hardships. For the employees, Company C appreciate those who are actively participating in teamwork, share knowledge and make an effort to teach others. A collective environment to support each other and tackle challenges is created by open attitudes and cultural diversity. (Company C's Website)

Company D is a world leading engineering company with innovative products and solutions that improve productivity for customers. It is a truly global company with sales in more than 150 countries. It is now about 45,000 employees worldwide within the group almost 200 expatriates in another country, employees and their professional growth is treated with great respect. The vision of company D is to set the industry standard, which means it aims to set the benchmark for others to follow. Under this vision, more than 2,700 people are working actively in research and development. It strives to foster a culture of customer focus and innovation by securing a professional way of working and continuously developing employees and their performance. There are four focus areas in managing employees, which are: drive performance; develop leaders; grow talent and lead change. Within the company, there is a strong performance culture, all the managers in the organization are offered training on performance-management close align to target-setting processes, in order to strengthen the follow-through on execution. Meanwhile, plenty of leadership programs are offered to different levels. (Company D's Website)

The Table 4 below summarizes additional information about the four interview companies, which can also be supportive to increase the understanding of their business and organizations.

Table 4 *Organizational context of four interview companies. Self created*

Company	Type	Founded year	Industry	Product	Number of Employees	Operations	Holding	Org. Structure
A	Publicly traded	1994	Manufacturing and services	Locks, automatic and security doors	45,994	Global	Swedish/ Finnish	Decentralized
B	Private	1964	Retail	Consumer goods	7,254	Regional	Swedish	Centralized
C	Private	2013	Automotive	Passenger Cars	1900	Global	Chinese/Swedish	Centralized
D	Publicly traded	1862	Engineering	Tools and tooling systems for metal cutting.	45,809	Global	Swedish	Decentralized

4.2 Talent management in company A

4.2.1 View of talent and Talent Management

According to respondent A, the word “talent” is seldom used in company A since it may cause exclusive effect. Within their talent management process, there are clear definitions of 4 categories of talents, which are senior talent, leadership talent, emerging talent and critical talent (From company’s document that respondent A provided).

Table 5 *Talent definition in Company A. Self created*

Senior talent	Refers to the one who has an established track record in different disciplines and is expected to take on a level 3 role or higher within the next 2-3 years.
Leadership talent	Refers to someone who has already in a leadership role at level 5 or above stands out in the organization with high initiative and succession potential.
Emerging talent	Defined as an individual that stands out as a high performer, demonstrates high initiative, ambition and willingness to grow; who assesses to be able to take 2 more steps in the organization.
Critical talent	Defined as the one with unique skills and knowledge that are hard to replace with rare talent supply, both internally and externally.

The talent management process in company A is not transparent, which means even though someone is identified as talent, he or she will not be informed. The talent management process is held once a year, but it is “*more an evaluation and identification process than a retaining and a career path planning process*” (Respondent A).

“When we talk about talents, we exclusive a lot of people. We have a lot of well performing employees, but they are not seen as talents.... Normally talents are approximately 1.5% out of our employees, that are quite a few... But we do have what we call talent management process, that is actually identifying 4 different kinds of talents. But we don't have an open process, so if you are to be seen as talent, you don't know about it. So we have hidden processes... Except of this talent management process we have once a year, we don't talk about talents... We can not only focus on that 1.5%, so then we talk about employees, like well-performing employees, instead of talents...”

-- Respondent A

4.2.2 Talent identification

When it comes to the talent identification, respondent A mentions it is the HR department in the head office decides the definition of talent, then the talent identification process is localized, the management team in each division conducts an overall performance evaluation based on which they identify their own talents with respect to the business need. The result is a list with the names of the identified talents generated at the local divisions and then raised to the senior management team. Though talents now being easily distinguished from the rest of employees, they do not necessarily receive any specific position or assignment nor this new information is used to plan for the future developments of these talents. In fact, the identification stops at this stage and serves solely to inform the senior management team on the locations of talents within the organization.

4.2.3 Talent development

Formal development programmes

In company A, two leadership programs are running for selected senior managers. One program creates a network of colleagues from different countries and business sectors to share best practices and identify new opportunities (Company A's website). Another program, called "Boosting Market Leadership Program", is aiming to support the implementation of the group's strategy. Both of the senior leadership programmes are highly business driven and strategic.

For more employees, two global initiatives are launched during 2015 to support their professional development. One is called "In My shoes", through which individual employee get the opportunity to shadow a colleague in a similar position. Another one is "Live My Life", which allows two employees in the same organization to swap positions for a day. Both of the develop programs provide employee the opportunity to gain unique and mutually beneficial insight into different parts of the business (company A's website).

Internal movement

Respondent A mentioned that encouraging people to change position and develop internally is now one of the focus areas of HRM, even though sometimes it costs time and money to facilitate. Compare to move geographically, company A believes encouraging their employees to take different challenges within the same division or in the same city is more feasible.

“We have five divisions, even though your competence satisfies one of them, it doesn't mean you can be 100% capable to work in another... We would also like people to get into their job right away to hit the ground running rather than educate them... as anyone else... but of course, we like people to move, exchange thought and get inspired, always keep innovative.”

--Respondent A

4.2.4 Career Management

Company A has job openings posted on companies' intranet, internal candidates are given priority to apply for the jobs since their employers believe they have comparable qualifications to those of external candidates. And according respondent A, the internal recruitment occupies more than 80% of position vacancies.

The career management of talent does not be specifies in company A's talent management process, as a result that talent management in company A is only about talent identification, not concerning following development and career planning. The activities are handled by local organizations. Respondent A declares that like as anyone else, talents should take care of their career path themselves.

“They are not getting projects or jobs in other way than anyone else.”

--Respondent A

4.3 Talent management in company B

4.3.1 View of talent and Talent Management

In company B, talents are not talked about at all. A collective view is hold that everyone contributes and everyone is regarded as a talent. Company B figures out their strength lies more in the collective body of employees rather than chosen elites (Company B Annual report, 2015).

“We say we have a collective view here; we think that everybody contributes. If the customers come to the shop, the only person they meet is the one at the cashier, so everyone makes a difference. We always come down to collective... If you compare us with banks or McKinsey, they have much more like a focus, but we don't.”

-- Respondent B

According to respondent B, talent management is only been used in “Swedish language”, and it is aimed “to secure organization has people that are ready to become

leaders and want to move to the next level ... and develop the people making them feel engaged and encourage them to grow.”(Respondent B) Succession planning acts as a main part in TM, to support which, HR department strives to clearly maps out career path for the employees in different level within the organization, and employees take active responsibility for their own personal development. Respondent B also says she would not frequently use talent management; she uses HRM instead.

“It’s all about make the people in the right place, and develop them. So they have the energy also they feel engage, and they want to deliver extra. There are so many things you can do. Talent management is a really small thing. It’s really important, but there are so many things that (around it), it goes to everything else. Every process you do. Having the poster (showing career path and leadership programs) in every store, this is talent management. But there is so much work behind the poster. And what it actually does is saying when you(employees) grow, we grow as a company. So that is culture.”

-- Respondent B

4.3.2 Talent identification

Company B shares a collective view of talent, and when it comes to identify the potentials, annual performance talk for every employee plays an important role. Employees meet their direct bosses (line managers) to have this talk once a year, discuss about how they performed last year and whether it is ok for them to move to the next level. *“During the talk, they talk about the behaviors and decide where the employee is together.” (Respondent B)* There’s a checklist that shows all the sets and levels of desired organizational behaviors specified by HR. First the employee's grade themselves, the managers also grade the employees by using the same checklist as reference, during the talk both the employees and their managers review the checklists to discuss the employees’ performance. Then during the meeting, they discuss together about the employees’ expectation towards career path and what skills should he develop next year. After the annual review, managers suggest the potential leaders that they found to local HR department, when the recruitment begins, the potentials’ names are on the list.

4.3.3 Talent development

Work-based learning

Company B believes work-based learning is an effective way to develop employees and prepare them to the next level. *“You (employees) can rotate through different departments. When the team manager is on vacation you can instead of him. You can*

introduce and take care of employees, have meetings... At work you can practice and prepare for moving to the next level.” (Respondent B)

Trainings and courses

In company B, there is a slogan “Training for everyone”, which is further claimed that all the employees have the same opportunities for training. In order to achieve this, company B’s HR department continually works on revising and improving training methods, especially for those who need aim such as with reading and writing difficulties. A company academy which act as the center for training and trainee programmes, act as the role that develops initiatives that strengthen the customer and offering and provide training for all employees as well as development programmes for managers within the group (Company B Annual Report, 2015). Besides, it is notices that within a leadership talent career path description, correspondent E-learning and classroom training are displayed as a way that employees can chase for developing themselves in order to prepare for the upper level movement.

4.3.4 Career Management

In company B, annual performance talk lays the foundation of PDPs (personal development plans), which is designed individually according to employee’s past year’s performance and their new ambition, acting as the guidance of next year’s career move. At the company, several common career path are clearly mapped out. The major one is the leadership career path for store workers, as they occupy the 90% of staffs. The path starts from basic “the employee”, to “team manager”, then “store manager”, finally “regional manager”. Besides, clear job qualification for each positions is clearly described, as well as the learning from e-course, company academy and on-site activities. Other career path can be the move between small, medium size stores to large stores, and move on to become a store manager; or move from working in stores to offices.

Company B reported in year 2015, the proportion of internal applicants per position increased by 30%. According to the company annual report (2015), the reason behind it is the clear map out of career path; employees have distinct direction to move forward, and their direct managers and HR support them on the way.

4.4 Talent management in company C

4.4.1 View of talent and Talent Management

In company C, there is a terminology called “talent forest”, by respondent C’s explanation, it reflects the fact that company C pays more attention to cultivate internal talents. When it comes to the definition of talent, Respondent C expresses that the talents in company C are “*defined as the ones who share the organization’s values and highly identify enterprise culture, willing to grow with company and can make contribution in different phases*”. Respondent C stresses on the importance of conformity with the enterprise culture in addition to capability and skills in defining a talent.

“The ability of individual can be extremely strong, like a ‘hero’. But we don’t need ‘hero’ in our company, we want a team to fight.”

-- Respondent C

When talking about talent management, respondent C says storing and developing people to meet business objectives at different phases is the basic aim of talent management, thereby the talent management strategy varies accordingly in different time. Another core idea of TM in company C is to provide the talents what he/she needs both in resource and development opportunities, to encourage the ones who strive to grow be developed and dug out the inner potential.

“We need the ones who can grow with company in long terms.”

-- Respondent C

4.4.2 Talent identification

“Identifying talent is not a single direction work”. In this statement respondent C argues that identifying talent is not only a job for managers or HR, there should also exist a process that give employees chances to recommend themselves as talents, showing their own interest and the direction they are aiming to fight for. According to respondent C, talent identification should not only focus on the employees’ previous performance, but also take their future potential into consideration. The on-site assessment is usually regarded as an effective way to evaluate a person’s accumulation as well as a way to foresee one’s potential. Moreover, according to respondent C everyone has some talent that hasn’t been dig out or even hasn’t been realized by

him/herself. It's very important that both employee and manager could notice them, get opportunities to trigger them, and show them to the outside. Thereby, company C's employees are encouraged to take initiatives to try higher level or other functions by applying for different assignments thus taking intriguing responsibility. Each and every year, they can apply for a “defense” to approve how they fulfill the requirement for higher level or other roles. This “defense” involves HR, the senior managers in functions together with employees, all participating in the process of identifying the talent's potentials.

4.4.3 Talent development

Internal Movement and Work-based learning

Job rotation is a highly appreciated way of developing talent in company C. Employees are encouraged to rotate within and out their own business sector to acquire knowledge, and find out his or her next motivation by taking a cross-functional or international job rotation.

“We open positions and resource to employees, provide them opportunities to try and find the thing they really want to fight for.”

--Respondent C

Further Company C emphasize on the need to understand employees' interest, then give them challenging task or project to fasten their development, especially for young professionals.

“Challenging assignments can stimulate employee's subjective, make them feel engaged and build motivation to go further.”

--Respondent C

4.4.4 Career Management

Company C has a standard system for career development. Clear career paths are planned for different function; meanwhile clear requirements of performance are also conducted to evaluate one's fulfillment. Every year, every employee is encouraged to take a “defense” opportunity to prove how he/she fulfills the current level requirement and seek to bridge the gap between his/her current status and the next level or new ambition. According to respondent C, career path planning is facilitated by HR function, together with business functions to design and develop different career paths. HR function provides tools and methodology, but the core substance need to be achieved based on the reality of business functions. HR raises a mechanism declares the

requirement of skills, knowledge and capability for every role, then it is up to employees to apply for different assignments and to take different opportunities to prove he/she is capable for a certain role.

4.5 Talent management in company D

4.5.1 View of talent and Talent Management

According to respondent D, everyone in company D is regarded as a talent, everybody should get the opportunities to be challenged and to grow. One particular aspect mentioned by respondent D is that previously the focus of succession planning has been on white collar only, but in recent five years, company D strives to make sure that blue and white collar are treated uniformly. However, no matter white or blue collar, there is a category called “high potential”, who get the opportunity to grow faster and receive a fast track. According to respondent D, the whole idea of TM is “*to secure the organization has its own talent that can grow into 250 key positions.*” (Respondent D). In order to achieve that goal, TM in company D is to dig out people’s potential and identify the best group among them; secure all the employees have development plan every year, but paying more effort and focus on the development of high potentials. Respondent D believes it should be transparent and let the high potentials know they are emphasized on.

“I should let (you) know that I believe in you and I think you have the potential to grow.”

-- Respondent D

4.5.2 Talent identification

Talent identification in company D is done through talent and succession review process, which starts from the bottom of the company and aggregate upwards reaching every level. This process is triggered by talent manager and HRBP supports and follows-up the process. Individual performance dialogue acts as the foundation of talent and succession review, which includes both the performance evaluation from line managers and the striving and expectation towards future from employees. Each and every line manager is responsible for identifying the high potentials in their unit and suggests a list of high potentials to an upper level HR and managers to review. Development plans are created meanwhile doing the identification.

“We are aiming to identify high potential and plan for their development, in this way to secure the sourcing of internal candidates to key positions and retain the high potentials and the key employees.”

--Respondent D

4.5.3 Talent development

At company D, two activities are regarded as most important around high potential's development. One is high potentials need to be given the “exposure” opportunities and recognized by management team; Another one is the management team need to actually work on designing assignments that challenge high potentials in their daily work.

“It is very much important that the local management team know who the potentials are, and to be able to give them an assignment and lift them be seen by the management team. We are not taking them out of the position of where they are, but we give them extra challenge to increase their role of responsibility. The development plans are set locally by each manager, but supported by the management team that is the closest to them... Through the two biggest activities around high potentials, we want to make sure the high potentials feel the attention that ‘I am potential’.”

--Respondent D

4.5.4 Career management

Respondent D mentions there are two clear mapped career paths in company D, one is for engineering expert, another one is for managers. Compared with the amount of talents involved in management career path, there are very limited number of engineers who are classified as experts and follow that path. Respondent D also mentions that the expectations towards career are different among different categories. For engineers, embracing challenges and creating realistic innovative products are more attractive than being promoted in position. Whereas for the management track, vertical movement is rather more appreciated.

4.6 Summary of the empirical finding

To summarize the empirical findings, the Table 6 below shows four cases companies view of talents and talent management, and Table 7 summarizes the Talent Management Practices within the scope of talent identification, development, and career management respectively.

Table 6 Summary of four cases companies' view of talent and Talent Management. Self created.

THE VIEW OF	TALENT	TALENT MANAGEMENT
A	Talents refers to 1.5% of the employees in 4 categories: (a)Senior talent, (b)Leadership talents, (c)Emerging talent, (d)Critical talent.	TM is the evaluation and identification process of the 4 categories of talents, rather than a retaining and a career path planning process.
B	Everyone contributes, so everyone is regarded as a talent.	To secure organization has people that are ready to become leaders and want to move to the next level and develop the people making them feel engaged and encourage them to grow.
C	Talents are the ones who share the organization's values and highly identify enterprise culture, be willing to grow with company and can make contribution in different business phases. Everyone can be.	The storage and development of people to meet business objectives meanwhile digging up everyone's inner potential.
D	Talents refers to the high potentials who can grow into 250 strategic key positions in organizations.	Ensure every employee gets fair opportunity to develop. However focusing on securing that the organization has its own talents who can grow into 250 key positions.

Table 7 Summary of four cases companies' talent management practices within the scope of Talent identification, development, and career management Self created

	Talent Identification	Talent Development	Career management
A	Talent identification is done based on a certain template which includes a localized overall performance evaluation. The process belongs to the local units.	Two leadership programs are running for selected senior managers; Internal movement without geographic shift is promoted.	Employees should take responsibility for their own professional career planning; Local organization handle the management process, which is not included in talent management scope.
B	Annual performance talk between employees and line managers lays the	Work-based learning is regarded as the most effective way for development; Trainings,	PDP is designed during identification process; Has a clear map out of

	foundation of talent identification, which prepare a "talent list" for internal recruitment	E-learnings and Academy	the career path for the one works in stores.
C	Two dimensional; Management team strives to identify talents and talents are encouraged to come forward and express their ambition.	Encouraging internal movement by taking cross-functional or international job rotation; Mainly through work-based learning	HR function together with business functions design and develop clear career paths; employees are given the opportunities to apply for "defense" every year to prove their ability to fulfill the next level and seek for opportunities to transfer.
D	Both HR and division managers based on performance evaluation as part of the talent and succession review program.	Development plan is set during the identification process to ensure the talent exposure to management team.	Two main career paths:(a) Managerial (majority) and (b) Engineering Expertise. The career path is highly related with succession planning.

5. Analysis

This section incorporates the analysis of three related topics which identified by the theoretical chapter: view on talents, TM approach and dominant TM practices. The analysis is trying to dig out the interactive relationship between these three topics. In each section, all the companies are analyzed under comparison aiming to find the similarities and differences, furthermore identify the patterns that are of value for answering the research questions. The analysis starts with identifying the dominant perspectives each and every company views talent and TM, then followed by the analysis on the main factors that shape TM approach, finally ends with analyzing how different TM approaches determine different types of talent management practice.

5.1 The view on talent and Talent Management

Through the empirical findings, for company A and D, they both perceive that talent management should be focus and implementing on a selective amount of employees, not everyone. In company A, only 1.5% of employees are regarded as talents, who are identified based on 4 different talent definitions. Similarly, in company D talent management aims at a certain amount of employees that can grow into 250 strategic important positions, who are identified as “high potentials”.

Differently, for company B and C, collective view is taken that everyone is perceived as a talent. Company B, the retail company believes every employee is regarded as talent who is playing important role in achieving successful business, regardless his/her academic background and experience. And in company C, the terminology of “talent forest” as well as its talent management definition reveals its talent philosophy: every employee could become a talent if given the proper conditions to realize his/her unique potentials and accordingly offered the opportunity to develop on the direction he/she chooses for him/herself.

According to Dries, N. (2013), it could be classified that company A and D both take an exclusive perspective on talent and TM, whereas, company B and C both take an inclusive perspective. This is in accordance with what is identified in literature, that this tension is claimed to be the main debate on the view on talent and Talent Management (Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Tansley, 2011).

5.2 Business context influence on a company's Talent

Management approach

Scholar has mentioned in literature that managing talents is aiming for gaining competitive advantages for business (Ashton, C., 2005). Back to initially, as plenty of literature shows that it is the business context that shapes company's perception of talents and further decides which approach companies take for talent management.

For company A and D, two big global manufacturing companies that show exclusive perspective towards talents, both of them operate with decentralized organizational structure to fulfill their global operational business objectives. This strategy is referred as multidomestic strategy, according to Bartlett & Ghoshal (1989), which emphasizes the autonomy of regional businesses to operate independently in responding to local opportunities and challenges.

Company A is the leading supplier of door opening solutions, its business relies on the regional divisions' manufacturing and selling the products that meet local customers' needs, adapting to local market's standards and security requirements. Plenty of acquisitions are done to stretch local business, thereby it is of great importance to nominate proper candidates in local organizations and manage business locally. What company A does to cope with this decentralized talents need is that the head office holds a centralized definition of talents as well as a standardized talent identification process, then it is up to the local organization to follow and develop their own talents according to local business. Similarly, but not the same, company D's decentralized business model reflects on its operation in different business units (BU), under which there exist different market units (MU), which enables clearer focus and faster response to the customers. To cater this strategy, talent management in company D is done from the bottom through each and every local unit till the top; three levels of key positions are mapped out in different organizational layers and talent management process is aggregated upwards.

The empirical shows that one common theme between company A and D in TM is that they both emphasize the development of core management competencies, which is done through exclusively focusing on the ones who show competitive talent in leadership and management positions especially. To the author's interpretation, this is because in decentralized operated organization, business operation is highly relying on the performance of managers -- who are of great importance in charging of the quality of business objectives deliveries and the effectiveness of skills and expertise transferring throughout the whole organization. This is in line with Evans et al. (2002), Scullion & Starkey (2000) and Sparrow (2007)'s research result, that exclusive approach focusing on the identification, development and succession

planning on leadership-oriented talent is usually taken in global decentralized operated organizations.

According to Bolander et al. (2014), both company A and D can be characterized to take a competitive approach in general. However, what can be noticed is, there still remain difference. The essence behind the choice of slight different approaches could be understood from talent strategy as well as the role of the corporate HR function in MNCs, according to the study of Farndale, Scullion and Sparrow (2010). The empirical shows company A is a highly decentralized firm who tended to pursue more of a multidomestic international strategy, which as Morris et al. (2016) proposes, enables decentralized decision making and flexibility in accommodating changes. Farndale et al. (2010) presents in this type of global company, CHR focused mainly on management development and senior executives' succession planning. Al Ariss et al. (2014) also proposes that under decentralized operation HR function appears as relatively loose confederation of diverse operating units with a weak central network, which allows separate business/ local units to develop talents as necessary without much intervention from headquarters. By contrast, even though company D organizes its business under decentralized operating structure whereas its TM strategy is still towards centralized. It can be found that CHR function in this type of companies undertook a wide range of activities which covers all of aspect of talent management. Farndale et al. (2010) indicates in the centralized global firms, there is growing need for coordination and integration which requires greater central control over the mobility of top managers, expatriates and high-potential staff. This is in line with what is shown in the empirical finding of company D.

Back to company B and C, everyone is viewed as talent have completely different business models and objectives. Company B, the retail company, in-store employees and the behind-the-scenes employees play equally important role in delivering great customer experience, thereby it is important to enroll everyone in talent management and offer the develop opportunities no matter what their positions are. This action sheds a light on Dries et. (2013)'s literature, that in service industry, talent is usually defined as the entire workforce since the business model is defined by and around the people employed. Correspondent with company B's core value that "The store is the stage. We dare. We are aware. You are important. Together we are strong.", collective talent management approach around the development of each and every employee in store is proposed and conducted. According to Bolander et al. (2014), company B shows a character to take a Humanistic approach.

For company C, which acts as the development center of a global-presenting auto group with an entrepreneur nature, the attempting for innovation and pursuing for the highest speed of R&D and completely new technology launch masters the lifeblood of its business. In order to chase its business objectives, company C need highly loyal and devoted employees who are willing to grow with company for long. As one company still in its infant phase, everyone in the company is taken into account.

Correspondingly, company C holds an inclusive view that each and every employee is talent if he/she is given a proper condition; and “talent” is an inherent quality, when proper circumstance and resource is provided then it will appear. Under this understanding, in company C talent management’s aim is to set an effective circumstance to encourage each and every employee to find their unique talent and transform these talents into lasting performance contributing to business. All the traits about TM in company C meets the character of an Entrepreneurial approach, according to Bolander et al. (2014).

To sum up, Table 8 shows the previous analysis about how companies view talent and talent management, the general Talent Management approach identified, and the dominant factor that shapes their TM approach.

By obtaining the analysis so far, in the next section the analysis will be conducted on how each and every company takes different approach to implement talent management in practice. During which comparison will be conducted regarding practical implementation of talent identification, talent development, career management and succession planning. Similarity and contrast will emerge and lead to more generalize analysis.

Table 8 *View on talent and TM and the main factors shapes TM approach. Self created.*

<i>Company</i>	<i>View on Talent and TM</i>	<i>General Talent Management approach</i>	<i>The dominant factor that shapes TM approach</i>
<i>A</i>	Exclusive	Competitive approach	Decentralized global operation
<i>B</i>	Inclusive	Humanistic approach	The nature of retail industry
<i>C</i>	Inclusive	Entrepreneurial approach	Entrepreneurial nature of company culture
<i>D</i>	Exclusive	Competitive approach	Decentralized global operation

5.3 Different TM approaches determine different types of talent management practice

After analyzing the view on talent and how company’s business context shapes the view of talent and talent management approach, the principal talent management practices of companies can be analyzed in reflection to approaches companies take. According to Bolander et al. (2014), the principal practices acting as the parts of talent management approach are firstly led by companies’ view on talent. Deriving from Bolander et al. (2014)’s framework, the further analysis in this section will be around three dominant practices in talent management implementation, which are talent identification, development, succession planning and career management.

Talent identification

Once the company has determined to implement talent management, talent identification is always regarded as the first step and the foundation of other practice (SIOP White Paper, 2013). As previous analysis, talents are defined differently among different companies, thereby the identification process and emphasis varies accordingly.

Based on the previous analysis, for company A and D who take competitive approach with an exclusive view on talents, identification of talents is always act as the principle practice. Within talent identification, there is a focus on distinguishing “high potential”, especially the management position related. This reflects the fact that in company A and D, most of the talents are perceived as the ones who show the potential and willingness to pursue management career path and eager to be promoted within organizational levels. It is in line with literature illustrates that when identifying talents, the one called “potentials” are usually rated based on the ability to either take a broader range of work and leaderships roles, or ability to be promoted to a higher level position (SIOP White Paper, 2013). What can also be seen is that the identification processes in company A and D are highly standard and rely largely on the measurement of formal criteria and structured talent review. Both complying with “grandfather rule”, the management team two level above has the power to decide who are identified as qualified as talents -- but usually based on certain criteria for successors, therefore the identification process is rather objective and inclining towards succession planning. In comparison, company D shows even more fix and standardized process, since the talent identification is always aiming to fill the vacancies of successors of the 250 positions. What can be inferred that through company A and D’s talent identification process, the development track of the identified high potential has somehow already been determined. Since it can be foreseen that the development plan is usually around and based on the succession positions, which limited to a certain business areas or functions.

By contrast, company B and C who take inclusive view towards talents show quite different approaches in talent identification. In company B, where everyone is regarded as talent taking the humanistic approach, as Bolander et al. (2014) induced in their research. There is a statement according to respondent B “We don’t talk about talent at all; everyone contributes in our company”. This is in line with the inclusive, development- oriented view on talent mentioned by literature (Bolander et al., 2014), identifying talents in company B does not focus on the “selection” for certain positions with strict criteria; instead, the annual performance talk conducted between line managers and employees which act as the identification process is aiming to exchange feedbacks about performance and involving employees into development decision of his/herself. Meanwhile, for the one who is planning to move to higher level or leadership position, further development and learning objectives are listed as the enter “criteria” instead of formal assessment.

Company C, according to Bolander et al. (2014), where the entrepreneurial approach is taken, an employee could be defined as talent if he/she proved him/herself to be one,

through his/ her performance and ambition. Consequently, organization is ascribed less responsibility for talent identification, instead employees have a responsibility to identify themselves. Applying for the “defense” acts as an initiative identification process which is driven by employees and allows the LM and HR to assess the employee's’ performance and potential, basing on which they can prove or recommend an adequate career plan. It can be noticed that formal identification processes are not used. To show their talent and be prepared for the “defense”, employees seek for challenging tasks and accumulate learnings act as evidence of capability, therefore it can be interpreted that the border between talent identification and development in company C is blurred, and on organization side, providing ambitious employees with proper assignments and challenging projects is important for both developing and allowing the talents to be identified.

Talent development

All the four respondents from case companies agree on developing their own talents in-house is important, since as the literature summarizes talents are not “one-size fit all” in every company. In a line with Garavan et al. (2012)’s definition of talent development as series of activities that ensure the organization to have both the current and future supply of talents to meet strategic objectives, our four case companies reflect that talent development activities and emphasis are highly related with its current business need and varying among each other.

Company A and D, who take the competitive approach based on Bolander et al. (2014)’s framework, both showing stance that it is the organization’s responsibility to develop talent. By using specific criteria, different level of management team has the power to decide who are talents and make plans to cultivate them into successor roles. In contrast, company B and company C who take humanistic approach and entrepreneurial approach respectively showing similar attitude that talent development should be initiated by employees and what organization should be responsible for is providing a beneficial talent development environment with broad range of developing opportunities and continuously training and learning.

Besides, it can be noticed the activities that talent development emphasis on are also different. For company A and D, the development activities are highly focus upon the skills that as future successors’ positions require of, mostly leadership and management related. These skills are developed mostly through taking challenging assignments and larger responsibility on site, instead of developing through internal movement or job rotation. This choice of developing pathway may be understood through their decentralized operational structure and its talent development’s goal as preparing successors for certain positions. For company B in retail industry, training and learning is continuously and develop programs open to all employees, even more inclining to the inabilities. Besides, job-rotation and internal movement also occupies large proportion in development opportunities. To the author’s interpretation, this is in comply with company B’s business reality; everyone and every detail accounts and tacit

on-site knowledge increases employees' competence then finally lead to higher quality of service. For company C, the main role of talent development is to provide employees with opportunities to develop and identify themselves as talents. Thereby, on-job training through new and challenging projects turns out to be the focus activities. According to Bolander et al. (2014), for company who takes entrepreneurial approach, little systematic planning is done in development process and employees are regularly assigned into new roles and projects without a lot of structure or guidance from the organization. Thereby, it is seen to have both pros and cons in this employee-driven development process.

Succession planning and career management

Succession planning is expressed to have tight relationship with talent management in all the four case companies. However, it is seen that the formalization of the process, the structure of career paths and the main responsibility towards career advancement varies among different companies. For company A and D, talents are regarded exclusively for leadership roles with expectation of successive vertical promotion. Especially company D, the career design for talents is tightly linked to strategic succession planning, preparing and storing talents for strategic vacancies only. Another limitation towards career management in these two companies is, due to the decentralized organizational structure, employee's career path is always limited in the certain local region or business unit he/she starts the career. As analyzed before it can be detected under respondent A and D's word that job rotation across regions and business unit is not that encouraged in these two organizations, hence it is always lack of flexibility in career path choice for employees. By contrast, the flexibility for career choice is higher in company B and C. Although it is found that succession planning is also an important aim for talent management as respondent B and C mentioned, B and C regard the importance of inclusiveness more and focusing on each individual's development, job rotation and cross-function assignments are highly encouraged. Therefore, to strive for vertical promotion and develop into leadership role is just one option, plenty of opportunities are provided by company for the employees to achieve lateral career move as well.

Another point that is of value to analyze is the extent to which the responsibility for career advancement or movement is taken on by the organization or the individual. For company A and D who take exclusive view of talents and rely on criteria-based approach throughout talent management process, organization takes most of responsibility of planning for the future career path for talents. Line managers, management team above together with HR function decide where someone goes after plenty of evaluation and measurement. However, for company B and C, both employer and employee need to take responsibility in career management but it should always be driven by employees initiatively. The practice in company B and C shed a light on the illustration of Clarke (2013), employees are expected to in charge of developing their career goals/plans, seize all kinds of available opportunities to achieve the goals, through both organizational development programs, trainings and so on. Meanwhile,

the employers are expected to set up effective mechanism, making sure the expectations are heard and corresponding personal development plans are formulated. To support the employees to achieve their career planning and goals, employers are also responsible to providing sufficient mentoring and job rotation. To cope with this context, it is found that line manager's' role is of great importance to achieve flexibility and adaptability. As a role that balance the interest of employee and organization in the most front line, line manager's impact on career management deserves to be discussed more.

5.4 Summary of the analysis

Table 9 below acts as a summary of the main findings of previous analysis.

Table 9 Summary of analysis. Self created.

	Company A	Company D
View on Talent	Exclusive	
General TM Approach	Competitive approach	
Principle TM Practice	Talent Identification	Talent Identification /Succession Planning
Organization of TM	- Centralized TM design and decentralized process	- Centralized TM processes aggregate upwards
Identifying Talent	- Follow standard criteria and formal process focusing on "potentials" - Objective process and aiming for succession planning	
Developing Talent	- Focusing on exclusive development programs and activities to nominated talents --future successors - Organization's initiative	
Succession Planning and Career Management	- Focus on clear vertical promotion of strategic successors - Career path is limited in the certain local region or business unit where employees start their career - Criteria-based approach in promotion and move, aiming for succession	
	Company B	Company C
View on Talent	Inclusive	
General TM Approach	Humanistic approach	Entrepreneurial approach
Principle TM Practice	Talent development	Talent identification and development
Organization of TM	- Centralized TM through mindset	- Decentralized TM

	around talent	
Identifying Talent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Through talent review which performed with every employee - Embrace subjectivity and involving employee into development decision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employees are encouraged to identify their own talents - Formal process is provided to achieve self-proved through previous performance - Embrace subjectivity
Developing Talent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involving employees to make development plan - Every employee involved - Focus on continuous development, opportunities open to all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employees take the initiative to seek for development - Focus on development through new assignments and job rotation - Encouraging develop through trial
Succession Planning and Career Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Start from the point "on the floor" - Horizontal as much as vertical moves - Experience-based approach in promotion and move, aiming for development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear career path provided, but encourage transfer and lateral move - Provide project-based positions - Employees are appreciate to seek for new opportunities in new business sector globally

Through the analysis, it can be found that in four case companies, talent management is perceived in different views with different aims, and its scope and implementation varies in each and every organization. Talent management strategy and practice is highly related with the comprehensive organizational context; organizational structure, industry, business objective, organizational culture and etc. all leaving impact on the choice of talent management approach, and further determines its implementation. Therefore, it is the author's understanding that, talent management should not be analyzed isolated from its organizational settings, every practice should be put into the context to see its inter-reactions with other organizational parameters.

It can be concluded from analysis that the business context has great impact on how company view talent, and the view will further determine the approach and practice company implement in their talent management process. There is no "one-size fit all" talent and talent management approach exist, however, for the companies who choose similar approach and view towards talent management, pattern emerges in their talent management implementations. Specifically, to company A and D, who take an exclusive view and complete approach, talent management works more closely with succession planning and management -- identifying and preparing the ones who can take strategic important positions; to company B and C, who take inclusive view, humanistic and entrepreneur approach respectively, talent management is more towards providing opportunities for employees and support them to achieve their

individual career pursuit. This is in line with Buckingham and Vosburgh (2001)'s illustration: the inclusive view of talent is typically linked with strength-based approaches to talent management -- i.e. recognizing where each employee's natural talent lies, and figuring out how to support each and every employee develop the job-specific skills and knowledge to turn those talents into real performance; whereas the exclusive view is more related to gap-based approaches focused on the remediation of development needs or succession planning.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

This section summarizes the finding of the whole research, the conclusion is drawn, and research questions set in the beginning of the thesis are answered. Discussion about future research area are proposed by the end.

6.1 Conclusion

The thesis has aimed to increase the empirical research on Talent Management. Specifically, attempting to detect the factors that influence company's TM approach and practices, and get a deeper understanding around the effects they leave on organization's view towards talent and approaches to Talent Management. Thus with the purpose declared, three research questions were raised as:

RQ 1: What are the different perspectives on talents and talent management?

RQ 2: What are the factors that determine company's choice of TM approach?

RQ 3: How are TM practices affected by the choice of TM approach?

After a wide range of literature review and practically investigated cases companies, the definitions of talents and Talent Management are found to be rather context-specific—which varies among every organization. There is no uniform perception of talents, neither a universal talent management procedure, which was confirmed during the research by generating the views from the four respondents who representing the standpoint of their organizations. One distinct tension that was found to be the dominant perspective of talent and talent management in this research is inclusive vs. exclusive, same as Lewis & Heckman (2006) and Tansley (2011) claimed. The tension was found to have profound effect on the approach company take for talent management, and furthermore determine talent management practice.

To answer the research question two, by closely analyzing on empirical finding, it is found that company's perception of talents is shaped by the overall organizational context and it determines the approach company take for Talent Management. Within this study, business type, organizational structure, operation mode, industry, business objective, organizational culture and control structure are identified as factors that leave significant impact on case companies' Talent Management approaches, and further determine their practical implementation. The analysis based on the empirical finding indicates the decentralized global operation and organizational control mechanism act as main factors that shape two globalized organizations' Talent Management into exclusive and competitive approach; for the another two companies, which have smaller scale and focus on more centralized business, the nature of business, industry and organizational culture shape their Talent Management as more inclusive,

humanistic or entrepreneurial approach especially. However, it can be inferred that for different organizations, the factors that determine Talent Management various. Some influential factors can be found among organizations which are compared with similar attributes, but the effect factors leave should always be analyzed within a certain organizational context.

After identifying the approaches companies take and motivating the influential factors behind, the paper turns to seek for the patterns that emerging from the case companies. Bolander et al. (2014)'s research was used as a framework to structure the analysis, and the practices generated from empirical part was analyzed. Finally, the research shows that within a scope of talent identification, talent development and career management, each and every company has its unique practices to meet its organizational context, however similar practices can be found when two organization choose same or similar TM approach, even if they are established in different industry. Whereas, the contrast is obvious when different TM approaches are taken. Different TM approach focusing on different principle TM practices, shapes different way to organize TM, and finally result in various practical implementation. The result of this paper shows an agreement and further build up the study of Buckingham and Vosburgh (2001) and Bolander et al. (2014): exclusive view on talent relates to competitive talent management approach, thus practices are focusing around selection and succession planning; inclusive view on talents links with humanistic and entrepreneurial talent management approaches, thereby the practices are focusing on recognizing each employee's talents lies and supporting everyone to develop and achieve good performance.

6.2 Critical reflection on the paper

As declared in methodology section, the research only contains four case companies with four key interviews with senior HR professionals, the limited sample makes it hard to achieve high generalizability of the result. Thereby, the author of the thesis was always attempting to increase analytical generalizability, according to Yin (2010), to show how the findings support previous study and to motivate how the findings can be generalized to similar situations. Thereby, as the the final conclusion shows, the paper end up with more conceptual findings, instead of seeking deep only in empirics. The innovativeness of this paper is not that strong, however the author believes this paper will enrich the empirical research in Talent Management area, which provides typical cases and critical analysis that further develop the researches especially Buckingham and Vosburgh (2001), Dries, N. (2013), Bolander et al. (2014).

6.3 Discussion about future research

By the end of the paper, the author is willing to discuss two more ideas that appear during the studying process. Due to the limitation of resource and time, in the phase of master thesis, the author was not able to explore further towards these two topics. However, the author believes both of them are of great value and will be interest for scholars to take future research on.

Centralized or Decentralized? -- Talent Management in global organizations

The research contains two global operated organizations as cases companies. Through the analysis before, it is found that organization structure and control mechanism show great impact on their Talent Management strategy and implementations. Operating in global scale leave company the space to choose between centralized and decentralized TM approach, which could result in totally different TM philosophy and practices.

The author think it will be interesting to research more specifically towards how much global companies would like to decentralize its TM process to regional business unit. Through the empirical, the author detects that different risks exist in two case companies that adopting different degree of centralization in TM. Under more decentralized approach, talents from local units are hard to be seen by the top management team; their development plans are made by unit management team, whether the talents have been enrolled into effective cultivation remains hidden. Meanwhile, decentralized approach may cause a lack of cross-border career opportunities, which may limit the employee development, furthermore limit the the knowledge and experience transferring in group level. The more centralized approach also has the risk to be too strict which ignores the force of local regulations and customs' impact on the formulation and execution of talent management. It will be quite interesting to analyze and discuss deeper from the perspective of Global Talent Management, however based on the delimitation and limitation of this paper, it is too wide a topic to be continue. Whereas, the author believes research on organizational control and its impact on talent management will be a great direction to look forward.

Line manager's role in Talent Management

As mentioned previously in methodology chapter, due to the delimitation and limitation of the thesis, the empirical finding was generated from the interviews with senior HR professionals, thus limits the whole paper only displaying Talent Management practice through organizational perspective. However, from literature review and empirical finding generating, the author found it is not merely CHR's responsibility to implement the whole process of Talent Management, the involvement of managers and employees also plays critical role in achieving an effective and successful Talent Management. A joint ownership should be built.

The empirical finding of this paper reveals that all the respondents in this research have mentioned line managers' pivotal roles in talent management. For the companies which take exclusive approach, line managers are on the front line to identify certain "talents" and generating name list upwards; for the ones that adopt inclusive approach, line managers are counted as the closest ones to have honest conversation with employees, conduct effective performance evaluation to identify talents, listen to employees' need and provide development plans accordingly. It is well recognized that line managers' role is so important since they are the actual ones who deliver talent management strategy into practice in full-scaled, and they are regarded as the people who are responsible to ensure the commitment of employees.

However, the empirical finding also exposes some extent of dissatisfaction or worry from HR professionals towards line manager's performance in Talent Management: sometimes line managers are noticed as a problematic link- as one respondent mentions sometimes HR suspect the line managers hand in fake talent lists, reluctant in moving potential talent to leadership role in fear of losing valuable team members. The author feels that the deeper reason behind could be multilateral, such as the interest conflict Talent Management brings about between small group and whole group; the relationship between HR function and business units and etc.

It will be of value to explore future study from implementing perspective of Talent Management. Investigation through the roles other than HR function, for example line manager or employees can bring in new insight on the research field of Talent Management.

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Documentation

Company A’s internal document on Talent identification

Company B Annual Report, 2015

8. Appendix 1 Interview guide

Part 0

Knowing more about The company X

- Introduction about The company X, the organization structure, the culture.
- What's the vision of HR in The company X?

Part 1

Insight of talent and talent management

- How "talent" is defined at The company X? who should be regarded as talent?
- What does "talent management" mean in The company X? when we talk about talent management, what do we mean? what does it aim for in The company X?
- What's the element that include in talent management at The company X?
- In The company X, is talent management equal to development programs?
- Why The company X implement talent management and make as a focus?

Part 2

Practices within talent management

Talent identification

- Which jobs and group of people will talent management focus on?
- Can you tell me how do you identify talents in your organization? Or how do you help your employees identify their talents?
- But basically we spend more time in identifying the talent inside of the company right?

Talent pool

- Do you have or form a talent pool in your company? What kind of people are aiming to be in it?
- Do you provide extra opportunities to the employees in talent pool?

Talent development

- What kind of development opportunities can employees pursue in your company?
- What happens in terms of development once individual have been recognized as talent or having potential? What kinds of develop path will be prepared for them? Can you describe the process for me?
- Is there any focus in developing your employees?
- What's the support that The company X can give to the ones who want to develop?
- Career path: What kinds of career path can talent pursue in The company X?
- How can you help them in planning and realizing their career path?
- Who will influence the development or the career path of employees at The company X?

Talent retention

- What factors do you think that play an important role in retaining talent people at The company X?
- How do you do to motivate talent and retain them for long-term employment?

Measurement of effective talent management

- How do you measure the effectiveness/ success of talent management? (Promotion and progression? Employee engagement? Turnover rate?)

Part 3

Challenges and outlook of talent management

- What do you regard as the most challenging part in talent management?
- Where do you think need to pay more attention in the future within TM at The company X? Your focus in the next 2-3 years?

Add up questions:

- Is there any document that I can have a look at? For example, TM policies, reports or written goals etc.;
- Is there anyone else within the company that you believe would be beneficial for me to interview or ask questions to, to complement your answers or have follow up interview?

Ask the interviewee if they would like to ask you any questions.

I would like to use this interview as empirical data in my thesis, and your experience will be reported as part of my research; So now I hope to confirm the anonymous principle with you. In the thesis, I may use some part of our conversation as empirical data, so I may need to refer you in a way. I can offer three different ways to refer you in the paper, for example:

A— completely anonymous, as “your position + company A”

B— conditionally anonymous, as “your position +The company X”

C— non-anonymous, as “you name+ position+ The company X”