

Analytical insight into selected talent management practices in Slovak health sector

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Abstract

Talent management becomes increasingly important in health sector because of its impact on the quality of healthcare services. The aim of this paper is on the basis of analysis of primary data collected through the questionnaire survey to examine the talent management processes and practices in Slovak health/healthcare organizations. Because the spectrum of talent management processes is broad, our attention is given to the talent identification, filling vacancies and succession planning. Correlation analysis was used to investigate the relationships between organisational attributes - size and type of ownership - and selected talent management processes.

Key words: talent, talent management, organisation, healthcare

1. Introduction

A couple of years the Slovak Republic is facing a mass outflow of qualified and skilled people abroad. Extremely critical is the situation in the healthcare sector which inevitably raises the need for efficient human resource management as well as talent management. Talent management is defined as: “activities and processes that involve the systematic identification of key positions that differentially contribute to the organization’s sustainable competitive advantage, the development of a talent pool of high-potential and high-performing incumbents to fill these roles, and the development of a differentiated human resource architecture to facilitate filling these positions with competent incumbents, and to ensure their continued commitment to the organization” (Collings & Mellahi, 2009, in Al Ariss et al., 2014).

Talent management has become an important part of human resource management and has received increased attention of the academia and business community (especially in the last decade). The ability of organisations to attract and recruit, retain and develop people with the required skills and abilities is extremely important for success and for the filling of organizational needs and goals. As declares one of

the leading organization in the field of work, workforce and workplace the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) (2007) “today an organization’s success is directly linked to the talent it can access. Competition and the lack of available highly talented and skilled employees make finding and retaining talented people a major priority for organizations”.

2. Talent management in organisational context

Talent management covers wide range of activities particularly identification, attracting, recruiting, selection, placement, developing and retaining the best (high-potential) employees. Pandey et al. (2012) define some fundamentals of talent management:

- Talent management represents “3R”: recognition, reward, and retaining available potential in people.
- It means developing those people who have ability and potential to become part of any organization's recruitment and retention strategy.
- Talent management involves individual and organization development with respect to a changing and complex operating environment.
- Talent management includes the creation and maintenance of supportive people oriented organizational culture.
- Talent management is a core purposeful approach undertaken to attract, develop, retain and guide people with the talent and abilities to meet current and future organizational needs.
- Talent management brings together a number of important human resources and management initiatives.

When implementing the concept of talent management the initial stage should be the identification of talent i.e. it is necessary to determine what kind of people with what competencies - abilities, knowledge, skills and experience are considered to be the organizational talent in the specific organizational context. Logically, the requirements on employees necessary for performing a particular job and the preference of certain competences and subsequent talents specification/identification is determined by the specific conditions of the organization or industry/sector. Different perception of talents could be the principal reason for the absence of clear and generally accepted definition of talents. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development CIPD (2007) research points out that (the way) how talents are defined is:

1. organisationally specific,
2. highly influenced by the type of industry and the nature of its work,
3. dynamic, and so likely to change over time according to organisational priorities.

Nijs et al. (2014) referring to the Wacker (2004) argue that operationalizing and measuring talent is one of the major challenges the talent-management field is currently facing.

However it is necessary to indicate at least some of the definitions of talent:

1. Talent refers to the human capital in an organization that is both valuable (having potential to contribute to organization's core competence and enhance its competitive advantage) and unique (difficult to replace) (Dries, 2013).
2. “Talent is commonly understood as corresponding to an above average ability that makes the individuals who possess, detect, develop, and deploy it, perform excellently in a given performance domain” (Gagne’, 2004; Tansley, 2011, in Nijs et al., 2014, p. 181).
3. Talent is “the sum of a person's abilities - his or her intrinsic gifts, skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence, judgment, attitude, character and drive. It also includes his or her ability to learn and grow” (Michaels et al. (2001, in Gallardo-Gallardo, 2013, p. 291)
4. “Talent refers to systematically developed innate abilities of individuals that are deployed in activities they like, find important, and in which they want to invest energy. It enables individuals to perform

excellently in one or more domains of human functioning, operationalized as performing better than other individuals of the same age or experience, or as performing consistently at their personal best” (Nijs et al., 2014, p. 182).

Nijs et al. (2014) emphasize that talent identification practices should be targeted to both – detection of the talent “already manifested in a given organizational setting” and those employees who have the potential to be excellent in different future roles (activities). Authors recommend to make decisions related to talent identification decisions not only on performance (which reflects currently deployed abilities) but also on prediction of the sustained interpersonal and intrapersonal excellence in which organizations are interested (Nijs et al., 2014, p. 185).

3. Talent management in healthcare context

Talent management has an important role in the health sector. Talent management has according Ogden (2010) a “significant impact on the most critical operational issues that health care organizations face today: patient safety, timely access to care, and cost control”. Douglas (2013, p.) emphasizes the role of talent management in discussions about “who are the right people we need with the right skills and competencies, how do we recruit them, and how do we create environments within which they can thrive”. Author claims that talent management can provide a platform for addressing and preventing such difficult topics as stress management, compassion fatigue, burnout, lateral violence, and bullying. It could help to create positive and healthy work environments. He adds that “although these topics may not traditionally fit within the scope of talent management for other industries, they fit well within the underlying principles of talent management, and in healthcare, talent management cannot be successful without addressing them” (Douglas, 2013, p. 24).

Holland (2011, p. 2) points out that talent management as a “process necessary to identify and nurture the leaders of tomorrow“ is the critical and often overlooked area in healthcare organizations. “Healthcare organizations are far less likely than companies in other industries to have formal talent management processes in place”. Situation is critical: according to Press Ganey Associates’ 2010 Hospital Pulse Report: Employee and Nurse Perspectives on American Health Care (the survey, which garnered responses from more than 235,000 employees at nearly 400 U.S. hospitals) 45% of hospital employees are disengaged, disempowered, and unhappy with their jobs. The need to address this issue also highlights one of the survey findings according to which “organizations providing the best environments for their employees receive higher satisfaction scores from patients” (Holland, 2011, p. 2).

Halogen Software in its reflection about the U.S. Healthcare industry „How effective talent management can help you prepare for healthcare reform 2013“ formulate recommendations for effective talent management:

1. Build a strong culture – reinforce a culture of performance improvement, high reliability and accountability.
2. Align employee goals with organizational goals - in order employees to see how their day-to-day work impacts to the organizational success.
3. Take a skills inventory – it means to identify of the skills and expertise that organization have, need and how to fill the gaps.
4. Drive improved employee performance – use talent management tools to provide a snapshot of individuals and departments.
5. Save time and money, and increase productivity.

4. Methodology and hypotheses

This paper aims to analyse the processes and practices of the talent management in organizations operating in the Slovak healthcare environment focusing on area of talent identification, staffing and succession planning. Selected talent management practices were analysed:

- in terms of the size of organization (1 - small, 2 - medium size and 3 - big)
- in terms of the type of ownership (1 - publicly owned/state/government, 2 - privately owned (for-profit), 3 - mixed and 4 - other)

When testing hypotheses correlation analysis detecting statistical relationship between two variables using statistical software STATISTICA 12 has been used.

Research sample consists of 154 employees working in different healthcare organizations (hospitals, clinics, laboratories, etc.) in Slovakia. In addition to the first four identification items (focused on type of organization - in terms of size, form of ownership and legal form and on the respondent position/function) all questions were closed in the form of statements using Likert scale on which respondents indicated the level of agreement or disagreement (from 1 - strongly agree to 5 - strongly disagree) on a five-point response scale.

The following questionnaire questions / items were evaluated in the analysis:

1. My organization places the right people in the right jobs (key positions in my organization occupy people with the right competences)
2. My organization has created so-called talent pool e.g. it has identified a certain group of employees, which are thought to have the potential to prepare for the holding of the key (or higher) position.
3. My organization has implemented succession planning, i.e. it has designated successors for key positions throughout the entire organization (at all levels and various departments).
4. In my organization there are correctly specified the kinds of skilled professionals needed.

Following hypotheses were formulated:

The first hypothesis tested whether there is linear relationship exists between the size of the organisation and selected talent management processes, where:

- H_0 : There is no linear relationship between the between the size of the organisation and selected talent management processes, i.e. talent management processes in the organization are related to the size of the organisation.
- H_1 : There is linear relationship between the between the size of the organisation and selected talent management processes

The second hypothesis tested whether there is linear relationship exists between the organisation's type of the ownership and selected talent management processes, where:

- H_0 : There is no linear relationship between the between the organisation's type of the ownership and selected talent management processes, i.e. talent management processes in the organization are related to the type of the ownership.
- H_1 : There is linear relationship between the between the organisation's type of the ownership and selected talent management processes

5. Research findings and conclusions

The first examined area is talent identification/specification. We examined which characteristics/abilities/features should have the "talent" within the specific healthcare conditions by asking respondents from a

predefined list of characteristics to choose five the most important characteristics. The following table shows the results.

Table 1 Characteristics/qualities of “talent” in healthcare context

Rank	Characteristic/feature
1.	ability to communicate and work in a team
2.	high professionalism, qualification
3.	leadership (ability to lead, guide and motivate a team to achieve targets set)
4.	creativity and the ability to create/generate innovation
5.	excellent performance and results
6.	high work morale
7.	willingness to go beyond the assigned tasks and responsibilities
8.	potential for growth and development
9.	hard work
10.	dedication and devotion to work (commitment)
11.	focus on customer/client/patient
12.	high motivation

The most important characteristics of talent are: (1) ability to communicate and work in a team; (2) high professionalism, qualification; (3) leadership (ability to lead, guide and motivate a team to achieve targets set); (4) creativity and the ability to create/generate innovation; (5) excellent performance and results. Surprisingly, focus on customer/client/patient was placed on the penultimate place. On the other hand, creativity and ability innovate as the fourth most important characteristic may be also considered surprising.

The second part of our analysis is devoted to the staffing, succession planning and existence of talent pool. The results show the Table 2.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Std. deviation
Right people in the right jobs	151	2,768212	1,000000	5,000000	1,116206
Existence of talent pool	152	3,493421	1,000000	5,000000	0,989994
Implementation of succession planning	151	3,463576	1,000000	5,000000	1,044189
Correct specification of the kinds of skilled professionals needed	152	2,796053	1,000000	5,000000	1,081689

In the question regarding the occupation of the key positions by people with the right competences 28% of respondents agreed with the statement (the % represents the sum of responses “strongly agree” and “agree”), 19% chose a neutral response and 52% did not agree (where 33% disagree and 19% strongly disagree) with the statement.

In the next question we investigated the existence talent pool (certain group of employees, which are thought to have the potential to prepare for the holding of the key (or higher) position) in healthcare

organisations. Only 20% of respondents confirmed the existence of the talent pool in their organizations, in contrast to the 57% of respondents disagreeing with the statement.

Similarly, in the area of succession planning, the results were unfavourable because only 34% of respondents indicate that their organisations have designated successors for key positions throughout the organization (at all levels and various departments). 16% of respondents chose a neutral response and 59% chose a discordant answer.

In the item/statement “In my organization there are correctly specified the kinds of skilled professionals needed” only 24% of respondents marked positive answer (agreement) and up to 62% disagreed with the statement.

The following section presents the results of testing hypotheses. The results of correlation analysis shows table 3.

Table 3 Correlation analysis

Variable X & variable Y	Correlation Selected correlations are significant at the $p < ,05000$						
	Mean	St. Dev.	r(X,Y)	r ²	t	p	N
Size	2,527397	0,676657					
Right people in the right jobs	2,732877	1,109775	0,244003	0,059537	3,01930	0,002998	146
Size	2,527397	0,676657					
Existence of talent pool	3,465753	0,990746	0,207155	0,042913	2,54098	0,012113	146
Size	2,527397	0,676657					
Implementation of succession planning	3,431507	1,036623	0,204250	0,041718	2,50378	0,013403	146
Size	2,527397	0,676657					
Correct specification of the kinds of skilled professionals needed	2,760274	1,084720	0,117065	0,013704	1,41450	0,159374	146
Ownership	1,472603	0,806826					
Right people in the right jobs	2,732877	1,109775	-0,250850	0,062926	-3,10963	0,002258	146
Ownership	1,472603	0,806826					
Existence of talent pool	3,465753	0,990746	-0,225499	0,050850	-2,77753	0,006207	146
Ownership	1,472603	0,806826					
Implementation of succession planning	3,431507	1,036623	-0,130069	0,016918	-1,57420	0,117637	146
Ownership	1,472603	0,806826					
Correct specification of the kinds of skilled professionals needed	2,760274	1,084720	-0,240021	0,057610	-2,96698	0,003522	146

Correlation analysis was used to measure the relationship between the size and selected talent management practices/processes. The correlation analysis revealed relationship between the size of the organisation and three processes: (1) occupation of the key positions by people with the right competences, (2) existence of

talent pool and (3) implementation of succession planning. A low correlation coefficient ($r = 0.117$) suggests that the relationship between the size and correct specification of the kinds of skilled professionals needed is weak. Since the p value less than 0.05 (in three of the four dependent variables) we can reject the null hypothesis.

The second hypothesis tested linear association between the organisation's type of the ownership and selected talent management processes. The correlation analysis revealed linear relationship between type of the ownership and (1) occupation of the key positions by people with the right competences, (2) existence of talent pool and (3) correct specification of the kinds of skilled professionals needed. A low correlation coefficient ($r = 0.13$) suggests that implementation of succession planning is not associated with organization's type of the ownership. Based on the analysis we can reject the null hypothesis

Conclusion

The survey results showed that the key positions in many organization do not occupy people with the right competences. This problem may lie in improper or no identification of talents. In this context, we propose to pay adequate attention to the identification of talent. Regarding the identification of talents is important to explicitly define the organizational "talent". The next step is important to ascertain which employees meet the defined criteria using a variety of assessment tools such as 360° feedback.

Despite the growing popularity of talent management, talent pools are still not commonly used tool in Slovak organizations. As research has shown, the situation is not ideal neither in the "healthcare" field. We therefore underline the need to develop internal talent pools - a database of employees who are selected to be available for a certain type of work and who would, if necessary, be able to immediately fill the accrued gaps (positions).

Regarding the implementation of the succession planning process in organizations, our survey showed that only just over one third organizations have implemented these processes. This together with the demographic decline, aging of the workforce and related retirement of key employees and top professionals raises the need for intensive building of succession strategies and implementing succession planning. In this process an important role plays a human resource departments that should identify gaps, and set development plans for selected successors.

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