

# Talent - the New Managerial Resource in Education

Alina Angela MANOLESCU<sup>1</sup>

Doina DĂNĂIAȚĂ<sup>2</sup>

Valentin MUNTEANU<sup>3</sup>

Alexandru GAVRILĂ<sup>4</sup>

## **Abstract**

*In today's economic environment, where changes are accelerating, organizations have begun to notice that a key factor in their success, which allows them to make a difference, is to maintain competent employees and train them according to the company's strategic objectives. Attracting talent, maintaining and motivating them through training and development programs, bring an advantage to organizations. Educational institutions must pursue opportunities and avoid threats to the current turbulent environment. Recurring legislative changes imply an increase in the flexibility of the educational organization to change. In this context, the educational institution has the predominant role to respond to these changes, but when we talk about the aspect of organizational efficiency, it must also be a promoter of innovative policies.*

**Keywords:** talent management, education, competences, globalization, human resources

**JEL classification:** I20, M12

**DOI:** 10.24818/RMCI.2020.4.447

## **1. Introduction**

Human capital is considered to be the engine of successful organizations. However, few educational institutions have established a formal program to support existing talent. Montez et al. (2003) confirm the lack of research in the field of talent management in educational institutions, while Blokdyk (2020) considers this field as unexplored, stating that higher education institutions have always been slower in adopting corporate managerial processes.

Recruitment and selection practices are less procedural and less diversified than 20 years ago, while increasing the number of candidates. The change is due to market developments, the technological process and the new generation of the workforce.

The school, in the sense of educational system, provides the context for access to information and implicitly the conditions for the discovery and development of

---

<sup>1</sup> Alina Angela Manolescu, West University of Timisoara, Romania, a.a.manolescu@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Doina Dănăiață, West University of Timisoara, Romania, doina.danaiata@e-uvt.ro

<sup>3</sup> Valentin Munteanu, West University of Timisoara, Romania, valentin.munteanu@e-uvt.ro

<sup>4</sup> Alexandru Gavrilă, Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania, galex@ase.ro

talent components. This is where the basic training takes place. It is necessary to achieve a disjunction during the period of life in which the actions of identification, development, recruitment, selection and integration of talents take place. It becomes obvious that Talents that possess innate qualities may be under the action of an educational system that favors their development, or inhibits it. The role of school is becoming more and more important in contemporary society because the goal is no longer the accumulation of information (computers are much better at this) but the development of skills to support man in competition with artificial intelligence. Which means that an adaptation of the educational system and an adaptation of the human resource within this system is needed. Due to the specifics of the work of education, those who educate must be Talents themselves.

## **2. Talent – conceptual differences, terminology and typology**

There are many definitions of talent in the literature. The approaches in this regard are specific to the field to which the researchers belong. Thus, there are differences between the approach to studies by psychologists and management specialists (including human resources management and leadership).

The former treat talent through the prism of origin (it is born or acquired) and identify those components that are related to human psychology, quantify them and characterize them in social action. The research is general and exhaustive, at the level of the whole society and up to the level of social groups. At the intersection with the economic sciences, work psychology appeared.

Management specialists are interested in making the work of psychologists fruitful by adapting their research in the work process, with everything that has developed as an applied science in the managerial field (human resources management). They are therefore interested in identifying the specific talents most suitable for the activity that the manager leads, or in particular those necessary for a successful manager. The talent-performance relationship will be treated in a next chapter. In modern organizations it is very important to invest in people development and this is more and more associated with a corporate social responsibility (Cristache, Năstase, Petrariu, Florescu, 2019) that finally is going to lead to higher performances. Developing talents should be a strategic approach not only for private sector, but also for public one as the quality of services delivered to the public highly depends to the professionalism of the human resources (Vrabie, et al. 2019).

What is common to most definitions is that talent is not acquired, but born. Who has talent for something, is distinguished from the average, by several characteristics that differentiate it from the rest of the group, with outstanding results in that field (Gennari & Ciaccia, 2020). There are countless controversies on this topic, just born and / or acquired. A critique of some definitions of talent is that those components of talent that cause a person to excel in a particular field can be learned, even if some people have these innate qualities. There are many authors who define talent as the sum of components that determine a person to excel in a particular field, components that can be learned, even if some people have these innate qualities.

In general, the definitions of talent focus on the aptitude aspect, so it is defined as the combination of skills in a particular field with a strong sustained activity, giving a special ability to perform a creative activity in different fields.

We have identified two important groups of definitions: the first emphasizes that the use of new technologies causes employees to constantly update their skills, the second is based on concepts already existing in resource management.

In order to identify and then measure the talent, it must be analysed contextually to the field to which it belongs, being specific to the respective situations. Each talent is relevant to a particular situation or role and each role has an appropriate talent. Thus, a teacher with above average teacher performance is not necessarily a good manager.

The most recent studies in the field show how, from the components that underlie the development of talent, three elements are born (Covey, 2006):

1. the power / ability to choose and decide;
2. universal principles;
3. the four fundamental intelligences:
  - a. logical-mathematical (mental) – IQ;
  - b. physics – PQ;
  - c. emotional – EQ;
  - d. spiritual – SQ.

Regarding the definition of talent at the managerial level, there is no universal definition of talent that is valid for all organizations. There is talent if it gives the organization a competitive advantage. It consists of skills, competencies and commitment that together lead to the long-term success of the organization.

Some authors consider that talent in performing a task is by definition somewhat rare, because if all employees were considered talented, they would lose their exceptional. In contrast, we agree with the authors who, on the contrary, argue that each person has a predominant talent, which, if known to that person, can be developed to reach their full potential. Its characteristics are: competitive advantage, the fact that talents are rare and unique, respectively commitment and their attachment to the company.

### **3. Managing talent in organizations**

Within the organization, talent is understood in different ways. Interpretation differs, generating a specific way of reporting to the organization through talent:

- the ability of an individual and what a person is able to do, how he contributes to the organization (Collings et al. 2019);
- a person (Sternberg & Turnage, 2017);
- a group of employees who are exceptional in the field of skills, abilities, technical areas or skills (Hoffman et al., 2014).

Talent is the sum of specific competencies, resulting from specialized studies, together with the ability to learn above average (learning agility) and other elements (Botma, 2019) such as:

If we accept the idea that talent is a sum of specific competencies, then we must follow how they can be oriented to achieve the managerial objective:

- creativity – innovative ideas to identify and solve problems or create new things (depending on the ability to adapt, permanent change, orientation towards the new, strategic managerial style);

- emotional intelligence – uses their own emotions consciously to know the interlocutors (clients, partners) and to direct / orient them towards the achievement of the goal;

- leadership – knows how to lead and guide, train and motivate other people towards a common goal (possesses innate personality traits and skills and acquisition to train and orient a group towards achieving the goal, have a high motivation for power);

- action orientation – acts responsibly and consciously towards achieving the result, setting standards and procedural steps;

- communication – communicates and shares ideas, knows how to listen and be listened to, to impose authority by recognizing his competencies (professional authority);

- critical thinking – the ability to solve problems to find optimal solutions;

- customer orientation – is oriented on the relationship with the customer, actively listening and building a relationship of trust with him;

- interacts efficiently, charisma – relates well to others, creating an environment of trust and respect;

- teamwork – knows how to create efficient teams, work constructively, encourage, motivate and train, resolve conflicts and inspire enthusiasm.

To understand the evolution of the concept of talent, it is useful to mention Carole Tansley's 2011 work, "What do we mean by the term talent in talent management", which considers the historical, linguistic and organizational development of the concept. Etymologically, the word was first used by ancient peoples to indicate a unit of measure and then a monetary unit. In different historical epochs it entered the common language due to the parable of Matthew, the parable of the talents. From talent as treasure, wealth, mental and natural abilities, talent is reached as a form of intelligence, special aptitude or special ability to do something.

In other cultures, especially in Asia, the term has not an innate ability, but one gained in years of experience (Tansley, 2011).

Thus a variety of authors consider talent as the fruit of distinct characteristics, but which taken together give a complete explanation of the concept. Joubert says that a talented person has the ability to inspire others and convey emotions. He claims that this talent is perceived emotionally. These four elements are:

1. power, influence, ability to get results;

2. interest, passion;

3. intelligence, mental and physical learning ability, performance, competitive skills;
4. virtue, moral excellence and integrity.

Jouber also identified eight characteristics that reflect valuable people:

1. passion for learning;
2. response to patterns of influence;
3. desire to assert, achieve;
4. ambition;
5. anticonformism;
6. self-sufficiency, tendency to loneliness;
7. physical vulnerability;
8. personal branding.

Instead, Glen believes that talent is produced by skills (knowledge, education, experiences), motivation (involvement, satisfaction, attraction to challenges) and opportunities. Ulrich and Smallwood (2012) in “What is talent?” propose a formula for synthesizing the factors that define talent:

### **Talent = competence x involvement x contribution**

Most organizations consider that Talents must have a wide range of skills: leadership, results orientation and problem solving, autonomy, initiative, flexibility, ability to influence and persuade, teamwork, active contribution to achieving the organization's goals. Competent staff, but not involved, will certainly not achieve professional performance. Thus, these two elements (skills, involvement) are considered key elements in the definitions of talent.

However, next-generation definitions of talent show that these two elements are no longer enough. Competent and involved employees must leave a real contribution behind them in order to be considered Talents. It is important to emphasize that in this equation the elements are multiplied and not added, just to show that if one of the elements is missing, the other two are not enough.

From the studied literature therefore results an agreement in identifying Talent as a person with exceptional abilities, who exceed the average of other employees in terms of performance, person with skills, knowledge and qualities that allow them to create value for the organization and is suitable to meet Successful tasks or occupy key positions. Developing important competencies for future success depend to a large extent on the quality of education, but also but building strong values for different categories of trainees (Raducan, et alt. 2020).

However, these definitions are related to the extended notion of talent, so it is necessary to go deep and focus on the vision of talent from a strictly organizational point of view.

The analysis of the literature shows that various terminologies have been used to indicate valuable persons who are already inserted or who need to be inserted in the labour market. The most common expressions are talent, high potential, high flyer, super keeper, etc.

#### 4. The strategic importance of talent management in educational institutions

In the education system, being about the provision (production and sale) of a service, the notion of “customers” is confused with that of essential “product” being the result: quality services. The object of this paper is not to evaluate the quality of educational services in the sense of out-put on the labor market. We are only interested in the way in which the competent human resource enters the recruitment-selection process and is hired, because it is or can become a Talent. During this course there is a differentiation between the public and private environment; the latter being much more flexible and with greater availability to adapt to the quality elements of educational services and more interested in ensuring an optimal management of Talents.

Internships within the human resources department in general, not just in the education system, must be adapted to the organization's strategy. Considering TALENT as an important element for competitive advantage in educational systems (see Figure 1), in this paper we will refer to the specific practices of human resources management in the conditions of different organizational strategies, that are based on competitive advantage: dominance through quality, domination through innovation, domination through cost minimization.



**Figure 1. Elements of managerial strategy in educational systems**  
(adaptation from Blokdyk, 2020, p. 32)

We consider it opportune to focus only on the first two in this paper: domination through quality and domination through innovation.

a) Top managers of educational institutions who must approach a clearly defined direction towards broad participation, a general orientation towards performance in ensuring the conditions of expression at all levels. In the foreground, both in terms of predominantly physical activities but especially for those with a high share of creative work, intellectuals being necessary to appear the expression of desire

to improve, to develop, both formally and informally a culture based on performance. Modern educational institutions should provide in the organizational structure, in addition to the human resources department, a “Talents laboratory”, which like “quality circles” to pursue the progress-performance relationship through their optimal management.

b) In order to approach the strategy of domination through innovation, it is necessary for managers to reduce the number of hierarchical levels, to streamline the flow of information between departments, even if this may mean rethinking the organizational structure. The manifestation of authority must be rightly dimensioned in such a way that employees must feel that they are not subordinate collaborators. If the “losses” recorded at the level of the manager's pride compensate by gains at the level of the organization's out-put, the advantages will be clear. Of course, for this, managers who think of strategies and ways to implement them through appropriate policies must take into account the managerial style of those at the medium and operational level. It is another situation in which the importance of identifying Talents in managers is obvious. In private educational institutions there is no restriction (political in nature, etc.) in front of the owner to be able to select talented school managers, with the right skills for the job, with the most appropriate leadership style and to use all means to maintain.

Moreover it is auspicious to have:

- at the level of the organizational structure – rethinking the positions in order to be able to organize according to the principles of versatility, in order to be able to formally form working groups,
- at the level of the human resources department – reconsideration of the selection process according to a main criterion: identification of Talents;
- rethinking the processes of motivation and reward in order to be able to adapt the rewards to the individual motivational factors and the inclusion in the list of rewards of the public recognition of creativity, of initiatives clearly oriented towards the achievement of objectives.

Talent management, including the processes of recruitment, training, development and management of human resources that have a key role in organizational success, is becoming an increasingly important need in today's economic environment, attracting talent is becoming increasingly difficult in contemporary society, under the alert flow of computerization, of human competition with artificial intelligence, so that new managerial strategies are required to develop, in the long run, the existing talents in the organization.

A recent study by SHL (2018) presented the results of an online survey, completed by 481 human resources professionals globally, which showed that “organizations that will be successful regardless of the dynamics of economic conditions are those that have an employee-focused culture, as this culture also becomes visible among customers”. Understanding the value of talent and accepting it as a strategic resource at the managerial level is the first step that the organization can take to develop a culture focused on human capital of the company.

What distinguishes an educational institution from competition is the advantage it has in terms of labor force. Organizations should consider their employees, at all levels, as critical factors in the future of the organization. Thus, a major concern at the managerial and human resources level should be the identification of talents in the organization, respectively their motivation and training to reach the maximum development of the potential according to the needs of the institution (Botma, 2019).

Hay Group (2018) conducted a global study to identify trends with an impact on talent management in the future. The six trends that emerge in this study are: globalization; changes in the environment and lack of resources; demographic change and the “war for talent”; pluralism of values; digitalization of lifestyle; state-of-the-art technology.

The global economic crisis has exacerbated the situation of lack of talent through processes such as unemployment, cost reductions in companies, higher risks that candidates take. One principle that has been demonstrated in economic history is that organizations and countries that have managed their talents effectively have been the first to recover from a financial crisis.

This “talent war” leads to the emergence of companies' strategies for implementing talent management to reduce or eliminate the disadvantages that occur when key people leave the organization. The global economic crisis and the prioritization of cost efficiency have made it easier to transfer know-how globally, and organizational systems are changing. To cope with all these changes requires a solid pool of leaders and they develop through effective talent management programs.

At the same time, talent is gaining increasing mobility – thanks to the internet and globalization, the whole world has become a large recruitment market. In this new approach, the planning of resources in the organization is implicitly translated by creating a pool of talents, together with the implementation of succession programs in management, through processes such as:

- performance measurement and talent identification programs;
- internal coaching and feedback systems;
- ways to evaluate talents through continuous feedback;
- tools for identifying talents in the organization according to performance and potential;
- mentoring and coaching programs for the development of talent skills.

There are several lines of study in talent management: managerial functions applied to human resources understood as carriers of talent, the amount and level being an individual, particular dimension.

There are several valuable research methods recently undertaken in the field of talent management. A first category focuses on defining talent, the nature and essence of talent management. It can be conceptualized as "naturalness, mastery, commitment, and job matching, innate, or acquired skills, knowledge and attitudes of employees that lead to outstanding results" (Ingram & Gold, 2016, p. 342). A second category focuses on the management of these talents.



In a study we conducted in three private schools with different educational systems (United Kingdom, Italy and Romania) during 2015-2019, we analysed the main challenges that schools encounter in talent management. Table 1 shows the responses of 59 respondents with managerial positions in the three schools cited (where A, B, and C are the schools in United Kingdom, Italy and Romania, in this order).

Considering that the particularities of each organizational culture identified in the three institutions from different countries, with different managerial styles, are unchanged variables during the process, after processing the data we found the following: “competition” is a key factor for all three schools; “legislative changes” is a factor mainly felt by school C - Romania (91.67%) and less by the other two institutions. Difficulties in recruiting and identifying talent are considered important for all three institutions, especially in schools A – United Kingdom and C – Romania (91.67%). Motivating employees who are not recognized as talented, to develop their strengths, is a factor felt mainly in school A – United Kingdom (91.67%), while schools B and C do not consider it such an important factor.

**Table 1. Challenges in managing talents in three schools of UK, Italy and Romania**

Challenges in managing talents in schools	Percent of respondents (%)			Percent of respondents MEAN (%)
	A	B	C	
Competition	75,00	91,67	83,34	83,30
Legislative changes	33,30	83,34	91,67	69,40
Recruitment difficulties	66,70	58,3	91,67	72,20
Identifying talents	91,67	83,34	91,67	88,90
Engaging employees	91,67	83,34	91,67	88,90
Identifying the right position of talents in organisation	91,67	91,67	91,67	91,67
Identifying an evaluation system of employees considering talent as a main criteria	91,67	66,70	75,00	77,80
Motivation of employees that are not identified as talents, in order to develop their qualities	91,67	25,00	58,30	58,30

The factors that have the highest percentages — in all three schools — recorded a maximum percentage: “competition”, respectively “talent identification”, which confirms the need of schools for solutions in this area.

The growing interest in talent management results from numerous studies, in which several interesting approaches can be identified. In particular, according to Ingram and Gold (2016, p. 343), “four main perspectives in talent management predominate in the literature”, as follows:

The first focuses on “sets of practices and functions strongly related to human resource management” and the researchers try to “differentiate the set of talent management practices by emphasizing future orientation, nature and relationship with strategic objectives”.

The second perspective focuses on “the perception of talent management as a sum of activities, part of human resource management in which the valuable skills of talented employees are put into practice”. Researchers in this category emphasize that “talent management is addressed to the group of elite employees”, so organizations are as strong as the best talent is competent.

The third approach emphasizes “the role of employee flow within the organization” and addresses internal talent groups and succession planning. According to this approach, talents appear as strategic resources, part of strategic management.

The fourth perspective focuses on identifying key positions in the organization rather than on finding talent. Identifying the compatibility between the tasks in the job description and the nature of the talents / competencies of the employees who will occupy or occupy that position is in this approach, the most important function of human resources management, aiming at integration (Tansley, 2011).

Despite numerous researches on this topic, so far, “little attention has been paid to talent management in public or public interest organizations” (Ingram & Gold, 2016; Hoffman et al., 2014), such as educational institutions. In this paper we try to fill this gap by presenting the results of the study conducted in this type of organizations, more precisely in three private educational institutions of public interest.

## 5. Conclusions

Based on these directions, we can draw some conclusions. First of all, talent management is a contouring discipline, in which there are still contradictory terms and theories, and managers are responsible for dealing with them. Second, “talent management requires consistency and an effective set of organizational solutions” (Collings et al., 2019, p. 50).

Talent management is essential in education because education managers can really benefit from what talent management can give to the organization. Innovative higher education institutions analyze the value of talent development as an effective process for the transition of power and authority. Most strategic plans and the mission of human resources departments in education see employees as key elements in maintaining academic success. The most effective policies in the field of talent selection increase the productivity of employees, which in turn determines the increase of organizational performance. However, the practice of talent management is very little present in educational institutions.

## References

1. Blokdyk, G. (2020). *Talent management systems. A complete guide*, Brisbane: Emereo Publishing.
2. Botma, G. (2019). *The problem isn't their paycheck. How to attract top talent and build a thriving company culture*, Kindle edition.
3. Collings, D., Scullion, H., Caligiuri, P. (2019). *Global talent management, second edition*, London: Routledge.

4. Cristache, N., Năstase, M., Petrariu, R. and Florescu, M., (2019). *Analiza efectelor forțelor de congruență asociate implementării unui cod de responsabilitate socială asupra sustenabilității firmelor din domeniul bioeconomiei*. *Amfiteatru Economic*, 21(52), pp. 536-553
5. Gennari, V., Ciaccia, D. (2020). *Chief Happiness Officer. Il futuro e delle organizzazioni positive*, Milano: Mondatori.
6. Hay Group (2018). *Annual report 2015*, available online [www.haysplc.com/investors/annual-report-2018](http://www.haysplc.com/investors/annual-report-2018)
7. Hoffman, R., Casnocha, B., Yeh, C. (2014). The alliance: managing talent in the networked age, *Harvard Business Review Press*, December 12.
8. Ingram, T., Glod, W. (2016). Talent Management in Healthcare Organizations – Qualitative Research Results, *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 39, 339-346
9. Montez, J.M., Wolverson, M.; Gmelch, W (2003). The roles and challenges of deans, *Review of Higher Education*, 26(2), 241-250
10. Raducan, M., Vrabie, T., Colan, A., Colan, G., Cristache, N.; Cristia, V., (2020) *The Influence of Management Style and Socio-Cultural Factors on the Education System in the European Union Countries*, *Annals of the University Dunarea de Jos of Galati: Fascicle: I, Economics & Applied Informatics*, Vol. 26 Issue 1, pp. 115-120.
11. Sternberg, L., Turnage, K. (2017). *Managing to make a difference: how to engage, retain and develop talent for maximum performance*, Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley & Sons.
12. Tansley, C. (2011). What do we mean by the term talent in talent management?, *Industrial and Commercial Training Review*, 43(5), 266-274.
13. Ulrich D., Smallwood N. (2011). *What is talent?*, *Leader to leader review*, University of Pittsburg.
14. Vrabie, T., Colan, A., Colan, G., Raducan, M., (2019). *Quality management in public institutions: meaning and implications*, *Proceedings of the International Management Conference*, Faculty of Management, Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania, vol. 13(1), pages 179-186