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Competency Characteristics of the Innovative Talent Leader

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Walden University

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Walden University

2020

Abstract

Competency Characteristics of the Innovative Talent Leader

by

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MA, University of Liverpool, 2014

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

Walden University

May 2020

Abstract

In today's volatile global market, outdated HR practices continue to cause the loss of value-driven talent. Scholars have noted a gap in the literature regarding how to create an innovative talent leadership role that is linked to meeting macrolevel outcomes and competitive advantage, rather than just passively reciprocating to micro and mesolevel business needs. The research problem addressed was that corporate executives have sparse information on the needed competency characteristics for an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage. The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to describe talent management experts' views on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader. Semistructured interviews with a purposeful sample of 10 participants, journaling field notes, and archival data served as data sources to understand talent management experts' views of competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader. Identifiable themes emerged through thematic analysis of the textual data and cross-case synthesis analysis. A total of 6 conceptual categories, including 16 themes, were identified. The conceptual categories were: managing macrolevel, mesolevel, and governance issues, creating value through macrotalent management, supporting organizational competitive advantage, and the future of the innovative talent leader role. The outcome of this study may drive positive social change by providing executives a better understanding of how to reshape talent management leadership roles within organizations to better support sustainability goal agendas.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my parents, Thérèse and Robert Mosca, who have taught me strength, perseverance, and resilience while allowing me to believe in myself. Special thought and dedication to my father who passed away in August 2019, there has not been a day that I don't think about my dad, always in my heart. Without the presence and support of my parents throughout my life, I could never have achieved this dream. I wholeheartedly thank you, Maman et Papa, and will forever be grateful for your unconditional love, patience, and support.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Talent acquisition professionals, an integral part of human resource (HR) management departments, are now being challenged by business leaders to think differently about the recruitment, selection, and retention of workers adding value to today's global organization (Sparrow, 2020). Once the employee is on board, a talent manager should be the organizational architect who creates the interface between the physical environment, talent value, and technology to produce a sustainable talent value supply chain (Makarius & Srinivasan, 2017). To sustain competitive advantage, corporate HR departments necessitate transformation in job roles to train value-driven talent that is rare enabling an organization to implement value-creating strategies and achieve a sustained competitive advantage (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Scholars recommended that a more in-depth study is needed on processes to support the long-term retention of value-driven talent, a critical challenge for today's corporate executives in maintaining competitive advantage (Cascio & Aguinis, 2018; King & Vaiman, 2019).

Scholarly and practice researchers recommended that before making structural changes to HR functions to address volatile market needs, corporate leadership must disrupt the HR sector by developing new roles within the talent value supply chain that aim at retaining talented employees, thereby contributing to positive organizational outcomes (Claus, 2019). The scarcity of applied knowledge in talent management calls for new thinking in conceptualizing a new role on the talent value chain that may become a brokering position within an organization to increase the long-term value of acquired talent (Makram, Sparrow, & Greasley, 2017; Sparrow & Makram, 2015). In the face of a global upheaval in the nature of work and

employment, talent management scholars agreed that, in order to disrupt the traditional human resources industry, the competency characteristics of an innovative talent manager position, one removed from the HR office, need to be considered among corporate executives in order to connect value-driven talent to competitive advantage (Claus, 2019; dos Santos & Pedro, 2020; Harsch & Festing, 2020).

Chapter 1 includes the introduction and background of the study, as well as the problem statement, purpose of the study, research question, conceptual framework, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, significance, and summary of the chapter.

Background of the Study

HR is evolving and brings value to organizations in a continually changing environment (Adamsen & Swailes, 2019; Ulrich, 2016). Ulrich (2016) suggested that understanding the meaning of HR and associated competencies are increasingly critical in developing and implementing effective HR practices. For optimized HR strategy results, and taking account of all stakeholders' interests, new HR models have emerged in the past 20 years based on Ulrich's (1997) work on the development of the human resources business partner model (HRBPM). While underscoring the benefits that organizations might reap from the HRBPM, researchers raised some challenges associated with the development of such models (Cooper, 2015; Gerpott, 2015). Gerpott (2015) and Marchington (2015) stressed the challenge facing organizations in understanding and implementing a model that aligns with their needs. External and internal environmental factors may impact this alignment (Geimer, Allen, & Zolner, 2017; Nadiv, Raz, & Kuna, 2017). McCracken, O'Kane, Brown, and McCrory (2017) underscored the difficulty of sustainable implementation of the

HRBPM. Given the drawbacks related to the model and the challenges associated with talent management, there is a need for a new concept for the HR function.

The structure of a human resources department can have a significant impact on whether or not it adds value and performs the roles that a business needs to continue to sustain competitive advantage (Cooper, 2015; Ganaie & Haque, 2017). While Ulrich's (1997) model still dominates much of the discussion around HR developing as a professional sector and delivering value-adding services through a role closely aligned to the business, the so-called "HR business partner," the design of his original model of shared services and HR business partners is best suited to large matrix organizations (Cooper, 2015). With Ulrich's model receiving much criticism in recent years, a surveyed sample of HR practitioners indicated moving away from Ulrich's (1997) model toward a more diversified HR team model including generalists, specialists, and managers (Cooper, 2015). The broader goal of a more diversified HR team model is to drive both competitive advantage and add value to organizations of various sizes through talent management (Claus, 2019).

The pursuit of value creation requires a new perspective on HR. A shift in paradigm is vital to face the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Claus, 2019). Amid the evolution of HR, which is characterized by the use of bundles of HR practices, the importance of talent management gives new impetus to the HR field (Glaister, Karacay, Demirbag, & Tatoglu, 2018). The practical implementation of talent management practices outweighs the shortfall of current HR practices, allowing for greater alignment with strategic objectives (Glaister et al., 2018). HR practices that organizations currently use fail to yield results (Whysall, Owtram, & Brittain, 2019). Talent management calls for a different mode of thinking toward human

resources, transitioning from the concept of human capital to that of people (Pandita & Ray, 2018). An organization's best assets remind leaders of the need to reach their objectives while also allowing stakeholders to meet their needs (Glaister et al., 2018).

Several popular media business bloggers, associated with such websites as HR.com, Loftus Bradford Blog, and McKinsey Quarterly, have called for innovation in talent management job descriptions to meet today's organizational needs (Bafaro, Ellsworth, & Gandhi, 2017; Carcel Ribes, 2017; Charan, Barton, & Carey, 2018). The competency characteristics for such a talent management position have yet to be theoretically introduced or conceptually developed within the talent management body of knowledge or scholarly literature (Harsch & Festing, 2020). New thinking in HR and talents to take in all stakeholders, including employees and customers, would materialize through the development of an innovative talent management architecture (Claus, 2019).

Problem Statement

New market realities marked by globalization, new technologies, and high global talent turnover and shortages compel organization leaders to revisit their HR approaches in order to sustain competitive advantage (Obedgiu, 2017; Sparrow, 2020). Since the 2008 financial crisis, the global business environment has become more difficult to forecast, and traditional internal labor markets have begun to disintegrate. A key challenge in the business sector today is whether traditional HR functions can effectively add value to support competitive advantage over competitors (Makram et al., 2017; Zehir, Karaboğa, & Başar, 2020). The inability of traditional HR functions to account for uncertainty in demand and disruptions in the talent supply chain has led many organizations toward poor financial performance

(Makarius & Srinivasan, 2017). The social problem is that corporate executives struggling to maintain a competitive advantage in today's volatile global market continue to lose value-driven talent to competitors due to outdated HR practices (King & Vaiman, 2019; Rotolo et al., 2018; Sparrow & Makram, 2015).

Given the shifting nature of work with ongoing labor market changes, the human resources sector may need a new job role within their talent acquisition team, one that supports competitive advantage through the long-term retention of value-driven talent (dos Santos & Pedro, 2020; Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen, & Scullion, 2019). Through innovative job design, job competencies for modernized talent leadership roles can be developed to add value to today's organization by addressing the issues of technology, dynamic capability, culture, governance, process, emotional intelligence, and strategy in the talent management process (Garavan, McCarthy, & Carbery, 2019; King & Vaiman, 2019). Scholars have noted a gap in the literature regarding how to create an innovative talent leadership role that is linked to meeting macrolevel outcomes and competitive advantage, rather than just passively reciprocating to micro and mesolevel business needs (Harsch & Festing, 2020; Sparrow, 2019; Wiblen & McDonnell, 2019). The specific management problem is that corporate executives have sparse information on the needed competency characteristics for an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage (Claus, 2019; dos Santos & Pedro, 2020; Sparrow, 2019).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to describe talent management experts' views on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent

leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage. To meet the purpose of the study and address this documented knowledge gap among corporate executives on the key competencies of an innovative talent leader, and consistent with the qualitative paradigm, I used a multiple case study design (Yin, 2017) to collect data from a purposeful sample of 10 talent management experts. I used semistructured interviews (see Yin, 2017), archival data, and reflective field notes (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) to support the credibility of the study's findings through data triangulation (see Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011; Yin, 2017).

Research Question

RQ: How do talent management experts describe the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-added talent to support organizational competitive advantage?

Conceptual Framework

This study was framed by two key conceptual models that focus on aligning with the purpose of the study, which was to describe talent management experts' views on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage: (a) Sparrow and Makram's (2015) four value-driven processes of a talent management architecture framework and (b) Schreuder and Noorman's (2019a) concept of strategic talent manager. Sparrow and Makram (2015) introduced "the notion of talent management architectures and four talent management philosophies and the different claims they make about the value of individual talent and talent management architectures" (p. 249). Schreuder and Noorman (2019a) discussed the

concept of a strategic talent manager who “leads the implementation of strategic talent management by way of corporate strategy, has a seat at the board table and participates in strategy discussions” (p. 3).

Four Value-Driven Processes of a Talent Management Architecture Framework

In developing the four value-driven processes of a talent management architecture framework, Sparrow and Makram (2015) relied upon a number of non-HR bodies of knowledge, such as value creation, the resource-based view (RBV) perspective of the firm, dynamic capabilities, and global knowledge management to understand the nature of value that might inform the design of any talent management system or architecture. Sparrow and Makram (2015) grounded their four value-driven processes of a talent management architecture framework in human capital theory and expectancy theory (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2006, 2007). The four value-driven processes, namely value creation, value capture, value leverage, and value protection of the first conceptual model (Sparrow & Makram, 2015) framing this study are briefly described below.

Value creation. Sparrow and Makram (2015) defined value creation as “the process through which an organization then bundles its talent resources with other resources to increase their dependency on the organization context, and hence weaken their bargaining power” (p. 250). To develop their conceptual framework, the authors questioned the definitional issue of value as seen through the theoretical lens of the RBV of the firm, where human capital resources are represented by the knowledge, skills, capabilities, intelligence, relationships, and experience of the firm's employees (Barney, 1991). The question was also raised as to why organizations still need to

protect their assets and resources from imitation if these assets and resources are valuable in the first place (Sparrow & Makram, 2015).

Value capture. Sparrow and Makram (2015) defined value capture as “the process through which an organization bundles its talent resources with other resources to increase their dependency on the organization context, and hence weaken their bargaining power” (p. 250). Another component of the authors’ value theory development, the concept of value capture, is grounded in coalitional game theory (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1995; Stirling, 2011). Sparrow and Makram (2015) argued that value is only captured through free form exchanges in which the value offered by one coalition partner can only be decoded and captured by another.

Value leverage (or amplification). Sparrow and Makram (2015) defined value leverage as “the process through which an organization develops and extends the captured capabilities of its talent resources to add new use-value” (p. 250). Through value leverage of an asset or resource, organizations aim to capitalize on their talents, for example, and ensure return on investments (Makram et al., 2017; Sparrow & Makram, 2015). The authors’ definition of value leverage is grounded in an RBV perspective, the process of combining individual skills with tacit organizational knowledge in ways that lead to novel and valuable outcomes or create greater human capital for customer service is a leveraging mechanism (Sirmon, Hitt, & Ireland, 2007).

Value protection (or preservation and retention). Sparrow and Makram (2015) defined value protection as “the process through which an organization develops isolating mechanisms to protect its talent resources from being lost to other competitors” (p. 250). Defined from an RBV perspective, the concept of value

protection originates from talent created by superior management skills. Superior management skills to be protected in valued employees include firm-specific skills in the form of developed knowledge and relationships with customers, suppliers, and critical employees, as well as a deep understanding of internal technologies (Castanias & Helfat, 2001).

Strategic Talent Manager

Differentiating the role of generic talent manager from that of strategic talent manager, the objective of the latter involves “translating the required strategic capabilities of an organization into positions that have a disproportionately large impact on realizing the strategy while also ensuring flexible, optimal staffing of such A-positions, enabling top talents to make the difference” (Schreuder & Noorman, 2019a, p. 1). Organizations develop and make their business strategy a central theme to reach their goals, and strategic talent managers should be a part of the strategic decision-making process to implement the business strategy (Tafti, Mahmoudsalehi, & Amiri, 2017). While corporate leaders aim to develop all employees’ talents to reach organizational goals, there is a call for distinguishing top talents to fill the pivotal positions and implement the business strategy. The linkage between management and talents, facilitated by strategic talent managers, allows for the implementation of the business strategy as well as the showcasing of the best talents (Schreuder & Noorman, 2019a).

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was qualitative in order for the methodology to align with the purpose of the study and provide data to answer the research question. The quantitative research design was not appropriate given that the purpose of this study

did not entail the testing of hypotheses and the analysis of variables (Garcia & Gluesing, 2013; Yilmaz, 2013). Given that the purpose of this study was to explore the views of management experts, a mixed-method research design was excluded due to the differences in ontological and epistemological perspectives (Heyvaert, Maes, & Onghena, 2013).

Given the study's purpose of achieving a deeper understanding of management experts' views on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is to retain value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage, I used an exploratory multiple case study (see Yin, 2017) to meet the study goals. The goal of qualitative research is to explore experiences from the viewpoint of people living within a specific context; this method is associated with the constructivist paradigm (Cooper & White, 2012). The qualitative research method is characterized by constructivism added to interpretivism, being that participants and researchers are allowed to interact socially to create new data (Harrison, Birks, Franklin, & Mills, 2017).

Among the main qualitative research designs, namely ethnography, grounded theory, case study, phenomenology, and narrative research, the multiple case study design provided the possibility of exploring the views of management experts in real-life contexts (see Harrison et al., 2017). The empirical nature of the case study design differentiates it from the narrative research design, which specifically aims at describing events and meanings without empirical evidence (McAlpine, 2016). With increasingly complex issues in the area of management, the qualitative, case study, and multiple case study designs allow researchers to go beyond the phenomenological feature of qualitative research to provide a contextual frame to the problem under

study (Runfola, Perna, Baraldi, & Gregori, 2017). In alluding to Stake's (1995, 2006) seminal work, Harrison et al. outlined the alignment between the qualitative case study design and the social constructionist and the interpretivist approaches. Compared to the single case study design, the multiple case study design allows for a deeper understanding of a research problem, thereby yielding higher replicability of the results and creating new theory (Ridder, 2017).

A multiple case study investigating a social phenomenon can involve individuals living within that specific social context as a separate unit of study (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2017). For this study, the unit of analysis was the talent management expert. I recruited participants for this multiple case study using purposeful criterion and snowball sampling strategies (Baxter & Jack, 2008) and screened with the following inclusion criteria: academics who (a) authored at least 5 peer-reviewed papers published in scientific journals and indexed on Google Scholar between 2010 and 2020 uncovered through a search using the terms *talent management*, *talent value chain*, *talent acquisition*, *talent analytics*, *talent supply chain management*, *talent value architecture*, *strategic talent management*, *value capture*, and *value-driven talent*; (b) have terminal degrees from accredited institutions; (c) have conducted extensive studies on management, talent management, and human resource management; and (d) possess deep knowledge regarding their experiences with the topic under study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

I conducted 10 in-depth, face-to-face individual interviews with the participants recruited for this study; the sample size was determined based on reaching saturation of the collected data. The three sources of data collected and utilized throughout this study were: (a) interviews conducted using a semistructured

interview protocol (Appendix B) with items that have been designed and standardized by previous researchers, (b) archival data in the form of labor and professional talent management reports (Yin, 2017), and (c) reflective field notes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). While qualitative research calls for small sample sizes to deepen the understanding of phenomena and experiences through in-depth interviews, the alignment of the research design with the philosophical paradigm contributes to data saturation and the transferability of results (Boddy, 2016).

In multiple case study research, Yin (2017) recommended the cross-case synthesis method as the most appropriate data analysis technique to explore the convergence and divergence of data between cases. Cross-case synthesis is more proficient than content analysis for extending theory using a multiple case study design because researchers must also compare cases rather than only analyzing individual cases embedded within a single case study to extend theory (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2017). I used methods to ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative study results and the transferability of findings in a multiple case study in this study and included prolonged engagement, observation, triangulation, transcript review, audit trail, reflexivity, and rich, thick descriptions (see Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013).

Definitions

Competitive advantage: This term refers to “a benefits strategy of companies that collaborate to create more competitive advantages in their markets” (Kurniasih, Reni, Istanti, Zuhroh, & Qomariah, 2019, p. 1154). A company sustains competitive advantage when the value created for customers outweighs the cost incurred to create that value (Kurniasih et al., 2019).

Disruption: This term refers to a process of continuous innovation that creates value within a market segment, organization, or industry and eventually creates new roles for managers in coordinating work and communicating (Christensen, McDonald, Altman, & Palmer, 2018).

Dynamic capability: This term refers to the ability of an organization to build upon, integrate, and renew internal and external competencies to address the challenges of the fast-changing environment (Yeow, Soh, & Hansen, 2018).

Job specifications: This term refers to the knowledge, skills, and abilities that are required to perform a job in an organization. Job specifications cover aspects such as work-experience, level of professional experience, communication skills, educational qualifications, specific qualities, and the physical, emotional, technical, and social skills required to help accomplish the goals related to the job (Cascio & Aguinis, 2018).

Competency characteristics: Competency characteristics are knowledge, behavioral skills, competency processing (IQ), personality traits, values, motives, and occasionally other perceptual capabilities. Competencies are a critical part of leading a talent management process (Elkeles, Phillips, & Phillips, 2016).

Macrolevel goals: This term refers to the goals that an organization aims to attain beyond the organizational level (King & Vaiman, 2019).

Microlevel goals: This term refers to the goals that an organization aims to attain at the organizational level (King & Vaiman, 2019).

Subject matter expert: This term in research refers to a scholar-practitioner who has expertise through the study and critical evaluation of a particular discipline or topic over a long period of time and after a great deal of immersion in the topic. A

subject matter expert has usually pursued advanced degrees in their area of specialization, maintains a rigorous program of scholarship in their field, and offers evidence-based ideas.

Strategic talent manager: This term refers to a corporate role leading the strategic capabilities of an organization to ensure flexible, optimal staffing of A-positions, and enabling top talents to add value for the organization and its customers (Schreuder & Noorman, 2019a).

Talent analytics: This term refers to the science and process of using HR raw data to make informed decisions and meet both shareholders' and stakeholders' needs (Claus, 2019).

Talent management: This term refers to “a holistic approach to optimizing human capital, which enables an organization to drive short- and long-term results by building culture, engagement, capability, and capacity through integrated talent acquisition, development, and deployment processes that are aligned to business goals.” (Adamsen, 2014, p. 5).

Talent supply chain management: This term refers to the full range of talent management activities, from the supply of skills to talent attraction, capability development, management development, talent mobility, career progression, and succession planning (Makarius & Srinivasan, 2017).

Talent value: This term refers to a process of assessing employees through a framework of competency, performance, and commitment to the organization (Pant & Venkateswaran, 2019).

Talent value architecture: This term refers to systems, processes, and practices within an organization to create value through talent management and reach and sustain the goal of competitive advantage (Sparrow & Makram, 2015).

Value-driven talent: This term refers to “the unique set of knowledge, capabilities, contributions, commitment, skills, competencies and abilities possessed by an organization's talent. Valuable, rare, imitable, and nonsubstitutable talent enables an organization to implement value-creating strategies and achieve a sustained competitive advantage” (Sparrow & Makram, 2015, p. 250).

Assumptions

The present study contains some assumptions. The first assumption concerned the use of the qualitative research method and its potential to yield rich data. With some disagreement between researchers regarding quantitative and qualitative researchers regarding the validity and reliability of qualitative data, there is still a predominance of quantitative as opposed to qualitative research studies in the field of management (Runfola et al., 2017). Qualitative research involves comprehending how individuals understand events and the meanings that individuals attribute to these events (Gaus, 2017). Making meaning of events results from social interactions between individuals with their interpretation of events (Daher, Carré, Jaramillo, Olivares, & Tomicic, 2017). In constant evolution, the field of management needs more attention to understand individuals' lived experiences and their interpretations of the world (Gaus, 2017).

My second assumption was the expertise of participants to yield rich data during the interview process. The extent to which academics can ensure the trustworthiness of the results of data collection and analysis depends on the inclusion

criteria. The interview process is an important aspect that contributed to the trustworthiness of the data collected and analyzed. Using an interview protocol, including various strategies such as field notes and transcript review translating into data triangulation, contributes to data saturation and trustworthiness (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2018). Alluding to expert and elite interviews, Bogner, Littig, and Menz (2018) stressed the power differential between interviewers and interviewees and the importance of defining the objective of the interview, whether informative or interpretive. Interpretative versus informative knowledge allows for inductive rather than deductive theory building (Bogner et al., 2018). In this study, the objective of the interviews was interpretive in order to explore the subject matter of talent management and create new knowledge around the role of innovative talent leaders.

My third assumption involved my own biases and the imperative to address these biases throughout the dissertation process. Given my work experience in HR, I intended to adopt a detached approach to the research, including the data collection and analysis, in order to remain as objective as possible during the entire research process. While the triangulation of strategies leads to a higher level of trustworthiness of the data collected and analyzed, novice researchers should become cognizant of the different data analysis methods in order to explain the discrepancies resulting from these different methods (Fusch et al., 2018). Enhanced knowledge of qualitative data analysis methods and triangulation substantiated the study results (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

Scope and Delimitations

Scholars have recommended that the scope of talent management research should extend beyond an individual and organizational analysis to incorporate the

macrolevel in order to fully comprehend the complexities of managing talent in today's globalized world, where organizations are not only competing with each other but where governments, organizations, and their societies have also joined the race to improve how they grow, nurture, and develop and retain talent (Sparrow et al., 2010; Ragazzi, 2014). As such, this study lies within the scope of macro talent management, which considers the study of factors such as the demographics, the economic, educational, social, political, and regional factors, and the policies, programs, and activities systematically developed by organizations to recruit and retain value-driven talent (Khilji & Schuler, 2017; King & Vaiman, 2019). The macro perspective of talent management broadens the scope of talent management beyond its current primarily micro (individual level) and meso (organizational level) focus and into a contingent role that supports organizational competitive advantage (Mora-Soto, Lemus-Olalde, & Carballo, 2016; Sparrow, 2019).

The scope and the delimitations represent the boundaries of a study (Tracy, 2019). The scope of this study lies within the business sector, specifically organization leaders facing the challenge of finding the right talents with the right skills (Tafti et al., 2017), and whether traditional HR functions can effectively add value to support a strong competitive advantage over competitors (Makram et al., 2017). There is a literature gap on how to create an innovative talent manager role linked to supporting organizational competitive advantage rather than just passively reciprocating to micro and mesolevel business needs (Sparrow, 2019). In a fast-moving environment, the creation of an innovative talent manager role would help organizations address the challenges of uncertainty in demand and disruptions in the talent supply chain to sustain competitive advantage (Makarius & Srinivasan, 2017).

This study may inform the HR field on a new job role based on innovative job design, job specifications, and competency characteristics for modernized talent leadership roles (Garavan et al., 2019; King & Vaiman, 2019).

The delimitations of this study follow the criteria of inclusion and exclusion of the study sample to serve the replication process (Yin, 2017). To enable the replication process to occur, the unit of analysis involved the selection of talent management experts. The talent management expert in this study was defined as a scholar-practitioner who has expertise in talent management through study and critical evaluation of particular discipline or topic over a long period of time and after a great deal of immersion in the topic. The subject matter of talent management in this study was defined as “a holistic approach to optimizing human capital, which enables an organization to drive short- and long-term results by building culture, engagement, capability, and capacity through integrated talent acquisition, development, and deployment processes that are aligned to business goals.” (Adamsen, 2014, p. 5) The definition of the talent management as a subject matter takes into account the macrolevel goals as opposed to the microlevel goals, which an organization aims to attain beyond the organizational level (King & Vaiman, 2019).

Participants for this multiple case study were recruited using purposeful criterion and snowball sampling strategies (Baxter & Jack, 2008) and screened with the following inclusion criteria: academics who (a) authored at least 5 peer-reviewed papers published in scientific journals and indexed on Google Scholar between 2010 and 2020 uncovered through a search under the terms *talent management*, *talent value chain*, *talent acquisition*, *talent analytics*, *talent supply chain management*, *talent value architecture*, *strategic talent management*, *value capture*, and *value-driven*

talent; (b) have terminal degrees from accredited institutions; (c) have conducted extensive studies on management, talent management, and human resource management; and (d) possess deep knowledge regarding their experiences with the topic of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Talent management experts were chosen so their expertise aligned with the criteria set forth in the concepts deriving from the four value-driven processes of a talent management architecture framework (Sparrow & Makram, 2015) and from the concept of a strategic talent manager (Schreuder & Noorman, 2019a).

Limitations

Limitations in a research study are the methodological constraints and influences over which the researcher has no control, which therefore can impact the trustworthiness of the overall study results (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The first limitation resided in adopting the most appropriate techniques throughout the research process to answer the research question. An in-depth review of the literature allows for effective alignment between the research question posed and the investigation of a contemporary research problem in a real-life context (Yin, 2017). For this study, in addition to an in-depth literature review, other techniques such as prolonged engagement, observation, triangulation, transcript review, audit trail, reflexivity, and rich, thick descriptions were used to ensure effective alignment between the research components and thereby answer the research question.

The second limitation lay in the scholarly criticism that qualitative research receives regarding the generalizability of results. While the use of multiple case studies, as opposed to single case studies, holds greater robustness through the former's replication logic, it remains that the objective of qualitative research resides

in analytic generalizations rather than statistical generalizations (Yin, 2017). Unlike statistical generalizations as used in surveys, analytic generalizations allow for building upon theoretical concepts and the creation of knowledge (Yin, 2017). However, depending on the purpose of the case study research, the effective use of different sources of evidence such as documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observations, and physical artifacts contributes to constructing validity (Yin, 2017). In terms of trustworthiness, while accounting for the robustness of multiple case studies, the challenge remains in transferring similar resulting behaviors of cases from one context to another (Bass, Beecham, & Noll, 2018). I used semistructured interviews (see Yin, 2017), archival data, and reflective field notes (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) to support the credibility of the study's findings through data triangulation (see Guion et al., 2011; Yin, 2017).

The third limitation lay in the challenge of posing interview questions to which participants would answer with honesty and transparency. Depending on the context surrounding participants, whether political or sociological, including personal bias or anxiety, the interview process might distort participants' responses (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). To address this limitation, the role of the researcher was critical in building trust with each participant, managing emotions, and assuming ethical responsibilities (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Significance of the Study

To sustain competitive advantage in a volatile global market, corporate executives must consider the creation of innovative talent management roles to train value-driven talent that is rare, imitable, and nonsubstitutable in enabling an organization to implement value-creating strategies (Sparrow & Makram, 2015).

Scholars recommended that a more in-depth study is needed on processes to support the long-term retention of value-driven talent, a critical problem for today's corporate executives (Cascio & Aguinis, 2018; King & Vaiman, 2019). Researchers acknowledge that corporate executives have sparse information on the competency characteristics for an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage (Claus, 2019; dos Santos & Pedro, 2020; Sparrow, 2019). This study is significant in informing organizational leaders on how to create an innovative talent leadership role linked to meeting macrolevel outcomes and competitive advantage, rather than just passively reciprocating to micro and mesolevel business needs (Sparrow, 2019; Wiblen & McDonnell, 2019).

Significance to Practice

This study may advance an understanding of talent management experts' views on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage. Since theory is important to practice, understanding how to build talent management leaders who may enable the organization to build on acquired talent through an understanding of the organizational capabilities is central to a macro talent management model (King & Vaiman, 2019; Sparrow & Makram, 2015). The implications of these capabilities for professional practice may enhance the ways in which talent contributes to the execution of strategic outcomes of innovation, customer centricity, efficiency and effectiveness, and the ability to respond creatively to immediate and sustained talent shortages (Rotolo et al., 2018; Sparrow et al., 2010; Sparrow & Makram, 2015).

The process of combining individual skills with tacit organizational knowledge in ways that lead to greater human capital for the serving of customers is a leveraging mechanism (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Effective leveraging can also create dynamic capabilities whereby organizations can renew, augment, and adapt their current capabilities, internalizing the need to serve changing needs. This study is significant to practice in that it may inform corporate executives on novel and creative means to prevent talent loss while evolving outdated HR processes that lead to exit behaviors (Claus, 2019). While corporate leaders aim to develop all employees' talents to reach organizational goals, there is a call for distinguishing top talents to fill the pivotal positions and implement the business strategy (Schreuder & Noorman, 2019a).

Significance to Theory

Scholars agree that there is a lack of rigor and coherence in empirical research on contemporary talent management challenges (Thunnissen & Gallardo-Gallardo, 2019; Wright, Nyberg, & Ployhart, 2018). Several popular media business website bloggers, such as HR.com, Loftus Bradford Blog, and McKinsey Quarterly have called for innovation in talent management job descriptions to meet today's organizational needs (Bafaro et al., 2017; Carcel Ribes, 2017; Charan et al., 2018). The job specifications and competency characteristics for such a talent management position have yet to be theoretically introduced or conceptually developed within the talent management body of knowledge or scholarly literature (Claus, 2019). Research in talent management practice has lagged (Claus, 2019; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2019). One criticism of much of the theoretical and applied literature on talent and

talent management is the lack of agreement on the meaning of talent, resulting in the latter concept being used heuristically (Adamsen, 2014, 2016).

Despite the need for new knowledge regarding talent, talent management, and retaining value-driven talent, HR managers' traditional functions leave fundamental questions unanswered, such as which key competencies may be needed for leaders driving value in organizations (Wright et al., 2018). This study is significant to theory and extends academic knowledge in talent management leadership through subject matter experts' views so as to integrate the "talent" construct into leadership theory-building (Gehman et al., 2018). The open nature of expert interviews allows for the collection of data from experts' breadth of knowledge and experience in research fields that still need exploring (Littig & Pöchhacker, 2014). The data collected from expert interviews may reveal challenging or even impossible-to-access information into regarding fields of business research in need of theory-building in order to meet new challenges facing corporate executives in today's uncertain global market (Bogner et al., 2018; Littig & Pöchhacker, 2014).

Significance to Social Change

At the 2020 World Economic Forum in Davos, thought leaders reinforced that today's businesses have a responsibility to adopt a focused approach toward the development and retention of talent that can participate in meeting sustainability goal agendas (World Economic Forum, 2020). With top talent in short supply throughout many industries, employee attitudes about sustainable business practices are compelling more companies to take this issue seriously, leading to better business results for those that take action. Articulating a "nobler mission" for a company is a big motivator for employees and powerful leverage in the war for talent (Anlesinya & Amponsah-

Tawiah, 2020). A better understanding of how corporate executives struggling to maintain a competitive advantage in today's volatile global market may retain value-driven talent and drive positive social change by better addressing today's great social challenges benefits stakeholders and shareholders alike (Pandita & Ray, 2018).

Talent management calls for different thinking toward human resources, transitioning from the concept of human capital to that of people committed to positive social change (Lawler, 2018). Emphasizing responsible management and ethical concerns in organizational talent strategies and practices is an imperative for today's business leaders, given the current level of interest in sustainable human and organizational outcomes through innovative management (Anlesinya & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2020). The outcomes of this study can drive positive social change by providing executives with a better understanding of how to reshape talent management leadership roles within organizations to better support sustainability goal agendas.

Summary and Transition

The specific management problem that is addressed in this study is that corporate executives have sparse information on the needed competency characteristics for an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage (Claus, 2019; dos Santos & Pedro, 2020; Sparrow, 2019). The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study is to describe talent management experts' views on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage. To meet the purpose of the study, a multiple case study design (Yin, 2017) was utilized to collect

data from a purposeful sample with semistructured interviews (Yin, 2017), archival data, and reflective field notes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) This study may be significant in informing organizational leaders on how to create an innovative talent leadership role linked to meeting macrolevel outcomes and competitive advantage (Sparrow, 2019; Wiblen & McDonnell, 2019).

Chapter 2 focuses on the literature review, including the literature strategy and the competency framework. Two conceptual models are introduced to frame the present study and align with the purpose thereof. I attempt to address the research problem by discussing different topics. Some of these topics are, among others, the evolution of the HR profession with its job specifications and competency characteristics, the value of talent for organizations, the challenges in reinventing talent management, and maintaining competitive advantage through value-driven talent.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The general problem is that corporate executives struggling to maintain a competitive advantage in today's volatile global market continue to lose value-driven talent to competitors due to outdated HR practices (King & Vaiman, 2019; Rotolo et al., 2018; Sparrow & Makram, 2015). The specific problem is that corporate executives have sparse information on the competency characteristics for an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage (Claus, 2019; dos Santos & Pedro, 2020; Sparrow, 2019). There is a call for new thinking in conceptualizing a new role on the talent value chain that may become a brokering position within an organization in order to increase the long-term value of acquired talent (Makram et al., 2017; Sparrow & Makram, 2015). The key competencies for such a talent management position have yet to be introduced or conceptually developed within the talent management body of knowledge or scholarly literature (Claus, 2019; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2019).

Corporate leadership is called upon by scholars to disrupt the HR sector by developing new roles within the talent value supply chain that aim at retaining talented employees and thereby contributing to positive organizational outcomes (Claus, 2019). The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to describe talent management experts' views on the key competencies of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage.

In Chapter 2, I present the literature search strategy and the concepts that guide this empirical study. The literature review of this chapter includes a synthesis of

knowledge and scholarly work regarding the following topics: *competitive advantage, core competencies, disruption, dynamic capability, job specifications, macro- and micro-level goals, talent, talent management, talent supply chain management, talent value, talent value architecture, value capture, value creation, value-driven talent, value leverage (or amplification), value protection, preservation, and retention.*

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search strategy section includes details regarding the list of databases and search engines that I used to identify resources for the literature review. Such resources included peer-reviewed articles, books/ebooks, doctoral dissertations, and studies conducted by professional institutions and renowned magazines.

Among the search engines that I used were Google Scholar and Google Books. I consulted databases through the online Walden Library comprising ABI/INFORM Collection, Academic Search Complete, Dissertations & Theses @ Walden University, EBSCOHost, Emerald Insight, ProQuest Central, SAGE Journals, Springer e-books, Taylor and Francis Online, Thoreau Multi-Database Search, and Walden Library Books.

Apart from the germinal work that served as foundational research and articles on research methodology, the references cited in the review of the literature were published between 2015 and 2020. Table 1 contains the number of resources by type and age of reference. Out of a total number of 294 resources, 148 references (50%) covered the literature review, out of which 107 references were dated between 2015 and 2020. Table 2 contains the comparison of the number of references between all resources (294) and the resources covering the literature review (148), out of which 190 references (65%) and 107 references (72%) respectively were dated between

2015 and 2020. Table 3 contains the numbers of journal articles, books, e-books, and reports by topic, with 71% of the references composed of peer-reviewed articles.

Table 1

Number of Resources by Type and Age of Reference

Age of references	2015-2020	2009-2014	2000-2008	1956-1999
Peer-reviewed articles	138	45	13	13
Not peer-reviewed articles	12	3	3	1
Management and HR organizations (reports)	2	0	0	0
Student theses	1	0	0	0
Books	25	11	9	5
e-Books	12	1	0	0
Total	190	60	25	19

Table 2

Comparison of Number of References between all Resources and Resources of the Literature Review

Age of references	All references	%	Literature review references	%
2015-2020	190	65%	107	72%
2009-2014	60	20%	21	14%
2000-2008	25	9%	9	6%
1956-1999	19	6%	11	7%
Total	294	100%	148	100%

Table 3

Numbers of Journal Articles, Books, e-Books, Student theses, and Reports by Topic

Topics	Journal articles		Books/ e-books	Student theses	Reports
	Peer-reviewed	Not peer- reviewed			
HR/Talent Management	141	11	23	1	1
Methodology	54	7	38	0	1
Theory	14	1	2	0	0
Total	209	19	63	1	2

The key search terms used in the literature search included: *talent management, talent acquisition, talent value, talent value chain, talent value proposition, talent management architecture, talent meaning, talent value, talent development, job description, job design, competency characteristics, job specifications, job duties talent, value-driven talent, value creation, value capture, value leverage, and value protection*. Given that the talent leader role has not yet emerged in scholarly journals, the use of Google Scholar and professional societies such as Human Capital Online, McKinsey & Company, and World Economic Forum were indispensable.

I used journals that specialize in the topic of HR and talent management: *Human Resource Development Quarterly, Human Resource Development Review, Human Resource Management, Human Resource Management International Digest, Human Resource Management Journal, Human Resource Management Review, Strategic HR Review, and The International Journal of Human Resource Management*. I used the key search terms mentioned above on their own and in combination with each other; I also added the qualifier of “systematic review” to yield complementary results. To keep abreast of the newly-published articles on the topic, I created Google alerts for *talent management, talent value, and talent leader*. I used additional keywords throughout the dissertation to substantiate the conceptual framework and the methodological research process. I used keywords such as *strategic human resources management, core competencies, people management, HR practices, succession planning, and workforce planning* in different databases and search engines to identify germane scholarship. I used different combinations of these

keywords during searches through Google Scholar and databases hosted by the online Walden Library that contained peer-reviewed articles.

Conceptual Framework

This study is framed by two key conceptual models that aligned with the purpose of the study, which was to describe talent management experts' views on the key competencies of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage: (a) Sparrow and Makram's (2015) four value-driven processes of a talent management architecture framework and (b) Schreuder and Noorman's (2019a) concept of strategic talent manager.

Four Value-Driven Processes of a Talent Management Architecture Framework

In developing the four value-driven processes of a talent management architecture framework, Sparrow and Makram (2015) relied upon a number of non-HR bodies of knowledge, such as value creation, the RBV perspective of the firm, dynamic capabilities, and global knowledge management, and to understand the nature of value might inform the design of any talent management system or architecture. Sparrow and Makram (2015) grounded their four value-driven processes of a talent management architecture framework in human capital theory by arguing that the costs associated with the development and retention of talent should be viewed as investments on behalf of the firm, and expectancy theory by arguing that people make choices about the investments they make in themselves and only self-invest if there are signals critical to the organization's growth (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2006, 2007). The four value-driven processes, namely value creation, value capture,

value leverage, and value protection of the first conceptual model (Sparrow & Makram, 2015) framing this study, are described below.

Value creation. Sparrow and Makram (2015) defined value creation as “the process through which an organization then bundles its talent resources with other resources to increase their dependency on the organization context, and hence weaken their bargaining power” (p. 250). To develop their conceptual framework, the authors questioned the definitional issue of value as seen through the theoretical lens of the RBV of the firm, where human capital resources are represented by the knowledge, skills, capabilities, intelligence, relationships, and experience of the firm's employees (Barney, 1991). The question is raised as to the reason why organizations still need to protect their assets and resources from imitation if these assets and resources are valuable in the first place (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). For example, given the turmoil caused by new technologies, 37% more of the surveyed organizations between 2013 and 2015 network with other organizations through interdependency and thereby maximize their effectiveness and value creation, enjoying more opportunities than if operating as stand-alone entities (Berman, Davidson, Ikeda, Korsten, & Marshall, 2016). In the same vein, organizations create value by adopting an agile management approach that empowers teams and extends teams' involvement in decision-making (Denning, 2018). The created value from agility allows for matching the right talents with the decisions made at the strategic level (Denning, 2018).

Value capture. Sparrow and Makram (2015) defined value capture as “the process through which an organization bundles its talent resources with other resources to increase their dependency on the organization context, and hence weaken their bargaining power” (p. 250). Another component of the authors' value theory

development, the concept of value capture is grounded in coalitional game theory (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1995; Stirling, 2011) argues that value is only captured through free form exchanges in which the value offered by one coalition partner can only be decoded and captured when the resources and capabilities of the players involved are equal. The balance of value between coalition partners represents a portion of the value of the resources that organizations identify as critically valuable for sustaining competitive advantage (Clauss, Abebe, Tangpong, & Hock, 2019; Sparrow & Makram, 2015). The capture of the value of assets or resources such as talents enables organizations to maximize their bargaining power over competitors (Clauss et al., 2019; Sparrow & Makram, 2015).

Value leverage (or amplification). Sparrow and Makram (2015) defined value leverage as “the process through which an organization develops and extends the captured capabilities of its talent resources to add new use-value” (p. 250). Through value leverage of an asset or resource, organizations aim to capitalize on their talents, for example, and ensure return on investments (Makram et al., 2017; Sparrow & Makram, 2015). The authors’ definition of value leverage is grounded in an RBV perspective. The process of combining individual skills with tacit organizational knowledge in ways that leads to novel and valuable outcomes or create greater human capital for customer service is a leveraging mechanism (Sirmon et al., 2007).

Effective value leveraging is also seen to create dynamic capabilities, whereby organizations can renew, augment and adapt their current capabilities within a context of change by bundling complementary resources, creating efficiencies and supporting the transfer of knowledge (Harsch & Festing, 2020; Sparrow, Hird, Hesketh, &

Cooper, 2010). Sparrow and Makram (2015) associated the concept of value leverage with value amplification to emphasize the importance of delineating the portion of the value that is worth capitalizing on. For example, organizations capitalize on knowledge management, learning, and development, enhancing both individual and organizational performance (Makram et al., 2017; Sparrow & Makram, 2015; Venkatesh, 2016). Soon (2015) drew attention to leadership communication and its ability to create value by sharing knowledge across organizational levels. Harsch and Festing (2020) contended that talent management processes and talents are dynamic, value-laden capabilities that allow for the sustainability of competitive advantage. The management of talents is vital to sustain competitive advantage and ascertain strategic organizational renewal (Järvi & Khoreva, 2020). Leveraging and capitalizing on specific knowledge and skills allows for a renewal of shared practices and organizational culture (Makram et al., 2017).

Value protection (or preservation and retention). Sparrow and Makram (2015) defined value protection as “the process through which an organization develops isolating mechanisms to protect its talent resources from being lost to other competitors” (p. 250). Defined from an RBV perspective, the concept of **value protection** originates from talent created by superior management skills. Superior management skills to be protected in valued employees include firm-specific skills in the form of developed knowledge and relationships with customers, suppliers, and critical employees, as well as a deep understanding of internal technologies (Castanias & Helfat, 2001).

Sparrow and Makram (2015) utilized a number of perspectives to articulate that value protection represents a human capital metrics tradition by considering the

value and utility of human resource interventions (Sturman, 2000), such as salary growth and promotions on job turnover (Trevor, Gerhart, & Boudreau, 1997), avoiding dysfunctional high-performance employee turnover, the role of organizational practices in influencing the performance distribution of leavers (Sturman, Trevor, Boudreau, & Gerhart, 2003), and organizational benefits of retaining top talent by empirically demonstrating that top talent produces a disproportionately large amount of output (O'Boyle & Aguinis, 2012). By linking intellectual capital to the business strategy, organizations aim to protect the very knowledge that is conducive to reaching goals and retaining the best talents while also enabling valued employees to maximize their lifelong knowledge acquisition and sustain their career aspirations (Sparrow & Makram, 2015).

Strategic Talent Manager

Differentiating the role of generic talent manager from that of strategic talent manager, the objective of the latter involves “translating the required strategic capabilities of an organization into positions that have a disproportionately large impact on realizing the strategy while also ensuring flexible, optimal staffing of such A-positions, enabling top talents to make the difference” (Schreuder & Noorman, 2019a, p. 1). Organizations draw attention to the definition of their business strategy, the *why* and *what*, and strategic talent managers should be a part of the strategic decision-making process to implement the business strategy (Tafti et al., 2017). While corporate leaders aim to develop all employees' talents to reach organizational goals, there is a call for distinguishing top talents to fill the pivotal positions and implement the business strategy. The linkage between management and talents, facilitated by

strategic talent managers, allows for the implementation of the business strategy while also showcasing the best talents (Schreuder & Noorman, 2019a).

In their follow-up research on organizational leaders transitioning from generic to strategic talent management, Schreuder and Noorman (2019b) asked the following question: how do we ensure that the talents and skills of people who fulfill these strategic, “difference-making” roles are best developed? In offering a response to this question, Schreuder and Noorman (2019b) took a value-driven approach to the development of the strategic talent manager role. Value-driven talent development pays specific attention to content, time, and money, deviating from a principle of equality and from investments in development based on hierarchy. Based on Dearnorff’s (2005) analysis of comparative advantage theory, Schreuder and Noorman (2019a) wrote that the strategic talent manager must be switched from the level of individual talent to the level of strategic capabilities for the organization and not only think in terms of talent development, but also in terms of organizational development (Lumme-Tuomala, 2019). Finally, the job role of the strategic talent manager must move from an operational to a strategic level. Strategic talent managers should not only respond to what the organization needs at the moment but also proactively think about what will be necessary for the future in order to maintain a competitive advantage (Schreuder & Noorman, 2019a).

Of importance is the fact that the use of strategic talent management strategies raises issues of ethics and sustainability for the strategic talent manager (Anlesinya, Dartey-Baah, & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2019). The identification by organizations of fundamental capabilities and pivotal positions, encumbered by the best talents to reach organizational goals, may discriminate the talented from the less talented

individuals. To mitigate the adverse effects of the use of the exclusive as opposed to the inclusive talent management approach, a strategic talent manager develops their strategy by rethinking the resulting ethical issues so as to ensure that division does not occur within the organization and social cohesion is not jeopardized (Anlesinya et al., 2019; Wiblen & McDonnell, 2019). While favoring the strategic over the generic talent management approach, Schreuder and Noorman (2019a) pointed out the importance of examining the readiness of organizations before adopting a talent management approach. Despite the adverse effects that may arise from the exclusive approach, the development of a strategic talent manager within an organization is conducive to more positive outcomes than negative outcomes at the micro, meso, and macrolevels (Cascio, 2019; Sparrow, 2019).

Literature Review

A Historical Perspective on Concept Development within the Human Resource Sector

A historical perspective on the development of the concept within the HR sector allows for an in-depth understanding of talent management. Talent management is a construct that revolves around the “systematic attraction, identification, development, engagement, retention, and deployment of those talents which are of particular value to an organization in order to create strategic sustainable organizational success” (Thunnissen & Gallardo-Gallardo, 2019, p. 171). Interest in talent management has a long history, dating back to 1997 when Ulrich developed the HRBPM. The main purpose of the HRBPM was to assume a strategic HR role and align with business objectives while also renewing its approach toward people and talent management (Naznin & Hussain, 2016).

The HRBPM comprises five roles for the human resources professional: employee advocate/champion, functional expert, human capital developer, strategic business partner, and HR leader (Ulrich, 1997; Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005). Since the creation of the HRBPM in 1997, and between 2004 and 2014, 95% of global organization leaders transformed their HR functions to align with business strategies, with 50% of these organizations investing in the HRBPM. From the concepts associated with the HRBPM and the five roles developed by Ulrich (1997), the innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-added talent to support organizational competitive advantage involves new concepts and key competencies.

Emerging from systems thinking as a worldview and going as far back as the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) and his integrated approach whereby “the whole is more than the sum of its parts” (p. 407), Bertalanffy (1901-1972), a theoretical biologist, introduced general systems theory in 1937 (Pouvreau & Drack, 2007; von Bertalanffy, 1972). The philosophical perspective of general systems theory finds its roots in the German philosopher Hegel (1770-1831, Kast & Rosenzweig, 1972; Pouvreau & Drack, 2007). As defined by Skyttner (1996), “A system is a set of interacting units or elements that form an integrated whole intended to perform some function.” (p. 17)

The systems approach allows for the interrelations and interactions between subsystems and components to be brought forward, thereby giving rise to an interdisciplinary approach (Boulding, 1956; Johnson, Kast, & Rosenzweig, 1964; Mulej, 2007). Trivedi and Misra (2015) pointed out the extent to which a system depends on subsystems, components, and the interactions and behaviors between the

two. Weak interactions and behaviors between subsystems and components, or even the absence thereof, may negatively impact the overall system (Skyttner, 1996; Trivedi & Misra, 2015). Some researchers alluded to holism and realism to explain the concept of the whole system, also called wholeness (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1972; Skyttner, 1996). Unlike holism, overspecialization tends to lead to reductionism, thereby curtailing the understanding of the world (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1972; Skyttner, 1996). Using systems thinking as a worldview allows for transcending the mechanistic perspective to encompass the organismic perspective, thus emphasizing the need to see the system as a whole (Drack & Betz, 2017; Shaked & Schechter, 2013).

Alluding to vitalism, Bertalanffy distinguished living from nonliving matters and the importance of having both coevolving in complex environments to understand what is out there (Shaked & Schechter, 2013; von Bertalanffy, 1972). The distinction between living and nonliving matters and the coevolution thereof led scholars to consider systems as open systems as opposed to closed systems, thereby giving rise to an enhanced understanding of the world (Boulding, 1956; Johnson et al., 1964; Kast & Rosenzweig, 1972). The perspective of open and living systems took root in *gestalt* psychology developed by Köhler in 1924, which was conducive to new understanding and theory creation (Boulding, 1956; Rousseau, 2015).

Role Theory and its Implications for Human Resource/Talent Management

Emerging from various disciplines such as anthropology (Linton, 1945) and sociology (Mead, 1934; Moreno, 1934), role theory has generated different definitions and perspectives (Biddle, 1986; Broderick, 1999). Biddle referred to role theory as “a science concerned with the study of behaviors that are characteristic of persons within

contexts and with processes that produce, explain, or are affected by these behaviors.” (as cited in Broderick, 1999, p. 119) Broderick (1999) pointed out the interdisciplinary nature and social exchange perspective of role theory that outlines expected behaviors within social contexts. Some of the perspectives include functional role theory, symbolic interactionist role theory, structural role theory, organizational role theory, and cognitive role theory (Biddle, 1986). While shared norms are common to the aforementioned theories, functional role theory refers to norms and behaviors shared and expected of individuals fulfilling a social position (Biddle, 1986). Symbolic interactionist role theory focuses on the actor interacting through its own cognitive understanding (Biddle, 1986). Structural role theory focuses on the set of norms, positions, members, and statuses (Biddle, 1986). These norms, positions, members, and statuses constitute the structure of an organization and the social interactions arising from these components, forming an organizational structure (Biddle, 1986).

From the perspective of organizational structure, organizational role theory focuses on social systems and interactions arising from formal and informal settings such as positions, tasks, and tacit knowledge generated by members in organizations (Biddle, 1986). While referring to organizational role theory, Wickham and Parker (2007) stressed the multifaceted aspect of a role, integrating four assumptions. The first assumption revolves around the concept of role-taking and acceptance of fulfilling a role (Wickham & Parker, 2007). While explaining the organizational, personal, and interpersonal factors that shape the role, Wickham and Parker (2007) asserted the need to include work and nonwork roles that impact the acceptance of individuals taking a role and associated behaviors in a social context. Wickham and

Parker (2007) stressed the extent to which accepting to fulfill a role might prove challenging in a changing work environment. Neglecting to take work roles and nonwork roles into account may lead to role conflict (Wickham & Parker, 2007).

The second assumption captures the concept of role-consensus and associated expectations from managers and employees (Mamman & Al Kulaiby, 2014; Wickham & Parker, 2007). Based on shared norms to fulfill certain roles and behaviors, the concept of role-consensus includes cultural norms (Mamman & Al Kulaiby, 2014; Wickham & Parker, 2007). Nadiv et al. (2017) posited that the strategic HR role comprises occupational and organizational characteristics that constitute organizational settings. While occupational characteristics include education and work experience, organizational characteristics include social, economic, and global characteristics (Nadiv et al., 2017).

The third assumption involves compliance with a role and associated behaviors (Wickham & Parker, 2007). Based on institutional theory, there is a relationship between the behaviors expected of individuals in an organizational context and the types of interactions, including the statutory rules and regulations that govern an organization (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The fourth assumption focuses on role conflict and the misalignment of roles, responsibilities, and behaviors in a given role (Wickham & Parker, 2007). The misunderstanding and misinterpretation of roles and responsibilities cause tensions and role conflict (Sheehan, de Cieri, Greenwood, & van Buren, 2014).

Over the past century, the HR profession has undergone a considerable transformation, and so have the definitions surrounding HR and people management concepts (Ahammad, 2017). Going back in history, Ahammad (2017) referred to

personnel management that mainly included administrative and transactional activities. Ahammad (2017) defined personnel management as “the administrative function of a business that exists to provide the personnel needed for organizational activities and to manage general employer-employee relationship” (p. 414). Given the increasing imperative compelling organizations to adapt to the changing environment, the concept of personnel management transitioned to HRM during the late 1970s (Ahammad, 2017). During these years, the emergence of globalization and new technologies changed the economic landscape (Galang & Osman, 2016; Obedgiu, 2017). Transitioning to HRM allowed for the taking of a broader approach toward managing people while also including the strategic business component to sustain competitive advantage (Ahammad, 2017; Fortier & Albert, 2015).

A broader approach contributes to managing people during the employment lifecycle (Ahammad, 2017). The employment lifecycle mainly involves pre-hiring, selection, recruitment, compensation, administration, development, performance management, rewards, motivation, health and safety, welfare, and communication (Ahammad, 2017). While the HRM approach enables organizations to advance their economic interests, the pursuit of this objective occurs to the detriment of the workers (Ahammad, 2017; Fortier & Albert, 2015). Adopting the HRM approach may result in a lack of balance between economic and social objectives (Gerpott, 2015; Martin, 2015).

The emergence of SHRM due to the dynamic environment might increase the gap between economic and social objectives (Garcia-Carbonell, Martin-Alcazar, & Sanchez-Gardey, 2015). Employees’ perception of SHRM policies and practices that aim at inducing organizational behaviors might not be favorable (Garcia-Carbonell et

al., 2015; Knies & Leisink, 2018). There is a call for a more balanced approach between these objectives in order to enable organizations to reach their goals and stakeholders to meet their needs (Cooper, 2015; Dhir, 2019; Marchington, 2015). In outlining the distinction between management of processes and leadership of people, Leroy, Segers, Van Dierendonck, and Den Hartog (2018) stressed the need to pay equal attention to management and leadership. Such equal attention aims to put the individual in their rightful place and prove true the adage that people are our best assets (Leroy, Segers, van Dierendonck, & den Hartog, 2018). Turner and Kalman (2015) highlighted the importance of going beyond the adage in today's constantly changing environment in order to ensure that organizational leaders adhere to the principle of putting people before things. To reach this goal, the need arose to transition from HRM to people management (Fortier & Albert, 2015; Leroy et al., 2018).

The concept of people management and its associated definitions remain unclear. The level to which HR practices influence organizational performance remains unproven (Knies & Leisink, 2018). The need to give importance to people in organizations varies depending on organizational setting (Knies & Leisink, 2018; Nadiv et al., 2017). It is critical to involve HR professionals in senior management's decision-making process when formulating and implement HR practices (Garcia-Carbonell et al., 2015). Denning (2018) referred to agile people management to transition from traditional to modern HR practices. There is a call for HR professionals to build people management knowledge and strengthen their credibility (Gill, 2018; Heizmann & Fox, 2017). Strengthened credibility contributes to the effective communication of HR practices across organizational levels.

Communicating HR practices to employees is paramount to ensure a positive outcome of implemented practices (Garcia-Carbonell et al., 2015). Knies and Leisink (2018) pointed out the importance of line managers' participation in communicating HR practices to order to ensure employees' positive perception and organizational performance. In drawing attention to the soft aspect of people management, Tripathy (2018) outlined the importance of communication, empathy, and patience skills. Multisource feedback from managers, peers, and subordinates, simplification of performance reviews, and coaching skills are some of the practices of agile people management (Denning, 2018). These practices foster teamwork (Denning, 2018). Taking employees' perceptions of implemented HR practices into account also contributes to organizational performance and employee motivation.

Since the introduction of the Ulrich model in 1997, an increasing interest in the evolving HR professional's role and the HRBPM has prompted a demand for an innovative talent manager position with clear job duties. Despite taking on a strategic role, 30% of HR business partners face the challenge of making informed strategic decisions, and 22% feel sufficiently skilled to do planning in line with their organization's needs. Although organizational leaders understand the imperative to develop talent management strategies, choosing the most effective approach remains challenging (Sahay, 2014). Combining HR business partnering and talent acquisition to enable organizations to sustain competitive advantage requires a holistic perspective that is part of a systems thinking approach (Sahay, 2014). Referring to talent management, Church and Silzer (2016) pointed out the need to move away from segregating components within the organizational structure. Instead, there is a call for social systems, bringing forward the organization with interrelationships and

interdependencies (Church & Silzer, 2016). From the perspective of general systems theory and open systems theory, Buller and McEvoy (2016) outlined the need for HR professionals to enhance their approach toward organizational sustainability.

Organizational sustainability allows for greater linkage between HR issues and their involvement in strategic decision making (Buller & McEvoy, 2016).

Evolution of the Human Resource role

An increasingly competitive environment changes organizational roles, and HR roles are no exception (Ulrich, 2016; Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015). Despite a high reliance on human resources, the topic of the HR profession has generated controversial debates among scholars and practitioners (Cohen, 2015; Legge & Exley, 1975). In a global survey of CEOs, 80% of respondents indicated that finding the best talents with the right skills is one of their biggest concerns. The social problem is that organizational leaders fail to develop an effective talent management process (Cohen, 2015). Although organizational leaders invest in HR management and talent management to meet business needs, they still face the challenge of finding the best talents with the right skills (Tafti et al., 2017; Tatoglu, Glaister, & Demirbag, 2016).

In the past, the evolving HR profession has been assigned a variety of roles, causing role ambiguity (Legge & Exley, 1975). The various roles associated with the HR profession include administrative activities, payroll, record keeping, and routine tasks (Boudreau & Lawler, 2014; Cleveland, Byrne, & Cavanagh, 2015). A perception prevails in that these routine tasks could be carried out by anyone and learned on the job, thereby requiring no formal certification (Cohen, 2015). Rather than a formal certification, there is the proposition of a rotation process to enable managers to gain HR knowledge and deliver as the need arises, although depriving

HR knowledge of social and humanistic values (Gill, 2018). Over the years, the HR profession has carried different labels, changing from personnel manager to human resource manager (Guest & Woodrow, 2012). The perception of the HR profession as carrying out administrative activities with no clear labeled roles and responsibilities has also led to the issue of role ambiguity (Marchington, 2015).

The ambiguity of roles may jeopardize the very role of the HR profession (Marchington, 2015; Pritchard & Fear, 2015). One factor that contributes to role ambiguity the boundaries of HR are becoming blurred, dissipating into other functions with more power such as finance and marketing (Guest & Woodrow, 2012; Marchington, 2015). Rather than being perceived as a critical function enabling organizations to sustain competitive advantage, the HR profession becomes associated with encumbrance (Guest & Woodrow, 2012). The ambiguity of roles causes tensions and role conflict (Sheehan, de Cieri, Cooper, & Shea, 2016). The more roles, the fewer organization leaders manage to implement HR roles based on the HRBPM that meet their needs (Sheehan et al., 2016).

A downplayed role, added to the ambiguity of roles, has conferred upon the HR profession variability in status, power, and opportunities (Legge & Exley, 1975). Perceiving HR as a profession with little power is synonymous with no authority for the other managerial functions (Legge & Exley, 1975). While the fundamental role of HR is to hire, recruit, train, compensate, and manage employees to reach organizational goals, the blurred boundaries surrounding the profession, added to a lack of power and authority, deprive the profession of its core purpose (Gill, 2018; Gowler & Legge, 1986). Deprived of its core purpose, the HR profession also loses its credibility (Marchington, 2015; Pritchard & Fear, 2015).

The loss of credibility becomes increasingly problematic as the changing business environment compels the HR profession to sit at the decision-making table (Pritchard & Fear, 2015). One major issue associated with HR's involvement in the decision-making process is the imperative for the HR profession to take on a strategic role (Boudreau & Lawler, 2014; Guest & Woodrow, 2012; Trost, 2020). The HR profession faces the challenge of honoring business decisions while also taking care of employees' issues (Boudreau & Lawler, 2014; Cleveland et al., 2015; Trost, 2020). The pursuit of strategic goals and economic growth through short-term plans prevails over considering human resources as valuable assets and as key enablers in reaching organizational goals (Gill, 2018; Marchington, 2015). HR professionals are torn between following their organization's management influence and bringing their expertise, thereby affecting their credibility (Aldrich, Dietz, Clark, & Hamilton, 2015; Pritchard & Fear, 2015). Without credibility, HR professionals are not likely to demonstrate their full competence (Aldrich et al., 2015).

In outlining the need for evidence-based HR expertise, Gill (2018) stressed that the lack of organizational incentivization for such expertise might lead HR professionals to implement HR practices that do not meet stakeholders' interests. By being compelled to devise HR practices that underpin a utilitarian rather than a humanistic approach, HR professionals might run the risk of losing employees' trust (Gubbins, Harney, van der Werff, & Rousseau, 2018). Addressing the employer's interests to the disadvantage of employees' interests may be detrimental to HRM sustainability and organizational performance (Boudreau & Lawler, 2014; Kramar, 2014). While HR professionals strive to align HRM and business strategies, the HR profession's efficiency and performance remain low (Boudreau & Lawler, 2014;

Cleveland et al., 2015). Failure to address the tradeoff between business and HR strategies leads the HR profession to underplay the tenet of inclusion of all employees as opposed to only top talents (Marchington, 2015; Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014).

The evolving business environment calls for equal attention to both organizational performance and social welfare (Cleveland et al., 2015). Such equal attention ensues in SHRM and sustainable HRM, whereby both concepts are closely interlinked to add value to organizations (Cleveland et al., 2015; Kramar, 2014). Adding organizational value might prove incongruent with organizations' utilitarian approach (Gill, 2018). Unless HR professionals can bring their expertise and competence, which will reinforce their credibility, HRM and its associate strategies may not be sustainable, and will be organizational performance (Aldrich et al., 2015; Kramar, 2014).

Human Resource Business Partner Model

Researchers identify significant variations in the role of the HR business partner as envisioned by Ulrich's (1997) model, in which individual HR departments have a relationship with the business, and some remain isolated from organizations' networks of experts required to develop value-added, innovative solutions to problems (Meyers, van Woerkom, Paauwe, & Dries, 2019; Wright et al., 2018). The HRBPM was introduced by Ulrich in 1997, in response to an increasingly demanding work environment. The pursuit of competitiveness prompts organizations to develop new HR models and align HRM with business strategies in order to reach organizational performance (Gerpott, 2015; Sheehan et al., 2016).

Given the possible confusion arising from the HR profession's roles and responsibilities, Ulrich and Brockbank (2005) attempted to clarify the essence of these

roles and responsibilities by conferring upon the HR profession five main roles. In developing the HRBPM, Ulrich transformed the HR professional's role into an HR business partner role (Sheehan et al., 2016; Ulrich, 1997). The initial HRBPM four roles, comprising strategic partner, administrative expert, employee champion, and change agent, evolved into a synthesis of five roles. Taking account of the various functions that an HR role integrates, these five roles developed into (a) employee advocate (EA), (b) human capital (HC) developer, (c) functional expert, (d) strategic partner, and (e) HR leader (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005).

Dividing the employee champion role into the employee advocate (EA) and human capital (HC) roles encapsulates the contribution brought by employees to the organization while also supporting employees' career development (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005). The administrative expert role evolved into the functional expert role to take account of the various means utilized to develop HR practices (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005). The change agent role, integrating the need for a new mindset and an ongoing engagement, is one constituent of the strategic partner role (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005). Altogether, the four revisited roles take root in the overarching HR leader role that aims at ensuring effective interdependency between the HR function, other organizational functions, and the organization as a whole (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005).

Associated with the HR roles, as prescribed by Ulrich and Brockbank (2005), are six HR competencies: (a) strategic positioner, (b) credible activist, (c) capability builder, (d) change champion, (e) HR innovator and integrator, and (f) technology (information) proponent (McCracken, O'Kane, Brown, & McCrory, 2017; Ulrich & Filler, 2015). These six HR competencies are the results of a study based on factor

analysis of 139 behavioral competencies (Ulrich, Younger, Brockbank, & Ulrich, 2013). The six HR competencies enable HR professionals to align HRM and business strategies, thereby effectively enhancing organizational performance (McCracken et al., 2017; Ulrich & Filler, 2015).

Three-legged stool model. Closely associated with Ulrich's HRBPM (1997) is the three-legged stool model that aims at ensuring effective implementation of the HR roles mentioned above (Ulrich, 1997). Grounded in the need to reconceptualize HR departments and adapt to the changing environment, the three-legged stool model subdivides into three main sections: (a) the Shared-Service Center (SSC), (b) the Center of Expertise/Excellence (COE), and (c) the Business Partner (BP) unit (Gerpott, 2015; Keegan, Bitterling, Sylva, & Hoeksema, 2017). The Shared-Service Center (SSC) focuses on operational excellence in administrative and transactional HR activities (Gerpott, 2015; Keegan et al., 2017). The Center of Expertise/Excellence (COE) focuses on policy development for specific HR activities (Gerpott, 2015; Keegan et al., 2017). The Business Partner (BP) unit focuses on creating value for customers and aligning business and HRM strategies (Gerpott, 2015; Keegan et al., 2017). The implementation of the three-legged stool model and associated roles varies across organizations (Gerpott, 2015; Keegan et al., 2017).

The HRBPM. As explained earlier, Ulrich developed the HRBPM in 1997 in response to a hectic business environment. The HRBPM comprises five roles: (a) employee advocate/champion, (b) functional expert, (c) human capital developer, (d) strategic business partner, and (e) HR leader (Ulrich, 1997; Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005). Since the creation of the HRBPM in 1997, and between 2004 and 2014, 95% of global organization leaders transformed their HR functions to align with business

strategies, with 50% of these organizations investing in the HRBPM. These statistics show the extent to which the HRBPM became an inspirational model for many organizations (Gerpott, 2015).

There are different interpretations and thereby different implementations of the HRBPM (Gerpott, 2015; Keegan et al., 2017). While much attention has been given to the HRBPM's roles and its potential thereof to deliver organizational value, Gerpott (2015) stressed the lack of guidance regarding the development of HRBP job descriptions. Taking into account the systemic context within which the HRBPM evolves, the formalization of the roles and responsibilities of the model into job descriptions may prove challenging (Higgins, Roper, & Gamwell, 2016; Sheehan et al., 2016). The number of responsibilities attached to each HRBP role makes it impossible to materialize them into concrete, filled roles (Higgins et al., 2016).

Some organizations take inspiration from the HRBPM and develop an HR role based on best practices that fail to take into account the surrounding context, and thus fail to yield results (Mamman & Al Kulaiby, 2014; Zheltoukhova, 2015). King (2015) cautioned that organizational leaders tend to mimic models based on best practices without assessing the validity of such replicated models for their organization. Poba-Nzaou, Uwizeyemungu, and Clarke (2018) found that some discrepancies may arise between the job descriptions of HR business partners' positions as enacted by recruiting organizations and the set roles prescribed by Ulrich, Younger, Brockbank, and Ulrich (2013). Organizational culture and organizational context should be considered when adopting the HRBPM (McCracken et al., 2017). Failure to pay attention to the organizational context may cause organizations to develop HR roles

that are ill-defined and thus fail to reach their full potential (Cooper, 2015; Gerpott, 2015).

The development of HR roles based on the HRBPM aligns with the organizational structure to sustain competitive advantage (Naznin & Hussain, 2016; Reilly, 2014). Cooper (2015) opined that the HRBPM does not fit all organizations. The structure of large-scale organizations calls for the implementation of the three-legged stool model, comprising the Shared-Service Center (SSC), Center of Expertise/Excellence (COEs), and thereby calls for the adoption of the HRBPM (Cooper, 2015; Marchington, 2015). The three-legged stool model aims to distinguish transactional from transformational HR activities, also referred to as distinguishing the core from the noncore HR activities, in order to enable strategic HR partners to focus on business strategies (Naznin & Hussain, 2016; Reilly, 2014). The three-legged stool model allowed for a shift in HR focus from people management to profit maximization (Reilly, 2014). To maximize profit, organizations tend to opt for HR transformation based on restructuring through outsourcing, standardization, and automation (Krausert, 2017; Reilly, 2014).

HR transformation and its associated restructuring take the form of HR shared services based on the centralization and decentralization of HR activities (Meijerink & Bondarouk, 2013; Reilly, 2014). The hybridization of centralized and decentralized HR activities allows for a reduction in costs, which can give rise to efficient HR services based on collaboration (Brenner, 2016; Meijerink & Bondarouk, 2013). Profit maximization is also associated with short-term plans, causing a shift in focus toward business strategies (Galang & Osman, 2016; Marchington, 2015). Such a shift in focus leads to the dominance of the role of strategic HR business partners over

people management, thereby underplaying the very substance of the HR profession (Galang & Osman, 2016; O'Brien & Linehan, 2014). Although the three-legged stool model was developed to reinforce the role of HR professionals at the strategic level, separating the strategic decision-making process from operational activities may thwart the purpose of the HRBPM (Keegan et al., 2017).

The Value of Talent for Organizations

The ambiguity resulting from the lack of a clear definition of talent has implications for the field of talent management. Foster (2015) highlighted HR professionals' responsibilities and their critical role in ensuring an adequate understanding and implementation of talent management processes. While talent management falls under the responsibilities of the HR profession, the interface between human resources management, talent management, and organizational performance is not systematic (Glaister et al., 2018). Organizations give different meanings to talent and cultivate their understanding of talent management (Makram et al., 2017). Compared to mental models, talent philosophies lead to different understandings and applications of the talent construct (Meyers et al., 2019). Due to the different meanings and usages of talent management, organizations' investments in associated processes vary, resulting in different levels of talent management optimization (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Organizations and HR departments build upon talent value propositions that align with their HR strategy and stakeholders' interests (Lesenyeho, Barkhuizen, & Schutte, 2018).

Job Roles and Job Specifications Within Strategic Talent Management

The main tenet that motivated the development of the HRBPM was the need for the HR profession to focus on business strategies (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005;

Zheloukhova, 2015). The greater alignment between HR and business strategies, the more organizational performance is enhanced (McCracken et al., 2017; Naznin & Hussain, 2016). Developing HR strategies that align with business strategies is the main challenge facing the HR profession to confront new realities (Sheehan et al., 2016; Ulrich, 2016). The HR profession is expected to integrate HR practices such as hiring, recruiting, compensating, and developing its presence in the business strategy (Sheehan et al., 2016). Ulrich (2016) emphasized that adapting to the new realities implies a shift of mindset whereby the role of HR practitioners involves adding value to the business rather than adding value to the HR discipline. Brenner (2016) stressed the absence of linkage between the HR profession and the business. Schiemann and Ulrich (2017) pointed out the importance of associating the role of HR practitioners with the discipline of industrial-organizational psychology to better adapt to the changing business environment. While there is a growing awareness of the evolving role of the HR profession, this profession continues to cling to traditional thinking and ways of doing (Boudreau & Lawler, 2014). The absence of linkage between the HR profession and the business, added to the persistence in clinging to traditional thinking, calls for a strategic transformation of the HR profession.

A strategic transformation of the HR profession necessitates questioning the foundational role of the HR profession (Efron, 2018; Fortier & Albert, 2015). Raising the HR profession at the strategic level involves a transition of the HR role from administrative and transactional HR roles to a managerial HR role (Higgins et al., 2016; Marchington, 2015). “HR is not about HR, but HR begins and ends with business.” (Ulrich & Grochowski, 2018, p. 181) While the three-legged stool model allows for an enhanced strategic HR role by separating strategic from operational

activities, the separation of activities might curtail the core HR function of the HR professional's role (Gerpott, 2015; Keegan et al., 2017). The more the HR profession leans toward the strategic HR role, the more the HR profession deprives itself of its core function (Marchington, 2015).

An unbalanced approach toward the HR role may result in putting forward business management while moving away from employee management (Gerpott, 2015; Marchington, 2015). Although there is a trend toward a heightened strategic HR role, the HR profession may undergo misperceptions from leaders (Naznin & Hussain, 2016; Sheehan et al., 2016). The HR profession may be failing to institute that some departments require more human resources than others (Brenner, 2016). The roles of the HR profession need enhanced clarity (Cooper, 2015; Galang & Osman, 2016). While organizations fall short of clarifying their purpose and values, the HR profession fails to establish the practices that allow for effective alignment between business and HR strategies (Efron, 2018; Sheehan et al., 2014).

The lack of results from organizations and the HR profession in bringing about an effective alignment between business and HR strategies causes role tensions (Sheehan et al., 2014). HR professionals face the challenge of performing various HRBPM roles (Sheehan et al., 2014, 2016). Negative reactions and perceptions surround the HR profession due to the tensions that emerge from the difficulty of performing the set of HR roles (Sheehan et al., 2014). The pressure and work overload associated with the HRBPM's concomitant roles prevent HR professionals from assuming their function effectively (Sheehan et al., 2016). Sheehan, De Cieri, Cooper, and Shea (2016) argued that one main challenge stems from the divide between the strategic partner role and the employee advocacy role, which results in

reducing the HR profession's level of power. The divide between HR roles and the reduced level of power compel HR professionals to prove the legitimacy of their function (Gill, 2018; Heizmann & Fox, 2017; Sparrow, Hird, & Cooper, 2015).

The extent to which the HR professional is able to transition to the HR business partner role determines the efficiency of the strategic partner and employee advocacy roles (Sheehan et al., 2016). HR roles underlie a difference in views between the soft and hard perspective of human resources (Gerpott, 2015; Marchington, 2015). While the soft perspective refers to the human side of resources, the hard perspective refers to the cost-effectiveness of resources (Marchington, 2015). The dual perspective of resources renders the HR business partner function paradoxical (Keegan et al., 2017).

Based on paradox theory, the HR profession is associated with inherent contradictions and tensions that emerge interdependently (Aust, Brandl, & Keegan, 2015; Keegan et al., 2017). Gerpott (2015) cautioned that the HR roles resulting from the three-legged stool model might cause a disconnect between HR business partners, line managers, and shared service centers whereby both the latter inherit noncore HR activities and administrative tasks. To address the emergence of contradictions and tensions, McCracken et al. (2017) suggested the need for organizations to understand the cultural aspect of the duality of the HR business partner's roles. One path to mitigating these tensions lies in endorsing the role of a change agent (Keegan et al., 2017; Kramar, 2014).

Assuming the HR business partner's roles involves a tradeoff between economic and social interests (O'Brien & Linehan, 2014). The constant alternation between cost-effectiveness and people management implies emotional control for the

HR professional and employees (Keegan et al., 2017; O'Brien & Linehan, 2014).

Rather than HR professionals alternating between one or the other role, Sheehan, De Cieri, Greenwood, and Van Buren (2014) suggested the need to defuse role conflict arising from the duality of roles by replacing it with an interplay of concomitantly evolving roles. The more HR professionals achieve an effective balance between economic and human interests, the more enhanced the alignment between business and HRM strategies.

An enhanced alignment between business and HRM strategies requires the roles of the HR profession to be built upon a systemic approach to ensure organizational performance (Ingham & Ulrich, 2016; Kramar, 2014). A systemic approach assumes that organizations are open, manifesting into social systems that include different stakeholder groups whose demands need satisfying (Kramar, 2014; Nadiv et al., 2017). In defining people management, Fortier and Albert (2015) noted that stakeholders are people who join together for the purposes of persons and organizations. Not limited to persons and organizations, the stakeholder perspective encompasses employees, families, communities, and society as a whole (Cleveland et al., 2015).

From this inclusive stakeholder perspective, the HR professional's role implies a focus on the external environment to shape the internal environment (Cleveland et al., 2015; Schiemann & Ulrich, 2017). Rather than developing HR practices that emanate from and take into account the internal environment, the role of the HR strategic partner entails an extensive understanding of the external environment (Cleveland et al., 2015; Schiemann & Ulrich, 2017). By understanding the external environment and stakeholders' expectations, the HR strategic partner develops the

organization's HR strategy (Turner & Kalman, 2015; Ulrich et al., 2013). This is the so-called outside-in approach (Ulrich et al., 2013). Based on systems thinking, a successful outside-in approach arises from understanding stakeholders' expectations and the relationships between external and internal stakeholders (Sahay, 2014; Ulrich, 2016). An effective outside-in approach also predicts sustainable and positive organizational outcomes (Nadiv et al., 2017).

Comparable to the outside-in approach, Garcia-Carbonell, Martin-Alcazar, and Sanchez-Gardey (2015) alluded to the integrative perspective and emphasized the importance of organizations recognizing the contributions of HRM and the HR function to the business strategy. The contribution of the HR function materializes through the formulation and implementation of HR policies and practices that are positively perceived by employees (Garcia-Carbonell et al., 2015). Boudreau and Lawler (2014) suggested that HR professionals explain to organizational leaders the importance of HR decisions and the associated implications of HR processes. Attracting more attention to HR decisions requires a stronger strategic HR decision-making involvement (Boudreau & Lawler, 2014). There is a call for HR professionals to endorse enhanced roles (Ulrich, 2016; Zheltoukhova, 2015). One of these enhanced roles lies in coaching organizational leaders about their behaviors and consequences thereof, thus contributing to informed strategic decision making (Ulrich & Filler, 2015). Another enhanced role concerns the capability builder role that aids in developing a new organizational culture (Reilly, 2014; Ulrich, 2016).

There is a wide convergence of opinion regarding the need for alignment between business and HR strategies. Such convergence explains the importance of a strategic role that prevails over the HR role. From the perspective of general systems

theory, HR professionals are torn between two forces, business and HR management. Naming these two forces “attractors” (p. 254), Morgan (2006) explained the increasing and decreasing levels of significance toward one force and the other. In the case of HR professionals, the level of significance increases when getting close to the strategic business and decreases when moving away from HR management. The difference in level of significance results in HR professionals finding it difficult to position themselves and assume job duties effectively (Gerpott, 2015; Keegan et al., 2017). The job duties associated with the strategic HR job category need clarifying in order to mitigate the adverse effects of role tensions, role conflicts, and work overload (Sheehan et al., 2016). The evolving HR profession establishes its strategic relevance based on a systemic approach and an acute understanding of stakeholders’ expectations, thereby requiring new competencies to ensure organizational performance.

Core Competencies and Job Specifications within the Human Resource Sector

The development of the HR business partner’s role is associated with the definition of competencies (Geimer et al., 2017). Core competencies refer to the set of behavioral competencies and personal attributes that members of an organization need in order to assume their roles and responsibilities effectively and efficiently (Poban-Nzaou et al., 2018). There is a need to distinguish the concept of role from competencies (Nadiv et al., 2017). While the term role refers to a set of major responsibilities, the term competency refers to the skills and capabilities that are expected of incumbents and can be evaluated (Nadiv et al., 2017). Although competencies represent an important aspect of the HR professional’s role, the definitions of roles allows HRM and business strategies to align and thus enhance

organizational performance (Galang & Osman, 2016). Nadiv, Raz, and Kuna's (2017) study revolves around the determination of roles, excluding competencies. Due to high expectations of the HR strategic partner's role, there is a call for correlating roles and core competencies (Poba-Nzaou et al., 2018; Sheehan et al., 2016). Clarifying the roles and associated core competencies allows for the mitigation of role tensions and role conflicts that arise from assuming multiple roles (Sheehan et al., 2016). Given the blurred boundaries surrounding these multiple roles and the resulting ambiguity of responsibilities, the clarification of roles and competencies becomes even more critical (Marchington, 2015).

One of the essential competencies expected of HR professionals besides expertise in people management is business acumen (Gerpott, 2015; Schiemann & Ulrich, 2017). Ulrich, Kryscynski, Ulrich, and Brockbank (2017) found that HR professionals should primarily be credible activists, strategic positioners, and paradox navigators in order to address tensions arising from the business. To reach this goal, Aust, Brandl, and Keegan (2015) suggested that HR professionals possess cognitive and behavioral competencies. Cunha, Gomes, Mellahi, Miner, and Rego (2019) referred to strategic agility as a core competency needed to anticipate and address tensions while remaining focused on goals. The importance of defining HR professionals' competencies is concomitant with defining those of HR departments in order to align business and HR strategies (Ulrich, Kryscynski, Ulrich, & Brockbank, 2017). A propensity for teamwork and self-awareness enables HR professionals to help employees capitalize on their strengths and meet their needs (Ulrich & Filler, 2015).

Heightened relationships and employee relations form some of the essential competencies for HR professionals. Equipped with core and differentiator competencies, HR professionals create talent value for internal and external stakeholders. Core competencies refer to business acumen, data and analytics, and talent translator. Differentiator competencies refer to business contributor, technology champion, internal boundary spanner, and external stakeholder relationships. The external stakeholder relationship competency, which involves developing partnerships with external stakeholders, goes beyond the scope of the HRBP's roles. Talent value forms a bridge between customers' demands and perceptions of products and the services rendered by talented employees (Sahay, 2014).

The need for a bridge between the external and internal environment requires a more comprehensive talent management approach and a talent value proposition. Sparrow and Makram (2015) defined a talent value proposition as "a mutually agreed-upon set of expectations between employer and employee, such as the level or type of work expected by the organization and the reciprocal level of development expected by the employee." (p. 5) According to Boudreau and Lawler (2014), a talent value proposition compels the HR profession to comply with rules, render professional services, and support talent decision making. The HR profession becomes accountable for decisions regarding metrics used, skills development, and performance of talents. Sparrow and Makram (2015) pointed out the importance of a talent value proposition in coordinating different HR and people management practices. Creating a talent value proposition based on enhanced strategic HR competencies and skills allows for a holistic approach toward the internal and external environment.

The core competencies job category contains job duties required to be an effective talent leader. There is a convergence of opinion regarding the need to acquire specific core competencies. The roles and competencies of HR professionals might be used interchangeably. Nadiv et al. (2017) stressed the need to not confuse the definition of roles with that of competencies. With the newer role of talent leader, the definition of roles and associated core competencies would give rise to a renewed set of roles and competencies that take new realities into account. To move away from the traditional HR roles, it has been suggested that HR professionals should move out of the HR function to gain different expertise and skills, reentering the HR function enriched by new experiences. Gaining such work experience outside the HR function would help HR professionals assume their HR role with an innovative spirit.

Human Resource, Talent Management, and Data Analytics

The creation of an effective talent value proposition premised in coordinated practices depends on the acquisition of critical skills. One major skill underpinning the coordination of practices involves metrics and talent analytics (Chaturvedi, 2016; Minbaeva, 2017). The use of HR and data analytics contributes to creating the right talent profiles and developing the processes of searching, identifying, acquiring, and hiring (Sahay, 2014; Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015). The use of metrics and talent analytics helps implement the processes of talent acquisition, succession planning, and employee retention while calculating the costs of hiring, developing, and attrition (Chaturvedi, 2016; Wang, 2018). The integration of talent analytics into HR practices also optimizes resources and investment returns (Sparrow & Makram, 2015; Zang & Ye, 2015). HR professionals' decision making is increasingly driven by the need for evidence-based data (Sahay, 2014; Schiemann & Ulrich, 2017). Decisions based on

evidence enable HR professionals to strengthen their voice at the senior management level (Pandita & Ray, 2018). The interchangeable use of HR, talent, workforce, and data analytics terms shows that the topic of HR and data analytics is still emerging (Marler & Boudreau, 2017). Minbaeva (2017) stressed HR professionals' lack of interest and readiness to make data analytics a priority. Marler and Boudreau (2017) cautioned that HR professionals might relinquish talent analytics to other functions such as finance and IT.

The HR profession's lack of talent analytics and information technology skills might result in inhibiting the implementation of a holistic approach to HR decision making (Marler & Boudreau, 2017). Cassar, Tracz-Krupa, Bezzina, and Przytuła (2018) pointed out the higher reliance on descriptive as opposed to predictive HR analytics. When only 9% of the organizations surveyed work on exploitable evidence-based data, 8% master the HR analytics competency. Effectively collecting and analyzing HR and talent data requires talent intelligence (Chaturvedi, 2016; Kinley & Ben-Hur, 2014). Talent intelligence involves applying sound judgment on the consolidation and correlation of appropriate data measurement (Chaturvedi, 2016; Kinley & Ben-Hur, 2014). Such an approach toward evidence-based decision making compels the HR profession to renounce traditional practices and enter the modern era of Big Data and talent analytics (Zang & Ye, 2015).

The adoption by the HR profession of contemporary HR practices based on talent analytics contributes to organizational performance (Marler & Boudreau, 2017). With the transition to contemporary HR practices based on new competencies and modern tools such as talent analytics, a new form of management has emerged known as agile talent management (Denning, 2018). To mitigate the transition to agile talent

management, organizations start with “Agile-lite” HR processes, enabling HR professionals to not use the complete set of talent analytics tools and processes right away (Denning, 2018, p. 3).

Transitioning to agile talent management involves ceding mechanistic approaches to organic approaches based on open systems and self-managed teams (Denning, 2018). Agile talent management serves the interests of all stakeholders (Denning, 2018). Given changing demographics and a multigenerational workforce, agile talent management allows organizations to implement workforce forecasts and planning (Elkeles et al., 2016; Martin, 2015). Workforce planning involves integrating the internal workforce into talent management strategies while attracting new talents through a culture of continuous learning and development (Martin, 2015). The combination of internal and external workforce enables organizations to fill key positions on a long-term basis, leading to organizational sustainability (Ogbazghi, 2017).

Agile talent management allows for organizational and sustainable performance (Martin, 2015; Naznin & Hussain, 2016). Through their strategic and active role in devising policies and practices that the internal and external environment into account, HR professionals contribute to “sustaining strategic agility,” as named by Ulrich. By adopting a holistic approach, HR professionals play a critical role in linking HR practices to organizational sustainability within the more general concepts of CSR and corporate social performance (Ehnert & Harry, 2012). The recognition by organizations of the role played by HR professionals in CSR and corporate social performance dovetails with the importance of repositioning the person at the core of HRM strategies (Fortier & Albert, 2015). Drawing attention to

people rather than resources gives a new meaning to human resources. Such a new a meaning for human resources translates the notions of altruism, fairness, and social responsibility into action, benefiting every person and society as a whole (Järlström, Saru, & Vanhala, 2018).

The Strategic Workforce Management Job Role

Strategic workforce management involves maximizing and developing employees' strengths and skills in alignment with the strategic objectives of the organization. Assuming the role of an employee champion, the HR professional supports employees' needs and rights, enhancing individual and organizational performance (Gerpott, 2015; Nadiv et al., 2017). As explained earlier, HR professionals face the challenge of prioritizing organizational and individual objectives (Gerpott, 2015; Nadiv et al., 2017). In order to ensure the optimal prioritization of objectives, HR professionals are expected to develop an agile workforce to meet evolving requirements at both the individual and organizational levels (Denning, 2018). An agile workforce refers to the importance of providing employees with skills, competencies, knowledge, and behaviors to adapt to changing organizational needs while developing their own career path (Denning, 2018). Developing an agile workforce contributes to organizational sustainability (Martin, 2015; Elkeles et al., 2016).

With talent management becoming increasingly critical, the need for an agile workforce gives rise to "a talent agile culture" (Martin, 2015, p. 113). To ensure an effective emergence of such culture, Zheltoukhova (2015) highlighted the importance of developing suitable people management systems and skills. The inclusion of all stakeholders' needs in HR practices contributes toward the effective implementation

of HRM and people management systems (Zheltoukhova, 2015). The development of HR systems that integrate policies and practices positively impacts organizational performance (Audia, 2016; Das & Kodwani, 2018). In alluding to general systems theory, Das and Kodwani (2018) suggested that the inclusion of career orientations in HRM systems positively impacts organizational performance. There is a call for HR professionals to go beyond HR job duties in order to ensure that all stakeholders meet their interests and needs (Zheltoukhova, 2015). Marchington (2015) noted the need for HR professionals to adopt an innovative as opposed to a conformist approach.

Central to the innovative approach is for HR professionals to convey the message that business goals and stakeholders' interests are intertwined (Marchington, 2015). The recognition of the intertwined nature of business goals and stakeholders' interests gives rise to long-term sustainability (Marchington, 2015). Additionally, part of stakeholders' interests is the adoption of corporate philanthropy and the implementation of work-life balance (Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015). The more organizational objectives and stakeholders' interests are given equal attention, the higher organizational performance and sustainability.

There is a lack of consensus as to which roles and job duties HR professionals are expected to assume. Given the ambiguity resulting from the blurred lines surrounding these multiple roles, HR professionals face various challenges (Marchington, 2015). These challenges lie in defining and prioritizing their responsibilities and gaining knowledge in business acumen without leaving out people and strategic workforce management (Elkeles et al., 2016).

Talent Management

In its attempt to get “the right person in the right job at the right time” (Cappelli & Keller, 2014, p. 306), talent management has become the main vector for organizations to sustain competitive advantage (Foster, 2015; Ogbazghi, 2017). According to Collings and Mellahi (2009), strategic talent management refers to “activities and processes that involve the systematic identification of key positions which 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.” (p. 304) Facing the challenge of adapting to a rapidly changing environment, organizations have shown a growing interest in talent management practices (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016; Sahay, 2014).

Many different understandings of talent management have developed due to this growing interest, causing confusion and different implementations of related practices (Nijs, Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, & Sels, 2014; Swailes, 2016). The term and title “War for Talent” were coined by McKinsey Company in a report in 1997, followed by a book in 2001 (Michaels, Handfield-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001). In times of highly competitive market conditions, the term “war” connotated the imperative for organizations to fight for the best talents, thus assuring the survival of their business (Swailes, 2016). The talent definition of an organization is directly related to the organization’s business strategy, which determines the types of HR practices

developed and thereby impacts employees' and organizational performance either positively or negatively (Nijs et al., 2014).

Organizations adopt an approach toward talent management and associated HR practices that arises from their underlying philosophies (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014; Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Through their underlying philosophies comprised of beliefs and mindsets that embody their culture, organizations give different meanings to talent management (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014; Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Depending on the meanings derived from their philosophies, organizations construct a talent management architecture (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Such talent management architecture is comprised of systems, processes, and practices to create value and reach their goals (Sparrow & Makram, 2015).

The contemporary approach toward talent management encapsulates a broadened scope, integrating people, practices, positions, strategic talent pools, and the interconnections thereof (Sparrow & Makram, 2015; Tatoglu et al., 2016). The importance of a broadened scope and the interconnections between components underpin both organizational and individual philosophies (Lesenyeho et al., 2018; Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014). Taking account of organizational and individual philosophies allows for the roles played by HR professionals in communicating talent management philosophies and their associated implementation to be put forward (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014).

Given the confusion surrounding the term *talent* and the concept *talent management*, research on the definitions and philosophies of this term and concept have emerged (Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, & González-Cruz, 2013; Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014). In referring to the etymology of the terms, Gallardo-Gallardo et al.

(2013) distinguished talent as an object from talent as a subject. Talent as an object refers to personal characteristics such as an innate ability as opposed to an acquired ability, underlying the notion that these abilities may or may not be taught and learned (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013; Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016).

Talent as a subject refers to a categorization of people, differentiating the high from the low performers (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013; Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016). The distinction of the high from the low performers had led to the issue of exclusiveness as opposed to inclusiveness in talent management (Al Ariss, Cascio, & Paauwe, 2014; Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014). Exclusiveness refers to the high potentials, high performers, and individuals occupying key positions in an organization (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016; Marchington, 2015). Inclusiveness refers to the importance of devising talent management practices that include every member of the organization regardless of their level of performance (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016; Marchington, 2015).

The issue of exclusiveness in talent management has grown in importance and has become controversial (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013; Tatoglu et al., 2016). Through exclusiveness, the distinction between high and low performers may motivate the latter to improve their performance, while also causing fear of failure and being detrimental to teamwork (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013). Regarding inclusiveness, while believing in all employees' potential to become high performers may likely generate positive effects, called the Pygmalion effect, not all employees may be motivated to pursue the highest performance (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014). The conflict between the exclusive and inclusive approach has direct

implications for the development of HR practices and for the HR professionals devising those practices (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014).

Given organizations' primary focus on results, different meanings of talent management ensue (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013). Organizations adopt either a "buying'-talent" (p. 297) perspective and identify talent or a "building'-talent" perspective (p. 297) and aim to develop talent (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013). Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen (2016) stressed the need for more research regarding the implementation of talent management practices, such as the implementation of the exclusive approach and its effectiveness thereof. Between defining, conceptualizing, and implementing talent and talent management processes, the definitions and measurement of talent, as explained above, represent the two issues that aroused particular interest among scholars and practitioners (Al Ariss et al., 2014; Nijs et al., 2014).

Despite the need for an integrated talent management strategy, there is a lack of information regarding the implementation of associated processes and HR professionals' responsibilities in delivering these processes (Lesenyeho et al., 2018). Empirical results regarding the lack of clarity in talent management processes are scarce (Ganaie & Haque, 2017). Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen, and Scullion (2019) noted the perennial challenge facing organizations in attracting and retaining employees with specific skills. More knowledge on how HR professionals implement talent management processes can contribute to organizations' preparedness and readiness for predictable and unpredictable events.

The Role of Talent in Succession/Workforce Planning

Succession planning is a fundamental HR process that relies on workforce demographics and predictive analytics (Barnett & Davis, 2008; Ramu, 2017; Ulrich & Filler, 2015). One of the talent leader's responsibilities involves using and applying HR data analytics to ensure effective succession planning. HR professionals face the challenge of employing the right metrics that align with organizations' objectives (Spofford, 2017). Integrating the two most critical components of talent management, succession planning and performance management, contributes to reaching organizational and individual goals (Makram et al., 2017).

While there have been different definitions of succession planning, Barnett and Davis (2008) stated that "succession planning refers to special efforts to invest in the best, highest performing, or highest potential talent at any organizational level of function, but particularly at or near the top" (p. 721). Succession planning is differentiated from workforce planning in that the latter aims to place all employees timely and effectively (Ramu, 2017; Reeves, 2010). Succession planning allows organizations to anticipate and prepare the leaders of tomorrow through structured leadership development and transfer of knowledge (Barnett & Davis, 2008; Khoreva, Vaiman, van Zalk, 2017; Ramu, 2017). Succession planning is a part of an integrated approach to talent management (Ali & Mehreen, 2019; Sablok, Stanton, Bartram, Burgess, & Boyle, 2017). Succession planning allows organizations to anticipate the renewal of leaders and the development of employees' career plans (Ramu, 2017; Sablok et al., 2017).

Too many organizations still fail to integrate succession planning, adopting a reactive as opposed to a proactive approach (Busine & Watt, 2005; Fatah, 2019).

These organizations limit the succession planning process to a replacement process, which excludes the importance of value creation (Busine & Watt, 2005). Sablok, Stanton, Bartram, Burgess, and Boyle (2017) found that large- rather than small-scale organizations are more prone to developing an integrated strategy to talent management that includes succession planning. The lack of an integrated strategy leads to overlooking needed capabilities and undermining employees' talents, thereby hampering organizational growth (Pila, Schultz, & Paul Dachapalli, 2016). The systematic approach to succession planning and talent management through annual talent reviews reinforces the development of an integrated strategy (Martin, 2015; Spofford, 2017).

Effective implementation of succession planning processes allows organizations to facilitate the retention of high performers while reducing staff turnover (Ali & Mehreen, 2019; Makram et al., 2017). Many organizations adopt an exclusive as opposed to an inclusive approach to retain high performers (Pila et al., 2016). One motivation for choosing an exclusive approach stems from the confusion surrounding the concepts of talent and talent management (Pila et al., 2016). Pila, Schultz, and Paul Dachapalli noted the distinction between exclusive employees, exclusive positions, and inclusive employees. While exclusive employees are the high potentials, exclusive positions are filled by the right employees, and inclusive employees are all employees across all levels who are considered potential talents (Pila et al., 2016).

Organizations are more likely to reach their goals if employees across all levels are given due regard as to their career aspirations (Pila et al., 2016; Ramu, 2017). Gerpott (2015) stressed the need for organizations to use CSR to mitigate their

inherent distinction between talented and less talented employees. The use of professional and personal development objectives that allow employees to acquire capabilities and skills is conducive to effective succession planning processes (Ali & Mehreen, 2019; Pila et al., 2016). Providing employees with learning and career development opportunities allows for job security and thus reduces staff turnover (Ali & Mehreen, 2019; Ramu, 2017).

The succession planning job category contains different job duties for an effective talent leader. While there is convergence on HR professionals' roles and responsibilities at the strategic level, there is room for greater clarity in the conceptualization of their job duties. Gerpott (2015) outlined that there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Sablok et al. (2017) stressed that using best practices might undermine the importance of contextual factors. Pila et al. (2016) highlighted the lack of decision-makers' critical thinking in developing effective processes. The issue of an exclusive as opposed to an inclusive approach to talent management remains unresolved (Nijs et al., 2014). Pila et al. also noted the challenge facing new talent leaders when taking on their new job functions.

Challenges in Reinventing Talent Management Processes

Researchers have highlighted the importance of revisiting the theories and philosophies on which organizations base and develop their HR practices (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014; Sparrow, 2019). Giving due regard to these foundational philosophies and theories allows for the cultivation and perpetuation of different levels of value creation (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Several popular media business website bloggers, such as HR.com, Loftus Bradford Blog, and McKinsey Quarterly,

have called for innovation in talent management job descriptions to meet today's organizational needs (Bafaro et al., 2017; Carcel Ribes, 2017; Charan et al., 2018).

Since the 2008 financial crisis, the global business environment has become more difficult to forecast, and traditional internal labor markets have begun to disintegrate (Claus, 2019; Khilji, Tarique, & Schuler, 2015). The challenge facing organizations in attracting and retaining talents has resulted in a loss of jobs and a decrease in organizational performance (Khilji et al., 2015). While the changing business landscape gave impetus to a need for new thinking in the HR sector and talent management, such as "The War for Talents" as coined by McKinsey Company in its 1997 report, there have been controversial debates between scholars and practitioners that leave the concept of talent management ambiguous (Claus, 2019). The resulting ambiguity has led organizations to not fully reap the benefits of talent management and not modernize their HR functions, thereby perpetuating the challenge of acquiring and retaining talents (Claus, 2019).

A key question within the business sector today is whether traditional HR functions can effectively add value to support a strong competitive advantage over competitors (Makram et al., 2017; Zehir et al., 2020). When questioning the meaning of value creation, Makram, Sparrow, and Greasley (2017) found that HR practitioners have difficulty explaining the relationship between implementing talent management systems and the organizational outcome thereof. There is a disconnect between conceptualizing and implementing talent management systems, and thus a lack of added value resulting from the implemented systems (Makram et al., 2017). The lack of meaning and understanding of talent management and value creation thereof hinders organizations from effectively implementing talent management systems, and

thereby impedes these organizations from sustaining competitive advantage (King & Vaiman, 2019). The lack of added value leads not only to a loss of competitive advantage, but also to a renewed motivation for organizations and HR practitioners to create new thinking and a new meaning for HR functions (Makram et al., 2017; Zehir et al., 2020).

In the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution characterized by the use of big data and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, the HR sector and the concept of talent management take on new meanings (Claus, 2019; Whysall et al., 2019; Zehir et al., 2020). While there is a persisting view of HR as a traditional function influenced by subjective and heuristic evaluations, the increasing call for an HR transformation leaves organizations with no choice but to adopt a new approach toward HR and talent management (Makram et al., 2017; Zehir et al., 2020). From subjective and heuristic evaluations, HR departments and the HR function become data-oriented, underpinned by the imperative to implement a strategic fit, aligning vertically with organizational strategies and horizontally with individual performance (Wright et al., 2018; Zehir et al., 2020).

Strategic and HR data-driven transformation that is conducive to organizational performance and sustainable competitive advantage has been a longstanding concern for academia and business (Wright et al., 2018; Zehir et al., 2020). While the need for a strategic fit goes back about three decades with the emergence of strategic human resource management (SHRM), organizations encounter difficulties in materializing such a fit (Wright et al., 2018; Zehir et al., 2020). Wright, Nyberg, and Ployhart (2018) stressed that despite growing attention toward the role played by SHRM toward organizational performance, there is a lack

of empirical research regarding the practices implemented by organizations. Makram et al. (2017) pointed out the overly sophisticated and numerous subject matters emanating from research on talent and talent management, causing a divide between scholars and practitioners. In spite of scholars attempting to examine the subject matters of HR transformation and talent management, these subjects remain unresolved (Wright et al., 2018).

In a world driven by information and knowledge, the role of HR at the strategic level is critical toward enabling organizations to make informed talent management decisions (Claus, 2019; Zehir et al., 2020). Mora-Soto et al. (2016) posited that organizations should manage knowledge and talent concomitantly to reach their goals. While there is wide agreement among scholars regarding the expanding HR role, HR professionals and organizations face challenges in keeping up with the rapidity with which technologies progress, causing disruptive effects on performance (Whysall et al., 2019). The magnitude of technological changes is such that it is no longer a matter of keeping up with the pace but a matter of doing things differently (Claus, 2019). Doing things differently calls for new paradigms and overhauling organizational structure and culture (Zehir et al., 2020). Such a technological burden causes disruption in that the HR sector is traditionally perceived as dealing with administrative and transactional activities, which makes it challenging for HR professionals to re-engineer the profession and develop HR and talent analytics capabilities and skills while also engaging at the strategic level (Claus, 2019).

Such an HR transformation underlying the need for both a strategic fit and talent data analytics dovetails with the importance of going beyond organizational

goals (Claus, 2019; King & Vaiman, 2019). King and Vaiman (2019) suggested that organizations adopt an integrated micro-macro talent management strategy to sustain competitive advantage. Rather than implementing talent management systems and practices that focus on the organization, talent management establishes its effectiveness by interrelating with the external environment, which is at the macrolevel and beyond the organization (King & Vaiman, 2019). The highly competitive environment and tremendous demographic shifts constitute an imperative for organizations to consider global talent management at the macrolevel (Khilji et al., 2015).

Given the socially constructed organizational context, organizations give different meanings to talent management depending on whether the focus is given to the micro, meso, or macrolevel, that is, at the individual, unit, or organizational level (Wiblen & McDonnell, 2019). Vaiman, Sparrow, Schuler, and Collings (2018) went further by outlining the need to extend talent management not only beyond the organizational level but also at the governmental and societal levels. Precluding the external environment from talent management compels organizations to use best and potentially unsuitable practices, inhibiting the full potential thereof (King & Vaiman, 2019). The use of traditional practices may compel organizations to face a continual supply and demand imbalance (Makarius & Srinivasan, 2017; Whysall et al., 2019).

The inability of traditional HR functions to account for uncertainty in demand and disruptions in the talent supply chain has led many organizations to poor financial performance (Makarius & Srinivasan, 2017). The highly competitive environment compels organizations to transition from a reactive to a proactive talent management approach (Makarius & Srinivasan, 2017). Such an approach calls for a holistic view

of talent management that includes a supply of skills to talent attraction, capability development, management development, talent mobility, career progression, and succession planning (Makarius & Srinivasan, 2017). By developing the model of talent supply chain management (TSCM) based on the concept of supply chain management, Makarius and Srinivasan (2017) outlined the importance of organizations taking into account the uncertain and risky labor market conditions in order to meet their needs.

Including the conditions brought by the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Whysall et al.'s (2019) study corroborated Makarius and Srinivasan's (2017) study. Such a rationale for TSCM dovetails with the need to develop multilevel talent management processes (King & Vaiman, 2019). In a fast-moving environment, organizations manage different types of contracts, regular versus contingent contracts, internally versus externally recruited, while also ensuring legal compliance (Claus, 2019). Unless they adopt a multi- and cross-level talent management approach that takes account of the internal and external environment as well as the business and HR strategies, organizations will find themselves with skills mismatch and a shortage of human capital (King & Vaiman, 2019; Ngamsirijit, 2019).

Maintaining Competitive Advantage Through Value-Driven Talent

New market realities marked by globalization, new technologies, and high global talent turnover and shortages compel organization leaders to revisit their HR approach to sustain competitive advantage (Obedgiu, 2017; Sparrow, 2020). While undergoing major transformations over the past century underpinned by various concepts, going from labor welfare to personnel management, HRM, SHRM, and digital HRM, history shows that the HR sector has continuously striven to rethink its

fundamentals in order to enable organizations to reach their goals and sustain competitive advantage (Zehir et al., 2020). Makram et al. (2017) distinguished the definitional aspect of value from the process of value creation in order to understand how organizations transform their talents into value and thereby input into output, transitioning from value capture to value retention. In addition to value capture and value retention of the value creation process, the emphasis is placed on value leverage, amplification, and value protection to show the importance of developing and protecting the captured value from talents, and thereby sustain competitive advantage (Makram et al. 2017; Sparrow & Makram, 2015). The effectiveness of the value creation process toward talent management is ensured if the value created for customers outweighs the cost incurred to create that value, thus achieving competitive advantage (Makram et al., 2017).

Corporate executives struggling to maintain a competitive advantage in today's volatile global market continue to lose value-driven talent to competitors due to outdated HR practices (King & Vaiman, 2019; Rotolo et al., 2018; Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Given the subjective perceptions of organization leaders and HR practitioners regarding talent management and the value that they give to talent management, there is a disconnect between these actors' understanding of talent management and how talent management systems and processes yield results (Makram et al., 2017). Such a disconnect shows the challenge facing organizations in developing an effective talent management architecture, which hinders these organizations from sustaining competitive advantage (Makram et al., 2017).

The pursuit of value-driven talent to sustain competitive advantage in a fast-moving environment compels organizations to analyze labor markets external to the

organization and engage, develop, and reward their employees internally (Dhir, 2019; van der Sluis, 2018). This is the so-called talent value chain approach (van der Sluis, 2018). Adopting the talent value chain approach enables organizations to transform their talents as capabilities (input) into value (output) and productivity (van der Sluis, 2018). The talent value chain derives from an effective talent management architecture, which is dependent upon a well-defined set of systems, processes, and practices that organizations deem valuable to reach their goals (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). The value associated with the set of systems, processes, and practices resides in the “unique set of knowledge, capabilities, contributions, commitment, skills, competencies, and abilities possessed by an organization’s talent” (Sparrow & Makram, 2015, p. 250).

To define the unique sets of capabilities and associated systems, Schreuder and Noorman (2019a) proposed that organizations differentiate generic talent management from strategic talent management to ensure that value-driven talents possessed by an organization focus primarily on the business strategy in order to gain advantages over competitors. Focusing primarily on the business strategy allows for the building of dynamic capabilities at the organizational level rather than the individual level (Schreuder & Noorman, 2019a). While focusing on business strategy, talent management aims to address both organizations’ and individuals’ needs (Ganaie & Haque, 2017). Associated with the sets of systems and capabilities is the identification of key positions that enable organizations to reach their goals (Fatah, 2019; Ganaie & Haque, 2017; Schreuder & Noorman, 2019a). An effective talent management architecture based on dynamic capabilities and key positions enables

organizations to anticipate future needs and sustain competitive advantage (Fatah, 2019; Ganaie & Haque, 2017; Schreuder & Noorman, 2019a).

Identifying Gaps in the Literature on Talent Leader's Competencies to Support Organizational Competitive Advantage

Given the shifting nature of work with ongoing labor market changes, the human resources sector may need a new job role within their talent acquisition team, one that supports organizational competitive advantage through the long-term retention of value-driven talent (dos Santos & Pedro, 2020; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2019). Dos Santos and Pedro (2020) stressed HR professionals' lack of competencies and skills, which hampers the development of innovative insights and thereby innovative human resource practices that meet both the organization's and employees' needs. The education level and expertise of HR professionals have a direct impact on modernizing HR practices (Garavan et al., 2019). Despite the numerous studies on how organizations develop talent management processes that meet their needs, there is a lack of empirical talent management research regarding contextual issues (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2019). Neglecting contextual issues such as globalization, new technologies, and socio-economic and demographic changes may hamper organizations from developing innovative talent management practices and thereby negatively impact the effectiveness of the talent management architecture (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2019; King & Vaiman, 2019).

Of critical importance are the competencies and competency characteristics that talent leaders should demonstrate in order to drive value in talent management (Beatty, 2019; Galagan, Hirt, & Vital, 2019; Sparrow & Makram, 2015). While there is a wide consensus of opinion regarding the need for competencies to drive value in

talent management, the identification of such competencies varies (Beatty, 2019; Galagan et al., 2019). For example, while the business acumen competency has been claimed as the top-priority competency for HR and talent leaders, it is now just one of a set of desired competencies (Beatty, 2019). “In order to interpret the different levels of competencies objectively, behavioral anchors for personnel must be specified in such a way, that they describe, on the basis of distinct behavior patterns. If one combines competence models with different jobs and determines the required competency levels, this results in job specifications that are ultimately assigned to each position in the company. These job specifications or competency characteristics are an essential part of a talent leader’s profile” (Trost, 2020, p. 18).

Several reasons may explain this variance in the identification of competencies. The first reason for the decrease in the need for business acumen stems from the difficulty in associating business with the HR field and potentially the lack of interest by HR and talent practitioners in acquiring business acumen (Beatty, 2019; Cohen, 2015). Associated with this lack of interest in business acumen is the unclear definition of this competency. Over time, competencies take the form of clusters and categories of competencies whose definitions vary across cultures and organizations (Beatty, 2019; Galagan et al., 2019). A second reason is the lack of efficient training, whereby on-the-job learning prevails over educational training opportunities (Beatty, 2019). The obsolescence of educational models prevents individuals, HR, and talent leaders from acquiring the needed competencies and skills (Claus, 2019). A third reason lies in the evolution of the work environment, and the need to change the HR profession as business and societal needs evolve (Beatty, 2019). New market realities

call for an overhaul of labor with the emergence of new professions, thereby leading to the need for renewal of models (Okros, 2020).

One major finding from research on new competency models is the need for a broadened HR role whereby HR and talent leaders are essential in enabling organizations to reach their goals and sustain competitive advantage (Claus, 2019). Galagan, Hirt, and Vital (2019) outlined the less tactical and more holistic role played by talent development professionals. The need for a comprehensive and holistic HR and talent leader role involves transitioning from competencies to capabilities. While competency refers to “having the knowledge and skills necessary to perform a job, capability is about adapting and flexing to meet future needs” (Galagan et al., 2019, p. x). Elkeles, Phillips, and Phillips (2016) underscored the need for competency characteristics that are “knowledge, behavioral skills, competency processing (IQ), personality traits, values, motives, and occasionally other perceptual capabilities. Competencies are a critical part of leading a talent management process.” (p. 185). The objective of the new HR and talent leaders equipped with capabilities and competency characteristics is to help organizations become agile and to transform, adapt, and anticipate the future while also accompanying employees through their development and growth as individuals (Galagan et al., 2019).

To reach this goal and develop a competency model that drives results and value for both organizations and stakeholders, competencies need to focus on organizational, professional, and personal capabilities (Galagan et al., 2019). The organizational category includes capabilities that align with the business needs and enable organizations to reach their goals, such as leadership, business knowledge, and technology. Organizations should aim to develop training programs that align with

their business and goals rather than implementing programs based on trends and those adopted by other organizations. Swiercz (2016) developed the FourSquare Model, enabling organizations to make informed decisions to sustain competitive advantage by clustering competencies into four categories, namely operations, finance, marketing, and human resources. The professional category includes capabilities that enable employees to gain professional knowledge and self-management skills to drive their careers and change and adapt as the labor market evolves (Elkeles et al., 2016).

In the same way that HR and talent leaders aim to develop agile organizations, these leaders equip individuals with agility, inculcating the importance of life-long learning to prepare them to face the future (Claus, 2019). Acquiring such capabilities allows for growing intellectual capital, which enables individuals to make a difference and add value to the organization and themselves (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). The personal category of competencies mainly includes interpersonal skills and soft capabilities that enable individuals to develop behaviors that align with the values and culture of the organization (Galagan et al., 2019). Depending on the organization's goals and values, there is a call to assess the extent to which competency characteristics, as defined earlier, need to be determined at the level of the division, unit, function, or other levels (Elkeles et al., 2016).

Through innovative job design, job specifications and competencies for modernized talent leadership roles can be developed to add value to today's organization by addressing competency characteristics needed within the area of technology, dynamic capability, culture, governance, process, emotional intelligence, and strategy within the talent management process (Garavan et al., 2019; King & Vaiman, 2019). Referring to international human resource development, Garavan et

al. (2019) outlined the effective practices and processes that emanate from the interplays of actors across the levels of an ecosystem, and consequently the innovative dynamic capabilities that emerge from these interplays. One example may be the inclusion of cognitive competencies driving the organizational strategy, such as positive feedback, creativity, well-being and happiness (dos Santos & Pedro, 2020). Another example may be the adoption of a macrolevel and cross-level, rather than a microlevel, talent management approach, which enables HR professionals and their organizations to widen the sphere of opportunities (King & Vaiman, 2019). Taking innovative practices into account and addressing them as job specifications for modernized talent leadership roles allows for value-added talent retention to support organizational competitive advantage (Claus, 2019).

Scholars noted a literature gap on how to create an innovative talent leadership role that is linked to meeting macrolevel outcomes and supporting competitive advantage, rather than just passively reciprocating to micro and mesolevel business needs (Sparrow, 2019; Wiblen & McDonnell, 2019). Given the socially constructionist nature of how organizations define talent and develop talent management practices, organizations tend to operate at the micro and mesolevel and limit themselves to adopting best practices (King & Vaiman, 2019; Wiblen & McDonnell, 2019). The competency characteristics for such a talent management position has yet to be introduced or conceptually developed within the talent management body of knowledge or scholarly literature (Claus, 2019). Corporate executives have sparse information on the competency characteristics for an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent

to support organizational competitive advantage (Claus, 2019; dos Santos & Pedro, 2020; Sparrow, 2019).

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter included a review and critical analysis of the scholarly literature on the main concepts of talent and talent management and how a knowledge gap in the competency characteristics for an innovative talent leader role may limit the long-term value of acquired talent (Makram et al., 2017; Sparrow & Makram, 2015). The literature revealed the talent management challenges facing organizations to support the long-term retention of value-driven talent and sustain competitive advantage (Cascio & Aguinis, 2018; King & Vaiman, 2019). The literature search strategy was presented to show the databases, journals, and key search terms that were utilized for the literature review. This chapter also included the conceptual framework derived from two key conceptual models that focus on aligning with the purpose of the study.

Research on the need for redefined job specifications and competencies for an innovative talent leader allows for the development and implementation of an effective talent management architecture. The lack of definitional clarity of the concepts of talent and talent management remains a critical problem confronting organizations (Claus, 2019; Sparrow, 2019). Another problem lies in aligning business and HR strategies that hamper the development of an integrated talent management strategy (Ganaie & Haque, 2017). There is wide agreement among researchers that talent management processes should be developed at the macrolevel in order to support the long-term retention of value-driven talent and sustain competitive advantage (Sparrow, 2019; Wiblen & McDonnell, 2019).

Chapter 3 is devoted to the methodology and includes a discussion of the research method for qualitative, descriptive multiple-case study research. The chapter includes the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, and the methodology, encompassing the processes for recruitment, participation, and data collection. Chapter 3 also includes information about data analysis, and addresses issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to describe talent management experts' views on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage. To meet the purpose of the study and address this documented knowledge gap among corporate executives on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader, and consistent with the qualitative paradigm, I used a multiple case study design (Yin, 2017) to collect data from a purposeful sample of talent management experts. This study was important because it addressed an under-researched area of using an innovative job design method to develop competency characteristics for a talent leadership role linked to meeting macro-level outcomes, rather than just passively reciprocating to micro and mesolevel business needs (Sparrow, 2019; Wiblen & McDonnell, 2019). My goal for this study's research was to contribute original, qualitative data from study participants to answer the central research question and utilize a constructivist lens to extend the theoretical foundations of the study's conceptual framework (Sparrow & Makram, 2015; Schreuder & Noorman, 2019a).

Chapter 3 provides detailed information on the research method and rationale for conducting an exploratory multiple case study, as well as the central research question guiding this empirical investigation. This chapter presents a foundational rationale for the participant selection strategy, data collection strategies, data analysis, role of the researcher, ethical considerations, and a summary of the main points of the research method.

Research Design and Rationale

Browne and Keeley (2014) recommended that a researcher ask the right questions in qualitative research that address the purpose of their study and drive the research strategy. Consistent with the purpose of this study, the central research question was as follows:

RQ: How do talent management experts describe the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-added talent to support organizational competitive advantage?

A fundamental paradigm shift has occurred with the scope of the business leader's role in their business ecosystem in order to thrive in today's uncertain and volatile global marketplace (Gitsham, 2019). A new generation of business leaders have started to recognize the need for taking a more systematic approach to the selection and development of talent that should be taken up by a senior-level decision-maker (Cascio & Aguinis, 2018; Venkatesh, 2016). This shift in how talent management is approached will require organizations to deliberately look for some innovative ways to make decisions about recruitment, career development planning, high potentials and succession planning, while challenging the ways hiring occurred in the past. Such an innovative approach will also require reassessing and, where necessary, reformulating the kinds of HR processes and indicators that supply the management information sometimes used when making talent management decisions (Adamsen & Swailes, 2019).

Talent management scholars recommended that the new talent leader who takes on such responsibilities should be adept at value capture and development and the retention of value-driven talent. Sparrow and Makram (2015) suggested placing a

talent leader in a brokering position across departments to drive this innovative talent management architecture, removed from the HR department. Getting this new talent leadership role right has become critical to whether an organization will smoothly navigate a business future dominated by meeting macro talent management goals and the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Vaiman et al., 2018; Whysall et al., 2019). More research is needed on the perspectives of talent management experts on innovative job design and competency characteristics for modernized talent leadership roles that will add value to today's organization by addressing issues of technology, dynamic capability, culture, governance, process, emotional intelligence, and embedding a macrolevel strategy within the talent management process (Garavan et al., 2019; King & Vaiman, 2019).

The nature of this study was qualitative in order to address the purpose of the study and provide data for the central question that drove this research, which was drawn on an interpretivist paradigm based on the assumption that people and groups construct their own social reality (Cooper & White, 2012). Interpretivists also assert that the perspectives of others are embedded in biographical, organizational, and social contexts that are meaningfully connected from their interpretation of a social phenomenon (Tracy, 2019). I used an exploratory multiple case study as the research design for this study given that the study's purpose called for a deeper understanding of management experts' views on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is to retain value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage (see Yin, 2017). Qualitative research offers scholars opportunities to describe how to analyze business decisions and how to explore the reasons behind various aspects of behavior within organizations.

Qualitative sampling strategies include purposeful sampling, which ensures an in-depth understanding of a case study's collected data (Robinson, 2014).

In choosing the case study research design, I considered other qualitative designs such as phenomenology and narrative inquiry, yet I deemed that they would be ineffective in answering the research question due to the methodological limitations of uncritical personal storytelling (see Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). Yin's (2017) recommendation regarding this matter was that "the case study method is pertinent when your research addresses either a descriptive question (what happened?) or an explanatory question (how or why did something happen?)" (p. 112). I chose the multiple case study design for this study rather than narrative, phenomenological, or ethnographic qualitative research strategies. Unlike other designs that are directed toward the focus of the study, the multiple case study design focuses on contemporary phenomena within real-life settings beyond the unit of analysis (Eisenhardt, Graebner, & Sonenshein, 2016). Phenomenology is focused primarily on the meaning of experience, while ethnography and narrative inquiry are focused on collecting data through narrative storytelling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The multiple case study design is characterized by in-depth, holistic, within-case and cross-case inquiry of contemporary experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Yin, 2017), making it the best approach for this study.

A multiple case study investigating a social phenomenon can involve individuals living in the specific social context as separate units of study (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2017). Multiple case studies differ from other research designs such as surveys and experiments (Yin, 2017). While surveys aim at collecting data from participants randomly selected regarding a particular research problem, experiments involve

controlling variables for testing hypotheses (Yin, 2017). The use of multiple case studies involves the replication of different cases. The data collected from and conclusions resulting from all cases are compared and contrasted for further analysis through a cross-case synthesis method (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2017).

To address this study's problem, the multiple case study and the selection of the cases were categorized into two types of selection, namely the *literal replication* and the *theoretical replication*. While the former means that case studies selected yield similar results, the latter means that case studies are selected to predict contradictory results. In a multiple case study, the "case" itself may be a person, event, entity, or other unit of analysis (Yin, 2017). Taking the example of a case as a person, a single case concerns one individual, whereas a multiple case study involves more than one person. The purpose of this process is to replicate the same results across multiple cases by exploring the differences and similarities between and within cases. The evidence resulting from the replication process is considered robust and reliable and can be utilized in building theory from cases (Welch, Piekkari, Plakoyiannaki, & Paavilainen-Mäntymäki, 2020; Yin, 2017).

Role of the Researcher

As a qualitative researcher, it is my ethical responsibility to ensure, disclose, and discuss reflexivity involving my assumptions and personal biases on the central phenomena of the study (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2017). I strived to remain an observer throughout the research process and focus on providing feedback and collecting, tracking, and analyzing data to ensure that my involvement did not cause undue bias in the data collection and analysis. I provided participants the opportunity for feedback through the semistructured interview process, which made my role

critical in creating a precise audit trail throughout the course of the study (see Mann, 2016). Reflexivity offsets preconceived notions about the research by the researcher while audit trails support the participants' perspectives (Billups, 2014).

To manage any personal biases, I also ensured that the resources drawn from the literature review arose from different databases and different sets of relevant keywords (see Dowd & Johnson, 2020). Although I intended to give participants clear instructions regarding the research problem and topic, I strived to not provide any leading questions or explanations that might induce biased responses. From an ethical perspective, while the anonymity and confidentiality of the data were respected at all times, panelists were requested to agree to the terms of an informed consent upon acceptance to participate in the study. Albeit not part, a priori, of the data collection process, power relationships between the researcher and panelists were devoid of any supervisory roles (Kee & Schrock, 2020).

Methodology

A multiple case study allows the researcher to investigate a social phenomenon, comparing and contrasting the differences between cases while considering each participant as a separate entity (Yin, 2017). Qualitative research can provide insights into the dynamics that support conceptual relationships as well as “how” and “why” they were developed (Tsang, 2013). I analyzed the cases in this study using replication logic; although each case stood alone, replication offered contrasts and thus further theoretical constructs (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Gehman et al., 2018). The qualitative method for probing questions, which also contributes to originality, can be pursued through multiple sources of data (Yin, 2017).

Six to 10 participants recruited through purposive sampling is sufficient to identify important themes and practical applications in qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I designed research and interview questions to gain a deeper understanding of talent management experts' views on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage. A template for reporting the findings of this multiple case study provided uniformity for the analysis of the similarities and contrasts of the participants' views (Noor, 2008).

Triangulation provides a method for integrating multiple data sources and balances the strengths and weaknesses of each independent approach, thereby strengthening the credibility of a study (Guion et al., 2011; Wilson, 2014). Flick (2002) stated that "triangulation is less a strategy for validating results and procedures than an alternative to validation which increases scope, depth, and consistency in methodological proceedings" (p. 227). In this study, interviews, journaling field notes, and archival data served as data sources. Purposeful participant selection was a foundational component of the research design of this study in providing answers to a tightly scoped research question (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Ravitch & Carl, 2020).

I used a qualitative multiple case study to allow the in-depth study of holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 2017). Yin (2017) proposed that employing the case study approach is most appropriate when asking how and why questions and when the study is bound by time. Scholars have recommended that researchers use a multiple case study approach that includes more than one case when the goal of the study is to make an original contribution to a theoretical or conceptual

framework and provide a rich, powerful picture of human interaction as compared to a single case study (Eisenhardt, 2020; Welch et al., 2020). Cross-case synthesis as an analytic procedure is recommended when analyzing data in a multiple case study in order to strengthen external validity and the trustworthiness of the data and thus make the research more vigorous (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Yin, 2017).

Designing a case study protocol allows researchers to augment the trustworthiness of their study (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2017). The method and research design delineate the process and system of conducting a multiple case study (Tsang, 2013). The research design includes research questions and interview questions that are used to reveal the participants' interview data, participant selection logic, data collection and field procedures, an identified data analysis technique, and a template to follow for reporting the multiple case study (Stake, 2013). The research design for this study began with the participant selection logic.

Participant Selection Logic

Population. Given that the study purpose calls for a detailed description of talent management experts' views on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage, the population from which this study's participants were selected were all academics and authors of peer-reviewed papers published in reputable scientific journals within the talent management subject area indexed on Google Scholar between 2010 and 2020. The total number of such peer-reviewed scholarly publications is approximately 504,000 (via Google Scholar). A total of 10 participants were recruited from this population as the purposeful sample for this multiple case study. This number of participants falls within the recommended

range of 6-10 participants for a qualitative study (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Schram, 2006). A larger sample size could have weakened a deep investigation of the phenomena under study, while the upper limit of 10 participants ensured that saturation of the data would be achieved faster (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Sampling strategy. To identify and recruit participants for this multiple case study, I used Yin's (2017) concept of replication logic, which states that each case in a multiple case study is treated as a distinct experiment and as a unit of analysis (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Since case studies do not involve experimental controls or manipulation, this method is suitable for the purpose of this study to gain a deeper understanding of talent management experts' views on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage. Participants for this case study were recruited using purposeful criterion and network sampling strategies. If the need arose to supplement the number of participants until data saturation had been reached, snowball sampling was utilized by asking a few key participants who already fulfilled the criteria for the study to refer others who would also potentially meet the criteria (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Sampling criteria. Expert interviews are now frequently considered a standard qualitative research method (Bogner et al., 2018). Flick (2018) wrote that the expert interview is situated within the qualitative paradigm, and that expert interviews can also follow standardized communication patterns as applied in quantitative research (surveys). Participants recruited for this study were talent management experts meeting the following inclusion criteria: academics who (a) authored at least 5 peer-reviewed papers published in scientific journals and indexed on Google Scholar

between 2010 and 2020 when undergoing a word search under the terms *talent management, talent value chain, talent acquisition, talent analytics, talent supply chain management, talent value architecture, strategic talent management, value capture, and value-driven talent*; (b) have terminal degrees from accredited institutions; (c) have conducted extensive studies on management, talent management, and human resource management; and (d) possess deep knowledge regarding their experiences with the topic of the study (Bogner et al., 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The specific participant selection logic ensured that all potential participants met the minimum requirements for recruitment and subsequent participation in the study through in-depth interviews.

Sampling selection. The process for identifying and selecting participants in order to gather information on their views through interviews and thus provide answers to the study's central research question enabled an in-depth investigation of the phenomenon under study (Tracy, 2019). I actively worked to select participants through criterion and network sampling who could potentially provide the richest data, and started to establish rapport once I was assured of their full understanding of the phenomenon and ability to provide in-depth data for analysis and interpretation. This criterion-based sampling resulted in a heterogeneous group of participants in order to support maximum variation sampling (Benoot, Hannes, & Bilsen, 2016). Maximum variation sampling in qualitative research relies on the researcher's judgment to select participants with diverse characteristics in order to ensure the presence of maximum variability within the primary data, which in this multiple case study are the responses to the interview protocol (Palinkas et al., 2015). The focus of the chosen sampling strategy is to ensure a participant pool that can contribute to a

sound understanding of the central study topic and not just generalizations (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Sample size and saturation. A small sample of 10 participants were chosen for this multiple case study in order to increase the chances of reaching saturation faster and ensure a trustworthy study that was of high quality and had validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The number of participants chosen for this study provided a data pool to increase the credibility and dependability of study findings. I was actively engaged in selecting the most potentially data-rich participants through the LinkedIn professional platform and began establishing rapport once the participants were identified as fully understanding the phenomenon, enhancing the probability that they would provide in-depth data.

I formulated the participant selection logic for this study based on similar studies, in order to choose participants who would offer a deep understanding of the central study topic and not generalize (Baxter & Jack, 2008). For example, to describe experts' views on the manifestations of precarious employment in Flanders, Belgium, Bosmans, Hardonk, De Cuyper, Louckx, and Vanroelen (2016) recruited 14 experts of various profiles, organizations, and knowledge through snowball and intentional sampling. The variety of experts' profiles allowed for reaching saturation of the data and ensured that the use of semistructured interviews on the subject matter of precarious employment would yield in-depth qualitative data (Bosmans, Hardonk, de Cuyper, Louckx, & Vanroelen, 2016). Similarly, Costa, Veloso, Loizou, and Arnab (2018) recruited 10 experts in the field of game and gamification to explore the way game-based learning programs should be designed in order to support healthy aging and lifestyles. Conducting semistructured interviews with experts knowledgeable

about various subject matters such as games, education, psychology, and aging contributed to yielding rich answers while also allowing the authors to reach saturation of the data (Costa, Veloso, Loizou, & Arnab, 2018).

Instrumentation

The goal of instrumentation in a case study is to gather data from several sources through reliable data collection instruments and processes in order to answer the research questions posed in the study (Yin, 2017). Thus, gathering appropriate instrumentation that aligns with the purpose of the study, provides answers to qualitative research questions, and contributes original data to the conceptual framework is an important process in qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Themes emerged through the suitable choice of instrumentation that supported the purpose of the study, which is to describe talent management experts' views on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage.

The data collection strategy of the multiple case study involves collecting evidence from multiple sources (Yin, 2017). Three sources of data were used in this study: 1) a semistructured interview protocol (Appendix B) whose items were designed and standardized by previous researchers; 2) archival data in the form of business and industry reports, and media articles on innovative talent management (Yin, 2017); and 3) journaling/reflective field notes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) kept by the researcher throughout the data collection process. Multiple data collection methods from multiple sources of evidence were utilized for methodological triangulation.

Semistructured interview protocol. Rigorous data collection procedures primarily influence the results of studies (Stake, 2013). As a standard data collection method in qualitative studies, the semistructured interview aims to provide a deeper understanding of a phenomenon or phenomena from the participants' perspectives. The careful selection of a qualitative, open-ended, unstructured interview guide allows for enhanced trustworthiness of the data produced in a qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this multiple case study, the interview protocol addressed the purpose of the study and answer the study's central research question:

RQ: How do talent management experts describe the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-added talent to support organizational competitive advantage?

This study's interview guide (Appendix B) consists of 14 open-ended questions and prompts grounded in the conceptual framework and literature applied to talent management by Sparrow and Makram (2015) who outlined it as a value-creating "process through which the organization attracts, acquires and accumulates valuable and unique talent resources and exploits their potential to create value" (Sparrow & Makram, 2015, p. 250). This perspective of talent management includes the processes of *value capture*, where talents are integrated into the organization-specific context; *value leverage*, including talent development; and *value protection*, focusing on talent retention (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). The goal of exploring talent management experts' views on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent is to propose a new conceptual/theoretical proposition for the development of a talent leader within a

corporation who can create and capture value from its talent in order to achieve competitive advantage.

It has long been recognized that “talent management” has struggled to establish itself as a distinct field of academic study largely due to a lack of theoretical development (Swales, 2016; Lumme-Tuomala, 2019); it is a field well-stocked with prescriptive and normative suggestions but one characterized by a lack of theory (Anlesinya & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2020). Despite empirical studies involving reliable quantitative data, there is no coherent frame to accumulate and organize knowledge. By exploring talent management experts’ scholarly views through semistructured interviews, this study contributed to the talent management literature by presenting a much needed scholarly and theoretical lens to define talent leader competencies that support an organization’s competitive advantage.

The interview question items are based on an interview protocol developed by Harsch and Festing (2020) for their study titled: “Dynamic talent management capabilities and organizational agility - A qualitative exploration,” published in the Wiley peer-reviewed journal *Human Resource Management*. The purpose of Harsch and Festing’s (2020) study was to explain how talent management can shape talents according to company-specific agility needs and thus contribute to gaining competitive advantage in dynamic firm environments. A total of 24 semistructured interviews were conducted with senior talent management professionals working in Germany. This study contributed to the theoretical and empirical discussion by addressing the specific talent management challenges of an increasingly dynamic environment.

Harsch and Festing's (2020) study was guided by the perspective applied to talent management by Sparrow and Makram (2015), who theorized that "an organization attracts, acquires and accumulates valuable and unique talent resources and exploits their potential to create value" (Sparrow & Makram, 2015, p. 250). This includes the processes of *value capture*, where talents are integrated into the organization-specific context; *value leverage*, including talent development; and *value protection*, focusing on talent retention (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Harsch and Festing's (2020) work was important developmental work on the measures of all the variables depicted in Sparrow and Makram's (2015) framework. One of the study's implications for future research includes replicating the study within other contexts to gain a broad perspective of results and enrich theory in different contexts (Harsch & Festing, 2020). I followed this recommendation for replication in developing the present research design in this dissertation. Permission to use interview items from Harsch and Festing's (2020) interview protocol from Prof. Harsch can be viewed in Appendix C.

A preliminary field test and quality audit was conducted on the researcher-developed interview questions in order to analyze and determine whether the study's interview items would produce results that can answer the study's research questions (Stake, 2013). Two experienced academic researchers and methodologists were recruited to determine the credibility, dependability, and applicability of the interview questions and procedures to gather data for answering the central research question (Golafshani, 2003). The two auditors were Professor Paul Thurman of Columbia University, USA, and Dr. Marcos Komodromos of the University of Nicosia, Cyprus. Both are established academic researchers who are experienced in utilizing the expert

interview method and knowledgeable in the talent management area. Prof. Thurman is a published author in both the research methodology and human resources areas (e.g., Ference & Thurman, 2009; Nandan, Halkias, & Thurman, 2018; Thurman, 2008) and Prof. Komodromos is a widely published author in the talent management/human resources area (e.g. Komodromos, 2014; Komodromos, Halkias, & Harkiolakis, 2019; Nandan et al., 2018). Both subject matter experts confirmed that the interview questions were appropriate to meet the research purpose and align with a multiple case study design. Both experts agreed that the length of the interview protocol was adequate to support a multiple case study and data analysis (Stake, 2013). This field testing established trustworthiness and credibility of the study's qualitative findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability, which is similar to external validity, adds strength to this study's instrumentation through the utilization of a collection protocol that can be useful in extending theory (Stake, 2013). Transferability of qualitative data is deemed to be validated when one study's findings can be proven to be used in other settings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Many qualitative studies are challenged by this process as their findings are often limited to specific settings and individuals (Tracy, 2019). The multiple case study approach of this study replicates the same findings across multiple cases by exploring the differences and similarities between and within cases, creating "robust and reliable" evidence (Yin, 2017). This multiple case study's replication logic supports the transferability of findings from the study past the participant sample (Stake, 2013).

Archival data: business, industry, and media reports. Triangulation is used as an analytic technique and central aspect of case study research in order to

authenticate qualitative data during fieldwork, such as the interviews in the study along with other sources of evidence in addition to the data analysis (Yin, 2017). Triangulation plays a pivotal role during the qualitative research process that goes beyond the objective of a methodological technique in corroborating or conflicting ideas and data (Guion et al., 2011). For the present study, the objective was to capture and record the actual data directly from participants and triangulate the results of the qualitative interviews with archival documents in the form of business and industry reports on innovative trends in strategic talent management from respected industry and business sources such as Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, Ernst & Young, Human Capital Online, World Economic Forum, and McKinsey & Company. Media reports were also presented from Harvard Business Review and Oxford Economics. While these reports cannot serve the objective of the literature review, these materials are a source of evidence that helps complement the semistructured interviews. Analyzing archived data through different sources of evidence can lead to deep, thick, rich information for methodological triangulation to answer the research question (Guion et al., 2011).

Journaling/reflective field notes. The research question and the constructivist paradigm are aligned with how the researcher used observation as a data collection technique. Reflective field notes are unstructured observations that serve as an additional source of data collection (Katz, 2014). Given that the semistructured interviews were conducted via Skype and Zoom, reflective field notes obtained from online data sources were the third instrument used for data collection from the participants of the present study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Skype and Zoom represent efficient tools in depriving the interview interaction of contextual

information and allowing for an unbiased atmosphere, thereby deterring the researcher's personal reflexivity. Skype is an effective tool for the replication process in that it enables the researcher to reach participants in geographically dispersed locations (Janghorban, Roudsari, & Taghipour, 2014).

Journaling and reflective field notes are a common technique in qualitative research and case study research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Stake, 2013). Over time, reflexivity has become a major concept of qualitative research methods in organizational research (Haynes, 2012) and a critical component of data analysis within the constructivist paradigm (Stake, 2013). The reliance on different sources of evidence allowed the researcher to mitigate reflexivity-generated bias and remain faithful to participants' views while also searching for divergent evidence as diligently as possible, thereby protecting the trustworthiness of the data (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2017).

Another online data collection method is netnography, which may include interactions, interviews, and introspection (Kantanen & Manninen, 2016). Most of these interactions, interviews, and introspections are recorded and saved as they take place, allowing reflective field notes to prevail over observational field notes. Reflective field notes are useful in allowing researchers to take note of their own observations regarding their online experiences (Katz, 2014), interpret the reasons behind the cultural actions observed, and offer insights into the transpiring and functioning of online social interactions (Kozinets, 2019). The inductive and emergent nature of the process of reflective field notes allows for note-taking in various online social experiences such as social groups, events, or sites that may be encountered during qualitative data collection (Yin, 2017).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

For sample size and saturation purposes, the number of participants recruited for this qualitative multiple case study was between 6 and 10. Recruiting a group of up to 10 talent management experts for in-depth interviews was adequate to attain data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). A study achieves a saturation point when further data collection ceases to yield new themes or information (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Mason, 2010; Yin, 2017). Initially, I identified talent management experts who fulfilled my sample inclusion criteria through Google Scholar and then identified them on the LinkedIn online professional network, which served as my recruitment tool. I posted a recruitment letter to candidates meeting my inclusion criteria by sequential order through this online professional network platform for initial contact, and asked them to contact me via personal message or via e-mail to be included in the study's sample. When the participants were recruited for the study and signed their Informed Consent form, I arranged for interviews to be conducted via Skype (Lo Iacono, Symonds, & Brown, 2016). Skype enables the expert interview interaction to avoid contextual information from influencing the researcher and maintain an unbiased atmosphere (Bogner et al., 2018).

The study participants shared their views through qualitative expert interviews on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage. The use of qualitative expert interviews spans across different fields of political sciences and social sciences research, including comparative politics, international relations, sociology, organizational research, and policy research (Flick, 2018). The exploratory nature of qualitative research studies makes expert interviews

effective, allowing for a more effective collection of rich data more than (Wästerfors, 2018) quantitative experimental research (Yin, 2017). The open nature of expert interviews, albeit in the form of semistructured interviews, allows the for the yielding of data from experts' breadth of knowledge and experience in research fields that still need exploring (Littig & Pöchhacker, 2014). Such data collected from expert interviews might otherwise be challenging or even impossible to access in these fields of research (Bogner et al., 2018; Littig & Pöchhacker, 2014).

Following approval by the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB), I e-mailed each potential participant a recruitment letter to invite them to take part in the study. Additionally, I e-mailed them a consent form that included the following: (a) explanation of what the study entails, (b) the option to withdraw, (c) the procedure, (d) possible risk or discomfort associated with participation, (e) the time limit, (f) a statement of voluntary participation and no consequences for refusal, (g) rights to confidentiality, and (h) the benefit of this study for the talent management field. Those who responded positively to my recruitment post were invited to participate in the study and provide their e-mail address, telephone number, and Skype/Zoom ID for communication purposes.

The main purpose of the qualitative method is to gain an in-depth understanding of the knowledge and experiences of the study's participants. I was mainly engaged in the production of data relevant to the interviewees' experiences regarding the issue under investigation. In the event that recruitment resulted in too few participants, I would seek out more talent management experts through snowball sampling until I would have a group of at least 6 to 10 willing potential participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The expert interview protocol included open-ended

questions that aligned with the issue under investigation. The questions were presented to capture the study participants' views on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage (Yin, 2017).

Of critical importance is the need for the Walden University IRB to grant approval of the dissertation proposal before conducting the expert interviews either via Skype or Zoom or telephone call. A number of 10 interviews were conducted and associated archival data collected on a daily basis. Each interview took between 30 and 60 minutes with data recorded with either the Skype or Zoom digital audio recorder, complemented by handwritten notes for the purpose of further reflection (Stake, 2013). I used the Windows 10 voice recorder and a transcriber application to record and transcribe participants' responses. I then used the software Microsoft Excel to electronically record, document, analyze, and categorize the data collected from each interview. Microsoft Excel is appropriate for documenting collected data from interviews, storing data, analyzing data through a thematical approach, and classifying information through numbering (Tracy, 2019).

At the end of each Skype/Zoom interview, I thanked the interviewees and informed them that they might be contacted again in case clarification of responses are needed. Of importance was the need for the researcher to assure each interviewee that their identity would remain anonymous and the data collected during their interview would remain confidential. I saved all communications and data collected on my own laptop, personal USB Flash Key, and Dropbox, locked with a password. I e-mailed participants separately with a transcription of their responses and allowed them 72 hours to review and validate their responses through a transcript review

process (Mero-Jaffe, 2011). Aside from ensuring the validity of the participant responses in written form, transcript review helps avoid significant errors within the interview transcriptions that may have an impact on the quality of the entire study. In order to avoid this, I took measures to ensure the trustworthiness of the transcripts. The interviewees had the opportunity to validate the transcripts by correcting them if necessary and clarifying unclear issues (Davidson, 2009; Mann, 2016).

Data Analysis Plan

In case study research, the researcher aligns the sample size with the topic of study. The researcher's main responsibility when conducting an interview is to know the amount and the type of data needed and manage the interview to yield quality responses (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The interview should contain questions that reveal authentic and reliable trends among the interviewees and connect to the overall purpose of the qualitative study. Talent management experts were the unit of analysis for this study. Theoretical propositions can be connected when utilizing "why" or "how" questions in analyzing case studies (Yin, 2017). To achieve this goal, a semistructured format was utilized to construct questions for the interview protocol to be used in this study. The data was categorized according to the information gathered from the semistructured questions and answers. In reaching the conclusions of the study, the researcher analyzed what the interviewees said and looked for patterns in the data, while reviewing and integrating the differences across multiple sources of data for purposes of triangulation (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

The data analysis process for the interview transcripts, journaling notes, and archival data developed into a compilation of all the data collected into categories and themes through content analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). To ensure that the data

collected was accurate, the data was transcribed and consequently analyzed, coded, and categorized using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet (Yin, 2017). In developing a case study database, identified themes, words of significance, viewpoints, and documented work were analyzed and organized using thematic analysis in order to assist with the development of models and themes from the data (Yin, 2017).

Data analysis in the present study involved two stages. While the first stage consisted of a within-case analysis of each of the selected cases, the second stage consisted of a cross-case analysis of the data in order to detect similarities and differences across the categories and themes (Yin, 2017). Regarding individual within-case analysis, data that were collected from the transcribed interviews and field notes were arranged in segments, indexed with line numbers, and arranged in line with the interview questions for ease of identification of codes (Finfgeld-Connett, 2014). The identified codes were recorded in a matrix form using a Microsoft Word table that had columns to capture the data segments, assigned codes, and the researcher's reflective notes (Saldaña, 2016). One of the objectives of this process is to capture emerging patterns (Saldaña, 2016). Codes sharing common meanings were classified into categories and themes (Saldaña, 2016). Although each case in the cross-case synthesis was evaluated as a separate case, the synthesis of the data from each case strengthened the robustness of the study's results (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2017).

Although there exists more than one way to analyze qualitative data (Maxwell, 2012), I chose the type of analysis that is appropriate to the data I collected to answer the central research question. The objective of coding in qualitative data analysis is not to merely count items (Maxwell, 2012). Rather, coding consists of "fracturing"

data by rearranging texts to compare items within the same category (Maxwell, 2012). While codes are used to capture words and phrases that share the same meaning, the categories serve to connect them (Maxwell, 2012). The descriptive coding method (Saldaña, 2016) was utilized as the basic analytical technique for this study. The descriptive coding method consists of assigning symbolic meanings to segments of data, providing an inventory of words or phrases for the indexing and categorization of the data (Saldaña, 2016). As recommended by Saldaña (2016), the descriptive coding method is appropriate for novice qualitative researchers.

Yin (2017) recommended cross-case synthesis as the most appropriate data analysis technique in multiple case study research. Cross-case synthesis is more efficient than content analysis for a Ph.D. study in that it also involves comparing and contrasting cases rather than just analyzing individual cases (Yin, 2017). The cross-case synthesis technique involves treating each case separately while aggregating findings across a series of individual cases. Accordingly, there is no difference between the cross-case synthesis and other research syntheses that aggregate and compare findings across a series of individual studies. Designs that use both within-case and cross-case synthesis have been proven to provide a more consistent platform to generate theoretical propositions and constructs than designs that use only within-case analysis (Barratt, Choi, & Li, 2011).

I followed Yin's (2017) recommendation for a *ground-up* strategy for the analysis of case study data. This strategy involves analyzing the data from the *ground-up*, thereby allowing key concepts to emerge by closely examining data. This strategy was the most appropriate for the analysis of multiple case study data that emanated from this study, allowing me to align the emerging concepts with the central research

question (Yin, 2017). This strategy is also consistent with the descriptive coding method (Saldaña, 2016), which is the analytical technique used in the study.

After the data had been coded from the interview questions, the objective was to link themes to classifications grounded in the conceptual framework and scholarly literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The codes identified common themes arising from the responses provided by the participants while collecting research and other field notes taken by the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). To aggregate the results of the thematic analysis, I utilized cross-case synthesis as the data analysis technique for this multiple case study. This type of synthesis allowed the researcher to determine whether the case studies are comparable by analyzing the convergence and divergence of the collected data (Yin, 2017). Each of the cases provided evidence to describe talent management experts' views on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage.

Issues of Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness encompasses the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, which correspond to the concepts of internal validity, external validity (or generalizability), reliability, and objectivity in quantitative research (Morse, 2015). The systematic use of audit trails and journals to take note of the issues in relation to the theoretical approach, methodology, and data analysis throughout a qualitative research study contributes to strengthening trustworthiness (Houghton et al., 2013).

Credibility

Credibility refers to the ability to render the plausibility of the results of a research study trustworthy and real (Morse, 2015). Some of the strategies to comply with credibility include deep engagement, transcript review, peer debriefing, negative case analysis and rival explanations, triangulation, and referential adequacy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2017). I used deep engagement, which translated into devoting the time needed to review the literature till reaching data saturation to develop the study's interview protocol. I followed a process of transcript review by providing the participants with the opportunity to verify and assess the results and establish their validity (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016; Mak-van der Vossen et al., 2019). I undertook field testing with two subject matter experts to verify the relevance and clarity of the interview questions to provide data to answer the study's central research question.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the transfer of the results of a research study into a different context (Morse, 2015). Transferability involves questioning the extent to which results can be generalized beyond the context and group under study (Carminati, 2018; Yin, 2017). Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, and Walter (2016) pointed out the importance of researchers accepting different interpretations of the results from participants and others who also decide upon the possible transferability of the results. Some of the others are the readers who, based on in-depth descriptions of the collected and analyzed data, may be able to determine the transferability of results if they are the fruit of rich, thick descriptions (Carminati, 2018). In addition to

thick descriptions, prolonged engagement, observation, triangulation, transcript review, audit trail, and reflexivity were utilized for this study (Houghton et al., 2013).

Van Rijnsoever (2017) outlined that the use of purposive sampling contributes toward generating relevant responses to answer research questions. Providing detailed descriptions of the research problem and the associated methodological approach also contributes to transferring research findings into different settings (Anderson, 2017; Carminati, 2018; Delmar, 2010). I used the purposive sampling strategy to identify experts as academics and authors of peer-reviewed papers published in reputable scientific journals within the talent management subject area indexed on Google Scholar between 2010 and 2020. A careful selection of participants added to the small sampling size of this qualitative research, which allowed for reaching effective data saturation through expertise supported by reasoned arguments rather than biased assumptions (Morse, 2015).

Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency of results and thereby to the possible replication of the results by using different strategies simultaneously (Anderson, 2017; Morse, 2015). Some of the strategies to comply with dependability include an audit trail, “overlapping methods,” in-depth methodological description, and peer debriefing (Morse, 2015; Sarma, 2015). Amankwaa (2016) noted the importance of developing a protocol that includes a detailed description of the methodological approach, including the requirements of rigor and timelines. Ensuring a clear alignment between the literature gap, problem statement, research question, methodology, and research design gave rise to a strong methodological approach. To comply with dependability, I developed a step-by-step process for the methodology

and used audit trails to document and describe every action and decision that occurred during the data collection process. The use of audit trails allowed me to keep track of the progress made while also anticipating the remaining actions. Parallel to the use of audit trails is the importance of maintaining a chain of evidence that allows for effective alignment between each step of the process while also linking up the findings to the research question (Yin, 2017).

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the extent to which the findings of a research study emanate from the panelists' responses as opposed to the researcher's views, thereby addressing bias issues (Morse, 2015). Some of the strategies to comply with confirmability include an audit trail and researcher reflexivity (Berger, 2015; Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). Morse (2015) posited that researchers must be mindful of their own biases and distinguish their role as experts in a given field from their role as researchers. Berger (2015) emphasized the importance of researchers developing reflective practice and critical self-awareness in qualitative research and suggested the need to keep a self-reflective diary or journal to monitor one's own biases and assumptions. The use of audit trails documenting the successive judgments and reasoning throughout the research process allows the findings of a study to achieve confirmability (Berger, 2015). I used a reflective journal to note my beliefs, assumptions, and emotional experiences and ensure a transparent data collection process.

Ethical Procedures

I sent a letter in the form of an e-mail message to LinkedIn group owners specialized in Talent Management and Human Resources to request permission to

access participants. Included in the letter was a request for permission to post the study announcement on the LinkedIn group owners' websites. Upon receipt of permission from the Linked group owners, and as part of the submission of the study's proposal, I sent a copy of the letter mentioned above along with the agreements received from the LinkedIn group owners to the IRB for approval. The study announcement contained all the required information regarding, among other issues, anonymity and confidentiality, potential risks and benefits, and the contact information of the IRB. Upon receipt of the IRB's approval of the study's proposal and access to participants, I informed the LinkedIn HR group owners, providing them with the IRB approval numbers.

Upon receipt of the approval from the LinkedIn HR group owners, members interested in participating in the research study needed to contact me through the LinkedIn platform in order to respect the confidentiality of their identity, certifying that they meet the research study requirements. Upon verification of the selection of criteria, the interested members had to agree to the conditions and terms of the informed consent, and I then arranged for interviews to be conducted via Skype or Zoom. Participants were requested to provide their private e-mail addresses in order to establish contact with the researcher. I e-mailed each participant in order to agree upon the date and time of the interview. As outlined in the informed consent form, I ensured that participants understood the voluntary nature of their participation, the do-no-harm principle, and privacy and data protection. While researchers' objective during internet research is to implement their research methodology effectively, protection from harm and human dignity of participants must be regarded at all times

(Kantanen & Manninen, 2016). I interacted with participants separately via e-mail to ensure that no unclear questions or issues remained unanswered.

There are no ethical concerns related to recruitment materials and processes. The submission of the request for permission to access participants and the study announcement to the IRB for approval ascertained the do-no-harm principle. Additionally, there are no ethical concerns regarding the data collection process. I informed participants that their participation in the study would involve their knowledge as academics and authors of peer-reviewed papers published in reputable scientific journals within the talent management subject area, and that no specifics regarding their organization would be requested. Informed consent contains the clause of voluntary participation. Should there be early withdrawal from the study, participants were reassured that they would not be treated differently if they decided to not be in the study, as was also mentioned in the informed consent form.

I created a folder for each participant and saved all transcriptions of the interviews and communications separately on my own laptop, personal USB Flash Key, and Dropbox, locked with a password. Slade, Dionne, Underwood, and Buchbinder (2014) explained the importance of collecting data through the deidentification of responses and storing data in a safe, password protected folder, thus applying the norms of privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality. I ensured that the informed consent form stated that data would be shared only with the Chair and Committee Member. Slade et al. also outlined the need to destroy the data collected after five years. I complied with this ethical practice and deleted all survey related-files regarding the present study from my own laptop, personal USB Flash Key, and Dropbox.

Regarding situational ethics, I reflected on the implementation of the multiple case study design and the participation of panelists throughout the data collection process to make adjustments whenever needed. Tracy (2010) pointed out the need to commit to self-reflexivity to ensure that ethical considerations are given due regard throughout the research process. I conducted this research study outside my personal and professional context and collected data anonymously, thereby addressing any potential conflicts of interest. Exiting ethics involved ensuring that the results of the research study and method by which these results would be communicated would contribute to positive social change.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study is to gain a deeper understanding of the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage. The use of the semistructured interview instrument based on open-ended questions allowed for the capturing of the study participants' views and served the purpose of the discussion for the present study. Other sources such as archival data in the form of business and industry reports, media articles on innovative talent management, and journaling/reflective field notes were utilized to substantiate the data collection process for efficient data analysis purposes.

Chapter 4 contains the data analysis results to answer the research question. I provide detailed explanations of the procedures for collecting and analyzing the data from the 6 to 10 semistructured interviews, including the procedure of the interview protocol. Any unexpected organizational conditions arising during the data collection process are explained. As part of the explanations, the provision of evidence of

trustworthiness, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, is provided.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to describe talent management experts' views on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage. From the data collected to answer the central research question, I was able to gain a deeper understanding and insights regarding talent management experts' views on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader, which were previously unreported in the extant literature. The study's central research question that guided the development of the study was the following:

RQ: How do talent management experts describe the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-added talent to support organizational competitive advantage?

A gap in previous research regarding how to create an innovative talent leadership role that is linked to meeting macrolevel outcomes and competitive advantage, rather than just passively reciprocating to micro and meso level business needs (Harsch & Festing, 2020; Sparrow, 2019; Wiblen & McDonnell, 2019) led to the development of the central research question. A literature gap was identified, which indicated that corporate executives have sparse information on the needed competency characteristics for an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage (Claus, 2019; dos Santos & Pedro, 2020; Sparrow, 2019).

The research design and approach of this study were grounded in the study's conceptual framework, which was built on two conceptual models that aligned with the purpose of the study, which was to describe talent management experts' views on

the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage: (a) Sparrow and Makram's (2015) four value-driven processes of a talent management architecture framework and (b) Schreuder and Noorman's (2019a) concept of strategic talent manager. Research in talent management practice for supporting organizations in reaching a competitive advantage in today's rapidly changing, volatile market has lagged (Claus, 2019; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2019). This study may be significant to theory and extend academic knowledge in talent management leadership through subject matter experts' views to integrate the "talent" construct into leadership theory-building (Gehman et al., 2018).

In this chapter, I provide an analysis of the results of this multiple case study based on two approaches. The first approach is a thematic analysis of the data collected based on the study's multiple sources, as recommended by Yin (2017), through the following sources: (a) a semistructured interview protocol (Appendix B), the items of which were designed and standardized by previous researchers; (b) archival data in the form of business and industry reports and media articles on innovative talent management (Yin, 2017); and (c) journaling/reflective field notes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) kept by me throughout the data collection process. A set of different multiple data collection methods from multiple sources of evidence were utilized for triangulation purposes.

The second approach to data analysis was Yin's (2017) cross-case analysis, by which I synthesized the findings of the initial thematic analysis of data to answer the research question. The use of different approaches of thematic analysis ensures the rigor of data and the trustworthiness of results (Boyatzis, 1998). For example,

Boyatzis (1998) contrasted different types of codes, such as theory-driven codes deriving from the researcher's or other existing theories and inductive codes, which are derived bottom-up from the researcher's reading of the data as well as from prior research-driven codes. While all approaches have something to offer qualitative data analysis, "thematic analysis is flexible and what researchers do with the themes once they uncover them differs based on the intentions of the research and the process of analysis" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 63).

The multiple case study design is primarily used to replicate the same findings across multiple cases by exploring the differences and similarities between and within cases (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). This study was an extension study that, as described in Bonett (2012), "not only provides replication evidence but also extends the results of prior studies in new and important theoretical directions" (p. 410). The minimum number of cases in a multiple case study is relative to the study's purpose and research question. Eisenhardt (1989) suggested limiting the number of cases in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomena under study (e.g., four to 10 cases).

The unit of analysis in this study was the talent management expert. When the individual is the focus in a multiple case study design, each unit of analysis becomes a case study in and of itself (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2017). The use of data collection methods that support a study's design contributes to delivering reliable results and answering the research questions in a multiple case study (Shenton, 2004). Such a method ensures rigor and credible results that can be replicated (Yin, 2017). I describe in detail the uncovered patterns and recurrent themes throughout this chapter while remaining faithful to the respective participants' voices. The study's sample

population, categories of codes, themes, and a cross-case synthesis of themes are also presented below, as recommended by Yin (2017).

Research Setting

I collected data for this multiple case study via semistructured interviews with 10 academics. The inclusion criteria were: (a) authored at least 5 peer-reviewed papers published in scientific journals and indexed on Google Scholar between 2010 and 2020 uncovered through a search using the terms *talent management*, *talent value chain*, *talent acquisition*, *talent analytics*, *talent supply chain management*, *talent value architecture*, *strategic talent management*, *value capture*, and *value-driven talent*; (b) had terminal degrees from accredited institutions; (c) had conducted extensive studies on management, talent management, and human resource management; and (d) possessed deep knowledge regarding their experiences with the topic of the study (Bogner et al., 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

The participants were recruited through the LinkedIn professional social media platform using network sampling, after which I initiated a first contact via e-mail with each individual participant. Attached to each e-mail was the consent form, including the confidentiality agreement, which was acknowledged and accepted by the participants. I planned a meeting for the interview with the participants. Interviews were conducted individually based on a mutually agreed-upon date and time, suiting the timetable of the participants while respecting the timeline of the research study process. I developed the semistructured interview protocol to enable the participants to provide in-depth answers and fully engage in the interview process without fearing any issues of confidentiality and anonymity. Although I had planned to conduct 10

interviews, 5 out of the 10 participants preferred to send written answers, constituting the only change in my setting during the study.

Demographics

In line with the eligibility criteria set in the research study, 10 academics participated, eight men and two women who had published peer-reviewed articles, books, and book chapters. It is worth mentioning that while two of the participants had authored fewer than five peer-reviewed articles as per the criteria requirements, these two participants had extensive experience as practitioners and publishers in the area of talent management.

This study considered age, gender, years of experience as an academic researcher/publisher, and a number of at least five peer-reviewed papers published in scientific journals and indexed on Google Scholar between 2010 and 2020, given that these demographic issues were pertinent variables in the defining the conceptual framework. The given pseudonyms were in an XY format so that X was presented by the generic letter P symbolizing for “participant,” and Y was the number identifier assigned to each participant.

With respect to the demographics of the sample, eight were male, and two were female. Their ages ranged between 39 to 69 years of age, with an average (rounded) of 55. Their experience as an academic researcher/publisher ranged from 8 to 45 years with an average (rounded) of 24. The number of peer-reviewed papers published in scientific journals and indexed on Google Scholar between 2010 and 2020 ranged from two to 100 with an average (rounded) of 28. Finally, the main subject matters of study included talent management and change management, talent management and learning and development, management and international human

resource management, management, analytics, and corporate strategic planning, public relations, communications, and marketing, management, global talent management, international human resource management, and cross-cultural communication and negotiation, management and global human resource management, business and research with skills in management, coaching, mental training, talent management, sport management, communication, culture and change communication, event management, and public speaking, human resources management and business administration.

Data Collection

The data collection started on March 12, 2020, after the IRB approval received from Walden University on March 6, 2020. A total of 10 academics/experts participated in the interview process via Skype or Zoom. Each interview took place between March 12 and April 1, 2020, and lasted between 30 and 40 minutes. The data collection phase stopped on April 1, 2020, when no new themes emerged, and data saturation was reached. As soon as the themes, such as *be a skilled business leader*, *be an organizational culture influencer*, and *build credibility with internal and external stakeholders* were evoked by 10 participants and no new themes emerged, data saturation was reached.

While collecting the data and conducting the interviews, evidence of data saturation occurred when themes emerged and contributed to answering the research question. Claus (2019) drew attention to the new HR stack enabling organizations to adapt to a continually changing environment and sustain competitive advantage. In particular, Claus alluded to competencies such as design thinking, agile management, behavioral economics, and analytics. Triangulation of multiple sources of data

showed the commonality of the themes of *creating value through macro talent management* and *supporting organizational competitive advantage*. More information on the data saturation process is provided in the Study Results section.

Over a period of 30 days, I conducted the following activities: (a) participant recruitment, (b) scheduling and conducting interviews, (c) journaling/recording reflective field notes, (d) reviewing the seminal literature, and (e) proceeding with transcript review, which enabled the participants to check their responses once transcribed. I created an audit trail table in an Excel spreadsheet to record every action that occurred during the data collection process with each participant, while also keeping track of the progress made and anticipating the remaining actions. The combination of audit trails and journaling/reflective field notes contributed to monitoring the data collection process, preempting an effective data analysis process, and establishing rigor.

Data collection occurred in a period of three weeks between March 12 and April 1, 2020, from a total of 10 participants. While five of the participants agreed to be interviewed through a video conference via Skype or Zoom, the other five participants opted to provide written answers by e-mail. After the participants agreed to the terms of the informed consent, the interviews were scheduled based on a mutually agreed-upon date and time, suiting the timetable of the participants while respecting the timeline of the research study process. The semistructured interviews were conducted in private settings, either office or home settings for participants and home settings for the researcher. Based on the developed interview protocol, the participants were able to provide in-depth answers and fully engage in the interview process without fearing any breaches of confidentiality or anonymity.

Upon receipt of the IRB approval by Walden University on March 6, 2020 and the start of the data collection on March 12, 2020, I, as the researcher, started noting my beliefs, assumptions, and emotional experiences in order to ensure a transparent data collection process. I also noted all the comments, reactions, and experiences in relation to the data collection process. The latter activity included noting comments provided by the participants at the time of the recruitment and concerning the agreed informed consent forms. I noted the informal aspects of the interactions between the participants and the researcher throughout the data collection process. Gaining respect and appreciation on the part of the participants was rewarding, and thereby provided the data collection process with an additional dimension of meaning and value. As a researcher, I gained a high level of knowledge regarding the process of collecting data and conducting interviews. I also acquired invaluable knowledge from academics in talent management, making these qualitative research interactions a rich experience.

Regarding the challenges faced during the data collection process, although there were some initial issues due to using the LinkedIn professional social media platform to establish the first contact, these issues were rapidly solved as subsequent contacts were made individually by e-mail. Interview scheduling occurred as planned, ensuring that time zones were respected and the anonymity of identity and confidentiality of data was assured. No issues arose regarding the interviews that were conducted via Skype and Zoom and recorded via Skype and Zoom digital audio recorders.

In each interview, I followed the interview protocol and asked the participants to describe their views on the competencies and characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support

organizational competitive advantage. The participants were asked the 14 questions of the interview protocol, which were divided into two sets of questions, the first on competency characteristics and the second on value creation and value capture. Definitions of both concepts were provided to the participants in order to ensure that they shared a common understanding of these concepts and that their responses were as accurate as possible.

Initial Contact

I initiated the first contact with the participants on March 10, 2020 through the LinkedIn professional social media platform using network sampling, following which a first contact was initiated via e-mail with each participant. The criteria used to recruit the participants were: (a) authored at least five peer-reviewed papers published in scientific journals and indexed on Google Scholar between 2010 and 2020 when undergoing a word search under the terms *talent management*, *talent value chain*, *talent acquisition*, *talent analytics*, *talent supply chain management*, *talent value architecture*, *strategic talent management*, *value capture*, and *value-driven talent*; (b) have terminal degrees from accredited institutions; (c) have conducted extensive studies on management, talent management, and human resource management; and (d) possess deep knowledge regarding their experiences with the topic of the study (Bogner et al., 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Several participants were identified and contacted based on their research in talent management, co-authoring peer-reviewed articles on the subject matter of this study.

The formal consent form from the last participant who agreed with the terms was received on April 1, 2020, and the final outreach for participants ended after the last interview was conducted on March 25, 2020. As indicated in the procedures for

recruitment in Chapter 3, I identified talent management experts who fulfilled the sample inclusion criteria through Google Scholar and then identified them on the LinkedIn online professional network. I posted a recruitment letter to candidates meeting my inclusion criteria by sequential order through this online professional network platform for initial contact; I additionally asked them to contact me via personal message or via the designated e-mail address to be included in the study's sample.

Most of the responses to participate in the study arrived at the same time after posting the recruitment letter to candidates meeting my inclusion criteria by sequential order through the LinkedIn online professional network platform for initial contact. While most of the participants who expressed a wish to participate in the study agreed upon the terms of the informed consent, it took some time to receive all the signed forms. Participants who met the criteria requirements shared positive feedback on the study subject. Participants were encouraged to contact other members whom they deemed to meet the criteria. During snowball sampling, 10 members agreed to participate and agreed upon the terms of the informed consent.

Interviews

Interviews were scheduled as soon as the participants returned and agreed upon the terms of the informed consent form. While half of the participants agreed to participate in the interview within a few days after the recruitment letter was sent out, the other half took longer to respond and participate. It is noteworthy that the period of data collection was marked by the worldwide breakout of coronavirus in February-March 2020. Therefore, whereas half of the interviews were scheduled to be

conducted via videoconference during this critical period, other participants instead chose to provide written answers.

After the interviews were scheduled, the participants provided me with their Skype username. I provided my username to the participants, enabling them to know from whom the request for new contact was originating. For those using Zoom, I sent an invitation via e-mail. The participants who agreed to be interviewed also agreed to use the video feature. All the interviews were successfully conducted, resulting in the collection of rich answers for the data analysis process.

All participants agreed to be recorded via a Skype or Zoom videoconference, although, as mentioned earlier, 5 participants opted to provide written answers by e-mail. In the event that the Skype or Zoom digital audio recorder would not work, the voice recorder available on my computer was open and prepared for use. Despite some initial issues due to using the LinkedIn professional social media platform to establish the first contact, interviews were scheduled and conducted as planned. The participants were located in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Denmark, Greece, and India in time zones spanning from GMT-8 to GMT+5:30. The use of Skype and Zoom contributed to identifying, recruiting, and interviewing academics and experts in talent management globally, thereby serving the purpose of the research study (Yin, 2017).

Journaling/Reflective Field Notes

I started journaling and recording reflective field notes on March 6, 2020 upon receipt of IRB approval from Walden University. I used the journal and audit trail Excel spreadsheet in parallel to ensure that both recording media complemented each other, substantiating the data collection process with as much information as possible.

While I recorded a level of frustration while awaiting the members to agree to participate and return the signed informed consent form, I updated the audit trail spreadsheet daily, including sending myself some reminders to ensure that I would conduct the data collection process as smoothly as possible.

I also recorded my own reflections to minimize my own biases and possible expectations I might have during the process as much as possible. As the interviewer, I strove to be mindful of the importance of detaching myself from the study subject and listen to the participants' views with empathy, an open mind, and a readiness to learn and accept new insights. I endeavored to observe the participants' tone and attitude and read nonverbal cues in order to clarify the meanings that the participants conferred upon their spoken words. The act of interviewing required some sensitivity to cultural differences and the participants' feelings and emotions without judgment or preconceived assumptions. Providing the possibility to the participants to review the transcript of their interview allowed them to be reflective, rethink their responses, and modify if needed (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

While I attempted to take some notes during the interviews, I preferred to concentrate on listening and observing the participants, and watched the video recordings after the interviews were concluded to ensure that I would pay as much attention to verbal and nonverbal communication as possible. Separating the act of listening to understanding verbal language first and observing nonverbal cues second contributed to distinguishing common patterns and themes. Verbal and nonverbal communication complemented each other in that the participants complemented their shared views by changing intonations, responding more or less rapidly, pondering over a certain response, or pausing.

The systematic process of manually coding the data transcribed from interviews and the meanings of the social reality constructed by the participants was conducive to the emergence of patterns and themes (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, & Snelgrove, 2016). The multiple case study design allows for these patterns and themes to arise by allowing the researcher to analyze the data collected within the cases and across cases (Yin, 2017). Through the careful selection of cases to predict either similar results, named *literal replication* and contradictory results, named *theoretical replication*, the emerging patterns and themes take on their full meaning for further analysis (Yin, 2017). Triangulation of multiple data sources added another dimension to the dependability and trustworthiness of the data.

According to specific criteria, all participants, as academics and practitioners in talent management and HR management in general, were interested in the subject matter and inclined to provide rich responses. The provision of definitions of competency characteristics, value creation, and value capture helped all participants achieve with the same understandings and thereby pinpoint areas needing attention. Given that some of the participants had authored several peer-reviewed papers on the subject matter of talent management, they provided honest and thought-provoking insights to develop this body of knowledge.

Transcript Review

Upon completion of interviews, I used professional transcription services to transcribe each interview upon receipt of which I revised each transcription to ensure the text aligned with the interview conducted. I then sent the revised transcription to the participants via e-mail for verification and review (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Transcript review allows the researcher to ask participants to check their responses to

ensure the accuracy thereof, thereby avoiding cases of misinterpretation, contributing to the credibility of data, and ensuring that the answers used for data analysis accurately reflected the interviewees' responses (Hagens, Dobrow, & Chafe, 2009). The exchanges back and forth between the participant and the researcher assured accuracy and clarify any thoughts the participant felt may not have been adequately expressed. The transcript review process reduces concerns over the accuracy of data and improves credibility (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Overall, only minimal changes were made to the interview transcriptions, with a few word omissions that were unclear.

One recurrent comment received from some of the participants was the redundancy of the questions, though the sequence of the questions allowed for a comprehensive review of the subject matter under study. Given the technicality of the interview questions in the area of management and the redundancy of the questions, the use of transcript review enabled interviewees to thoroughly review their responses, serving the purpose of data analysis and ensuring compliance with ethical standards. Upon completion of each interview, I sent the transcript via e-mail to the participant for their verification and perusal. The iterative verification process involved at this stage of the data collection process allowed the participants to clarify their thoughts and add insights to avoid misinterpretations (Mero-Jaffe, 2011).

The responses received through transcript review were helpful, given that this additional validation process after interviewing allowed the participants to provide further thoughts and complement their responses. Most participants who were interviewed checked and returned their responses within a week with corrections and additional comments. Definitions such as competency characteristics, value creation,

and value capture were provided either through Skype/Zoom or via e-mail to ensure that the participants and the researcher had the same understanding of these concepts. All edited transcripts were stored in a safe, password-protected folder, as per the ethical procedures underlined in Chapter 3, following which the hand-coding of the data began.

Data Analysis

I adopted the descriptive coding strategy for the analysis of the raw data collected in this study to assign meanings to segments of raw data (Saldaña, 2016). The use of this strategy allowed for the emergence of words and phrases for further categorization and thematic analysis. The raw data (transcripts) collected from the interviews contained the in-depth experiences of the study's 10 participants.

The data analysis process for the interview transcripts, journaling notes, and archival data developed into a compilation of all the data collected into categories and themes through content analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The process consisted in identifying data segments from the data collected through the transcripts and recording the codes to capture emerging patterns (Saldaña, 2016). The data collected from the transcribed interviews added to the reflective notes and archival data gave rise to an in-depth understanding of talent management experts' views of competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage.

In qualitative, exploratory research studies, the process of coding constitutes the primary method of analyzing collected data (Saldaña, 2016). The use of a consistent approach toward data collection and analysis ensured an effective process of coding. The alignment between collecting and analyzing the data allowed for

simultaneous, useful emergence of key concepts and an understanding of the research problem (Stake, 2013). The coding method involved the process of manual coding, categorization, and identification of emergent patterns and themes across the cases.

In line with the two-staged approach adopted to analyze the data, consisting of within-case analysis of each of the selected cases and a cross-case analysis of data to seek similarities and differences across the categories and themes, the same coding method was used to analyze the data within and across cases (Yin, 2017). Given the standardized propositions upon which the multiple case study design is based, the following design benefits from the use of a consistent approach to understanding an underexplored area. Using the same coding method to analyze the data within and across the cases allows for the replication of cases, comparing and contrasting results for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2017).

For the present study, the use of the thematic analysis approach translated into manually coding the data through a systematic process mapped out in the descriptive coding method (Saldaña, 2016). The systematic process of coding allowed the researcher to transition from collecting to analyzing the data (Saldaña, 2016). I identified segments of data that emerged from the transcribed data provided by the participants' described experiences and categorized sets of keywords through an indexing method (Saldaña, 2016; Vaismoradi et al., 2016). The manual coding process involved using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to enter interview notes after checking the participants' transcribed responses. The data analysis process consisted in analyzing the participants' responses by looking for patterns while reviewing and integrating the differences across multiple sources of data for purposes of triangulation (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

After developing the spreadsheet containing the segments of data, categories, and themes, the data analysis process involved identifying the key phrases that contributed to answering the research question. Based on the interview discussions and the transcribed responses, the process consisted in recognizing and differentiating the patterns that emerged from the themes while also putting aside the nonrecurring evidence attributed to individual case compositions. Consistent with the descriptive coding method (Saldaña, 2016), the *ground-up* strategy, as recommended by Yin (2017), was used to identify codes from the raw data and allow critical concepts to emerge by closely examining data. The use of the *ground-up* strategy involved extracting the relevant phrases from the transcribed responses and assigning these phrases with codes for further analysis. This coding process was used to categorize the themes emerging from each participant's interview as well as those that emerged by distinguishing common relationships across the participants' interviews (Yin, 2017).

The thematic analysis for this study was done by hand-coding the data through a systemic process mapped out in the descriptive coding method (Saldaña, 2016). The descriptive coding method was used to assign meanings to segments of data collected from the interviews and the description of the daily experiences of the participants. This process allowed providing an inventory of words or phrases for the indexing and categorization of the data (Saldaña, 2016), thereby revealing themes (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). Once the transcript review checking was finalized, I hand-coded the interview notes by utilizing an Excel spreadsheet to enter the participants' transcribed responses to the questions. The triangulation of data, along with word coding, also allowed for broader recognition of patterns and increased dependability by drawing

attention to common relationships across multiple cases (Yin, 2017). Identified coding categories and their deriving themes contributed to answering the research question.

I identified a total of six coding categories that enclosed a total of 16 themes during the process of analyzing the study's collected data. The coding categories were (a) competency characteristics for macrolevel organizational issues, (b) competency characteristics for mesolevel organizational issues, (c) competency characteristics for governance issues, (d) competency characteristics for value-driven processes, (e) competency characteristics for leading competitive advantage strategies, and (f) future planning for the innovative talent leader role.

The six coding categories were grounded in the conceptual framework. This included (a) Sparrow and Makram's (2015) four value-driven processes of a talent management architecture framework and (b) Schreuder and Noorman's (2019a) concept of strategic talent manager.

The use of the manual descriptive coding method for this study allowed me to immerse myself in the data (Cronin, 2014). Such immersion in the data led to a deep understanding of the collected data and the research problem (Finfgeld-Connett, 2014). As a novice researcher, I chose to use the descriptive manual coding method, as explained by Saldaña (2016), rather than use Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) programs to analyze the data. To ensure comprehensive data analysis, I used the semistructured interview protocol, the items of which were designed and standardized by previous researchers; archival data in the form of business and industry reports and media articles on innovative talent management (Yin, 2017); and journaling/reflective field notes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I kept

my reflective field notes throughout the data collection process and used them to reflect on participants' responses during the within-case and cross-case data analysis.

The use of multiple sources of data gave rise to an in-depth understanding of talent management experts' views of the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage. The use of archival data added to my journaling/reflective notes in reinforcing my role as a researcher, in which I must continuously strive for unbiased interpretations in line with the research problem and purpose. The iterative verification process between the collected data and the emerging patterns and associated categories and themes helped deepen my understanding and analyze the participants' responses within each interview and across interviews.

I used a hierarchical coding frame to organize codes and themes based on how they relate to one another, as is presented below. Six coding categories based on the conceptual framework emerged from three root nodes, and 16 themes were gleaned from the thematic analysis of the coding categories.

Coding Categories

Root node: Competency characteristics of the innovative talent leader

Coding category: Managing macro-level organizational issues

Themes: (a) be a skilled business leader, (b) lead a global organization's value-driven talent strategy, and (c) be a skilled technology leader.

Coding category: Managing meso-level organizational issues

Themes: (a) be an organizational culture influencer, (b) be a trusted employee coach, and (c) manage interpersonal relations on a team.

Coding Category: Managing governance issues

Themes: (a) build credibility with internal and external stakeholders and (b) lead successful succession planning.

Root node: The innovative talent leader goals within a talent management architecture

Coding Category: Creating value through macro talent management

Themes: (a) value creation, (b) value capture, (c) value leverage and amplification, and (d) value protection and retention.

Coding Category: Supporting organizational competitive advantage

Themes: (a) lead by influence as a partner on the leadership team, and (b) support organizational competitive advantage.

Root node: Defining a new leadership role

Coding Category: The future of the innovative talent leader role

Themes: (a) creating value-driven talent to meet global organizational challenges, and (b) job title to designate a talent leader as an equal partner in organizational governance.

The following is a brief description of each of the 16 themes as they emerged from the three root nodes that served as the hierarchal framework of the data analysis.

Be a skilled business leader. This theme describes the innovative talent leader's competency of superior business skills to manage macro talent management processes and join the organizational leadership team as an equal partner.

Lead a global organization's value-driven talent strategy. This theme describes the innovative talent leader's competency to lead global talent strategy at the macrolevel and create value for the organization.

Be a skilled technology leader. This theme describes the innovative talent leader's competency of superior technological skills to manage macrolevel talent management processes at the global level.

Be an organizational culture influencer. This theme describes the innovative talent leader's competency of cultural and influencing skills to manage mesolevel organizational processes and ensure alignment between business and talent strategies.

Be a trusted employee coach. This theme describes the innovative talent leader's competency of coaching skills to manage mesolevel organizational processes to achieve both organizational and personal breakthroughs.

Manage interpersonal relations on a team. This theme describes the innovative talent leader's competency of interpersonal relations skills on a team at the mesolevel to improve communication skills across individual and cultural differences.

Build credibility with internal and external stakeholders. This theme describes the innovative talent leader's competency to build credibility with internal and external stakeholders at the meso and macrolevel to reach organizational goals while ensuring that all stakeholders, internal and external, meet their interests.

Lead successful succession planning. This theme describes the innovative talent leader's competency to lead successful succession planning and develop succession strategies for pro-active planning, assessment, monitoring, and management of current and future human capital needs to enable organizations to meet their objectives strategically.

Value creation. This theme describes the innovative talent leader's goals within a talent management architecture to create value through macro talent management.

Value capture. This theme describes the innovative talent leader's goals within a talent management architecture to capture value through macro talent management.

Value leverage and amplification. This theme describes the innovative talent leader's goals within a talent management architecture to leverage and amplify value through macro talent management.

Value protection and retention. This theme describes the innovative talent leader's goals within a talent management architecture to protect and retain value through macro talent management.

Lead by influence as a partner on the leadership team. This theme describes the innovative talent leader's goals within a talent management architecture to support competitive advantage.

Support organizational competitive advantage. This theme describes the innovative talent leader's goals within a talent management architecture to support competitive advantage and establish strategies to allow alignment between business and talent strategies.

Creating value-driven talent to meet global organizational challenges. This theme describes the innovative talent leader's new leadership role to create a talent architecture where human, social, and intellectual capital interrelates in a culturally and technologically ever-changing environment.

Job title to designate a talent leader as an equal partner in organizational governance. This theme describes the innovative talent leader's job title that raises the role of the talent leader to the level of an equal partner in organizational governance.

Presenting case study research findings can be done in various styles according to the purpose of the work, the kind of analysis undertaken, and the intended readership (Boyatzis, 1998). I chose to present categories and themes in a visual representation (researcher-generated table) by participant quotes since a goal of the research was to describe talent management experts' views on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage (see Harding, 2018).

As previously exhibited, each of these themes belongs to their respective categories (see pages 138-139). The frequency of instances was different among several themes, causing some cases to be more prominent in the data analysis. These themes will be discussed more in-depth throughout the *Cross-Case Synthesis and Analysis* section of this chapter, in addition to a visual representation graph to depict the frequency of occurrence for every theme across the cases.

Table 4 (see Appendix D) presents the finalized coding categories and themes of this multiple case study, along with several examples of participant quotations aligning with each of those categories and themes.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Some of the strategies that contribute to rendering the results of a research study credible and trustworthy include deep engagement, transcript review, peer debriefing, negative case analysis and rival explanations, triangulation, and referential adequacy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2017). For this study, I undertook field testing with two subject matter experts to verify the relevance and clarity of the interview

questions that would provide data to answer the study's central research question. Interviews occurred individually via Skype based on a mutually agreed-upon date and time, suiting the timetable of the participants while ensuring that the participants could end the interview at any time. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, providing the participants with the opportunity to check their responses and my consolidation of the interview data (Birt et al., 2016; Mak-van der Vossen et al., 2019).

Transferability

Some of the strategies that contribute to the transferability of study results, which refers to the transfer of the results of a research study into a different context, involve questioning the extent to which results can be generalized beyond the context and group under study (Carminati, 2018; Yin, 2017). For this study, I adopted a detached position in order to accept different interpretations of the results from the participants, who also decide upon the possible transferability of the results. The use of thick descriptions of the collected and analyzed data contributed to the transferability of the results. Providing detailed descriptions of the research problem and the associated methodological approach also contributes to transferring research findings into different settings (Anderson, 2017; Carminati, 2018; Delmar, 2010). In addition to thick descriptions, prolonged engagement, observation, triangulation, transcript review, audit trail, and reflexivity were utilized for this study (Houghton et al., 2013). The use of the purposive sampling strategy to identify experts as academics and authors of peer-reviewed papers published in reputable scientific journals within the talent management subject area indexed on Google Scholar between 2010 and 2020 also contributed to the transferability of the results.

Dependability

Some of the strategies that contribute to the dependability of study results, which refers to the consistency of results and their possible replication by using different strategies simultaneously, involve audit trails, “overlapping methods,” in-depth methodological description, and peer debriefing (Morse, 2015; Sarma, 2015). For this study, I developed a step-by-step process for the methodology, including a detailed description of the methodological approach. I also used audit trails to document and describe every action and decision that occurred during the data collection process. Using audit trails allowed me to keep track of the progress made while anticipating remaining actions. Coupled with audit trails was the need to maintain a chain of evidence, allowing for effective alignment between each step of the process while linking up the findings to the research question (Yin, 2017).

Confirmability

Some of the strategies that contribute to the confirmability of study results, which refers to the extent to which findings ensuing from a research study emanate from the panelists’ responses as opposed to the researcher’s views, include audit trails and researcher reflexivity (Berger, 2015; Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). As recommended by Morse (2015), I strove to be mindful of my biases by distinguishing between the roles of experts in a given field and the roles of researchers. This distinction between these roles was accompanied by developing reflective practice and critical self-awareness in this study. I used a self-reflective journal to note my beliefs, assumptions, and emotional experiences and monitor my biases, thereby ensuring a transparent data collection process. To comply with confirmability, I also used

transcript review by enabling participants to check their responses once transcribed, preventing the arising of biases during data collection and analysis.

Study Results

In this qualitative, multiple case study research study, framed by two key conceptual models that focus on aligning with the purpose of the study, the specific research question was developed to provide answers through an in-depth investigation of the phenomenon under study (Tracy, 2019). By conducting semistructured interviews, talent management experts shared their views and experiences in order to inform on the needed competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader. While the sample of 10 experts, comprised of both academics and practitioners, provided answers regarding the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader at the macro-, meso-, and microlevel, the issue of the future of the talent leader role in global organizations was also raised. The study's central research question that guided the development of the study was the following:

RQ: How do talent management experts describe the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-added talent to support organizational competitive advantage?

The use of the multiple case study design contributed to extracting segments of data, providing an inventory of words or phrases for indexing and categorization of the data (Saldaña, 2016). The manual data coding process allowed themes and patterns to emerge and be analyzed through a two-phased approach; first, the thematic analysis of the textual data, and second, the cross-case synthesis analysis.

The use of cross-case synthesis analysis aims to examine the similarities, differences, and themes across cases. The case in a cross-case analysis is a unit of

analysis that represents an entity, an individual, a group, or an event, and which for this study is the talent management expert. When the individual is the focus in a multiple case study design, each unit of analysis becomes a case study in and of itself (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2017). Throughout the data collection process, the data analysis approach consisted in comparing and contrasting the emerging thematic patterns across cases (Yin, 2017). Such an iterative data analysis process contributed to the development of comprehensive field notes and commentaries for each participant's views and experiences in the area of talent management and thereby relating these views and experiences to the phenomenon under study. The issue of the irrelevance of data collected from participants did not arise in the present study.

For the present study, the data analysis process includes all multiple sources, as recommended by Yin (2017), namely the semistructured interview protocol, archival data in the form of business and industry reports, media articles on innovative talent management, and journaling/reflective field notes. Transcript reviews were also used for data analysis purposes. Multiple data collection methods from multiple sources of evidence were utilized for triangulation purposes. The data analysis process involved a cross-case analysis in determining whether the case studies were comparable by analyzing the convergence and divergence of the collected data (Yin, 2017). Each of the cases provided evidence to describe talent management experts' views on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage. The emerging themes were categorized, and the findings were cross-referenced for visual representation purposes (researcher-generated table) by participant quotes. This approach constituted the groundwork for the cross-case

analysis whereby the data synthesis technique involved treating each case separately while aggregating findings across a series of individual cases, strengthening the robustness of the study's results (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2017).

Of importance when using the multiple case study design is the consistency of the procedure used for the data collection and data analysis, allowing for a common platform for cross-case comparisons and the thematic analysis (Yin, 2017). For the present study, the same technique was used to collect data from the 10 participants. Although five of the participants opted to provide written answers, the same interview protocol was used. While those participants who provided written answers could think over their responses before sending them over, the participants who were interviewed had the opportunity to review the transcript of their answers, allowing for a readjustment of the data collection process for the 10 participants. The importance of consistency was also applied when hand-coding the collected data in order to categorize and identify the emerging themes across the 10 cases. For the present study, data analysis involved two stages, consisting first of a within-case analysis of each of the selected cases and then of a cross-case analysis of the data to seek similarities and differences across the categories and themes (Yin, 2017).

First Phase: Thematic Analysis of the Textual Data

The use of a step-by-step data analysis process contributes to ensuring the trustworthiness of the thematic analysis (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). Given that the concurrent and simultaneous occurrence of data collection and analysis may imperil the robustness of the results thereof, Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017) suggested the need to adopt a step-by-step approach. The use of a clear and logical presentation of the results, demonstrating the way the data was collected and

analyzed, gives rise to dependability and credibility. As part of the thematic analysis approach, the present study includes the use of direct short and long quotes collected from the participants (King, 2004). While short quotes allow for the addressing of specific points of the questions posed, long quotes allow for a comprehensive understanding of the explanations provided by the participants, while also remaining faithful to their voice. Of importance is the transition in the thematic data analysis from raw data to a robust analysis of the data, meeting the criteria of trustworthiness (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Below is the presentation of the analyzed themes emerging from the data collected in relation to the central research question:

Be a skilled business leader. This theme describes the innovative talent leader's competency of superior business skills to manage macro talent management processes and join the organizational leadership team as an equal partner. Participants were asked to describe their views as to the competency characteristics that a strategic talent manager should possess to be a skilled business leader. Participant 3, for example, drew attention to the importance of the divide between organizations going international while being able to preserve local responsiveness, stating: "When organizations, for example, think about how to globalize operations, each subsidiary, country, or strategic partner has their own understanding of talent management. That business understanding is very, very important, especially in a more global context and in a more networked business environment. This global integration versus local responsiveness divide is hugely important". Participant 4 highlighted the need for the strategic talent manager to be a strategic thinker and stated: "Strategic thinker—able to anticipate needs in the future, not just execute based on today's agenda." The issue

of knowing the organizational strategy was raised by Participant 2, who stated: “The first requirement and one important competency of the new strategic talent manager involve understanding to the finer detail what the strategy is and what the strategy is about. If the strategic talent manager does not have this understanding, he/she will not be able to implement the strategy by identifying the roles, positions, and people to fill those roles and thus implement the strategy.”

Lead a global organization’s value-driven talent strategy. This theme describes the innovative talent leader’s competency to lead the global talent strategy at the macrolevel and create value for the organization. Participants were asked to describe their views as to the competency characteristics that a strategic talent manager should possess in order to successfully lead a global organization’s value-driven talent strategy. Participant 1 highlighted that: “The most important competency would be to have/create the vision of the company and have/create an idea of long-term ambitions”, and that “I think that what has been effective is for leaders to have big visions, but also the ability to question the company’s direction, goals, ambition while translating this vision into some competencies that align with these goals and ambition to realize the vision.” Participant 3 underscored the importance of knowledge management, stating: “The knowledge management side is hugely important when thinking about talent that is going to deliver for the organization as a whole, as opposed to just delivering career advantage for themselves. While creating such systems, including writing down the behavioral indicators makes sense initially, the development of such systems creates a talent pool that is generalized.” Participant 9 highlighted the meaning of competency and stated: “he or she should be competent. When we talk about competencies, we’re talking about managerial competencies. That

is based on knowledge, education, and experiences. You cannot separate any of these. If you do separate experience from knowledge and education, it will end up being a mistake.”

Be a skilled technology leader. This theme describes the innovative talent leader’s competency of superior technological skills to manage macrolevel talent management processes at the global level. Participants were asked to describe their views as to the competency characteristics that a strategic talent manager should possess to be a skilled technology leader. Participant 1 drew attention to the need to know technology to a certain extent, given the unpredictable future, stating that: “I think that when it comes to technology, the core of being a leader in the area of technology is managing a future that is very hard to predict. So, I think learning agility and managing unpredictability to manage the arising changes and thereby know what technology can bring to manage those changes within organizations.” In particular, Participant 1 pointed out that: “When it comes to technology, being knowledgeable in technology is not the primary requirement for being a leader in technology. While the strategic talent manager should have some basic IT knowledge and knowledge about technological developments, other members in the organization are experts in this area and have that knowledge (and should be recognized as such by the strategic talent manager).” Interestingly, Participant 2 differentiated generalists from specialists in technology, stating that: “The strategic talent manager should be able to use and understand which tools are available. Not so much apply them, him or herself or invent or implement them, but he should be very well aware of the fact that those tools are there and not be afraid to apply them.” In the same vein, Participant 6

mentioned that: “Basic knowledge of technology available in an organization, ability to call on experts, ability to make decisions related to technology and its use.”

Be an organizational culture influencer. This theme describes the innovative talent leader’s competency of cultural and influencing skills to manage mesolevel organizational processes and ensure alignment between business and talent strategies. Participants were asked to describe their views as to the competency characteristics that a strategic talent manager should possess in order to be an organizational culture influencer. Participant 1 stated: “The most important competency is being a good role model. When it comes to culture and influencing cultures, it is a tough topic. Although it is a tough topic, being a role model is the most important one.” Participant 2 highlighted that: “He needs to be able to set change in motion, and then though that’s a part or technique, part influencing the politics, he needs to be a person who is accepted on this person and on this question of skills.” Alluding to the importance of reputation, Participant 3 pointed out that: “Also, it’s easy to sell if you’ve got reputation. To have reputation, the strategic talent manager needs to understand the business model of the organization he/she is working in, and also understand the reality of that part of the organization that helps them to understand the business. This can be done by managing the conversation with all of the other functional experts around that top table, such as the finance people or the operations people, enabling the strategic talent manager to understand why and what is important in their part of the organization and how this talent system helps to play into that and will make their work more effective, easier, and more valuable.”

Be a trusted employee coach. This theme describes the innovative talent leader’s competency of coaching skills to manage mesolevel organizational processes

to achieve both organizational and personal breakthroughs. Participants were asked to describe their views as to the competencies that a strategic talent manager should possess in order to become a trusted coach for employees working in an agile environment that is often changing due to volatile market disruptions. Participant 1 stated: “While in the past the strategic talent manager might have been the one who owns for some reason the most hierarchical power, today he is the one who is the real strategic talent mentor who knows how to manage, be able to connect, give space to others, and be able to be the leader of leaders so to speak. While he is responsible for a lot of areas, he knows how to give space to others to connect with one another, to form a team, to develop themselves, to facilitate others’ development, thereby giving space to others.” Participant 4 and Participant 8 emphasized the importance of listening skills, while Participant 6 highlighted: “Strong communication skills; empathy; self-awareness; knowledge and deep understanding of the organization’s core business and roles different employees play.” Interestingly, Participant 9 mentioned that: “the strategic talent manager has to have a growth mindset and understand that he/she has to be flexible and democratic in his/her managing style, interacting on the same level as the employees.”

Manage interpersonal relations on a team. This theme describes the innovative talent leader’s competency of interpersonal relations skills on a team at the mesolevel to improve communication skills across individual and cultural differences. Participants were asked to describe their views as to the competencies a strategic talent manager should possess in order to successfully manage interpersonal relations on a team. Participant 1 stated: “As I mentioned before, the most important competency for such a leader is being able at least to think about what combinations

of talents that are matching fairly well, that give some sort of synergy. Once you have this team, the question arises as to how you maintain a situation where the team keeps performing.” Participant 1 also mentioned that: “And those are the rules of engagement. This is the way we are working. So I think a good leader is very articulate and very clear about that. But within this framework, within those rules of engagements, I would say being a good leader for such a team is giving them the maximum room of possibilities and responsibilities to do the thing as a team and not so much telling them how to work as a team. So, giving them full responsibility within the rules of engagement is an essential competency.” Participant 2 stated: “Organizations do try and manage that by having certain protocols for how top teams should operate and how they ensure that they do not fall into blind spots or groupthinking. A strategic talent manager needs to give as much attention to members of the talent pool talking to each other as it does to identifying talent to be part of that pool. They need to ensure that talent talks to people in the operational core of the organization, to the management leadership of the organization. They have to manage the conversation and the dialogue, and they need to ensure that dialogue happens. It is crucial that such conversations and dialogues continually happen, both in the everyday operations of the organization and during any particular crisis.” In the same vein, Participant 4 mentioned: “Listener—able to listen to team’s concerns, ideas, feedback; Coach—able to maximize the potential of each team member; and Ombudsperson—able to help resolve conflicts among team members.” Participant 5 and Participant 7 alluded to the importance of work ethic. Some of the other competencies mentioned by participants were: “self-confidence, relationship management, Strong communication skills, ability to relate to other people, empathy,

self-awareness, trust, genuine interpersonal skills, kindness, sense of humor, and cooperativeness.”

Build credibility with internal and external stakeholders. This theme describes the innovative talent leader’s competency to build credibility with internal and external stakeholders at the meso and macrolevel to reach organizational goals while ensuring that all stakeholders, internal and external, meet their interests. Participants were asked to describe their views as to the competencies a strategic talent manager should possess in order to build credibility with internal and external stakeholders. Participant 6 mentioned: “Infallible reputation, strong communication skills, ability to forge new relationships, ability to maintain existing relationships.” and “Knowledge of the organization’s mission and vision, as well as its strategic intent (goals, strategy, etc.).” Participant 4 alluded to: “Trusted advisor—able to convince stakeholders to follow plans/visions instead of just give orders” and “True partner—give and take, especially with external partners, with an ability to negotiate for win-win solutions and outcomes.” Participant 5 mentioned: “Body language, listening, and collaboration.” Participant 6 stated: “Infallible reputation, strong communication skills, ability to forge new relationships, ability to maintain existing relationships.” Participant 7 mentioned: “Conflict resolutions and stakeholder management.”

Lead successful succession planning. This theme describes the innovative talent leader’s competency to lead successful succession planning and develop succession strategies for pro-active planning, assessment, monitoring, and management of current and future human capital needs to enable organizations to meet their objectives strategically. Participants were asked to describe their views as

to the competencies a strategic talent manager should possess in order to lead successful succession planning within the organization. Several participants referred to visionary skills. Participant 8 mentioned: “Essential succession planning skills, e.g., replacement chart. And conflict management/communication skills to reduce the divisive forces that succession planning can release.” Participant 9 stated: “it is a combination of competences, qualifications, people skills, credibility when it comes to showing results.” Participant 7 mentioned: “Develop every team member to the fullest (upskilling, reskilling, coaching, feedback, etc.).” And Participant 10 stated: “Visionary, ability to identify potential in employees, Analytical abilities, ability to integrate organizational growth plans with HR plans.”

Value creation. This theme describes the innovative talent leader’s goals within a talent management architecture to create value through macro talent management. Participants were asked to describe their views as to the competencies a strategic talent manager should possess to create value for their organization. Participant 1 stated: “The most important skill or a requirement of competency for such a leader starts with the awareness and the knowledge as a leader that there are some key positions within an organization. At the same time, there is a need for courage to acknowledge that some key positions add more value economically and allow the organization to differentiate from its competitors. Compared to the other positions in the organization, these key positions should be given more space and more opportunities.” Participant 2 mentioned that: “Understanding the strategy and clearly defining the key roles needed to achieve or to realize the strategy, and then putting the best people in those roles make strategic talent manager efficient. Against backgrounds of knowing what value-creating processes are key for the future of the

company and realizing that value creation is not a machine, the strategic talent manager needs to give people autonomy to enable them to create and pursue their own growth process.” Participant 3 stated: “The role of a strategic talent manager is about helping the organization build specific capabilities, which are essential for the strategy or necessary for the business model. Such a manager has to understand how to create that organizational capability. In that, the design of the organization is hugely important, and talent is only one part of the solution to help build an organization's capability.” And Participant 9 mentioned that: “What I would say here is that, for a manager to be able to add value in any talent management program must fully understand from experience and insight, the context in which he is in because having a training program for talents could never ever just be a standard training program for developing competences and qualification. It has to reflect the challenges that your company or your organization is facing in order for you to make sure that you can use the talents, hidden potentials in a way that will give you a competitive advantage.”

Value capture. This theme describes the innovative talent leader's goals within a talent management architecture to capture value through macro talent management. Participants were asked to describe their views as to how a strategic talent manager captures value for their organization to motivate talent toward better performance. Participant 5 mentioned: “detailed scorecard and measurable action plans that can help teams move forward and assess performance (team-wise and individually) toward those strategic/visionary goals.” Participant 7 stated: “You cannot really motivate people, but you can create a motivating environment by linking the needs of the workers with the mission and strategy of the organization.

(Dis)Engagement can come from many different sources: the worker, the team

leader/manager, and the organization.” Participant 9 mentioned that: “By knowing. That's why I talked about focusing on the epistemology. Knowing is the biggest challenge that we are facing in order to capture anything. We don't know enough, and the reason is that we don't know enough has to do with the fact that most of the knowledge within an organization is tacit knowledge.”

Value leverage and amplification. This theme describes the innovative talent leader's goals within a talent management architecture to leverage and amplify value through macro talent management. Participants were asked to describe their views as to how a strategic talent manager captures value for their organization to motivate talent toward better performance. Participant 1 stated: “Then, having a clear understanding of the type of combination of positions or the level of contribution that teams make, more than the average, adds value. The question then arises as to the type of positions or teams that allow for this value creation. As soon as one has a clear idea of those positions and teams that add value, one can capture the value that allows sustaining competitive advantage.” Participant 1 added: “This process involves trying to get the best people having key roles in key positions. Capturing talent involves knowing where value can be added in the organization, the types of positions, and teams filled by identifying and keeping the best people who add value and who can offer that value.” Participant 2 mentioned that: “Without clarity and understanding of what the company is aiming at and where it goes, a strategic talent manager cannot capture value for their organization to motivate talent toward better performance, and decisions of cost reduction and cost-effectiveness may arise.” Participant 6 stated: “A strategic talent manager can capture value for their organization by helping to attract

talented individuals and high potentials, develop their knowledge, skills, and ability, and retain their expertise within the organization in the long run.”

Value protection and retention. This theme describes the innovative talent leader’s goals within a talent management architecture to protect and retain value through macro talent management. Participants were asked to describe their views as to how a strategic talent manager captures value for their organization to motivate talent toward better performance. Participant 3 stated: “In my experience as a consultant, I’ve run hundreds of assessment centers, and the thing that I learned when assessing managers with whatever technology was that some managers have got the capability to use a broad spectrum of behaviors. They know when to use certain behaviors or a certain approach, whether it is for leadership or anything else, and when not to use that behavior and to use another. This is a competency that strategic talent managers need to have because they can display a range of behaviors, and they know when to use and when not to use certain approaches.” Participant 3 additionally stated: “Therefore, a strategic talent manager is trying to create people who have got that flexibility. Talent should not just be a one-trick pony, so to speak. They aren’t just, basically, doing either a particular role or using a particular management style or a leadership style. They can flex. The strategic talent manager has to have that confidence, having the broad capability, behaviorally, to be able to do this, and do it authentically. Because a talented manager has to be authentic.” Participant 4 mentioned: “Detailed scorecard and measurable action plans that can help teams move forward and assess performance (team-wise and individually) toward those strategic/visionary goals.”

Lead by influence as a partner on the leadership team. This theme describes the innovative talent leader's goals within a talent management architecture to support competitive advantage. Participants were asked to describe their views as to the competencies a strategic talent manager should possess in order to lead by influence as a partner on the leadership team. Participant 2 stated: "To be able to have any impact, the strategic talent manager needs to be on par and the same level with those he/she is talking to, business-wise, strategy-wise, and finance-wise." Participant 3 mentioned that: "The historical reputation of the person has a lot to do with the answer to this question. This person has some credibility because he/she always seems to make a lot of sense when finding some solutions with the top team with a problem." Participant 4 stated: "Negotiation and influence skills—which help the talent manager negotiate for win-win solutions that give the organization the outcomes it needs while giving the talent manager the resources it needs to fulfill key business unit-level demands." Interestingly, Participant 8 stated: "Don't bother with influence, lead by example. Earn the right to claim your power". Most competencies mentioned by the other participants included "strong leadership skills, high-level emotional intelligence, ability to persuade, strategic planning abilities, resilience, decision making, analytical abilities, general awareness, open-mindedness, awareness of organizational culture and values."

Support organizational competitive advantage. This theme describes the innovative talent leader's goals within a talent management architecture to support competitive advantage and establish strategies to allow alignment between business and talent strategies. Participants were asked to describe their views as to the competencies a strategic talent manager should possess in order to support

organizational competitive advantage. Participant 1 stated: “there need knowledge and awareness of the organization's competitive advantage that starts with strategic analysis. What is my competitive advantage? What is my unique combination of knowledge, skills, etc.? And once you know that, building this competitive advantage involves identifying the positions and teams that allow contributing to this competitive advantage taking into account that two to five percent positions or teams who can really make a difference in realizing your competitive advantage. The actual realization of the competitive advantage comes with having the right people in those positions. So, one of the competencies lies in having this strategic awareness, knowing how the competitive advantage is being realized. Knowing what the competitive advantage is about may be challenging for some managers”. Participant 2 mentioned that: “The strategic talent manager needs to understand which competencies are required to achieve the strategic objectives of the organization, and for that, he needs to understand in which business sector or external environments, the organization is operating.” Participant 7 mentioned: “an ability to learn and innovate.”

Creating value-driven talent to meet global organizational challenges.

This theme describes the innovative talent leader’s new leadership role to create a talent architecture where human, social, and intellectual capital interrelates in a culturally and technologically ever-changing environment. Participants were asked for their views regarding the future of the talent leader role in global organizations.

Participant 3 stated: “What's happened in the world is that we are now creating much more systemic solutions, and talent is a classic example. It's just as important that at a country level, we look at all the things that feed into the talent equation. But then, this is complex because it also becomes very political. You have to look at the way that

we create skills; our vocational and educational systems, where the skill clusters exist, the impact that your actions will have on the local economic geography. You have to look at the role of migration, of low and high skill migrations. What's the balance between migration and productivity? And so on. You have to look at all these other issues. People have to, governments have to, and the strategic talent manager has to deal with these issues." Participant 5 mentioned that: "Think ahead and focus on the right traits. The future of the talent leader in global organizations is to think about talent inclusively and to embrace people who are different from you and others already on your team. The engine of progress is change, and change is unlikely to happen if you only hire people who perpetuate the status quo. We all know that companies with diverse talent pipeline tend to have better financial results."

Participant 8 stated: "Talent is going to be more important going forward than ever. However, the mix of talent is going to change significantly. The talent leader is going to have to be a bit of a futurist and advocate for his/her view of the future. In other words, the talent manager should claim a greater voice in shaping the strategic direction of the firm."

Job title to designate a talent leader as an equal partner in organizational governance. This theme describes the innovative talent leader's job title that raises the role of the talent leader to the level of an equal partner in the organizational governance. Based on the view that titles attract talent, participants were asked to offer suggestions for the title of an equal partner among a corporation's leaders whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage. Participant 1 mentioned: "talent value creator? Talent value facilitator? CTO - Chief Talent Officer." Meanwhile, Participant 2 and stated: "I'm

not really sure I agree with the statement that titles attract talent”, while Participant 7 said that: “Titles are obsolete. In hierarchical, bureaucratic large-scale organizations, titles are important.” Participant 3 stated: “Yes, of course, labels and titles are important.” Participant 4 mentioned: “Chief Talent Officer”, while Participant 10 mentioned: “Talent Nurturing Officer”.

Second Phase: Cross-Case Synthesis and Analysis

For the present study, I used the cross-case synthesis and analysis technique to organize the 16 themes across the 10 cases (Yin, 2017). Unlike a meta-analysis conducted for large samples of cases, the use of Word tables for the present study allowed me to seek patterns across the small sample of cases, as is typically done in qualitative research studies (Yin, 2017). Given the complexity of real-life experiences and patterns that may not easily emerge from the study’s textual data when using the thematic analysis technique, the additional use of the cross-case synthesis method substantiated the data analysis process and ensured the transferability and trustworthiness of the results (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2017). An effective consolidation and interpretation of the data allowed me to develop an evidence-based argument, framed by two key conceptual models that focused on aligning with the purpose of the study (Cooper & White, 2012; Yin, 2017).

The use of the cross-case analysis technique involved an iterative data analysis process, given that each of the 10 cases was analyzed separately. The combination of the two techniques contributed to identifying the patterns and themes and exploring the views of the participants as to the competency characteristics of the innovative talent leader role. The use of the cross-case synthesis technique allowed for exploring

the convergence and divergence of data between cases while also removing the irrelevant data from the analysis (Yin, 2017).

Below, illustrated in Figure 1, are the cumulative frequencies of each theme by occurrence, combining the results of the thematic analysis from each case to provide the readers with a visual representation graph of those themes that converged to answer the research question.

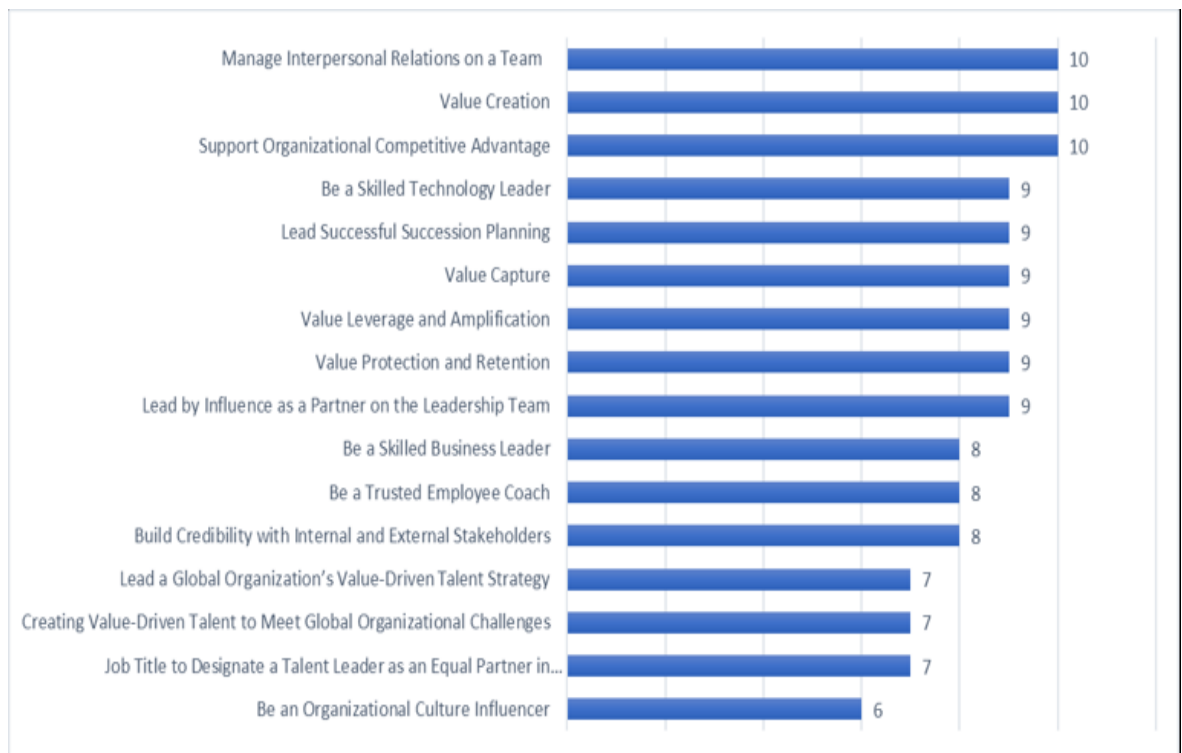


Figure 1. Multiple case analysis (theme frequency of occurrence by participant).

The cross-case analysis was an iterative process, and I first analyzed each of the 10 cases separately. Recurrent themes were identified across the data to meet the purpose of the study of gaining a deeper understanding of talent management experts' views on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary

responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage. The cumulative frequencies of occurrence for each theme from the expert interviews are illustrated in Figure 1, in which I combined the data analysis from each case while analyzing the convergent and divergent data across the 10 cases to present a multiple case study cross-case synthesis graph.

In both quantitative and qualitative research projects, expert interviews can serve to establish an initial orientation in a field that is either substantively new or poorly defined, as a way of helping the researcher to develop a clearer idea of the problem of the study. In this sense, exploratory expert interviews, as conducted in this study, helped to structure the area under investigation and to generate recommendations for practice and research, which will be detailed in Chapter 5. In my study, the expert's role is that of someone who possesses *contextual knowledge* in addition to *technical* and *process knowledge*. Expert and elite interviews conducted in my study also had an explorative function focused on *interpretative knowledge* (Littig & Pöchhacker, 2014). Orientations, interpretations, and evaluations from the interview data were explored to get an impression of the field, for example, in order to formulate guidelines for further research into new theoretical directions.

Expert interviews based on interpretative knowledge, that is, theory-extending interviews using thematically focused narratives, give the participants space to present his or her orientations and beliefs (Van Audenhove & Donders, 2019). Exploratory interviews with experts and elites should be conducted as openly as possible in order to make it possible to gather an unexpected breadth of information and interpretations. The goal of the expert interview in this study, as recommended by Witzel and Reiter (2012), is a permanent revision of the topic guide in the course of the research while

advancing the body of knowledge on defining new roles within the talent value supply chain that aim at retaining talented employees, thereby contributing to positive organizational outcomes (Claus, 2019). The scarcity of applied knowledge in talent management calls for new thinking in conceptualizing a new role on the talent value chain that may become a brokering position within an organization to increase the long-term value of acquired talent (Makram, Sparrow, & Greasley, 2017; Sparrow & Makram, 2015). In the face of a global upheaval in the nature of work and employment, talent management scholars have agreed that, to disrupt the traditional human resources industry, the competency characteristics of an innovative talent manager position, one removed from the HR office, needs to be considered among corporate executives in order to connect value-driven talent to competitive advantage (Claus, 2019; dos Santos & Pedro, 2020).

There is not only one way of doing expert or elite interviews, and there is no standard procedure for analyzing expert interviews (Flick, 2018). In principle, all qualitative social research analysis methods can be used, such as the code-based procedures common in the qualitative thematic analysis (Bogner et al., 2018). In formulating implications for the study and focused recommendations for further research in Chapter 5, my interpretivist narrative will be based on the frequency with which expert-generated themes occurred together in at least eight out of the 10 cases (Rosenthal, 2018). Three categories that figured prominently across the data collected from all 10 cases were *manage interpersonal relations on a team*, *value creation*, and *support organizational competitive advantage*. Six themes figured prominently across nine out of the 10 cases: *be a skilled technology leader*, *lead successful succession planning*, *value capture*, *value leverage and amplification*, *value protection and*

retention, and lead by influence as a partner on the leadership team. And, finally, three themes figured prominently across eight out of the 10 cases: be a skilled business leader, be a trusted employee coach, and build credibility with internal and external stakeholders.

Triangulation

This study used three sources of data: 1) a semistructured interview protocol (Appendix B) whose items were designed and standardized by previous researchers; 2) archival data in the form of business and industry reports and media articles on innovative talent management (Yin, 2017); and 3) journaling/reflective field notes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) kept by the researcher throughout the data collection process. Multiple data collection methods from multiple sources of evidence were utilized for purposes of data triangulation. In addition to binding data sources, the codes used in the analysis of the data bridged themes across a variety of methodologies, including interviews, field notes, historical literature, and archival data (Stake, 2013). This data source triangulation boosted the trustworthiness of the study's results and developed a more aggregate consideration of the data (Yin, 2017).

The research question and the constructivist paradigm are aligned with how I used observation as a data collection technique through keeping reflective field notes as unstructured observations that served as an additional source of data collection (Katz, 2014). Journaling and reflective field notes are a common technique in qualitative research and case study research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Stake, 2013). Over time, reflexivity has become a major aspect of qualitative research methods in organizational research (Haynes, 2012) and a critical component of data analysis within the case study design (Stake, 2013). The reliance on different sources of

evidence allowed me to mitigate reflexivity-generated bias and remain faithful to participants' views while also searching for divergent evidence as diligently as possible, thereby protecting the trustworthiness of the data (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017). I provided each study participant with a copy of the transcript and requested they read and verify the accuracy of their responses; the participant-reviewed transcripts were also useful for reviewing researcher reflexivity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

I used an interview protocol for the semistructured interviews in order to standardize the data collection process (see Appendix B). An audit trail of the research record is a synthesis of reports for the transcript, coding structure, and memos on the progress of a research study. I used an audit trail and methodological triangulation to ensure the dependability of the study results (Guion et al., 2011). For the process of data triangulation during the data analysis, I referenced data from my reflective journal notes and analyzed archival data. Triangulation is used as an analytic technique and central aspect of case study research in order to authenticate qualitative data during fieldwork, such as the interviews along with other sources of evidence in addition to the data analysis (Yin, 2017). Data triangulation was my method of choice to limit problems related to constructing validity, given that multiple sources of data offer different measures of a phenomenon and further strategies that can be used for data analysis of multiple sources (e.g., case description, investigating opposing explanations, analytic techniques to compare proposed relationships with empirical patterns) (Halkias & Neubert, 2020; Yin, 2017). Pattern-matching logic was employed to compare empirical and predicted patterns in the

archival data set, which supported my choice of data analysis for the primary data (e.g., cross-case synthesis, explanation building, and logic models).

After I conducted semistructured interviews with the participants, I continued the data triangulation process to answer the research question. I read and annotated peer-reviewed scholarly papers from 133 scientific journals. I collected and reviewed 294 articles that included government, business, company, and media reports, white papers, and popular media (newspaper, a magazine) relevant to the study. These reports were not substantive for the literature review but were a source to complement the overall data collection process. This reading helped me specify the meaning of recurring concepts and ideas in order to generate themes that were complete, accurate, and credible (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The archival data information was in the form of business, industry, and media reports on innovative trends in strategic talent management from respected industry and business sources such as Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, Ernst & Young, Human Capital Online, World Economic Forum, and McKinsey & Company. Media reports were also presented from Harvard Business Review and Oxford Economics. While these reports did serve as support within the literature review, these materials were also a source of evidence that helped complement the primary data from the semistructured interviews.

In conclusion, analyzing archival data through different sources of evidence can lead to deep, thick, rich information for methodological triangulation to answer the research question (Guion et al., 2011). Triangulation of three data sources provided thick enough, rich information to support the trustworthiness of the study results (Guion et al., 2011; Yin, 2017). By analyzing the triangulated results through the lens of my conceptual framework, the findings of the study can extend the body of

knowledge related to talent management experts' views on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage.

Summary

A case by case analysis was conducted and presented in Chapter 4 with a total of 10 separate cases, leading to a cross-case analysis and synthesis process to provide answers for the central research question that guided the development of this multiple case study:

RQ: How do talent management experts describe the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-added talent to support organizational competitive advantage?

Based on the findings of this multiple case study, a total of six coding categories emerged from three root nodes, and 16 themes were gleaned from the thematic analysis that yielded thick, rich data on the expert views of the study participants. The six coding categories emerged from the study's conceptual framework. This includes (a) Sparrow and Makram's (2015) four value-driven processes of a talent management architecture framework and (b) Schreuder and Noorman's (2019a) concept of a strategic talent manager. The coding categories were (a) competency characteristics for macrolevel organizational issues, (b) competency characteristics for mesolevel organizational issues, (c) competency characteristics for governance issues, (d) competency characteristics for value-driven processes, (e) competency characteristics for leading competitive advantage strategies, and (f) future planning for the innovative talent leader role.

I used cross-case synthesis as the data analysis technique to incorporate critical findings of individual case studies. Once themes were arranged across the multiple cases in this study, the 16 themes gleaned from the raw data included the following: (a) be a skilled business leader, (b) lead a global organization's value-driven talent strategy, (c) be a skilled technology leader, (d) be an organizational culture influencer, (e) be a trusted employee coach, (f) manage interpersonal relations on a team, (g) build credibility with internal and external stakeholders, (h) lead successful succession planning, (i) value creation, (j) value capture, (k) value leverage and amplification, (l) value protection and retention, (m) lead by influence as a partner on the leadership team, (n) support organizational competitive advantage, (o) create value-driven talent to meet global organizational challenges, and (p) job title to designate a talent leader as an equal partner in organizational governance. In addition to binding data sources, I strengthened the trustworthiness of the study's data by employing methodological triangulation of three data sources: interviews, journaling/reflective field notes, and archival data (Guion et al., 2011). I analyzed and interpreted the multiple case study results through the lens of the conceptual framework.

In Chapter 5, I further interpret the study findings in terms of how they compare and contrast to the literature described in Chapter 2. I demonstrate the significance of the research for theory, practice, and social change and describe how the results of this study extend the body of knowledge on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-added talent to support organizational competitive advantage. Finally, I describe how future scholarly research can extend the findings of this study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to describe talent management experts' views on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage. To meet the purpose of the study and address this documented knowledge gap among corporate executives on the key competencies of an innovative talent leader, and consistent with the qualitative paradigm, I used a multiple case study design (Yin, 2017) to collect data from a purposeful sample of talent management experts. I used semistructured interviews (Yin, 2017), archival data, and reflective field notes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) to support the credibility of the study's findings through data triangulation (Guion et al., 2011; Yin, 2017).

The goal of qualitative research is to explore experiences from the viewpoint of people living within a specific context; it is associated with the constructivist paradigm (Cooper & White, 2012). The qualitative research method is characterized by constructivism added to interpretivism in that participants and researchers are allowed to interact socially to create new data (Harrison et al., 2017). This study was framed by two key conceptual models that aligned with the purpose of the study, which was to describe talent management experts' views on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage: (a) Sparrow and Makram's (2015) four value-driven processes of a talent management architecture framework and (b) Schreuder and Noorman's (2019a) concept of a strategic talent manager.

A multiple case study of 10 interviews, thematic analysis, and cross-case synthesis analysis gave rise to 16 themes gleaned from the raw data: (a) be a skilled business leader, (b) lead a global organization's value-driven talent strategy, (c) be a skilled technology leader, (d) be an organizational culture influencer, (e) be a trusted employee coach, (f) manage interpersonal relations on a team, (g) build credibility with internal and external stakeholders, (h) lead successful succession planning, (i) value creation, (j) value capture, (k) value leverage and amplification, (l) value protection and retention, (m) lead by example as a partner on the leadership team, (n) support organizational competitive advantage, (o) create value-driven talent to meet global organizational challenges, and (p) designate a talent leader job title as an equal partner in organizational governance.

Interpretation of Findings

The findings of this multiple case study confirm and extend current knowledge in the discipline, with each case presenting examples of issues discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2. Extant theories can be expanded and enhanced using a multiple-case study design for gathering data to answer a qualitative research question (Eisenhardt, 2020). In this section, I develop analytical generalizations to compare theory with the empirical results, based on the outcomes of which the theory can be extended or modified (Ridder, 2017). Extension of theory using a multiple case study design can contribute value to a particular theoretical perspective and further define the boundaries of the original theory (Halkias & Neubert, 2020).

In this section, I present the study's findings and interpret them in the context of the coding categories that emerged from the data analysis. I compare each of these six categories with relevant concepts from the conceptual framework and the extant

literature reviewed in Chapter 2. I provide evidence from the 10 semistructured interviews to support how the study's findings either extend, confirm, or disconfirm existing knowledge. Extension studies, such as this multiple case study, "provide not only replication evidence but also extend prior research results by offering novel and important theoretical directions" (Bonett, 2012, p. 410).

Competency Characteristics for Macrolevel Organizational Issues

My results confirmed the need to develop talent management processes at the macrolevel to support the long-term retention of value-driven talent and sustain competitive advantage (see Sparrow, 2019; Wiblen & McDonnell, 2019). Data that I gathered from the 10 semistructured interviews were consistent with the importance of implementing talent management systems and practices at the macrolevel and interrelating them with the external environment rather than focusing on the organization (King & Vaiman, 2019). The highly competitive environment and tremendous demographic shifts constitute an imperative for organizations to consider global talent management at the macrolevel (Khilji et al., 2015). My study's results aligned with the argument that the adoption of talent management strategies at the macrolevel and cross-level, rather than microlevel, and going beyond the HR-centric orientation contributes to organizations sustaining competitive advantage (King & Vaiman, 2019).

Competency Characteristics for Mesolevel Organizational Issues

There is an increasing need to develop an agile workforce that allows organizations and their members to face and meet evolving requirements (Denning, 2018). My research findings confirmed the importance of the innovative talent leader gaining competency characteristics that will help organizations become agile by

transforming, adapting, and anticipating the future while also accompanying employees through their development and growth as individuals (Galagan et al., 2019). In particular, the present study's results corroborate the need for new talent leaders to develop coaching skills and interpersonal skills, enabling individuals to develop behaviors that align with the values and culture of the organization (Galagan et al., 2019).

My research findings were consistent with the argument that the innovative talent leader needs to give space to individuals and gain self-management skills (Schreuder & Noorman, 2019a). The present study's results also confirmed the importance of fostering lifelong learning opportunities to prepare individuals for the future (Claus, 2019). As shown in the study's results, by instilling more learning opportunities to individuals, the innovative talent leader encourages the growth of intellectual capital, which enables individuals to make a difference and add value to the organization and themselves (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). While Elkeles et al. (2016) suggested that talent leaders need to enable individuals to gain self-management skills to drive their careers and adapt to the evolution of the labor market, my research findings extended this prior study by highlighting the importance of challenging individuals to seek learning opportunities out of the ordinary.

Competency Characteristics for Governance Issues

There was a wide agreement that the innovative talent leader should develop external and internal stakeholder relationship competencies. My research findings confirmed the type of competency characteristics associated with external stakeholder relationship competencies such as business acumen, data analytics, and talent value creation. Talent value forms a bridge between customers' demands and perceptions of

products and the services rendered by talented employees (Sahay, 2014). Developing stakeholder relationship competencies at the meso and macrolevel dovetails with the competencies needed to implement succession planning effectively.

The present study's findings confirmed that succession planning is a part of an integrated approach to talent management (Ali & Mehreen, 2019). My findings also corroborated that the lack of an integrated strategy leads to overlooking needed capabilities and undermining employees' talents, thereby hampering organizational growth (Pila et al., 2016). Corroborating the argument that more large- than small-scale organizations are prone to developing an integrated strategy toward talent management and succession planning (Sablok et al., 2017), the research results highlighted that the role of the innovative talent leader does not lie in developing succession plans for every position in the organization. Rather, the role of the innovative talent leader is to identify key positions with continual attention to the organizational talent pipeline and through ongoing conversations with business managers.

The innovative talent leader reaches this goal by demonstrating creativity skills in order to identify and select candidates from different fields of work, along with comparable skills as required for the positions concerned. In addition to visionary and analytical abilities, the present study's results showed that communication and conflict management skills help mitigate the divisive forces that succession planning can unleash, thus becoming some of the new talent leader's essential competencies. Interestingly, while there is a tendency to underscore the importance of drawing attention to key positions and placing key people in these

positions, the research findings showed the need to develop every team member to the fullest through upskilling, reskilling, coaching, and feedback.

Competency Characteristics for Value-Driven Processes

In a fast-moving environment, the pursuit of value-driven talent compels organizations to analyze labor markets external to the organization and engage, develop, and reward their employees internally (Dhir, 2019; van der Sluis, 2018). This is the so-called talent value chain approach (van der Sluis, 2018). Consistent with my research findings, the development of value-driven talent management processes at the macrolevel through networking and partnerships enables organizations to enjoy more opportunities and sustain competitive advantage (Berman et al., 2016).

My research findings also corroborated the insight that the capture of the value of assets or resources such as talents enables organizations to maximize their bargaining power over competitors (Claus et al., 2019; Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Consistent with my research findings, the adoption of agile management approaches at the mesolevel empowers teams and extends teams' involvement in the decision-making process (Denning, 2018).

Competency Characteristics for Leading Competitive Advantage Strategies

Leading competitive advantage strategies are vital toward achieving strategic organizational renewal (Järvi & Khoreva, 2020). New market realities prompted the need for an HR transformation and urged HR professionals to focus on business strategies (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005; Zheltoukhova, 2015). The present study's results corroborated the notion that effective alignment between business and talent/HR strategies helps sustain competitive advantage (Efron, 2018). Besides clarifying the innovative talent leader's role, my research findings also extended

Sheehan et al.'s (2016) study, commending talent leaders for challenging corporate executives through continual discourse and gains in strategic power.

This study's results confirmed the divide between HR roles and the reduced level of power, compelling HR professionals to prove the legitimacy of their function (Gill, 2018; Heizmann & Fox, 2017; Sparrow et al., 2015). By extension, the study's findings indicated the importance of the ability to build trust and demonstrate personal accountability. The importance of leading by example rather than influencing, as well as demonstrating the ability to create results, arose from the study's results as competency characteristics that support organizational competitive advantage.

Future Planning for the Innovative Talent Leader Role

Given the ongoing labor market changes that have caused a shift in the nature of work, there is wide agreement on the need for a new talent job role to support organizational competitive advantage through the long-term retention of value-driven talent (dos Santos & Pedro, 2020; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2019). The present study's results confirmed that the lack of competencies and skills might hamper the development of innovative insights and practices that meet both the organization's and employees' needs (dos Santos & Pedro, 2020).

My research findings corroborated the need for a broadened HR role whereby HR and talent leaders are essential in enabling organizations to reach their goals and sustain competitive advantage (Claus, 2019). Consistent with the need for a broadened role, this study's results also showed that the new talent leader should be as knowledgeable in HR and talent as they are in finance and technology in order to realize the organization's ambitions. This study's findings revealed that the new talent leader role should be a role model, fully integrated into and involved in the

macrolevel, strategic decision-making process. As shown in the results, there needs to be a higher alignment between the talent leader title and the work identity that reflects real-life talent management units' experiences, thus yielding authentic and substantial knowledge and understanding of the work processes currently implemented in organizations. The findings also showed that, equipped with diverse knowledge and experience, the new talent leader, as such, will not exist in the future. Instead, there will be different types of managers, such as people skill managers, strategic managers, training managers, and so forth, as per this study's results.

Limitations of the Study

This qualitative, multiple case study contains several limitations. The first limitation resided in the data collection process. Although a sample of 10 talent management experts was recruited to participate in the research study, an adequate number to attain data saturation in qualitative research (Fusch & Ness, 2015), half of the participants opted to send in written answers. Conducting semistructured interviews and receiving written answers might have resulted in collecting answers of varying levels of quality and depth. This issue was mitigated by allowing interviewees to review the transcript of their answers and provide modifications as needed.

The second limitation lay in the inherent criticism toward the qualitative research study method, given the challenge in reaching generalizability (Yin, 2017). The use of the multiple as opposed to the single case study design helped address part of this issue, in addition to the use of multiple data sources. These data sources included interviews, journaling/reflective field notes, and archival data, which strengthened the trustworthiness of the study's data by allowing for the methodological triangulation of data sources (Guion et al., 2011).

The third limitation lay in the challenge of collecting honest and transparent answers from participants. The political or sociological context surrounding the participants, including personal bias and anxiety, may impair the quality of the answers (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). It is worth noting that power differentials may arise between the researcher and interviewees (Mero-Jaffe, 2011). I strove to address this issue by building trust with the participants, managing emotions, and assuming ethical responsibilities (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Future Research

Recommendations

Continuous improvement in meeting today's talent management challenges. Scholars noted a literature gap on how to create an innovative talent leadership role that is linked to meeting macrolevel outcomes and supporting competitive advantage, rather than just passively reciprocating to micro and mesolevel business needs (Sparrow, 2019; Wiblen & McDonnell, 2019). More research is needed on the perspectives of talent management experts on innovative job design and competency characteristics for modernized talent leadership roles, embedding a macrolevel strategy within the talent management process (Garavan et al., 2019; King & Vaiman, 2019).

Regarding the sustainability of competitive advantage, the present research study's results confirm Harsch and Festing's (2020) view that talent management processes and talents are dynamic, value-laden capabilities. Consistent with the importance of talent leaders demonstrating business acumen (Beatty, 2019; Galagan et al., 2019), my research findings confirm the imperative not only to acquire business knowledge but to know the very core of the organization's identity. This study's

results indicate the need for further research into the challenge facing organizations in moving away from competency models and integrating the very competency characteristics that support competitive advantage (Beatty, 2019; Galagan et al., 2019). My research findings are consistent with the view that categories of competencies vary with the culture of the organization (Beatty, 2019; Galagan et al., 2019). More research is recommended on the role of discourse and communications skills in the innovative talent leader's toolbox of business skills to help gain strategic power and support organizational competitive advantage.

Research on creating value-driven processes in talent management. The present study's results confirm the importance of creating value-driven processes by combining individual skills with tacit organizational knowledge in ways that lead to novel and valuable outcomes or create greater human capital for customer service (Sirmon et al., 2007). The present study's results are consistent with scholars' perspective that knowledge management, learning, and development enhance both individual and organizational performance (Makram et al., 2017; Sparrow & Makram, 2015; Venkatesh, 2016).

Further research is needed on how the innovative talent managers can link intellectual capital to macrolevel business strategy. Such research can drive further inquiries into how organizations can protect the very knowledge that is conducive to reaching goals and retaining the best talents while also enabling valued employees to maximize their lifelong knowledge acquisition and sustain their career aspirations (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). This recommended area for further research can extend current scholars' perspectives by highlighting the training and knowledge

management needs of mid-level employees working in a volatile and ever-changing global marketplace.

The inclusive versus the exclusive approach to talent management. The issue of an exclusive, as opposed to an inclusive approach toward talent management, remains unresolved (Nijs et al., 2014). New talent leaders still face the challenge of choosing one approach or the other when taking on their new job functions (Pila et al., 2016). While corroborating the above statements, this study's findings show the need to adopt an inclusive as opposed to an exclusive approach toward talent management, including a diverse workforce (Hughes, 2019). For example, Whysall et al. (2019) suggested one of the critical areas under-researched in following an inclusive approach with the onset of industrial revolution 4.0 is talent management of older workers since the study of training and career development opportunities for older workers is lacking. While emphasizing an inclusive approach toward talent management, the study's results show that the new talent leader needs to convey the message that key talents are the organization's best strategic assets, continually differentiating key positions from other positions and key people from others, and seeking the best people for key positions.

Methodological recommendation in future research streams within the talent management field. Regarding the chosen methodological approach, and more specifically the data collection and analysis techniques, the use of multiple methods and data sources in talent management research is recommended in order to avoid single method biases and yield greater accuracy (Hughes, 2019). As recommended by Hughes (2019), the empirical collection of data from multiple sources, such as organizational evaluation reports, data retrieved via assessment centers, or

observation/participation allows researchers to utilize the same means currently used by organizations to identify talent, thus yielding more robust results. For example, the use of qualitative, longitudinal methods of research alongside quantitative, cross-sectional research would help diversify the sources (Al Ariss et al., 2014; Nijs et al., 2014).

Quantitative data serve an important purpose in supporting the theoretical arguments that build into generalized conclusions (Harkiolakis, 2017), but they do not permit an in-depth understanding of individual experiences (Stake, 2013). Qualitative data continues to be the best resource for yielding information beyond statistics and gathering thick, rich information on the quality of the processes under empirical investigation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Qualitative, in-depth interviews, for example, can contribute details that enable the evolution of a more solid theory within the talent management discipline. The use of field notes taken during the research process may enhance the analysis process. These include notes on the participants' nonverbal cues such as the tone of voice and attitude, providing additional information that would go unacknowledged in the traditional interview process. These additional notes aim to add contextual, supporting information relevant to the analysis, evaluation, and interpretation of the participants. Enhanced detailed documentation yields valuable information for evaluating talent management practices and identifying avenues for more effective individual and organizational performance.

Implications

Positive Social Change

This study is important because it addresses an under-researched area of utilizing an innovative job design method to develop competency characteristics for a talent leadership role linked to meeting macrolevel outcomes, rather than just passively reciprocating to micro and mesolevel business needs (Sparrow, 2019; Wiblen & McDonnell, 2019). This study's research goal is to contribute original, qualitative data from study participants to answer the central research question and utilize a constructivist lens to extend the theoretical foundations of the study's conceptual framework (Sparrow & Makram, 2015; Schreuder & Noorman, 2019a). As highlighted at the 2020 World Economic Forum in Davos and given the sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the results of the present study reinforce the imperative for corporate leaders to adopt innovative talent management practices that support social sustainability goals (World Economic Forum, 2020).

With a global increase in top talent shortages looming throughout many industries, more so in times of pandemic, employee attitudes about sustainable business practices are compelling more companies to take this issue seriously. The current crisis compels corporate leaders globally to adopt new thinking toward human and talent management, transitioning from the concept of human capital to that of people committed to positive social change (Lawler, 2018). The findings of the present study can drive positive social change by providing corporate leaders with a better understanding of how to reshape talent management leadership roles within organizations to better support sustainability goal agendas. Articulating a “nobler mission” for a company is a tremendous motivator for employees and powerful leverage

in the war for talent (Anlesinya & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2020). Emphasizing responsible management and ethical concerns in organizational talent strategies and practices is an imperative for today's business leaders, given the current level of interest in sustainable human and organizational outcomes through innovative management (Anlesinya & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2020).

Theoretical Implications

There is a gap in the literature regarding how to create an innovative talent leadership role that is linked to meeting macrolevel outcomes and competitive advantage, rather than just passively reciprocating to micro and mesolevel business needs (Harsch & Festing, 2020; Sparrow, 2019; Wiblen & McDonnell, 2019). The findings of the present study confirm the need to provide corporate executives with information on the needed competency characteristics for an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage (Claus, 2019; dos Santos & Pedro, 2020; Sparrow, 2019).

The results of this study, depicted in the model of competency characteristics supporting job roles of the talent value leader (Figure 2 below), represent pathways for future theoretical investigations into developing innovative talent management leader role job descriptions to meet today's organizational needs. Job characteristics underpinning talent value leader roles that draw attention, among others, to creating value at the macro and the mesolevel, reinforce the importance of a broadened role that enables all stakeholders to meet their needs and organizations to reach their goals (Dhir, 2019). The more organizational objectives and stakeholders' interests are given equal attention, the higher organizational performance and sustainability, and the more sustainable competitive advantage. By filling a gap in knowledge on the

creation of an innovative talent leadership role that is linked to meeting macrolevel outcomes and competitive advantage, the present study contributes original, qualitative data to the integration of the talent construct into leadership theory building that may prove useful in future related research.

Implications for Organizations and Recommendations for Practice

My inspiration as a researcher in taking on this investigation was researcher recommendations in the literature related to the shifting nature of work across the global labor market. Working in the human resource field for over two decades, I was interested in scholars' recommendations that organizations might need a new job role within their leadership team, one that supports competitive advantage through the long-term retention of value-driven talent (dos Santos & Pedro, 2020; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2019). King and Vaiman (2019) recommended that competencies be developed for a novel talent leadership role within organizations; such a role would be charged with meeting macrolevel outcomes and sustaining competitive advantage (Harsch & Festing, 2020; Sparrow, 2019).

The purpose of this study led me to conduct a subject matter expert study to offer recommendations for practice to corporate executives on the needed competency characteristics to support job roles for an innovative talent leader (Claus, 2019; dos Santos & Pedro, 2020; Sparrow, 2019). I was very fortunate to recruit several highly regarded scholars in the talent management field, all of whom were cited in my conceptual framework and literature review, to offer their expertise on the competency characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage. Until now, only nonscholarly business reports raised the issue of a lack of

knowledge on the competency characteristics of such a novel role within the talent management area.

My goal in conducting this multiple case study was to launch a research stream about this innovative role in talent management and disseminate these preliminary study results through a proposed model of the competency characteristics needed to fulfill this job role. I used a multiple case study design to replicate the same findings across multiple cases by exploring the differences and similarities between and within cases (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Through the cross-case analysis process, this study is an extension study that “not only provides replication evidence but also extends the results of prior studies in new and important theoretical directions and offers recommendations for future research” (Bonett, 2012, p. 410). The most robust multiple case studies done for organizational research focus on results that are termed as novel and which present a rival or new interpretation of the data collected from the literature, often driving implications and recommendations to support theory extension (Halkias & Neubert, 2020; Hannah & Eisenhardt, 2018).

In the nonscholarly business literature reviewed in my archival data sets, such as reports from several popular media business bloggers associated with HR.com, Loftus Bradford Blog, and McKinsey Quarterly, there have been calls for innovation in talent management job descriptions to meet today’s organizational needs (Bafaro et al., 2017; Carcel Ribes, 2017; Charan et al., 2018). The competency characteristics for such a talent management position have yet to be theoretically introduced or conceptually developed within the talent management body of knowledge or scholarly literature (Harsch & Festing, 2020). My introduction of such a talent management position can be viewed in a proposed model developed through the results of this

multiple case study. This proposed model may be used as a recommendation for practice in global organizations facing the challenges of valued talent retention.

For naming this position, I asked all my expert participants for their recommendations and decided to blend their views with the business report data I accumulated on the topic. I decided to utilize the title of *talent value leader*, a role often cited in business reports and professional talent management articles. The talent value leader holds a broader role at the strategic level that combines business and talent decisions that increases talent value leaders' responsibility and accountability. Charan et al. (2018) outlined the accountable role held by talent value leaders. While creating strategic business value, talent value leaders link up talent management to people analytics, allowing for a holistic approach toward organizational goals.

The innovative job role of talent value leader fits within the wider framework of the talent value chain, which aims at approaching talent value through a holistic lens (Chaturvedi, 2018; van der Sluis, 2018). The talent value chain encompasses all resources, policies, processes, and procedures that enable organizations to attract, select, recruit, develop, and retain the right talents to meet business needs (Chaturvedi, 2018; van der Sluis, 2018). In this study, the job role of talent value leader, through the concept of the talent value chain, moves beyond traditional mesolevel HR roles to create value by joining and bridging organizations' and all stakeholders' forces and interests for the greater good (van der Sluis, 2018). Bringing forward the holistic perspective through the talent value chain allows the role of talent value leaders to bridge the gap between HR management and the overall strategic plan (Carcel Ribes, 2017).

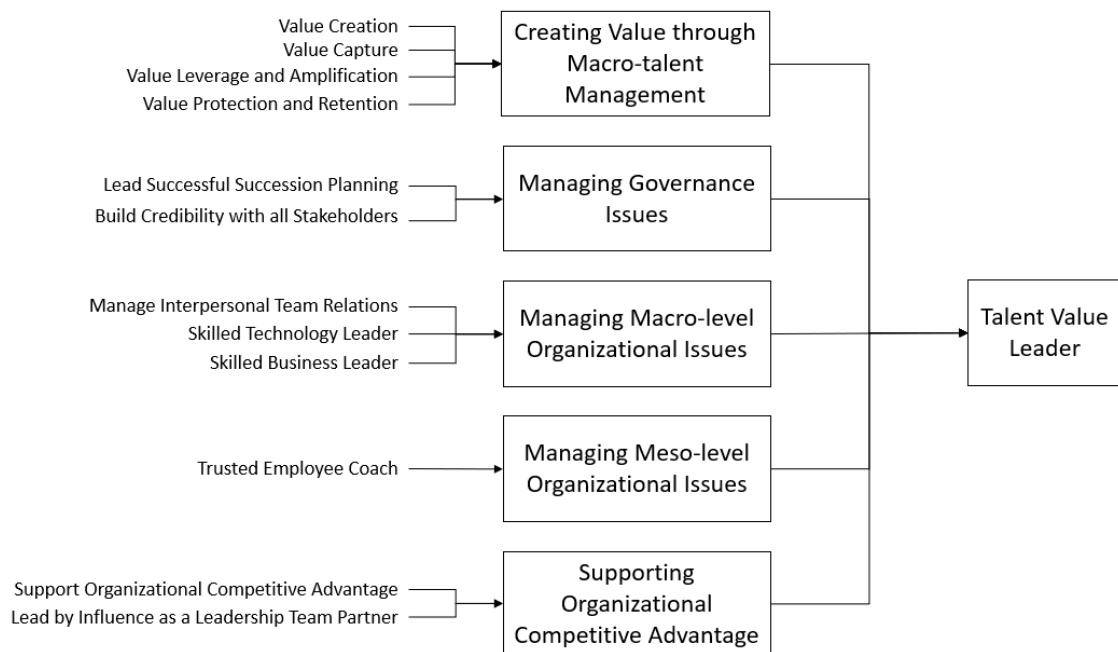


Figure 2. Model of competency characteristics supporting job roles of the talent value leader.

The talent value leader role emerges as a new avenue to address the lack of alignment between strategic business decisions and strategic talent decisions. The talent value leader role aims to reinforce HR involvement in strategic decision making (Charan et al., 2018). The authors, who are affiliated with Harvard Business School and Korn Ferry Management Consulting, wrote that in the future, researchers should further develop the role of talent value leaders and the competency characteristics that will enable these leadership team partners to attract and retain the best talents for their organizations (Sheehan & Anderson, 2015; Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Talent value leaders can maximize return on assets by including every employee without distinction between organizational levels (Sheehan & Anderson, 2015; Sparrow & Makram, 2015). Given that there was little agreement on an innovative talent

manager's role among business experts, I developed the proposed model of competency characteristics for the talent value leader based on the results emerging from a multiple case study design, an exploratory expert interview method, and cross-case synthesis analysis (Eisenshardt, 2020; Yin, 2017). The results of my study helped to generate recommendations for practice to corporate executives on the competency characteristics to look for when hiring candidates to carry out the various job roles of the talent value leader within the leadership team of their organizations.

Organizational Policy Implications amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

As COVID-19 continues to spread across the globe, both employers and employees are coming to terms with its economic and societal impacts. Given the widespread disruption of this virus, many are concerned with the prospects for growth and recovery as well as the potential for a lasting structural impact on organizations (Ding, Levine, Lin, & Xie, 2020). More than ever before, those with the proper competency characteristics of the talent value leader will be called upon to effectively plan organizational responses and retain valued employees (Hudecheck, Sirén, Grichnik, & Wincent, 2020). Shareholders and stakeholders are keen to invite those in the talent management area onto executive boards. As recruiting and retaining skilled workers has become a preoccupation for corporate executives, competent leaders in the talent management area are needed in the C-Suite and as an equal partner on an organization's leadership team. Of course, a higher profile entails new expectations for a talent value leader. According to one recent survey, HR heads appointed to Fortune 100 companies between 2016 and 2019 were around 50% likelier than earlier hires to have worked abroad in general management or finance (O'Kelley III, Goodman, Jones, & Neal, 2019). A talent value leader is needed with strong

competency skills in using predictive tools to spot opportunities for a macrolevel outcome alignment and people operations. For example, algorithms now challenge behavioral biases on everything from compensation to career pathing and employee engagement, and can now trigger alerts when talent is at risk of attrition (Noack, 2019).

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the instinct among executives is to cut costs through mass redundancies, as seen in hotel chains and airlines, and slash payrolls indiscriminately. It is recommended that a talent value leader in an organization's leadership team can use the crisis "to reconfigure company workflow, what needs to be done by whom, what can be automated and what requires people to share the same space" ("The importance of people people," 2020, p. 4). The most forward-thinking talent managers must already begin looking beyond the pandemic crisis. Although times may be too uncertain for recruitment, it is always a good time to start the value capture process of courting talent at rival firms (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). The flattened curve will bring a new configuration to the global labor market. An astute talent value leader continues to engage with what could now be an at-home workforce in order to actively drive value in the talent management supply chain (Dingel & Neiman, 2020).

Conclusions

Given the longstanding problem of organizations facing the challenge of identifying and retaining talents, the knowledge of eminent professors and practitioners who participated in the study contributed to providing invaluable insights on the much-needed competency characteristics and associated roles of an innovative talent value leader. Today's volatile global market is marked by disruptions and

challenges, the most recent being the COVID-19 pandemic that may forever alter how talent is valued, recruited, and retained to meet macrolevel goals. The insights provided by the participants contribute to identifying the competency characteristics of an innovative talent value leader role. Such insights have the potential to remind the outside world to adopt new thinking in conceptualizing talent leader roles that take part in the talent value chain. Encompassing all resources, policies, processes, and procedures that enable organizations to attract, select, recruit, develop, and retain the right talent, the talent value chain dovetails with systems thinking that seeks to go beyond traditional mesolevel HR roles and associated practices.

The development of an innovative talent leader role that is integrated into the strategic decision-making process is conducive to creating value at the macrolevel by bringing organizations' and all stakeholders' forces and interests together for the greater good. The pursuit of competitive advantage cannot be sustainable unless each and every component that constitutes an organizational system and beyond relates and interrelates to learn and produce the best of itself. Future research should promote alternative views and pathways of theoretical investigation as to how the innovative talent managers can link intellectual capital to macrolevel business strategy. Such an approach gives rise to responsible and ethical management in organizational talent strategies and practices, allowing for more sustainable human and organizational outcomes. Articulating a "nobler mission" for a company is a powerful leverage in the war for talent (Anlesinya & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2020). A better understanding of how corporate executives struggling to maintain a competitive advantage in today's volatile global market may retain value-driven talent and drive positive social change can aid in addressing today's great socioeconomic challenges.

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Appendix A: Walden Institutional Review Board Approval Number

IRB ID: 03-06-20-0661676

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Participant No: _____

Gender: _____

Age _____

Nationality: _____

Years as an academic researcher _____

Number of published peer-reviewed papers in the HR/TM subject area: _____

Preliminary Actions:

Interviewer to participants: *Thank you for accepting my invitation to be interviewed in your capacity as a recognized scholar and subject matter expert in the talent management subject area. The purpose of this interview is to collect talent management experts' views on the competencies and characteristics of an innovative talent leader whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage.*

Competency characteristics *are knowledge, behavioral skills, cognitive and emotional intelligence, personality traits, values, motives, and occasionally other perceptual capabilities. Competencies are a critical part of leading a talent management process. In order to interpret the different levels of competencies objectively, Trost (2020) recommends that behavioral anchors are specified in such a way, that they describe, on the basis of distinct behavior patterns, what the different levels mean from beginner to expert. If one combines competence models with different jobs and determines the required competence levels, this results in job specifications that are ultimately assigned to each position in the company. These job specifications or competency characteristics are an essential part of a talent leader's profile.*

1. What characteristics should a strategic talent manager possess to be a skilled business leader?

2. What competencies should a strategic talent manager possess to successfully lead a global organization's value-driven talent strategy?

3. What competencies should a strategic talent manager possess to be a skilled technology leader?

4. What competencies should a strategic talent manager possess to be an organizational culture influencer?

5. What competencies should a strategic talent manager possess to become a trusted coach for employees working in an agile environment that is often changing due to volatile market disruptions?

6. What competencies should a strategic talent manager possess to successfully manage interpersonal relations on a team?

7. What competencies should a strategic talent manager possess to build credibility with internal and external stakeholders?

8. What competencies should a strategic talent manager possess to lead successful succession planning within the organization?

*This next question is about **value creation**. Sparrow & Makram (2015) define value creation as the process of attracting, acquiring, and accumulating talent and exploiting its potential to enhance its value. **Value creation** occurs both at individual and organizational levels. Individuals create value by engaging with their work creatively and through the interaction between their work environment and personal attributes such as knowledge, intelligence, ability, and motivation. Organizations boost the value of their talent through skilled management, training programs, and by creating complementarities with other workers. From an economic perspective, value creation is the difference between costs incurred and benefits derived.*

9. What competencies should a strategic talent manager possess to create value for their organization?

*This next question is about **value capture**. A firm can realize **value capture** by reducing administrative costs of hiring, retaining, and developing talent. Sparrow & Makram (2015) wrote that value capture depends on the source of value (individual or organization), the competitiveness of the market, and isolating mechanisms. Talent managers make efforts to motivate talent to perform better, improve their skills, or find creative solutions to problems with the expectation that new value will be created for the organization.*

10. How can a strategic talent manager capture value for their organization to motivate talent towards better performance?

11. What competencies should a strategic talent manager possess to lead by influence as a partner on the leadership team?

12. Which competencies should a strategic talent manager possess to support organizational competitive advantage?

13. What do you think is the future of the talent leader role in global organizations?

14. Finally, we know that titles attract talent. Can you offer any suggestions for the title of an equal partner among a corporation's leaders whose primary responsibility is retaining value-driven talent to support organizational competitive advantage?

Debrief:

Thank you for assisting me with this research study. I will contact you via e-mail once the transcription from our interview is finalized. I will provide a summary of the interview, and I would like for you to review the summary as a confirmation that I have captured the essence of what you have shared with me. If any discrepancies are found, I will correct the interpretations. Do you have any questions? Please contact me if you have any questions.

Thank you!

Appendix C: Permission to Use Interview Protocol from Dr. Katharina Harsch

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Katharina Harsch** <kharsch@escpeurope.eu>
 Date: Wed, Jan 29, 2020 at 12:23 PM
 Subject: Re: Extending results from your 2019 study
 To: Daphne Halkias <daphne.halkias@faculty.ism.edu>
 Cc: Marion Festing <mfesting@escpeurope.eu>

Dear Prof. Halkias,

thank you for your email and your interest in our research.
 Kind regards
 Katharina Harsch

. Please find attached the interview guide, although it is in German.

Kind regards
 Katharina Harsch
Katharina Harsch
 PhD Student, Chair of Human Resource Management & Intercultural Leadership
kharsch@escpeurope.eu
 GSM +49 17630740296
 Berlin Campus, Heubnerweg 8-10, D14059 Berlin, Deutschland

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DESIGNING TOMORROW



Am Mo., 27. Jan. 2020 um 17:53 Uhr schrieb Daphne Halkias <daphne.halkias@faculty.ism.edu>:

Dear Dr. Harsch:

One of my Ph.D. studen., Ms. Nathalie Mosca, is interested in replicating your 2019 study:

Dynamic talent management capabilities and organizational agility

—A qualitative exploration using a cross-national sample.

We found your paper to be exceptional work in an unexplored area across many

national markets and this sparked our interest to compare and contrast new data with your original data.

My question: May we have a copy of your interview protocol and your permission to use it in this dissertation?

Of course, all your work will be credited and cited in the dissertation and in any forthcoming publications.

Best regards--

Prof. Daphne Halkias

Appendix D: Coding and Theme Examples

Table 4

Coding and Theme Examples

Participant	Interview excerpt	Coding category	Theme
Participant 1	<p>“The most important competency is being a good role model. When it comes to culture and influencing cultures, it is a tough topic. Although it is a tough topic, being a role model is the most important one.”</p> <p>“While in the past the strategic talent manager might have been the one who owns for some reason the most hierarchical power, today he is the one who is the real strategic talent mentor who knows how to manage, be able to connect, give space to others, and be able to be the leader of leaders so to speak.”</p> <p>“While he is responsible for a lot of areas, he knows how to give space to others to connect with one another, to form a team, to develop themselves, to facilitate others’ development, thereby giving space to others.”</p> <p>“As I mentioned before, the most important competency for such a leader is being able at least to think about what combinations of talents that are matching fairly well, that give some sort of synergy. Once you have this team, the question arises as to how you maintain a situation where the team keeps performing.”</p> <p>“But within this framework, within those rules of engagements, I would say being a good leader for such a team is giving them the maximum room of possibilities and responsibilities to do the thing as a team and not so much telling them how to work as a team. So, giving them full responsibility within the rules of engagement is an essential competency.”</p>	Managing meso-level organizational issues	1) be an organizational culture influencer; 2) be a trusted employee coach; 3) manage interpersonal relations on a team

Participant	Interview excerpt	Coding category	Theme
Participant 2	<p>“Coaching senior leaders or top talents or strategic talents requires that one has more on the CV than just coaching skills. Such a manager needs to be able to convince me that he/she is talking to that he/she understands what his/her priorities, his/her objectives, his/her role dynamics are.”</p> <p>“A third competency is to be able to not only retain but also to identify, recruit, and develop the really star players or A players for those roles and to be able to manage those people and develop them in such a way that they even get better.”</p> <p>“Another important competency of a talent leader is to be able to make the best people better. An organization can never make the best people better by expanding their position or providing them with the regular average coach or something like that because they will have all that already.”</p> <p>“In order to make the best people better, an organization needs be able to challenge them and provide them with learning and development opportunities which are quite out of the ordinary.”</p>	Managing mesolevel organizational issues	1) be an organizational culture influencer; 2) be a trusted employee coach; 3) manage interpersonal relations on a team.
Participant 3	<p>“When organizations, for example, think about how to globalize operations, each subsidiary, country, or strategic partner has their own understanding of talent management.</p> <p>That business understanding is very, very important, especially in a more global context and in a more networked business environment. This global integration versus local responsiveness divide is hugely important.”</p> <p>“The knowledge management side is hugely important when thinking about talent that is going to deliver for the organization as a whole, as opposed to just delivering career advantage for themselves.”</p> <p>“While creating such systems, including writing down the behavioral indicators makes sense</p>	Managing macrolevel organizational issues	1) be a skilled business leader; 2) lead a global organization’s value-driven talent strategy; 3) be a skilled technology leader

Participant	Interview excerpt	Coding category	Theme
	<p>initially, the development of such systems creates a talent pool that is generalized.”</p> <p>“Although the systems will look generic, there is a need to bring in more important judgments. And that’s where the architecture has to give these managers the flexibility to give particular importance to these more situational aspects of talent because these aspects of talent, in the current context, allow the organization to reach its goals. Making judgments is an iterative process, implying that these managers are not just trying to impose HR systems.”</p>		
Participant 4	<p>“Global mindset—understanding different cultures, communication styles, and any potential values conflicts that could arise.”</p> <p>“Strategic thinker—able to anticipate needs in the future, not just execute based on today’s agenda.”</p>	Managing macro-level organizational issues	1) be a skilled business leader; 2) lead a global organization’s value-driven talent strategy; 3) be a skilled technology leader
Participant 5	<p>a. The ability to build trust and demonstrate personal accountability</p> <p>b. The ability to effectively execute plans and initiatives</p> <p>c. The ability to remain flexible and adapt to changing situations”</p> <p>“Solving problems and making decisions; managing politics and influencing others; taking risks and innovating; setting vision and strategy; managing the work; enhancing business skills and knowledge; understanding and navigating the organization”</p>	Supporting organizational competitive advantage	1) lead by influence as a partner on the leadership team; 2) support organizational competitive advantage
Participant 6	<p>“Infallible reputation, strong communication skills, ability to forge new relationships, ability to maintain existing relationships.”</p> <p>“Knowledge of the organization’s mission and vision, as well as its strategic intent (goals, strategy, etc.).”</p>	Managing governance issues	1) build credibility with internal and external stakeholders; 2) lead successful succession planning

Participant	Interview excerpt	Coding category	Theme
Participant 7	<p>“While I fully understand why you want to ask these competencies as they apply to different areas in your questions, different competencies (knowledge, skills, abilities and person-related factors) have to be an “integrated” package through life-long learning and development (tacit and experiential knowledge).”</p> <p>“In addition to HR basic competencies (HR body of knowledge) and integrated knowledge from business knowledge (like MBA), there is a stack of additional competencies coming from other management disciplines: (1) design thinking; (2) behavioral economics; (3) agile management; (4) data analytics; and (5) global-local integration.”</p> <p>“Global standardization and local responsiveness. Intercultural, change management and execution skills.”</p> <p>“Business, technology and operations should be integrated.”</p> <p>“Develop every team member to the fullest (upskilling, reskilling, coaching, feedback, etc.)”</p>	Creating value through macro talent management	1) value creation; 2) value capture; 3) value leverage and amplification; 4) value protection and retention
Participant 8	<p>“Don’t bother with influence, lead by example. Earn the right to claim your power.”</p> <p>“Make sure everyone knows the importance of human capital to sustainable competitive advantage. More specifically, understand the Resource Theory of the Firm.”</p> <p>“Knowledge of business, specifically the industry and employing firms’ business model.”</p> <p>“Labor market analysis – how to find talent especially in secondary labor markets.”</p> <p>“The strategic talent manager is more likely to be a culture communicator rather than a culture influencer. That said, as a linking pin between the organization and its environment, this person must be able to lead upward.”</p>	Supporting organizational competitive advantage	1) lead by influence as a partner on the leadership team; 2) support organizational competitive advantage

Participant	Interview excerpt	Coding category	Theme
	<p>“Listening skills again. Cross cultural skills, especially for a firm in global markets. Inter-generational communication skills.”</p> <p>“The primary goal is to build “human capital” assets of the firm. Maybe I could say: Understanding how to value the intangible elements of human capital.”</p>		
Participant 9	<p>“When we talk about titles in any organization, if a title does not reflect a work identity, that title is a title that is useless and creates a lot of conflicts, contradictions, and a bad working environment. The reason is very simple. Without a work identity, there is no knowledge or understanding of the work processes in the organization and the actual world.”</p> <p>“As previously outlined, definitely experience and the ability to create results.”</p> <p>“Experience related to what we call tacit knowledge. When we talk about tacit knowledge, it is basically your knowledge and information used in the actual world, in real life.”</p> <p>“When we talk about competences, we're talking about managerial competencies. That is based on knowledge, education, and experiences. You cannot separate any of these. If you do separate experience from knowledge and education, it will end up being a mistake.”</p> <p>“When you are in a specific context, you need more than just that kind of competence. You also need qualifications. That basically means a thorough understanding of the context in which you are going to implement any idea in, and that is part of qualifications. That is why consultancy is such a problem. It is a problem due to a lack of understanding of the context resulting in the absence of qualifications.”</p>	The future of the innovative talent leader role	1) creating value-driven talent to meet global organizational challenges; 2) job title to designate a talent leader as an equal partner in organizational governance

Participant	Interview excerpt	Coding category	Theme
	<p>“The strategic talent manager has to have a growth mindset and understand that he/she has to be flexible and democratic in his/her managing style, interacting on the same level as the employees.”</p> <p>“For a manager to be able to add value in any talent management program must fully understand from experience and insight, the context in which he is in because having a training program for talents could never ever just be a standard training program for developing competences and qualification. It has to reflect the challenges that your company or your organization is facing in order for you to make sure that you can use the talents, hidden potentials in a way that will give you a competitive advantage.”</p> <p>“One should be able to, in an unambiguous language, to identify who and what, and why someone in the organization would be able to carry that project or develop that kind of design, or whatever. That's a very difficult thing to do because most managers use a management language and a management language is characterized by being ambiguous. There are a lot of empty signifiers.”</p>		
Participant 10	<p>“Ethical behavior, sound decision making, honesty, ability to perceive opportunities and threats.”</p> <p>“Visionary, Empathetic, Sensitive, Alert, Good change manager, business acumen, customer orientation”</p> <p>“Development orientation, leadership skills, conceptual skills, employee orientation”</p> <p>“Ability to adopt changes, ability and willingness to learn, growth and development orientation, alertness and awareness about technological environment”</p> <p>“Flexibility, cultural sensitivity, leading by example, change</p>	Managing governance issues	1) build credibility with internal and external stakeholders; 2) lead successful succession planning

Participant	Interview excerpt	Coding category	Theme
	management skills, willingness for organization development”		
	“Empathy, trustworthiness, helpfulness, facilitator of change adoption, communication skills, empathic listening, sense of humor, cooperativeness”		
	“Visionary, ability to identify potential in employees, Analytical abilities, ability to integrate organizational growth plans with HR plans”		
	“Strategic thinking, business acumen, motivating employees, performance management, organizational development mindset”		
	“Sensitivity toward the need of a diverse workforce, performance management, sensitivity, empathy, communication skills, change management”		