2020-04

My talent or yours? A labour process analysis of talent management in practice

Kabwe, C

http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/14253

My Talent or Yours? A Labour Process Analysis of Talent Management in Practice.

Journal:	*Competition & Change*
Manuscript ID	CCH-18-0011.R2
Manuscript Type:	Neoliberalism in the workplace
Keywords:	Talent, Talent Management, Employment relationship, Labour Process
Abstract:	The article empirically examines the experiences of managers and employees involved in talent management (TM) practices. Our empirical aim is to explore the ways in which degradation of the employment relationship takes place among high-potential employees. We make a theoretical contribution by analysing TM practices through the labour process theory (LPT) as a theoretical lens . LPT is part of a well-established Marxist approach (Cf. Braverman, 1974) and we extend this framework to analyse TM practices in industrial capitalism to offer new insights on how these practices are changing the employment relationships with unintended consequences leading to degradation, and work intensification. Using an employer-employee perspective, we use qualitative data from three multinational companies (MNCs) based in Europe. Through application of LPT, findings indicate softer forms of control, work intensification and illusion of opportunity and expectations, thus degrading and hollowing out the employment relationship. In effect, TM practices are adding pressure through uncompensated talent development activities and paradoxically debilitating the employment relationships for the talented employees.

SCHOLARONE™
Manuscripts

My Talent or Yours? A Labour Process Analysis of Talent Management in Practice.

Introduction

That talent management (herein after TM) has attracted considerable attention in recent years is unquestionable (see: Farndale et al, 2010; Scullion et al, 2016; Cappelli, 2008; Scullion, Collings, and Caligiuri, 2010, Tarique and Schuler 2010). The concept was initially popularised by the influential McKinsey consultants' report 'War for Talent' which highlighted the shortage of talent owing to the aging population, changes in demographics and mobility of the labour force (Michaels et al., 2001). Indeed, the proverbial war for talent has spiraled TM to the top of the agendas for senior managers and HR professionals. For example, TM was among the top three current and future organisational priorities for both HR and non-HR Leaders in the 2016/2017 HR Outlook survey (CIPD, 2018).

Interest in TM has been sustained by discourses of scarcity (Beechler and Woodward 2009; Michaels et al, 2001; McDonnell et al, 2010; Ready and Conger, 2007; Schuler et al., 2011; Towers Watson 2011, World Economic Forum, 2011), high performance (Bjorkman et al. 2007; 2013; Collings and Mellahi, 2009; Makram and Sparrow, 2014; McDonnell, 2011; Schuler et al., 2011; Joyce and Slocum, 2012; Ready and Conger, 2007; Son et al., 2018) and competitive advantage (Blass 2006; Collins and Mellahi, 2009; Lewis and Heckerman, 2006; Scullion et al., 2010). It is apparent from the literature that the focus of TM is on leveraging internal talent to address organizational goals; very limited attention is given to individual needs and aspirations (Farndale et al., 2014) and to the impact of these practices on the nature of work for the talented individuals.

Although there is a small emerging literature addressing individual dimensions in TM (see for example, Bjorkman et al, 2013; Farndale et al., 2014; Festing and Schafer, 2014; Gelens et al, 2014; Khoreva et al., 2017; Thunnissen, 2016; Swailes and Blackburn, 2016;), the everyday work experiences of individual 'high-potentials'   have not been critically addressed, and we also lack detailed analysis of how organizations make use of high-potential employees' labour power. While discourses of precarity (Standing, 2011; Manolchev et al., 2018) have focused on the low skilled and low paid, our contention is that precarity increasingly extends not only to white collar and professional work but also to 'talented' employees by virtue of their precious identity- the 'talented'. This paper explores how TM practices might potentially also degrade the work of high-potential and talented employees.

Our empirical aim is to explore the ways in which high-potential employees might be exposed to a degradation of their employment relationship. We make a theoretical contribution by employing labour process theory (LPT) to TM. LPT is part of a well-established Marxist approach (Cf. Braverman, 1974) to analyze TM practices in industrial capitalism to offer new insights on how these practices are changing the employment relationships with unintended consequences leading to degradation, and work intensification through added pressure from executing uncompensated talent

development activities which debilitate the employment relationships for the talented employees.

This article contributes to existing research in two main ways. First, it brings LPT directly into conversation within the ongoing debate in TM: TM has so far resisted critical examination into the nature of its practices and the impact on individual talented employees. LPT with its ability to highlight degradation of work and the use of often covert means of control, couched in positive overtones of autonomy, consent and choice serves as a useful analytical lens to study work intensification and other precarious experiences within TM practices. Secondly, as there are few critical empirical studies (Farndale et al., 2014; Tansley et al., 2013; Thunnissen et al., 2013), the article contributes to the research on TM by providing critical empirical findings on the experiences of high-potentials and the impact of TM practices on individuals including work intensification and illusion of opportunities and expectations, thus degrading and hollowing out of the employment relationship. The paper is structured as follows. We first analyse the literature that underpins TM, before moving on to provide a critical introduction to the conceptual traditions of LPT. Second, we outline the methodological details that underlie our research design, and data collection methods. Third, to elaborate our findings, we present both the managerial expressions as well as employee experiences. We conclude by identifying the complex and contradictory nature of TM which results in commodification and degradation of the employment relationship.

Talent management in practice

Although TM in practice and as field of academic research has gained currency, conceptual clarity still remains elusive (see: Collings and Mellahi, 2009; Dries, 2013; Mellahi and Collings, 2010; Lewis and Hackerman, 2006; Tansley et al., 2007; Thunnissen et al., 2013). Empirical studies are few and far between (Collings and Mellahi, 2009; Sparrow et al., 2014). Previous studies in TM have called for more empirical work on attitudes and behaviours of the high-potential employees (Hartmann et al., 2010; Sparrow et al., 2014; Thunnissen et al., 2013). Owing to this balkanized terrain, there are a variety of definitions of TM with a lack of unanimity, a review of these is beyond the scope of this study. For the purpose of this study, TM will be defined as "all organizational activities for the purpose of attracting, selecting, developing, and retaining the best employees in the most strategic roles (those roles necessary to achieve organizational strategic priorities) on a global scale" (Scullion, Collings and Caligiuri, 2010: 106).

Practical implementation of TM is aimed at developing and leveraging human capital (Swailes, 2013). This places TM as a subset of strategic human resource management (HRM) fitting in with the conventional, North American view of HRM as serving organisational effectiveness by aligning people with goals set by top management (Swailes, 2013). Within this view, TM promotes the identification and development of a select few individuals who are capable of making a disproportionate impact on organisational performance. Indeed, in practice there are two main approaches used by organisations - exclusive and inclusive. The exclusive approach promotes an elitist

perspective and holds that only about 20% of an organisation differentially contributes to the performance of the organization and are therefore worthy of investment (see: Dries, 2013; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013; Swailes, 2013; Tansley et al., 2007). The inclusive approach is more egalitarian and views all staff as having potential to contribute to competitive advantage and that everyone should get their share of development (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013). The exclusive approach is the more dominant and is therefore adopted in this research to allow for conceptual analysis through LPT.

The TM literature has indirectly relied upon human capital thinking to make a series of "value claims" (Sparrow and Makram, 2015; Lepak and Snell, 1999). For this reason, talented employees are distinguished from other employees by the capital they possess, which enables them to add value to their organizations. In similar vein, Huselid et al. (2005) argue that there are often limited financial and managerial resources available to attract, identify, develop and retain top performers. Although this should not be at the expense or neglect of other employees, it is argued that it is both reasonable and essential to invest in scarce developmental assignments and spend resources on the most promising talent (Iles et al., 2010). Similarly, McDonnell (2009) contends that resources are more appropriately utilised if multinational companies (MNCs) focus on those designated as the key talent (high-performing and high-potential). Certainly, it makes economic sense for an organisation to attract and identify only the key talented individuals and in turn provide them with further development opportunities.

Given the reasoning above, there is considerable research focusing on TM as creating value for the business and or competitive advantage (see: Ahammad et al., 2018; Blass, 2006; Bjorkman et al. 2007; 2013; Collings and Mellahi, 2009; Joyce and Slocum, 2012; Lewis and Heckerman, 2006; Makram and Sparrow, 2014; McDonnell, 2011; Ready and Conger, 2007;Schuler et al., 2011; Schiemann, 2014; Scullion et al., 2010; Son et al., 2018). Most studies of TM focus heavily on organisational gains of increased productivity and competitive advantage which reveals a very limited perspective of TM and the employment relationship. Recent research by Farndale et al (2014) and others has called for a 'mutual benefits' perspective to TM. The current paper addressing this call by focusing on 'talented' individuals; in particular, exploring how they are managed and how they fare under TM practices.

Talented employees are both an organization's strategic asset and its manipulable resource that have the potential to contribute to value creation (Sparrow and Makram, 2015). Although talent is an individual property, it is acquired by the organisation through the employment relationship. Employers design TM programmes in keeping with their strategic goals and business needs. The approach to TM by MNCs is motivated by a variety of organizational goals, including business control and client demands, moderated by cost considerations (Li and Scullion 2010; Suutari and Brewster, 2001). Through these programmes management seeks to control, restrain, appropriate and cultivate talent for their own purposes, in effect commodifying labour - controlling the factors of production and dictating the terms of the employment relationship for the 'talented'.

A range of practices exist in firms to identify, manage, develop and in effect control the talented employees, with their application often suffering from a lack of transparency, fairness and openness (Björkman et al., 2013). Individual employees are not perceived as having a vested interest in developing their talent (Blass et al., 2006; Brannen, 2007; The Economist, 2006). In some organisations, those considered to be talented are unaware of this fact, especially if their employers use an opaque approach (Björkman et al., 2013). Sometimes the shroud of opaqueness is driven by the fear of discouraging others and of disrupting the apple cart if the talent pool is relatively small (Blass et al., 2006; Björkman et al., 2013). Often the treatment of these talented individuals leaves much to be desired: in effect the talented are treated as commodities. For example, they may be trained for CEO succession in the interests of the employer while not treated as individuals who need to be supported and nurtured for themselves and for the sake of their potential. This approach to TM is potentially highly exploitative and dishonest as it implies management can and should craft a person's career and future without considering employees' individual responses, needs, and expectations (Blass et al., 2006). It is unsatisfactory, therefore, for research on TM practices to be restricted only to studies on its 'effectiveness' (Yan et al., 2002); we also require studies on TM from the perspective of individual high-potential employees who may be suspicious and hesitant about what TM really means for their career, work-life and personhood (Björkman and Mäkela, 2013).

Explaining Labour Process Theory
Before going any further, it is important to advance the rationale for adopting the LPT as a lens for understanding TM. As noted by Farndale et al., (2014), there are two main stakeholders in TM, the management and the talented employees, with disparate interests, priorities and power. The application of LPT will enable a more rigorous understanding of these two key viewpoints and their converging or diverging agendas and viewpoints. Adopting LTP introduces the voices of the high-potentials into the TM literature as advocated by Thunnissen et al (2013). By viewing TM within a neoliberal labour-capital paradigm, this article argues that TM should be critically evaluated and not merely accepted at face-value. LPT hence provides us with an important framework for the study of TM practices and its impact on the organisation of work and the employment relationship.

Braverman (1973) is the classic expression of LPT thought, building on Marx's insights into labour and employment, and analyzing the impact of advanced industrial capitalism on work and work organisations in twentieth century. Braverman highlighted the degradation of work, asserting that organizational development under capitalism serves to 'de-skill' workers and obfuscates the tyranny being imposed on labour. Braverman's (1974) 'labour process' perspective advocates that managerial action/ strategies are determined by capital-labour relations, whereby managers or employers control labour and its unruliness. Within the capitalist economic system skills have two key dimensions – complexity and autonomy - and managers are driven to maximize efficiency and profits, and hence "reduce complexity and autonomy so as to ensure lower costs and greater control" (Adler, 2007: 1314). For Braverman, the methods of control over workers increased over the twentieth century as a consequence of Taylorist systems of scientific management such that it forced the division of labour to the point where

4

workers, particularly on assembly lines, became increasingly deskilled and detached from the product they spent their lives working on (Braverman, 1974). Although Braverman mainly focused on industrial work, he also argued that other work, including white-collar jobs, would increasingly become degraded and intensified under Taylorist management systems.

Braverman (1974) focused on the 'labour process' which scripts the relationships between the employer who owns the means of production, and the worker as the possessor of labour power. Through this 'labour process', labour power is transformed into a commodity according to set relations of production (Braverman, 1974; See also Burawoy, 1979). Thompson (1990) outlines the main principles of the LPT in four main points: (a) a focus on the 'function' of labour as capital accumulation in the set context of the workplace or the point of production; (b) an analysis of the role of skills and competencies in this process; (c) a study of the logics of control of the labour process exerted by an employer which transforms the labour power of workers into a commodity or service; and, (d) the unpacking of the social relations between capital and labour as 'structurally antagonistic' which brings into reckoning issues of control, autonomy, consent and resistance at work (see Flecker and Meil, 2010; Jaros, 2005; Newsome, 2010; Smith, 2006, 2015; Smith and Thompson, 1998; Taylor, 2010; Thompson, 1989; Thompson and Vincent, 2010). LPT use the logics of degradation of skills and tasks as a feature of capital accumulation and uses it to study autonomy, control and consent within industrial capitalism (Thompson, 1989; Smith, 2006; Smith and Thompson, 1998; Knights and Willmott, 1990).

Extending Labour Process Theory to Talent Management

LPT as a conceptual body of work is especially well suited to empirical explorations of work degradation and commodification through managerial control, in particular by examining their implications for acerbating workplace contradictions, pressures, anxieties and frustrations.

Firstly, the central premise of LTP is control. Within LPT discourse, one of the key foci is the process by which labour is controlled and degraded under capitalist organisations, through mechanisms which lend themselves to outright as well as more pervasive yet understated ways to maintain the domination of capital over labour. Researchers influenced by Braverman's work note from the mid-1980s a shift in the nature of outright control to soft(er) and sometimes more indirect control (Thompson and Harley, 2007). Indeed, within a knowledge economy and in relation to high potentials' work, the shift in control regime has meant a movement away from traditional Taylorism, Fordism and bureaucracy towards managerial value-based practices to shape employee identities. These softer and more fluid forms of control are associated with wider changes linked with the prevalence of a 'cultural turn' in the workplace (Price et al., 2012). For the talented and skilled professionals, subtle manifestations of control embrace self-directing and self-regulating behaviours including a self-commitment to building competencies (Bjorkman et al., 2013).

TM practices use different models of control over the skills and competencies of the talented individuals which are more nuanced and normative in the way they operate. With respect to TM practices, softer, more indirect control is exercised by employers including an appeal to professional values, creativity, career, goodwill or trust which all serves to direct the effort of skilled and professional workers (Thompson and Harley, 2007; Smith, 2015). For TM, adopting an elitist or exclusive approach is becoming more acceptable so as to keep in check the investment costs. MNCs justify their focus on a small proportion of high performing employees (see: Iles et al, 2010; McDonnell, 2009; McDonnell et al, 2010). Our empirical research points to a combination of contractual obligations and additional TM development activities with more emphasis on 'self-regulation' and 'self-pressure' to enact control and monitor the talented workers' performance and productivity. Such 'soft controls' are used to support feedback, ranking, rating and reputational systems which have been referred to as "management by customers" in the case of Uber, call centres and other parts of the gig economy (Fuller and Smith, 1991; Rosenblat and Stark, 2016).

Secondly, 'talent' is reduced to being an organizational resource, a commodity which management can utilize by finding, segmenting, nurturing, and placing in pivotal positions (Boudreau and Ramstad, 2005) rather than remaining an individual's possession to be used as desired by the individual for their own satisfaction and career development. Braverman (1974) noted that labour power has become a commodity and his notion of commodification can be extended to the context of TM. By applying Braverman's commodification argument to TM, talent is no longer organized according to those who sell it but rather those who purchase it. Hassard et al (2011) refer to the notion of investor capitalism which assumes the primacy of shareholder interests over the interests of traditional holders of power in the firm, in this case the high-potential and talented employees. Accordingly how, when and to what purpose will TM be used passes from the hands of those who possess talent, to managers who seek to expand talent's value in meeting organizational goals (see Farndale et al., 2014). TM's commodification of talent ensures talent is for sale rather than used by the individual at their will and behest, leading to work intensification and misplaced opportunities for meeting or exceeding potential.

Thirdly, in line with the central theme of LPT, work is degraded as knowledge and skills are systematically removed from direct producers and are concentrated in the hands of management and their agents; this depletes and debases the quality and experience of work such that workers are condemned to endless routine and impoverished tasks (Braverman, 1974; Buroway, 1979; Jaros, 2005; Smith, 2015). Opportunities for growing, nurturing and maximizing their talent potential become a pipedream, an illusion for most of the talented employees. Farndale et al's (2014) work points out the disparate interests among employers and employees as key stakeholders in. From an organisational perspective the essence is to increase investment in human talent and leverage employees' skills and competences in order that organisations can create requisite added value. The high performers and high potential employees are driven by the expectation that the organisation will help them to upgrade their knowledge, skills and abilities in order that they will remain employable in the wider employment market (Holland et al.,

2007). In reality, meeting employees' expectations, needs and potential is an add-on or corollary and not necessarily a priority or focus for the organisation.

Finally, another important facet of LPT is the 'de-skilling' discourse. For Braverman (1974) a central element of the degradation of work is its 'de-skilling' under advanced capitalist employment conditions. But, unlike Braverman's labourers, the talented employee is not one without skill. In fact, 'the talented' are likely to be – at least rhetorically - high-end 'knowledge workers', 'thought leaders' or 'symbolic analysts' (McCann, 2018: 97). Drucker's (1998), 'gold-collar' workers are characterized as having high-level specialist skills to resolve issues and problems critical to an organization's sustainability and competitive advantage. 'The fundamental characteristic with these workers is that they own the means of production in the form of knowledge and have the ability with these specialist skills to attract large rewards' (Holland et al., 2007: 250). However, the conceptualisation of employees as embodying a set of skills which can be 'rented out' to employers (Ehrenberg and Smith, 2012) means that, labour market permitting, employees can withdraw their skills when they perceive that they are not getting a fair deal from the employment relationship. Securing the commitment of these employees through TM practices, therefore, becomes even more important because these employees are not just mobile but also career-minded and can assert themselves by moving employers or threatening to do so unless changes are made.

To what extent is this picture accurate? How much labour power does 'talent' really possess? In this paper, we argue than an application of the critical lenses of LPT - specifically its themes of control, work intensification, illusion of opportunity and deskilling - to 'talent' work, we are able to better analyze the rifts and dichotomies in the workplace and to better understand how white-collar 'knowledge workers' are far from exempt from exposure to restrictive, dishonest and degrading employment conditions.

Research Design and Methods
From an employer-employee perspective, an exploratory approach was taken in order to establish experiences of both management and high potential employees. Data were collected in three European MNCs based in Finland, United Kingdom and Germany. As regards sampling of respondents, it was very important to select the most relevant informants from the chosen organisations who could share meaningful information regarding the research objectives. Purposive sampling (non-probability sampling) was used (Saunders et al., 2016). Following the structure of talent pools within the case study firms, the management responsible for designing and implementing TM initiatives and employees involved in the practices in each case study organisation were identified. The HR departments in conjunction with line managers played an important role in identifying informants. For purposes of anonymity, fictional names have been used for all companies and informants. The three informant organisations have identified TM as a strategic imperative and have been running TM initiatives for at least five years. They also have mature TM structures and systems, providing fertile material around which to conduct research. The following table gives a summary of the informants.

Insert Table 1 Here

Use of narratives was considered appropriate in gaining an in-depth understanding of the experiences of those involved in TM as they preserve meaning and convey individuals' experiences within a given context. Use of narratives enables understanding of experiences over a long period of time both within and between individuals (McAlpine 2016). Narrative research presents a novel approach to exploring TM because it presents a plausible and rich presentation of lived experiences. According to Elliott (2005: 3), 'a narrative can be understood to organise a sequence of events into a whole so that the significance of each event can be understood through its relation to that whole'. In addition, Hinchman and Hinchman (1997: xvi) note that narratives (stories) in the human sciences should be defined provisionally as discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus offer insights about the world and people's experiences of it. In the light of an analytical study of TM and the employment relationship which are influenced by past experiences and organisational contexts, it is important to focus on the stories, the logic and sequence in which they are told by the informants in order to gain an understanding of how to interpret their experiences.

Although Labov and Waletzky (1997) outline six elements of narratives, Elliot (2005) notes that the key thing is to be able to establish what actually happened and the meaning of the story. This is precisely the approach taken in the analysis of narratives in this research. Thus, the data analysis stage offered an opportunity to reflect and engage with each different situation represented in the narratives emerging from the case studies. Reading, reflecting and writing notes was thus an important step to understanding the prevailing TM situation in each organisation. Reflection was vital in order to construct the experiences of the management and talented employees. Another important stage in the data analysis process was contextualising, categorising and comparing the information from different sources, which involved studying talented employees' experiences of TM practices, which necessitated exploring their histories through their narratives.

Research Findings

The study set out to explore ways in which high-potential employees involved in TM may experience a degradation of their employment relationship. This section presents qualitative data findings, examining the managerial conceptualisation of TM across the three case companies. Thereafter, managerial and high-potentials' experiences of TM are explored within the framework of LPT analysis. Finally, a summary of key findings from the case studies are presented.

Managerial conceptualisation of TM

The opening section explores the managerial conceptualisation of TM as manifested in the interview data. In Company A, conceptualisation of TM appears to be influenced by an egalitarian culture that is often associated with the Nordic culture of the company's national origin. Here, the use of the term 'talent' had some negative connotations. As a

8

result, the terminology of 'competence development' and 'competence management' was preferred to the term TM. As a senior HR manager explains:

> And maybe the reason for that is that we prefer talking about competencies and competence management instead of TM and maybe it's connected to the sort of values and mental picture or image which the word 'talent', as we understand it, has… (Senior HR manager, Finland)

Although management claims that it wants to be seen to treat every employee equally, they have a designated competence development programme akin to TM including all associated features of an exclusive approach. The competence development programs are closely linked to business strategy and are aimed at developing competences of strategic importance.

In Company B and Company C, TM at the corporate level is regarded as the process to identify and accelerate the development of high-potential individuals. This is illustrated in the statements below:

> …so, for me it's [TM] all about identifying those people that we think have got the potential to become partners, and in making sure that we nurture them and give them the very best client experiences that we can do, that will mean when they become partners they have a greater breadth of experience. (Senior HR manager, Company B).

> TM is a structured approach to identifying and developing the people who have the potential to become future leaders of various functions within the organisation in the future (Senior HR Manager, Company C)

In this regard, TM is focused on the white-collar and professional workers; individual employees with demonstrable ability and potential to become leaders. To these organisations, TM is a means of accelerating the development of the leadership competences needed to execute business strategy in a medium to long-term spectrum. TM is a managerial strategy that aims to create a new employment relationship with the talented. In sustaining this new employment relationship, the organisation justifies TM as a managerial strategy for improving organisational efficiency and employee commitment. Company C explicitly expressed the need for efficiency and continuity in the projects as evident in the statement below:

> 15-17 years is an average length of time we expect employees to stay in our company. So, we're talking about long-term things. If you are building a power plant, if you're talking about coal you need six to eight years... if you are talking about nuclear, eight to 12 years from the first meeting until the power plant is delivering energy. So, we are always talking about long-term strategies and long-term development, (Vice-President of Employer Branding, Germany, Company C)

Company C makes a deliberate investment in TM practices, developing high-potential employees, which brings forth benefits by servicing their long-term projects of building

power plants and delivering energy to their end customers. High-potential employees in turn are expected to feel valued as the company shows an interest in not only helping them develop competences, but also giving them a chance to develop a leadership career.

In Company B, an important aspect of this talent development process is that it is an ongoing process with shared responsibility between management and individual high-potentials. Following nomination and induction, high-potentials have to construct a personal development plan (PDP), with the support of their line managers, counselling partners, coaches, learning and development and the human resources staff. Emphasis is placed on the individual's ability to be proactive in managing his or her development as shown from this line manager's statement:

> **...**this is a programme that requires a commitment from you, this doesn't mean you need it; you still need to put in the effort as you have been to get to this stage. All this programme does is creating opportunities for you to go further... they're not there to make you a leader without you trying... (Line manager, Company B)

In this context, the organisation provides the tools and support for high-potentials' development. High-potentials work on live projects as a means of developing their competences. The PDPs can be seen as a form of management structure or part of an HR strategy to control and monitor the behavior and development of the talented employees in order to elicit better performance and organisational productivity as the end product of the labour process.

Employee experiences of TM

We now turn to exploreingTM from the point of view of employees. First, in all cases, the narratives indicate a certain lack of clarity in the objectives of the TM programs. High-potentials expressed an expectation of a clear connection between TM activities and their own career paths. Undoubtedly, much as they regard the programme to be a form of recognition, high-potentials would like to know how the work they are doing will pay off in terms of rewarding their own career pathways. This point was expressed by the high-potential respondents as below:

> ...I would have liked to see it made a little bit clearer as to the impact the course would have on my career path, … I would like to have known more at the outset what this physically and actually means for my career... does it mean that there is a greater chance that I will be made a partner, or is there any chance that I will be fast tracked (High-potential, UK)?

> I think it's very rewarding being nominated... but at some point, it would be good to know that all this work that you are doing and all this additional time that you are investing… what it means to you at the end of the day. I think that is the piece that is missing (High-potential, UK).

> I'm not sure what they were aiming for with the whole thing, it wasn't maybe that clear… we were supposed to be able to make our own conclusions about the whole programme (Junior Managers' programme participant, Finland).

10

> Of course, if the goals are set more clearly, I think it works both ways, then whoever takes part in the course knows it better and maybe then can choose and say that this is something I want to be or do. (Junior Managers' programme participant, Germany)

Employees thus described a frustrating absence of clear objectives and a need for clarity around the purpose and meaning of TM practices. This would enable employees to make an informed choice about opportunities which they perceive as being beneficial for their development needs. Rather, managerial influence is described in terms of a perceived increase in organizational control over the outcomes of TM as a managerial strategy. If the objectives of the development opportunities are not clarified for the participants, they will use their own interpretations of TM initiatives, asking the question 'what is in it for me?' thereby forming an understanding of what TM is and how it may relate to their career and well-being in the workplace.

We can see this dynamic in one narrative from a high potential employee in Company C:

> My managers did not specifically discuss with me the reasons why I was nominated to be part of the talent pool. But I suppose it was implied ...my managers perhaps assumed that I knew why I was nominated... It was only after going through the global assessment that I had a discussion with my manager. At first when I was told about the TM programme I thought it was just another HR thing, that it would not lead to anything. However, I have had a positive experience, I feel more supported with my development than anticipated

The employee perception that TM is just a managerial initiative or just another HR initiative indicates that high-potentials have a vested interest in their own development. Their performance is outcome driven; they are not only interested in giving a service to the organisation, but also meeting their expectations and opportunities for promotion and for career development.

Second, there was considerable evidence to suggest that TM practices lead to work intensification. There is evidence in Company B and C to show that high potential employees deem TM activities as an additional responsibility which requires them to put more time aside from their day to day duties. Indeed, there was evidence to suggest that high-potentials are stretched as regards the time they have to devote to their contracted duties and TM activities. This message comes across clearly in the statements below:

> There is an expectation about the amount of time... because really by definition, the people who are in the talent pool are generally those who are the busiest people in the business...I think really it is a must that you end up having more client work than your colleagues and then there is the expectation of having sufficient time to devote to the high-potentials' programme on top (High Potential, UK, Company B)

> ....and something that can impact talented individuals is that work always finds its way to you as people know that you will get the job done. So,

doing all of that and not necessarily being freed up to do the work for the high-potentials' programme can present a problem... (High-potential, UK, Company B)

The statements attest work overload and pressures, time constraints to complete tasks and possibly conflicting obligations. In Company B and C, high-potentials are given opportunities to be mentored by senior managers as well as working on client projects which help them develop a considerable breadth of experience within a set period of time. Indeed, management expects high-potentials to move outside their comfort zones by engaging in live projects and other development activities which provide the greatest stretch for their talent. Although high potentials work on live projects, they are not actually remunerated or rewarded for doing this additional work. Management believes that working on live projects presents a development opportunity which is compensation enough. The following evidence from a high potential employee based in Germany working for Company C captures the employee frustration around this:

…I would finally like to join the senior management pool, and not only the potential pool, obviously, and it is dragging along for me. This is slightly frustrating; at the moment I'm working hard... but I'm not rewarded for what I'm doing [TM activities].

The differences between management intentions and the experiences of the employees signify conflicts of interest in the labour process. On the one hand, management's interest is in developing future leaders for the purpose of increasing production, enhancing profits and creating sustainability for the business. On the other hand, much as high-potential employees have a vested interest in becoming future leaders, there are un-met, perhaps even un-said, interests, expectations and needs about rewards and financial compensation for the extra responsibilities that come with involvement in TM practices. For example, in the words of a high-potential employee based in the UK:

... I struggle sometimes to strike a balance between my job (what I'm employed to do) and the TM activities. I feel my main duty is first to carry out the duties within my role and then use my spare time to attend to the TM activities…I wonder how others do it (High potential, UK, Company C).

Further examination of high-potentials' experiences reveals that they feel overworked in their jobs. The current approach to TM implies that employees must do considerably more in order for TM to create value for the company. Without time to reflect on their development plans or the resources to engage with it in other meaningful ways, high-potentials' PDPs may turn out to be a ritual practiced only for the sake of fulfilling the requirements of the TM programme.

Clearly, high-potential employees' experience conflicting obligations and ambitious targets between the jobs they are paid to do and the development activities in Company B and C. Employees start to question whether their time is well spent. In all of the three companies, TM is structured as an additional opportunity made available to a selected

12

few high-potentials. For example, in Company B, the high-potentials' programme is structured as an additional responsibility which requires talented employees to put more time aside from their day to day duties. Similarly, one of the high-potential employees in Company C noted that she was struggling to strike a balance between the job which she is paid for and TM activities. This presents evidence of work intensification in addition to the practice of using free labour 'volunteered' by the high potentials engaged in TM practices.

TM activities result in work intensification for the talented while showing a lack of consideration towards issues such as work-life balance and personal development. The approach may defeat the ultimate aim of development through the use of PDPs which require time for reflection. In effect, the approach may signify a form of value extraction rather than value creation.

Third, TM is experienced as being process oriented. For example, in Company B and C where TM systems are process-oriented, one of the high-potential employees based in the UK Company B described being part of the talent pool as 'process-oriented and full of activities'. Progression takes longer than anticipated as there are limited senior leadership positions available. The management would like to ensure that high-potential employees develop a considerable breadth of experience. Conversely, high-potential employees perceive management's stringency over promotions as an impediment to their progression to senior management positions. Some high-potentials stated that:

> ...I probably think it is for a good reason, but I think maybe you overshoot the target. I think, apart from myself, there are many talented people, but they are held back because the group can only take a certain number of senior managers... In times when the economy is weak of course these hurdles are enforced ... so it is also a kind of formal entry barrier (High-potential employee, Germany- Company C)

> ...In my case, I have a senior management position waiting for me, basically, but still I have to go through these formal hurdles, and it just takes time... An example from this week, the next position I will take has to be re-graded or graded, and there are grading committees for that and the grading committee was just cancelled, so it will not happen... I will have to wait again. (High-potential employee, Germany- Company C)

Talented employees' narratives repeatedly reveal the managerial control systems inherent in TM practices, designed to ensure efficiency in competence and talent development. Management put measures and activities in place making it very difficult for high-potential employees to reach senior positions of their companies. More attention is paid to adhering to the structured approach than to the specific circumstances of employees. From the management perspective, being in a talent pool does not necessarily guarantee the high-potential employees' progression to senior management.

13

Indeed, management often noted that it would like to see significant changes in terms of the development of the identified competences. In Company C, one of the high-potential employees had senior management experience before joining the company. However, this individual was told that he too had to go through all the formal procedures before he could be promoted to a senior management position. This high-potential employee described the process frustrating as it was dragging along with no end in sight. Further, the absence of any guarantee for promotion in the sample organisations, coupled with so much emphasis on the procedural details in promotion to senior ranks of management, there was a feeling of disappointment and frustration. For employees, TM programmes in reality presented an 'illusion' of opportunity rather than a fast track to promotion and progression.

The above are significant findings which relate to TM and the employment relationship within a neoliberal context and can be summarized as follows: Firstly, there is evidence to suggest that TM is a mechanism for converting labour power into profitable work. Employers design TM programmes which suit their strategic goals and business needs while career development is merely a byproduct. Therefore, expert labour is commoditized. Management in the three companies seeks to identify, develop and retain high-potential individuals who have the talent necessary to lead the operations and ensure sustainability of their businesses.

Secondly, the managerial conceptualization of TM appears to be problematic in that high potentials find the objectives ambiguous. Talent management seems to offer merely an illusion of opportunity to high potential employees. This leads to frustration among high potentials as they have a vested interest in developing their careers and expectations of fast-track promotion. Thirdly, findings indicate that involvement in TM activities is an extra work burden that goes unrewarded, in addition to existing, very demanding contractual obligations. This indicates work intensification and exploitation of labour. As high-potential employees struggle to meet targets in both contractual obligations and TM activities, it would appear that the company uses a value maximisation approach to developing talent which may be counterproductive to espoused TM processes and goals.

Discussion and Conclusion
This paper aimed to empirically examine the experiences of managers and employees involved in TM practices in order to establish the ways in which TM might impose structures on high-performing 'talent' that exposes them to a degradation of the employment relationship. TM practices are described by managerialist literature as priority practices widely used by many organizations for the development of high-potential employees (Hartmann et al., 2010; Khoreva and Vaiman, 2015; Thunnissen, 2016). The installation of TM practices is described as 'best practice' and essential for all establishments which seek success through understanding the (assumed) links between the ways that talent is managed and organisational performance (Bjorkman et al., 2007; Ready and Conger, 2007).

The approach taken by the three firms has resonance to strategic HRM literature, where it is argued that resources and capabilities that underpin an organisation's competitive

advantage are directly tied to the capabilities of talented individuals who make up the human capital pool (Cheese et al., 2008). TM focuses on developing high-potential individuals within the sample organisations. In this context, the organisations' investment decisions are influenced by the economic gains that are associated with investing money where it has the most impact, that is, high-potential employees as opposed to embracing the 'everyone mantra' (Warren, 2006).

In answering the question of where degradation of the employment relationship might occur for talented employess, three key themes emerge. Firstly, as the focus is organisational gains, that is, investment in high potential for the purpose of increasing productivity and gaining a competitive position in the market place, it appears there is not much focus on achieving a mutual benefits approach in the labour process. The managerial conceptualisation of TM implies firms' ownership and management of the talent. From the LPT perspective, control of the factors of production including labour (Braverman, 1974; Hassard et al 2011; Thompson, 1989; Smith, 2006) lay in the hands of the owners – in the case of TM, this is the organisation and its senior executives.

Clearly, TM is a managerial practice rooted in strategic HRM. It is part of the human resource (HR) strategies which represent the configurations of decisions management use in relation to how they design work and develop, appraise, motivate and control workers. As attested in the high-potentials' narratives, TM is aimed at securing employee commitment as well as achieving high levels of labour productivity and a corresponding level of profitability. As a result, the management indirectly controls high-potential employees' behaviour through monitoring of levels of achievement in terms of competence development and promotion as well as the use of unfruitful PDP processes. This aspect of controlling employee behaviour as a basis for distinguishing different HR strategies resonates with the study of the labour process by industrial sociologists such as Braverman. As aptly noted by Thompson and Harley (2007), from the perspective of LPT there is indeed a shift from outright control to soft(er) and sometimes more indirect control in the labour process as evident in the research narratives.

Emerging from TM and managerial discourses are the characteristics of talent as human capital which must be further developed in order to enhance the efficiency and competitive position of the organisation. We contend that such conceptualisation and treatment of high-potential employees commodifies these highly skilled employees and, in subtle ways, controls their behavior in the workplace. The introduction of competency frameworks for talent assessment and development introduces structures that control the behaviour of talented employees. In addition, the label of 'talented' becomes a powerful mechanism of control over the construction of these workers' identities and the nature of their work. 'The term talent provides an added meaning of preciousness and distinct value to a human resource that should be invested in, cared for, shaped and developed - but certainly not taken for granted or squandered' (Vaiman and Vance, 2008: 5). However, in effect, this added meaning of preciousness created contradictions and tensions among white-collar and professional workers. On one hand they were told of their value by way of inclusion in TM projects and nomenclature. On the other, the very same TM mechanisms subjected them to pernicious forms of organizational control featuring work intensification, unfair rewards and reduced promotion prospects.

15

Secondly, in keeping with the findings of many workplace studies of the labour process, work intensification was highly evident. According to Bamberger et al. (2015), work intensification is a popular management strategy to increase productivity, but at the possible expense of employee mental stress. Applying LPT concepts to TM reveals that talented employees experience work intensification, for example, they work on live projects while also attending to their contractual obligations. The talented employees experience work intensification owing to development opportunities which are structured as additional job roles. Indeed, work intensification or heavier workload demands has been reported in studies focusing on junior and middle managers such as Farrell and Morris (2010); Hassard et al (2009); McCann et al (2008). These studies also point to the impact on the roles and behaviour of these managers as being affected markedly by increased spans of control (see Hassard et al 2011). This approach to TM studied in the present paper seems to strongly suggest a similar degradation of the employment relationship between organisations and their talented employees.

Whilst focusing mainly on industrial workers, Braverman (1974) also contended that other forms of work would increasingly become degraded and intensified under Taylorist management systems. Although there has been a shift away from traditional Taylorism, Fordism and bureaucracy towards value-based and cultural practices to shape employee identities, work intensification still exists in various forms. For the talented employees, their 'talent' label exposes them to exploitation; by definition, they get more work done owing to their competencies and new identity in the labour process. Strategic control resulting from the ability of these talented employees to generate value through human capital leads to work intensification.

The findings indicate an exploitation of high-value labour because of high potentials' engagement in extra development activities which are experienced as additional job roles without additional pay or greater likelihood of promotion. Although high potentials spend considerable time working on live projects as a means of developing their competences, there were no financial rewards. Talented employees know their worth in the labour market (Bjorkman et al., 2013), they (potentially) own the means of production in the form of knowledge and (supposedly) have the ability with these specialist skills to attract large rewards (Holland et al., 2007: 250). However, workers in the capitalist system are always exposed to the danger of having their surplus labour expropriated and exploited by employers (Fairlamb,1996). Managerial regimes enacting TM exploit the labour value of high potentials in their pursuit of profit maximisation while limited or zero financial rewards are attached to the 'stretch' targets given to the 'talent'.

Thirdly, talented employees experience an illusion of career opportunity. In the short-term, high-potentials' efforts are recognised but, as revealed in the findings, there are questions as to whether the promised opportunities of promotion will be achieved. Whilst having the willingness to support the goals of the organisation, individuals also have personal interests (Farndale et al., 2014; Kulvisaechana, 2006). Individuals engage in a calculative process of what value TM might have for them, which leads to a questioning of TM's objectives and essence. The findings indicate that high-potential individuals

16

want their careers to be developed within the context of their contractual roles and the TM initiatives. This line of thought corresponds with the work of Woodrufe (1999) and Holland et al., (2007), who concede that there is a tacit understanding among high potential employees that in exchange for their effort and commitment the company will support them in developing their potential and advancing their careers.

However talented employees who are career minded often become frustrated by the attenuation of their prospects for upwards progression. Indeed, it appears that the corporate world of contemporary neoliberalism has created a new regime with more stringent limits on workers' rights, prospects and benefits (see: Livingston, 2016). Owing to the way management conceptualises and operationalises TM, employees can easily get frustrated and demotivated. If individuals' desired outcomes are unavailable they may lose commitment to TM activities and the firm. Gratton and Ghoshal (2003) note that the highly talented are investors of their own human capital, they can rent their skills to an organisation in tight labour market conditions. Employee commitment to TM activities may depend on how the organisation reciprocates to high potentials' desired outcomes, which, in most cases, will relate to career development (see Collings and Mellahi, 2009; Garavan, Morley, Gunnigle and Collins, 2001; Gratton and Ghoshal, 2003; Hiltrop, 1999; Holland et al., 2007). However, the perceived expectations and rewards of engaging in TM activities appear to be illusory and thus may lead to a weaker bond in the employment relationship.

In the current scenario it would appear that high-potentials' 'talent' is largely under the control of management. As observed by Lawler (2008: 1), 'rather than encouraging people to be important contributors, most of the systems in organisations are designed to control their behaviour'. In this regard, TM can be seen as a means for management to control the talent of the high-potential employees for the purpose of gaining competitive advantage. Guest (2006: 6) notes that 'for organisations adopting a hard approach to HRM, the interests of workers and their well-being are of no significance in themselves'. However, there is a limit to which an organisation can control high potential individuals' talent. The organisation can easily lose control of talented individuals if they disregard employees' interests. Even given the high degree of control over talent that management desire to extend, high potential employees to a greater or lesser degree do still 'own' the means of production; their expert abilities, skills and analytical capacity. If such employees are not treated well they are likely to withdraw their labour as long as labour market conditions permit.

This leads to a final point about abilities and skills. Another central characteristic of LPT is de-skilling. As noted above, de-skilling is not directly apparent in TM. However, the presence of specialist skills among talented employees does not necessarily moderate the "unequal distribution of power over work in the capitalist workplace" (Ackroyd 2009: 265). Talent work rather than being "ever safer, cleaner and more automated" is "actually less skilled, more controlled, and more intensive" (Smith, 2015: 222). Structured antagonism is a fundamental feature of the capitalist mode of organization (Delbridge and Keenoy, 2010: 802). Competitive market relations lead to structured antagonism because on one side employers compete for employees resonating their individualist orientations,

17

whereas on the other employees seek to maximise their opportunities and rewards from employers. Employers are simultaneously competing with others in product and service markets and are under pressure to minimise labour costs in order to sustain and improve profits or other benefits (Delbridge and Keenoy, 2010). Structured antagonism provokes conflicts of interests between the employer and the employee.

Owing to the way TM activities are conceptualized, high potentials' voices as regards their experiences appear to be silenced. Attested examples from the three companies show that employees' interests are secondary in the calculation of managers and that there is a plurality of interests because talented employees have their own goals. Although there are studies which have looked at the relationship between high potential and employee development (Khoreva et al., 2017), further empirical work across a wider range of organisations is required if we are to better understand the complex and contradictory nature of TM. Further research is also needed to explore employee voice and the role of unions in TM programmes. While Swailes (2013) has looked at ethics in TM, there is need for research into how TM relates to issues of power, class and gender. While there is agreement in some of the literature that effective TM practice is likely to be associated with positive high-potential employees' attitudes (Chang, 2005), the causal chain between high potential commitment and development through TM is more complex than is often portrayed since high-potential employees are likely to perceive, value and react to TM practices differently (see Khoreva et al., 2017) – indeed often skeptically and critically. Human 'talent' is commoditised as it is utilised by management as any other organisational resource rather than being a possession of individuals with autonomy, discretion and career aspirations. LPT literature has a long history of exposing such contradictions in workplaces and the conflict between management and labour in all its forms under industrial capitalism. Further exploration is required as regards the managerial conceptualisation of TM and how this in turn impacts on the commitment, employment and wellbeing of high-potential employees.

Declaration of Competing Interests

Funding

References

Ackroyd S (2009) Labor Process Theory as 'Normal Science'. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal* 21(3): 263–272.

Adler PS (2007) The future of critical management studies: A paleo–Marxist critique of labour process theory. *Organization Studies* 28(9):1313–1345.

Ahammad FM, Glaister KW, Sarala RM and Glaister AJ (2018) Strategic Talent Management in Emerging Markets. *Thunderbird International Business Review* 60(1): 5–8.

Bamberger SG, Larsen A, Vinding AL, Nielsen P, Fonager K, Nielsen RN, Ryom P and Omland Ø (2015) Assessment of work intensification by managers and psychological distressed and non–distressed employees: a multilevel comparison. *Industrial health* 53(4): 322–331.

Beechler S and Woodward IC (2009) The global war for talent. *Journal of International Management 15*(3): 273–285.

Björkman I and Mäkela K (2013) Are you willing to do what it takes to become a senior global leader? Explaining the willingness to undertake challenging leadership development activities. *European Journal of International Management* 7(5):570–586

Björkman I, Ehrnrooth MK, Smale A and Sumelius J (2013) Talent or not? Employee reactions to talent identification. *Human Resource Management* 52 (2):195–214.

Blass E (2009) *Talent management: Cases and commentary*. Hampshire: Palgrave McMillan.

Blass E, Knights A and Orbea A (2006) Developing future leaders: The contribution of TM, Ashridge Business School, UK– http://ashridge.org.uk (accessed: 07/01/2017).

Boselie P, Brewster C and Paauwe J (2009) In search of balance – managing the dualities of HRM: An overview of the issues. *Personnel Review* 38(5): 461–471.

Boudreau JW and Ramstad PM (2005) Talentship, talent segmentation, and sustainability: a new strategy definition. *Human Resource Management* 44 (2): 129–136.

Brannen MY (2007) Global TM and learning for the future: Pressing concerns for Japanese multinationals. Keynote speech prepared for international organisational network Toshiba Training Centre. Yokohama, Japan.

Braverman H (1974) *Labor and Monopoly Capitalism*. London: Monthly Review Press.

Burawoy M (1979) *Manufacturing consent: Changes in the labor process under monopoly capitalism*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.

Callaghan G and P Thompson (2002) "We Recruit Attitude": the selection and shaping of routine call centre labour. *Journal of Management Studies* 39(2):233–54

Cappelli P (2008) *Talent on Demand: Managing Talent in an Age of Uncertainty*. Boston: Harvard Business Press.

Cheese, P Thomas, R.J and Craig, E (2008). *The Talent Powered Organisation: Strategies for Globalisation, Talent Management and High Performance*. Kogan Page: London.

Clark T, Mabey C and Skinner D (1998) Experiencing HRM: The importance of the inside story. In: Mabey C, Skinner D and Clark, T. (eds). *Experiencing human resource management*. London: Sage Publications.

Collings, D G and Mellahi, K (2009) Strategic TM: A review and research agenda. *Human Resource Management Review* 19 (4): 304–313.

Delbridge, R. and Keenoy, T. (2010) Beyond managerialism? *International Journal of Human Resource Management* 21 (6): 801–819.

Dries N (2013) The Psychology of TM: a review and research agenda. *Human Resource Management Review* 23(4) :272–285

Drucker, P F (1998) *Peter Drucker on the profession of management*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

The Economist (2006) 'The battle of brainpower: A survey of talent. The Economist Intelligence Unit October 7th.

Ehrenberg RG and Smith RS (2012) *Modern Labour Economics: Theory and Public Policy*. HarperCollins: New York.

Elliot J (2005) *Using narrative in social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. London: Sage Publications.

Fairlamb H L (1996) Adam Smith's other hand: A capitalist theory of exploitation. Social Theory and Practice 22(2): 193–223.

Farrell C and Morris J (2012) Managing in the neo-bureaucratic organization. *International Journal of Human Resource Management* 18: 1578–1588

Farndale E, Pai A, Sparrow P and Scullion H (2014) Balancing individual and organizational goals in global TM: a mutual–benefits perspective. *Journal of World Business* 49 (2): 204–214.

Festing M and Schäfer L (2014) Generational challenges to TM: a framework for talent retention based on the psychological–contract perspective. *Journal of World Business* 49(2): 262–271.

Flecker J and Meil P (2010) Organisational restructuring and emerging service value chains: implications for work and employment. *Work, Employment and Society* 24(4): 680–698.

Fuller L and Smith V (1991) Consumers' reports: Management by customers in a changing economy. *Work, Employment and Society* 5(1): 1–16.

Gallardo-Gallardo E, Dries N and González-Cruz TF (2013) What is the meaning of 'talent' in the world of work? Human Resource Management Review 23: 290–300.

Garavan TN, Morley M, Gunnigle P and Collins E (2001) Human capital accumulation: The role of human resource development. *Journal of European Industrial Training* 25(2/3/4): 48–68.

Gelens J, Hofmans J, Dries N and Pepermans R (2014) Talent management and organisational justice: employee reactions to high potential identification. *Human Resource Management Journal* 24(2):159–175.

Gratton, L and Ghoshal, S (2003) Managing personal human capital: new ethos for the volunteer employer. *European Management Journal* 21(1):1–10.

Guest D (2006) Human resource management: The workers' verdict. Human Resource Management Journal 9(3): 5–25.

Hartmann E, Feisel E and Schober, H (2010) Talent management of western MNCs in China: balancing global integration and local responsiveness. *Journal of World Business* 45(2): 169–178.

Hassard J, McCann L and Morris J (2009) *Managing in the Modern Corporation: The Intensification of Managerial Work in the US, UK and Japan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hassard J, Morris J and McCann L (2011) 'My Brilliant Career'? New Organizational Forms and Changing Managerial Careers in Japan, the UK, and USA. *Journal of Management Studies* 49(3): 571–599.

20

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Hiltrop JM (1995) The changing psychological contract: The human resource challenges for the 1990s. *The European Management Journal* 13(3): 286–294.

Holland P, Sheeham C and De Cieri (2007) Attracting and retaining talent: Exploring human resources development trends in Australia. *Human Resource Development International* 10(3): 247–262.

Houlihan M (2002) Tensions and variations in call centre management strategies. *Human Resource Management Journal* 12(4): 67–86.

Huselid M A, Beatty RW and Becker B E (2005) 'A Players' or 'A Positions'? The strategic logic of workforce management. *Harvard Business Review* December 83(12): 110–117.

Iles, P (2007) Employee resourcing and TM. In Storey, J (ed) *Human resource management: A critical text*. London: Thomson Learning (97–114).

Iles, P and Preece, D (2006) Developing leaders or developing leadership? The academy of chief executives programmes in the North–West of England. *Leadership* 2(2): 317–340.

Jaros SJ (2005) Marxian critiques of Thompson's (1990)'core' labour process theory: an evaluation and extension. *Ephemera* 5(1): 5–25.

Joyce WF and Slocum JW (2012) Top management talent strategic capabilities, and firm performance. *Organizational Dynamics* 41: 183–193.

Khoreva V, Vaiman V and Van Zalk M (2017) "Talent management practice effectiveness: investigating employee perspective. *Employee Relations* 39(1):19–33.

Knights D and Willmott H (2016) *Labour process theory*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kulvisaechana S (2006) Human capital development in an international organization. *Journal of European Industrial Training* 30 (9): 721–734.

Labov W and Waletzky J (1997) Narrative and identity: The double arrow of time. in De Fina, A., Schiffrin, D. and Bamberg, M. (Eds). *Discourse and Identity,* Georgetown University: Washington DC.

Lawler EE (2008) *Talent: Making people your competitive advantage*. Jossey–Bass: California.

Lawler EE and Boudreau JW (2009) Achieving Excellence in Human Resources Management: An assessment of human resource functions. Stanford University Press: Redwood City.

Lepak DP and Snell SA (1999) The human resource architecture: Towards a theory of human capital allocation and development. *Academy of Management Review* 24(1): 31–48.

Lewis RE and Heckman RJ (2006) Talent management: A critical review. *Human Resource Management Review*16 (2): 139–154.

Li S and Scullion H (2010) Developing the local competence of expatriate managers for emerging markets: A knowledge-based approach. *Journal of World Business* 45(2):190–19.

Livingstone DW (2016) Exploitation, Stagnant Wages and Underemployment in Advanced Capitalism: A Canadian Perspective. Journal of Critical Research 27.

Manolchev C, Saundry R, and Lewis D (2018) Breaking up the 'precariat': Personalisation, differentiation and deindividuation in precarious work groups. Economic

21

and Industrial Democracy. Epub ahead of print 28 November 2018 DOI: 10.1177/0143831X18814625

McAlpine L (2016) Why might you use narrative methodology? A story about narratives. Eest Hardusteaduste Ajaki 4(1): 32–57.

McCance TV, McKenna HP and Boore RP (2001) Exploring caring using narrative methodology: an analysis of the approach. *Methodological Issues in Nursing Research* 33(3): 350–356.

McCann L (2018) A Very Short, Fairly Interesting and Reasonably Cheap Book About Gloablization. London: Sage.

McCann L, Morris J, and Hassard J (2008) Normalized Intensity: The New Labour Process of Middle Management. *Journal of Management Studies*, 45(2): 343-371.

McDonnell A (2011) Still fighting the "War for Talent"? Bridging the science versus practice gap. *Journal of business and psychology* 26:169–173.

McDonnell A (2009) Delineating multinational companies and their engagement in TM: Addressing an empirical deficit. Unpublished PhD Thesis. University of Limerick.

McDonnell A and Collings D (2011) Identification and evaluation of talent in MNEs.In Scullion H and Collings D (eds): Global TM London: Routledge.

McDonnell A, Lamare R, Gunnigle P and Lavelle J (2010) Developing tomorrow's leaders– Evidence of global TM in multinational enterprises. *Journal of World Business* 45(2): 150–160.

Mellahi K and Collings DG (2010) The barriers to effective global TM: The example of corporate elites in MNEs. *Journal of World Business* 45 (2): 143–149.

Michaels E, Handfield–Jones H and Axelrod B (2001*) The war for talent*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Newsome K (2010) Work and employment in distribution and exchange: moments in the circuits of capital. *Industrial Relations Journal* 41(3): 190–205.

Price A, Mansfield C and McConney A (2012) Considering 'teacher resilience' from critical discourse and labour process theory perspectives, *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 33(1): 81–95.

Ready DA and Conger JA (2007) Make your company a talent factory. *Harvard Business Review* 85(6): 68–77.

Rosenblat A and Stark L (2016) Algorithmic labor and information asymmetries: A case study of Uber's drivers. International Journal of Communication 10: 3758–3784.

Saunders M, Lewis P and Thornhill A (2016) *Research Methods for Business Students*. London: Pearson Education Financial Times, Prentice Hall.

Schiemann WA (2014) From TM to talent optimization *Journal of World Business* 49(2): 281–288.

Schuler RS, Jackson SE and Tarique I (2011) Global TM and global talent challenges: Strategic opportunities for IHRM. *Journal of World Business* 46(4):506–516.

Scullion H, Collings DG and Vaiman V (2016) Guest editorial: Strategic TM. *Employee Relations Today* 38(1): 1–15.

Scullion H, Collings DG and Caligiuri P (2010) Global TM. *Journal of World Business* 45(2): 105–108.

Smith C and Thompson P (1998) Re–evaluating the labour process debate. *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 19(4): 551–577.

Smith C (2006) The Double Indeterminacy of Labour Power: Labour Effort and Labour

22

Mobility. *Work, Employment and Society* 20 (2): 389–402.

Smith C (2015) Continuity and change in labor process analysis forty years after labor and monopoly capital. *Labor Studies Journal* 40(3), 222–242.

Son J, Park O, Bae J and Ok C (2018) Double–edged effect of TM on organizational performance: the moderating role of HRM investments. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 29(8): 1446–4399.

Sonnenberg M, Vera van Zijderveld and Brinks M (2014) The role of talent–perception incongruence in effective TM. *Journal of World Business* 49(2): 272–280.

Sparrow P and Makram H (2015) What is the value of TM? Building value–driven processes with–in a TM architecture. *Human Resource Management Review* 25(3):249–263.

Sparrow P, Scullion H and Tarique I (2014) *Strategic TM: Contemporary issues in international context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Standing G (2011) *The Precariat: The Dangerous New Class*. London: Bloomsbury.

Swailes S and Blackburn M (2016) Employee reactions to talent pool membership, *Employee Relations* 38(1): 112–128.

Swailes S (2013) The ethics of TM. *Business Ethics: A European Review* 22(1): 32 – 46.

Suutari V and Brewster C (2001) Expatriate management practices and perceived relevance: Evidence from Finnish expatriates. *Personnel Review* 30(5):554–577.

Tansley C, Kirk S and Tietze S (2013) The currency of TM—A reply to "TM and the relevance of context: Towards a pluralistic approach" *Human Resource Management Review* 23(4): 337–340.

Tansley C, Turner PA, Foster C, Harris LM, Stewart J, Sempik A and Williams H (2007) Talent: Strategy, management and measurement Research into practice. London: CIPD

Tarique I and Schuler R (2010) Global TM: literature review integrative framework, and suggestions for further research. *Journal of World Business* 45(2):122–133.

Taylor P (2010) The globalisation of service work: analysing the transnational call centre value chain In: Thompson P and Smith C (eds) *Working Life: Renewing Labour Process Analysis*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 244–268.

Thompson P and Harley B (2007) HRM and the worker: Labour process perspectives. The Oxford Handbook of Human Resource Management, Chapter 8. 147.

Thompson P (2010) The capitalist labour process - concepts and connections. *Capital and Class* 34(1): 7–14.

Thompson P (1989) *The Nature of Work* (2nd edition), Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Thompson P (1990) Crawling from the wreckage: the labour process and the politics of production. In: Knights D and Willmott H (eds) Labour Process Theory, Basingstoke: Macmillan, pp. 95–124.

Thunnissen M (2016) Talent management: For what, how and how well? An empirical exploration of TM in practice. *Employee Relations* 38(1): 57–72.

Thunnissen M, Boselie P and Fruytier B (2013) Talent management and the relevance of context: Towards a pluralistic approach. *Human Resource Management Review* 23: 326–336.

Towers Watson (2011) Leading Through Uncertain Times: The 2011/2012 Talent Management and Rewards Study. North America New York: Towers Watson.

Vaiman V and Vance CM (2008) *Smart TM: Building knowledge assets for competitive advantage.* Edward Elgar: Cheltenham.

Warren, C (2006) Curtain Call. *People Management* 12(6): 24–29.
World Economic Forum (2011) Global Talent Risk –Seven Responses. Geneva: World Economic Forum.

24

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Appendices

Table 1: Informants' background

Company A	Informant's position	Number of participants
	HR Vice-President	One
	Talent Review Committee member	One
	Line Managers	Two
	Employees involved in TM initiatives	Thirteen
Company B		
	HR Senior Manager	One
	Talent Coach	Two
	Line Managers	Two
	Employees involved in TM initiatives	Five
Company C		
	Vice-President Employer Branding	One
	HR Senior Manager	One
	Line Managers	Two
	High-potentials	Three

25