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Exploring Professional Competencies for Talent Management in Hospitality and Food Sector in Turkey

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Abstract

This study is an exploratory research conducted for understanding talent management practices in hospitality and food sector in Turkish business environment. The data of the study was collected via face-to-face interviews from employees working in the small and medium sized companies in Turkish hospitality and food sector. The data obtained through in-depth interviews was analyzed by content analysis. The main aim of the current study is identifying strategic talent attributes in Turkish hospitality and food sector through a qualitative research. The outcomes of the current study will be utilized as the groundwork of a further quantitative research in order to construct a professional competence scale for hospitality and food sector in Turkish business environment.

1. Talent management

Talent management has been a popular concept both for businesses and academia since early 90s. On the subject of strategic management, the importance of talent management practices derive from the fact that talented employees have the strategic capabilities that can increase the productivity, efficiency and competitive advantage of organizations in all industries. In order to comprehend talent management, firstly the term '*talent'* should be thoroughly discovered. According to Butter and colleagues (2015) the 'talent' concept incorporates various meanings; that is, having an ability, intelligence, and capability in some profession that permit performing specific acts. In broad terms, 'talent' mainly refers an individual's level of intelligence or capability that enable effortlessly and skillfully conduct an activity (Butter,

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Valenzuela & Quintana, 2015). Although talent is commonly linked with an ability, it can also be developed through exercise, practice and training. While talented employees have similar strategic effects on the performance and competitiveness of companies in various sectors, the identification of strategic competencies that characterize *'who the talented employees are'* in each industry seems to be quite different. By conducting a qualitative research, the current study aims to identify strategic competencies that describe the main attributes of talented employees in hospitality and food sector within Turkish business environment.

The talent management concept initiated by the work of a group of McKinsey consultants who had highlighted the idea of "war of talent" during 1990s. This original study showed the significant role of employees for companies' outstanding performance that can strengthen their competitive advantages (Khilji, Tarique & Schuler, 2015). Since then, not only the reality itself, but also the realization of such a reality of talent wars have intensified due to the lack of skilled employees (Latukha, 2014). No matter how the general condition of the economy; i.e. good or bad, talent management stays as a critical concern for all companies in all times.

Talent management process is related with identification, attracting, developing, rewarding and retaining employees with critical attributes by which they can support sustainability of organizational success as well as organizational development (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). According to Vaiman, Haslberger and Vance (2015) talent management process includes the following set of activities:

- Classifying, identifying, choosing and recruiting talent from outside of company within employment marketplace
- Classifying and identifying internal talent
- Training talented employees
- Retaining talented employees

Talent management is basically a process that involves utilizing, developing and managing employees who have strategic capabilities that are important for the success of business. Talent management methods help to stimulate newly joined employees to be energetic, motivated, long-term staff, and make this process to be the duty of all managers from top to bottom rather than keeping it only as a duty of human resources departments (Lou, 2007). Human resources departments function as support functions within organizations and perform various operations about personnel. In terms of employee development practices human resources departments may primarily focus on training future leaders rather than trying to train all employees at the same time with the same effort (Marchington, 2015). On the other hand, as a philosophical approach, talent management involves focusing on all talented employees and trying to develop all of them.

During talent management practices, information management becomes crucial. Information technology contribute to talent management by supporting sustainability of operations, and so increase organizational performance (Benitez-Amado, Llorens-Montes & Fernandez-Perez, 2015). Through the usage of information technology, a better data management would result in making healthier decisions and so achieving better organizational performance (Russell & Bennett, 2014). In this regard, the real value of talent management has still not been systematically discovered (Festing, Schafer & Scullion, 2013).

Talent management practices are more common within big multinational companies. The lack of managerial and professional talent have become one of the most important human resource management challenge for majority of multinational companies (Latukha, 2014). At early times, talent management developed as only the concern of large multinational enterprises, however it has been seen that talent management issues will not be limited to those large MNEs or big local companies, but also has become crucial for all companies regardless of their size and level of internationalization (Festing, Schafer & Scullion, 2013; Iles, Chuai & Preece, 2010).

Nowadays, the main focus of the researchers in the area is analyzing talent management practices in different industry segments, by studying small and medium sized enterprises (SME's) as well as large MNEs (Sparrow & Makram, 2015). By building on the main findings of previous research on talent management and its effects, this study aims to explore the strategic talent competencies that would be effective for the performance of the companies within Turkish hospitality and food sector.