

Talent development as a sustainable practice for employee engagement: A Delphi study

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Abstract

Purpose: The study attempts to explore the relationship between talent development (TD) and employee engagement (EE). The purpose is to identify those talent development affecting factors that act as key predictors of employee engagement in higher educational institutions of private sector.

Methodology: The study is qualitative. Extensive literature review was carried out to identify factors affecting talent development which could play a critical role in enriching the employee engagement. Delphi technique has been followed to identify the key factors affecting the employee engagement level in private educational institutions. Opinions of fifteen experts were collected through a questionnaire that was designed based on literature review.

Finding: The study implies that some of the factors that affect talent development also act as a measure to elevate the level of engagement of employees at the job.

Implications: The administration of educational institutions may use the developed conceptual model to diagnose areas of improvement for talent development strategies. It would ultimately be helpful in predicting, increasing, and sustaining the level of employee engagement. This is ultimately expected to lead to a better entire academic community.

Contribution: The study has filled the conceptual void that exists in literature in the area of talent development in educational institutions. The study presents the relation/linkage between the factors of talent development and employee engagement by developing a conceptual model.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Talent Development, Delphi Method, Faculty Engagement.

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1. INTRODUCTION

With the growing demands in the globalized market business sustainability has become the major concern for organizations. In order to sustain in the competitive world there is a need to have sustainable practices to achieve higher productivity, quality standards and engagement of employees in the organizations. On the one hand employee engagement is one of the important indicators to predict success rate of every organizations, irrespective of sectors and on the another hand to attain sustainability in success rate talent development practices are also adopted by organizations in order to engage employees. Therefore it seems there is a connection between these two concepts. Talent development practices predict the employee engagement levels of HR professionals

(Morethe, Swarts & Schultz, 2020). On this basis the problem of employee engagement in educational institutions could be addressed.

Some of the educational institutions are struggling for engaging and retaining their faculty members. Developing the talent of faculty is definitely essential for improving quality of higher education additionally; it is also helpful in engaging the talented faculty members with the institution. Studies (for example Schaufeli & Salanova, 2005; Ali, Ullah & Guha, 2020) have shown the importance of developing the talent of employees leads to employee engagement. Engaged employees have higher retention rate therefore when organization are putting effort on developing the talent of existing employees they

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perform better with more dedication which ultimately leads to higher productivity and sustainability (Harter et al. 2002; Casey & Seiber, 2016; Goodman 2022).

The educational institutions those struggling to improve employee engagement focus on talent development practices to increase the engagement of their employees. Therefore, there is a need to identify that which factors of talent development have been effect on the level of employee engagement. The present study tries to identify key factors of talent development that act as predictors of employee engagement in higher educational institutions.

Talent Development

Organizations that want to compete and survive in the global scenario need to develop talent of employees (Beechler & Woodward, 2009) because talented employees ensure success and sustainability of organization in the long run (Lawler, 2015). Talent development strategies help to increase employee's zeal, energy, and make them positively engaged and good performer with the universities through enhancing their skills and knowledge (Obedgiu et al., 2023).

Talent development is a part of the talent management process. It can be defined as "talent development is a comprehensive development framework that focuses on planning, selecting and implementing the development strategies, i.e., coaching, mentoring, training, etc., in a personalised way to make the talent pool sustainable that enables internal fit perfect to achieve the strategic objective or projected performance of the organization" (Agrahari, 2024).

Talent development has been conceptualized as a process comprising four elements they are: performance management, coaching talent, leadership development and talent acquisition (Mohammed, Hafeez-Baig & Gururajan, 2020). The two ideas "focus" and "fit" are used for managing talent. Focus refers to the outcome expected from the talent development process, to build talent pool equipped with required skills and experience for possible future roles. Fit means that the employees need to fit with other people management practices and support the core values and purpose of the organization (Garrow & Hirsh, 2008).

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is an effective tool for attaining competitive advantage, business success, productivity, improved organizational and individual performance, employee retention, customer satisfaction, organizational reputation, well-being and the overall stakeholder value (Javadi & Ahmadi, 2013). Engaged employees are not only socially connected with their work that encourages them to develop better solutions for problems, taking the organizations forward (Dutta & Sharma, 2017) but also attentive towards their

responsibilities and are mentally involved in their workplace. Employee engagement is related to wellbeing and emotional experiences. Engagement in work is one of the key ingredients for employee innovation. Engaged employees impact other with their work and drive the creativity and productivity; therefore businesses must accelerate engagement of employee (Nandan & Jyoti, 2017). After emerging from COVID-19 employees want both the financial as well as the emotional satisfaction also there is a shift towards remote and hybrid work occurring, under the circumstances the need to address employee engagement has been increased (Goodman, 2022).

Talent development and employee engagement

Talent development strategy in business process benefits both employee and organization. Employees get engaged when they feel emotionally and mentally connected, and enjoy learning at their workplace (Mufeed & Showkat, 2018). Proper learning and development improves the career path of talents which motivates the employees to work with more involvement in the assigned tasks (Ali, Hossain, & Ahmed, 2018; Mehdiabadi & Li, 2016). The talent development process leads to learning therefore ultimately it changes the behavior of the organization and its employees which helps in making the maintenance and acquisition of human capital easy (Lyria, 2014). Talent development facilitates person-specific/personalized development, it helps employees to gain knowledge, to be creative, to work at a particular motivational level and to develop themselves according to their ability, experience and will (Zahorsky, 2010). Hence, talent development (TD) and employee engagement concepts are interconnected (Isa, Ibrahim, Jaaffar, & Baharin, 2018); TD practices work as instrument for employee motivation and increases the employee engagement to their assigned jobs (Ali, 2020).

Factors affecting Talent Development of Faculty Members

The factors affecting talent development of faculty identified as those affecting talent development among employees of corporate organizations because no study was found by the researchers that focused particularly on factors affecting talent development of faculty members. It was found that talent development is affected by a number of factors. These factors are broadly related to organizational policies and practices, employees' personal attributes, and leadership. These factors are enlisted in Table 1.

2. Research Methodology

Study Design

The Delphi technique has been found to be a reliable method for exploratory research & planning and for giving direction to future-orientated research

(Moore 1987; Rowe and Wright, 1999) therefore this technique has been found suitable to fulfill the purpose of this study. The present study utilized a modified, 3-round Delphi research methodology to answer the research question: What could be the talent development affecting factors which act as key predictors of employee engagement in private educational institutions? A total of fifteen panelists were selected using purposive sampling from the private educational institution for the survey. They were provided with a clear explanation of the purpose of the study. The panelists have more than 10 years of teaching experience in private educational institutions.

Instrumentation

Fifteen Attributes (factors affecting talent development) for the survey were developed by analysing 23 research articles. An iterative process of feedback through Delphi technique was undertaken to eliminate least important attributes. The researchers used Google forms to conduct the survey for this study.

Delphi Timeline

The Delphi followed a 38-days implementation schedule including final round analysis. Experts had 15 days to complete round 1, 10 days for round 2, and 7 days for round 3. Every week, a reminder e-mail was sent in first two rounds and in final round reminder mail was sent after 4 days to experts had not completed the survey. After each round, the researchers had 2 days to calculate group per cent agreement/disagreement and prepare a new questionnaire for next round along with the calculated data.

Sample selection

It is very important decision while implementing Delphi methodology because experts acts like a spindle on which the whole process and quality of output depends. Linstone (2002) stated that a "poor selection of experts [...] can produce a cozy group of like-thinking individuals [...] and become a vehicle for inbreeding" (p. 568).

A large sample size can results in diminishing returns regarding the validity of the Delphi survey findings therefore a minimum of 12 panellists is generally considered to enable consensus to be achieved (Crane et al., 2017; Wainwright et al., 2010). Non-probability purposive sampling was adopted to ensure that invited experts met the inclusion criteria. The study is related to private educational institutions area so as to get results that have a balance of theoretical aspects and practical experiences, faculty members of same field were approached having at least 10 years of work experience in their respective subject area. Contact details (e-mail id's, contact numbers) were taken from

the institution's website and from personal contact list of researchers.

Participation rate the Delphi rounds

A total of 20 experts from the private institutions, were invited through e-mail along with the research objectives to participate in the Delphi process. Three experts did not respond to the invitation. The remaining 17 experts accepted the invitation but responded 15 in all the rounds.

Determining Consensus

The panellists were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the items (factors responsible for their engagement in their institution) in the survey instrument using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1-5 (1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree). The median rating was calculated for each item. Median rating of 4 and above was accepted. Delphi studies usually use percentage agreement to measure consensus (Neidberger and Sprager, 2020). The accepted range for consensus is reported to be very wide, that is 50 – 97% (Diamond et al., 2014). Experts were asked to rate the attributes on likert scale according to their importance for the specified purpose. Attributes that achieved 70% agreement for importance were retained and considered for re-rating by the experts in subsequent rounds. Attributes which were suggested to eliminate in two consecutive rounds, were deleted from the next list. In the final round the level of agreement was >70%. Stability of consensus was considered reached if the between round group responses varied by $\leq 10\%$ (Duffield, 1993).

3. Findings and Discussions

Summary of data analysis

In round 1, the experts formed consensus on 12 attributes among 15. The three attributes, on which consensus was not build were self-motivation for development, risk taking ability and Growth potential and positive energy/ Ambitious.

In addition to 3 attributes marked in first round, 3 more attributes opined to eliminate in the second round among 12 attributes, they were Self actualization/ Self assessment, Attention on education and required skills and Changes in organizational culture.

Of the 15 experts who provided feedback, nearly all stated that they were comfortable with the final list of 10 factors in third and final round.

Table 1 shows a round-wise summary of the Delphi attributes that achieve consensus by calculating percentage of number of rates (median rating=4) given by total number of experts according to the importance of attributes to engage employees in private educational institutions.

Table 1: Attributes with supporting studies and a summary of expert opinion

S. No.	Attributes	Supporting Studies	Level of group consensus percentage achieved (number of experts =15)		
			Round 1	Round 2	Round 3
1.	Self-motivation for development	Chait and Gueths (1981); Green (2008); Caplan, (2014); Hana and Lucie (2015)	40	33.33	NA
2.	Learning agility	Ready, Conger, Hill and Stecker (2010); Juhdi, Pa'wan and milah (2012)	73.33	80	80
3.	Change adoption	Juhdi, Pa'wan and milah (2012)	80	86.67	86.67
4.	Risk taking ability	Ready, Conger, Hill and Stecker (2010)	46.67	20	NA
5.	Self actualization/ Self assessment	Latukha (2018)	53.33	33.33	20
6.	Growth potential and positive energy/ Ambitious	Ready, Conger, Hill and Stecker (2010); Juhdi, Pa'wan and milah (2012)	40	33.33	NA
7.	Active support by administrative for professional development	Seldin (1976); Chait and Gueths (1981); Camblin and Steger (2000); Araoz, Groysberg, and (2011); Latukha (2018)	73.33	86.67	93.33
8.	Relationship with senior colleagues	Green (2008), Araoz, Groysberg, and (2011); Gallup (2013)	73.33	80	93.33
9.	Encouraging reward system	Laursen and Rocque (2009); Araoz, Groysberg, and (2011)	86.67	93.33	100
10.	Consistent development process	Carr, Inkson and Thorn (2005); Edgar, Geare (2005); Fajcikova, Urbancova and Kucircova (2016)	66.67	73.33	80
11.	Learning and working environment	Tseng and McLean (2007); Agrawal (2010); Panda and Sahoo, (2015)	73.33	86.67	93.33
12.	Personalized and customized TD strategy Suits to individual learning style	Garavan, Carbery, and Rock, (2012); Juhdi, Pa'wan and milah (2012); Caplan (2014); Hana and Lucie (2015)	66.67	73.33	73.33
13.	Attention on education and required skills	Juhdi, Pa'wan and milah (2012); Hana and Lucie (2015); Latukha (2018)	60	53.33	20
14.	Changes in organizational culture	Latukha (2018)	60	40	20
15.	Leadership	Azmy (2019)	73.33	86.67	93.33

From the findings of data analysis the conceptual model has been designed, presented in figure 1.

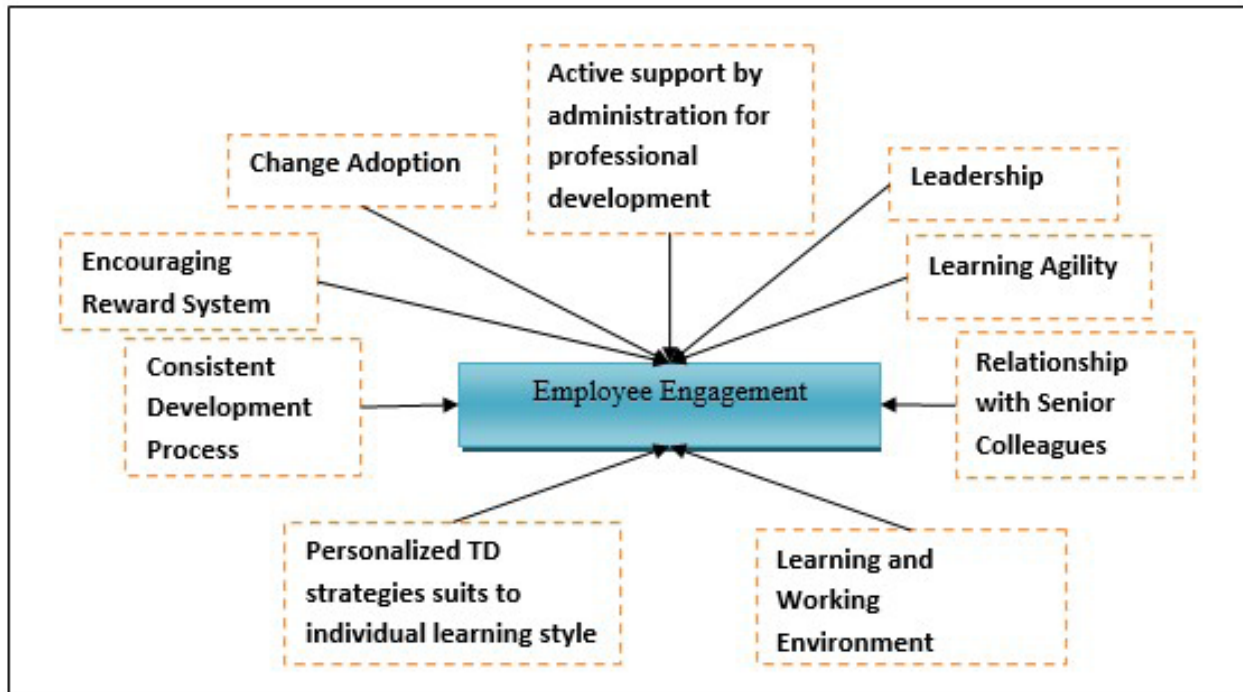


Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Model: Talent Development affecting Factors enriches Employee Engagement

4. Conclusion

The study was tried to verify through literature review that the factors of talent development will work in two directions i.e.; it will develop talent among employees as well as enrich the level of engagement. Although literature has indicates that there is a positive correlation between employee engagement and talent development but not all factors of talent development affects the employee engagement. Ten factors of TD were identified through Delphi process as key predictor of employee engagement in private educational institutions i.e. Active support by administration for professional development, Change Adoption, Encouraging Reward System, Consistent Development Process, Personalized TD strategies suits to individual learning style, Learning and Working Environment, Relationship with Senior Colleagues, Learning Agility, Leadership, that can be shown in the figure 1.

In today's competitive environment it is very important for every organization to focus on these factors to continuously brush the current skills of the faculty members and facilitate them to increase their engagement and become more efficient in their respective fields. Institutions should adopt talent development practices as sustainable strategies more effectively in order to retain and engage the faculty members of private institutions.

Implications for practice

The administration of educational institutions may use the developed conceptual model to diagnose

areas of improvement for talent development strategies and predict the level of engagement. This is expected to lead to improved student-learning outcomes and a better entire academic community.

Moreover, the findings also provide a direction to management and policy makers in the institutions for developing parameters for faculty training and development, and performance appraisal. Through the current study, practitioners, trainers and academicians would understand the impact of talent development on employee engagement.

Directions for future research

The outcomes of Delphi process work as small repository to the literature that could be used by future researchers to understand the relation between these two concepts.

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