Talent pool exclusion: the hotel employee perspective

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Abstract

Purpose- The purpose of this paper is to explore the experiences of employees excluded from a talent pool and to identify what career development is provided for them.

Design/methodology/approach- A qualitative approach was adopted, and narrative inquiry was selected as the optimum route to obtaining detailed and rich accounts of the experiences of employees excluded from a talent pool. 15 in-depth interviews were conducted with 8 employees and 7 managers in a small hotel chain in the south of England.

Findings-The study shows that employees who are excluded from a talent pool feel frustration, mistrust in the organisation, have low expectations of career development and show an intention to leave the organisation.

Research limitations/ implications-The study was conducted in a chain of hotels where TM strategies are one of the key priorities in the organisation. The results may be different in hotels where TM strategies are less formal and talent pool segmentation is not clearly identified.

Practical implications- Hotel managers should consider employees who are excluded from a talent pool and build effective TM strategies and provide career development in order to minimise adverse reactions and improve commitment and motivation.

Originality/value- This research contributes to understanding talent pool exclusion and its consequences for the hotel sector. Narrative interviewing is used in this context for the first time.

Key words- Talent Management, Talent Pool, Attraction, Retention, Succession Planning, Turnover

Paper type-Research paper

Introduction

Talent Management is much debated and contested in the literature and despite extensive research it has been difficult to arrive at a set definition. Academic TM literature explores the concept in all possible directions, using a broad range of academic traditions, including HRM and career management (Gallardo-Gallardo et al. 2013). Moreover, researchers still argue what actually constitutes TM. The term TM has escaped a standard definition, and nearly every researcher supplies their own definition. Lewis and Heckman (2006, p. 139) note the ― "disturbing lack of clarity regarding the definition, scope and overall goals of Talent Management."

An increasing number of authors such Ashton and Morton (2005), Randall and Jackson (2005), Lewis and Heckman (2006), Tansley et al. (2007), Garrow and Hirsh (2008), Cappelli and Keller (2014) and Thunnissen (2016), have explored TM from different angles and perspectives. Interestingly, there is a tendency in the TM literature not to offer a formal definition of the concept (Lewis and Heckman 2006, Huang and Tansley 2012). Those authors who do provide definitions fail to do so conclusively (Cappelli 2008). However, in order to understand the complexity and versatility of the concept of TM, it is essential to provide some definition. According to Hugles and Rog (2008, p. 746):

"Talent Management is a multi-faceted concept that has been championed by HR practitioners, fuelled by the war for talent and built on the foundations of HRM. It may be viewed as an organisational mind-set or culture which employees are truly valued; a source of competitive advantage; an effectively integrated and enterprisewide set of sophisticated, technology enabled, evidence-based HRM policies and practices."

Many authors, such as Michaels et. al (2001), Tansley et al. (2006), Goffe and Jones (2007), describe talent as the exceptional characteristics that are demonstrated by individual employees. For example, Michaels et al. (2001, p. 12) considered talent as "the sum of a person's abilities-his or her intrinsic gifts, skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence…" Likewise, Tansley et al. (2006, p. 2) defined talent as "a complex amalgam o of employees' skills, knowledge, cognitive ability and potential".

TM in hospitality continues to attract attention in managerial practice and academic research (Claussen et al. 2014). This could be due to the fact that the hospitality industry has a poor reputation as a source of permanent employment, offering low pay, anti-social working hours and menial work (Wood 1995; Kusluvan and Kusluvan 2000; Baum 2008). Thus, talented employees are considered *"key determinants of service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty, competitive advantage and organisational performance"* (Kusluvan et al. 2010, p. 172), and TM plays an important strategic role in the success of a hospitality organisation. However, TM is very challenging, especially in the context of the hospitality industry in view of the problems faced by hospitality managers from an HRM perspective as discussed below.

The first challenge relates to the attraction, career development and retention of staff. These issues have long been identified as the hospitality industry's biggest challenges (Powell and Wood 1999). Cappelli and Keller (2014) argue that this is due to the highly labour intensive nature of the industry, especially in contexts where customer service expectations are high. Issues of organisational strategies on attraction, career development and retention of talented employees have remained major topics in the hospitality literature (Cappelli and Keller 2014). Focusing on TM practices evidences the importance hotels attach to intellectual capital; investment in TM practices helps retain high class specialists, developing careers which can provide a continuous pool of fresh talent for managerial positions (Collings and Mellahi 2009).

The second challenge is high labour turnover (Barron 2008). The hospitality industry is associated with long working hours, a stressful environment and job dissatisfaction, resulting in a high turnover which is costly and disruptive to hospitality organisations (O'Halloran 2012). Moreover, it could be argued that replacing employees is an expensive and time-consuming process which could lead to lower productivity in the interim. There have been a number of studies that have recognised that investment in high-performance work practices such as training, empowerment, rewards, selective staffing and teamwork motivates employees and reduces turnover intentions (Crick and Spencer 2011; Karatepe 2013).

The retention of talented employees is crucial to organisational success. They are the key to the hospitality organisation's competitive advantage. They improve performance and

profitability and make a measurable difference to the organisation. Moreover, hotels are aware that talent must be managed as a critical resource to achieve the best possible results. It is argued that talent is the leading indicator of whether a business is heading up or down (Conaty and Sharan 2010). Development Dimension International (DDI) (2013) claimed that hotels must have the best talent in order to succeed in the hypercompetitive and increasingly complex global economy. Most managers, at all levels, understand that today's talent helps the business grow and build a sustainable competitive advantage in the market. It is often argued that it is these talented employees who, in fact, make the crucial decisions which impact growth.

In the UK, the first TM study in hospitality is by Barron (2008), where the issues and challenges that the UK hospitality industry faced are explored. Later on, Watson (2008) primarily evaluated literature that addressed the development of the hospitality industry, as this is a major component of TM. The latest research on TM in hospitality (Deery and Jago 2015) examined employee retention through strategies such as maintaining work-life balance using Deery's (2008) framework for improving employee retention rates.

Contemporary interest in TM is grounded in exploring the experiences of individual employees in the hotel sector (Thunnissen et al. 2013, Panda and Sahoo 2015). These authors have laid the foundations of this line of inquiry, which is followed in this research paper. It is argued that the scope should be widened, from a narrow focus on HR practices, to a much broader perspective taking account of the personal needs, preferences and expectations of people working in the hotel sector. A workforce is made up of individuals who come with personal histories, aspirations and experiences and plans for career development within the hotel sector (Farndale et al. 2010). Understanding what attracts individuals to this sector and how personal career development is viewed may be a way forward for improving TM practices in hotels.

The lack of research that gives voice to individual employees excluded from the talent pool is surprising. Among the few studies Mäkelä et al. (2010); Collings and Mellahi (2009) posed a question of whether or not to inform individuals about their possible status of belonging to a

talent pool. They claimed that differential treatment of such employees in terms of career development and organisational support could be a sensitive matter. If the status of employees excluded from talent pool is made public, this may, for example, lead to frustration, lack of motivation and commitment. While the question has been posed of whether or not to inform individuals about their possible status as talent or not, there is no empirical research on the experiences of employees excluded from a talent pool. Also concerns were raised by Pfeffer (2001); Björkman et al. 2013; Swailes and Blackburn 2016). Pfeffer (2001) argued that the introduction of TM programmes that focus only on employees included in the talent pool leaves excluded employees demotivated, ready to quit and this can be hazardous for company's performance and productivity. Björkman et al. (2013) found that inclusion in the talent pool is perceived as a signal that the organisation values its employees and their career development. However, employees who are excluded from a talent pool are less likely to get organisational support and career development and will consider leaving the company. Finally, Swailes and Blackburn (2016) found that employees excluded from the talent pool had less support from their line managers, less access to career development which resulted in lower retention rates and higher turnover.

This paper will explore the experiences of employees excluded from a talent pool and will identify what career development is provided for them, thereby extending the literature on talent pool exclusion and drawing implications for TM practitioners.

Context

TM practices in hospitality organisations

In order to understand which elements of TM are the most beneficial for hospitality organisations we need to explore TM practices. There is an argument in the TM literature that TM practices form part of a broader and coherent system and core business process, matched to the business strategy (Meyers and van Woerkom 2013). Cappelli and Keller (2014); Hatum (2010); Collings and Mellahi (2009) claimed that TM practices can be subdivided into four main components: attraction, learning and development and succession planning.

Attraction

Collings and Mellahi (2009) argued that hospitality organisations invest their resources into the attraction of talented employees in order to sustain competitiveness. The demand for a talented workforce in the US and the UK is extremely high as it is considered to be the main economic driver for a company's successful development (ibid). Porter (2011) claims that most employee turnover can be minimised and prevented when an organisation builds up sound strategies on how to attract talented employees.

Hatum (2010) stressed the idea that in order to be successful in attracting a talented workforce a company needs to build its Employee Value Proposition (EVP). EVP creates sets of benefits that motivate talented employees to join and remain within the company. Browne (2012) argues that individual reward structures have stimulated the best attraction talent techniques. Moreover the higher the rewards offered to talented employees, the stronger the bond between them and the organisation (Schlechter et al. 2015).

Learning and development

The CIPD learning and development report (2014) stresses that the development of high-potential employees remains the most common objective of TM activities, particularly in the private services sector (39%), where job growth is strongest (and also the not-for-profit sector: 38%), rather than in the production and manufacturing sector (28%) or public sector (23%). Some hospitality organisations are less positive regarding the effectiveness of TM activities, although the overall trend has improved compared with 2012 and 2011. Nevertheless, just 7% of those with TM activities rate them as very effective, while 13% believe they are fairly ineffective (11%) or very ineffective (2%).

Campbell and Richardson (1983) argue that the learning and development of talented employees are simple activities to undertake in theory, however they are highly difficult to achieve in a hospitality organisation. Hatum (2010) argues that the training and development of talented employees is an important element in assuring service quality within the hospitality industry. Moreover, the training and development of experienced managers are critical. Paditporn and Verma (2003) claim that matching talent to the job roles presents a

challenge for HGMs. Due to changes in demographics, between 40 to 70 per cent of senior hotel managers will retire by 2020 and, therefore younger talents need to be developed (Fernandez-Araoz 2014).

As a part of learning and development strategy, hospitality organisations can utilise some strategic HR practices such as career development courses, staff training and coaching sessions to improve productivity, increase motivation and engagement of talented employees and form and an effective staffing system (Chen and Huang 2009).

Succession planning

Succession planning is another essential activity for hotels to consider. The planning of long-term strategies, aligned with organisational goals, is imperative (Eshiteti et al. 2013; Cappelli and Keller 2014). Eshiteti et al. (2013) describe succession planning as a complex of measures that aim at the identification and selection of future potential successors in hospitality organisations. They stress that succession planning is a structured analysis which penetrates hospitality organisations at all levels, involving searching for the right talented human capital, which can take over key positions and develop the right competencies. Heathfield (2016) claims that succession planning allows the identification of potential candidates within hotels based on their traits and competencies. It allows for developing a training schedule and assures that, once a person is promoted, the hotel is placing the right person in the right position.

Cannon and McGee (2007) remark that hospitality organisations predominantly focus on a small talent pool of top management when designing succession planning strategies. However it could be argued that other roles are equally important and therefore, identifying the key positions is likewise strategically and critically important. Pandey and Sharma (2014) identify factors that cannot be ignored when dealing with different levels of succession planning in hospitality organisations. Key factors include the organisation size, the culturally-embedded model and the budget that is procurable for succession planning. It is critical to consider succession planning at varying levels: top, middle and line management. Moreover,

it is argued that the style of succession planning is similarly essential in achieving higher results (Eshiteti et al. 2013).

Cappelli and Keller (2014) argue that succession planning is closely linked to job satisfaction of talented employees. Employees come to work to realise their objectives. They get job satisfaction to the extent that they realise these goals and reach their career targets. Talented employees show higher levels of job satisfaction, as companies invest in their career development, offer them promotional opportunities. Actually, succession planning is imperative for employees' career path. Talented employees move along the career path, and become more valuable to the organisation, advance their career and increase monetary rewards.

Talent pool: theoretical perspectives

The theoretical underpinning for this research comes from the management and career literature. It draws from the following theories: Super's theories of career choice and development (Super, 1957, 1981 and 1990), Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), (Lent et al. 1994, 2000, 2005) and Higgin's Regulatory Focus Theory (RFT) (Higgins et al. 1997, 1998).

There are three theories of career choice development that are applied to that research. Firstly, Super's theory of career choice and development (1957, 1981, and 1990) is key to understanding the career development of the cohort of employees under research. It offers a comprehensive framework which explains the process of career development. By applying this framework, individual employees can build their experience and skills which are essential to career development. In conclusion, Super's theory of career choice and development deepens our understanding of the process of career building and explains how individuals situate their work roles among their other life roles, and then use them to gain their career experiences and fulfil their personal career aspirations.

The second career theory under discussion, SCCT of Lent et al. (1994, 2000, 2005), focuses on several cognitive-person variables (e.g., self-efficacy, outcome, expectations, and goals),

and on how these variables interact with other aspects of the person and his or her environment to help shape the course of career development. Lent et al. (1994) partitioned SCCT into two complementary levels of theoretical analysis. The first level presented cognitive-person variables (self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals) that enable people to exercise personal control within their own career development. The second level of analysis considered the career paths through which particular learning experiences influence career-related interests and choice behaviour (Lent et al. 1994). Lent (2005, p 104) defined self-efficacy as —a dynamic set of beliefs that are linked to particular performance domains and activities. Self-efficacy expectation influences the adoption and maintenance of behaviour in response to barriers and difficulties. Lent (2005) suggests that of the four sources of information or learning experience, personal performance accomplishments have the most powerful influence on the status of self-efficacy. He further defines outcome expectations as personal beliefs about the outcomes of performing particular behaviours. Outcome expectations include beliefs about extrinsic reward associated with performing the target behaviour, self-directed consequences, and outcomes derived from task performance.

The third career theory to be explored is RFT by Higgins (1997, 1998). RFT concentrates on self-regulation toward desired end-states and proposes that people are guided by two distinct motivational systems: promotion focus and prevention focus (Higgins 1997). Promotion focus is founded on growth and advancement and reflects an approach of orientation and positive outcomes. In contrast, prevention focus concentrates on protection, safety, and security needs, and indicates an avoidance orientation. The presence and absence of negative outcomes are salient for people who are prevention-focused. That is, goals and standards that drive behaviours are associated with the absence of negative outcomes (Higgins 1998). Higgins (1997) proposes that people learn from interactions with others to regulate themselves in relation to promotion-focused ideals or in relation to prevention focused thoughts. Pursuing promotion goals means making good things happen in a positive-outcome-focused motivational state. A promotion orientation involves focusing on maximising positive outcomes regardless of the number of misses or errors (Higgins, 1998). As a result, the perception of progress toward a promotion goal results in happiness and joy, whereas lack of progress results in sadness and disappointment. In contrast, self-regulation with a prevention focus occurs in the service of a desired end-state as well but involves concerns over security, protection, and responsibility. Pursuing prevention goals means

keeping negative incidents from happening and negative-outcome-focused motivational state. A prevention orientation involves focusing on error avoidance. When an individual in a prevention state is successful in avoiding an undesired outcome, feelings of calm or relief are experienced (Higgins 1998).

The theory of career choice and development of Super (1957, 1984, 1990), SCCT of Lent et al. (1994, 2000, 2005) and the RTF of Higgins (1997, 1998) help to inform how we might consider career development in the hotel sector and contribute to an improved understanding of the career development of individual employees and their experiences working within the hotel sector.

Research Methods

Adopting narrative inquiry

To understand the experiences of employees excluded from the talent pool, this study adopts an inductive qualitative approach. As discussed earlier, employee perspectives of exclusion from the talent pool is under-represented within the TM and career literature. Given the focus on the experiences and feelings of employees, the narrative method is best suited to the research aim. Moen (2006) and Riessman (2008) highlight the three main characteristics of narrative inquiry: human beings organise their experiences of the world into narratives; stories that are told, depend on an individual's past or present experiences; there is a collaborative relationship between the researcher and their participants. To date, narrative inquiry has received little attention within the TM and career literature. Therefore, this study fills a methodological gap. One reason why this method has not appeared in the TM and career literature is that it is a difficult, time-consuming, and intensive, method (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006).

Data collection

Data collection was completed in two stages at a small hotel chain (four hotels) in the south of England. Between January and February 2015, company HRM documents were collected, in order to understand how TM is implemented from the organisational perspective. Access was granted by the Head Office of the company where the lead author was allowed to examine HRM documents, such as: induction forms for employees at all levels, probation and mid-probation questionnaires, appraisals of the staff at all levels, exit interviews, interviewing and selection of the candidates for a job, procedures for career development, retention policy, advertising for candidates, training and development needs in different departments. The gatekeepers were the Hotel Managers or the General Managers of all four hotels in the company. Being an employee of one of the hotels under exploration put the lead author in a favourable position. The Hotel Managers were keen to collaborate with him and offered their support to facilitate conducting the narrative interviews. Though the role of the interviewer as an existing employee in the research could be problematic in terms of possible pressure on interviewees to participate, their insider status was on balance to the benefit of the research in that it gave access to participants and to the organisational culture that would have been denied an outsider.

Between June and July 2015 narrative interviews were conducted with employees and managers of all four hotels in the company. 15 narrative interviews were conducted with eight employees and seven managers of different ages, nationality, gender, departments and experience to maximise variation. The subdivision into the managers' and employees' perspective was important for this research, as it helped to reveal differences and similarities in their personal career development.

Non-probability purposive sampling was adopted for the selection of participants in the research. As Polkinghorne (1988) claims, purposive sampling involves a deliberate selection of the individuals suitable for the research purposes. Cresswell et al. (2007) suggest that purposive sampling involves the researcher choosing the participants and the settings that allow them to address the research question. Purposive samples can be of different varieties, for example Patton (2002) outlined sixteen types of purposive samples—but the common element is that participants are selected according to predetermined criteria relevant to a particular research aim. Patton (1990, p.169) states that purposive sampling allows one ―to

select information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research.

The selection of participants was criterion based: Jones et al. (2013) identify this as a process whereby sampling criteria are formulated and the participants are chosen accordingly. The criteria were identified following the review of the initial body of research and were as follows: age, gender, hotel department, position, years of experience and nationality. These characteristics would better reflect the sample population needed to address the research question. For example, age and gender could impact on the employees' experience; different hotel departments and positions could experience TM practices differently; length of service might impact on the depth of knowledge of TM practices and nationality could influence the level of understanding. As Patton (2002) advised, maximum variation sampling is used to capture a wide range of perspectives relating to the topic that the researcher is interested in studying. The principle behind maximum variation sampling is to gain greater insights into a phenomenon by looking at it from all angles. The following table provides the participant profile:

Table: Participant profile

No.	Age	Gender	Hotel Department	Position	Years of experience
1	23	Female	Front of House	Receptionist	5
2	47	Male	Nights	Night Porter	5
3	55	Male	Restaurant	Restaurant Supervisor	12
4	35	Male	Nights	Night Porter	5
5	44	Male	Management	Deputy Hotel Manager	9
6	55	Male	Management	Hotel Manager	11
7	49	Male	Management	Hotel Manager	12
8	60	Male	Restaurant	Restaurant Manager	13
9	30	Female	Conference and Banqueting	C&B Manager	8
10	37	Male	Food and Beverage	F&B Supervisor	6
11	38	Male	Front of House	Reception Manager	7
12	29	Male	Conference and Banqueting	Guest Services	5
13	43	Female	Front of House	Receptionist	4
14	25	Male	Restaurant	Restaurant Assistant	5
15	45	Male	Kitchen	Head Executive Chef	13

Narrative interviewing was used as the method to get interviewees to recount their experiences. This method allows interviewees a greater voice and builds up the dialogue between the researcher and the participant (Guest et al. 2006).The researcher prepared a narrative interview guide with three broad topics: life as a hotel employee, understanding TM practices in hotels and personal career development in hotels. The three themes were developed from an inductive analysis of the data, and were identified as being relevant to talent management. Knowledge of the relevant literature and sector influenced the guide but the researcher was determined to remain open to new and unexpected information. The researcher was led by the participants throughout the interview, so that the latter had control of the interview process and related their story openly and freely. The interviews were terminated when the participants and the researcher were happy that their story and experiences had been fully recounted.

Interviews of between 1.5 to 3 hours in duration were digitally recorded and fully transcribed by the researcher. Data were analysed using the technique of thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) identify six phases in the process of conducting thematic analysis: familiarising and transcribing data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report. Stage one, took place immediately after the interviews. The transcription and reading and re-reading of data allowed the researcher to familiarise himself with the data. Later recurring words or phrases were highlighted and noted in the margins. During the second stage multicolour pens were used to highlight and label the codes. Once all the data were coded, similar codes were grouped together which led to the emergence of themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), themes generally identify a broader level of meaning than codes. Clusters of similar codes were grouped into potential themes and created a thematic analysis map. This allowed the researcher to visualise all the emerging themes which was useful in the further stages of the analysis. During stages four and five, the researcher reviewed the themes and determined the overarching themes. Once all the themes and sub-themes had been identified the researcher was ready for the final stage of writing the Findings and Analysis Chapters that afforded him to establish a complete story to be told from the participants' perspective and to understand the experiences of individual employees within the hotel sector, and the role of TM practices in their personal career development. The thematic analysis identified three overarching

themes, which formed the basis for each findings chapter: Life as a hotel employee, Understanding TM practices in hotels and Personal Career Development in hotels.

The sample size in narrative inquiry is normally small, due to the large amount of data that the researcher needs to analyse (Connelly and Clandinin 2006). Many authors, such as Sandelowski (1993), Bluff (1997) and Morse (2000) recommend the size of the sample to be established inductively in that sampling continues until data saturation occurs. Saturation in fact, has become a gold standard, by which purposive sample sizes are determined in qualitative research (Morse 2000). There is no cap on how many participants should take part in the research, as long as the needed information is obtained (Morse 2000). Seidler (1974) suggests that for data to be reliable, the minimum size of purposively selected participants is five. However, often, a sample size is initially projected but remains fluid throughout the research process (Guest et al. 2006). In this research 15 participants were interviewed. Saturation was reached by the 15th in-depth interview. As stated by Guest et al. (2006), saturation in narrative research is a fluid concept, because, while stories are expected to have some common themes, each storyteller and thus each story, is unique. Even so, an intensive study by Guest et al. (2006) showed that 92 per cent of their total thematic codes emerged by the 12th interview.

Findings

Life as a hotel employee

This chapter explores the life of a hotel employee. As a context chapter, it sets the scene and allows the reader to understand how the process of being a hotel employee is shaped by work-life balance and job satisfaction. As Jones et al. (2013) state, contextualisation in qualitative research is very important in order to locate and understand the data presented in the analysis.

Work-Life Balance

Employees' perspective on work-life balance

The issue of WLB was raised by the participants. Some participants confessed that it was extremely difficult to achieve a proper WLB in hotels due to stress, unsociable hours and exhaustion. Certain hotel departments seemed to have more of an impact on WLB. For example work rotas were a critical issue for participants working in the restaurant, F&B and housekeeping departments. Soli (Restaurant Supervisor at Hotel B) had this to say with regards to WLB in the F&B department:

"I enjoy more my hospitality work, where you are always with people and cater for their needs. I remember, when I just started my career, I worked part-time. However, now that I work full-time in the F&B department, it is not easy to balance my job with my life and spare time... When most people are off, I have to go to work."

The above narrative revealed that employees who failed to attain WLB had high levels of stress and exhaustion. Deery and Jago (2015) tested the effects of such variables on job embeddedness and job performance and found that those employees with heavy workloads had a low WLB and tended to underperform. Stress and emotional exhaustion are found to impact on the quality of life for hotel employees (Chiang et al. 2010), as demonstrated by Soil's experience.

Managers' perspective on work-life balance

The study revealed that the culture of long working hours in the hospitality industry is so typical that many managers see it as the norm and rarely question it.

Interestingly, Andy (Hotel Manager at Hotel B) highlighted that WLB was difficult to achieve in the hospitality industry. He emphasised that being a Hotel Manager had an adverse impact on his personal life:

"Obviously, I wanted a career in hospitality from the beginning. However, sometimes, it is very difficult to balance work and my free time out of the hotel. It is mostly work without having free time for you. Even when I am at home I expect phone calls from work when emergencies occur in my hotel. So there is no work-life balance whatsoever! No proper family life for me, as I am always at the hotel, even on my days off."

It is evident that maintaining WLB is a critical issue in all service industries. However, Andy emphasised that hotel work in particular is very laborious and could lead to work and family conflicts. Andy's narrative supported the literature and highlights the fact that employees

entering the workforce today are putting more emphasis on the importance of WLB than their predecessors and are more aware of the need to balance responsibilities at work and at home.

Getting job satisfaction

The study found that job involvement, promotions, rewards, perks, benefits and career progression had a positive impact on employees' job satisfaction.

Employees' perspective on job satisfaction

Participants revealed the importance of job satisfaction in hotels. Katia (Receptionist at Hotel A) recalled how her job involvement invigorated her job satisfaction.

"I started working in hospitality in the restaurant. I did enjoy the fact of dealing with guests and solving problems. Then I moved to a leisure club, something different, not a lot of customers at the same time… I moved then to the bar, which I loved a lot. At the end I can say that I am satisfied with my job, as I do what I really love!"

It is evident from the above quotation that job involvement has a positive impact on job satisfaction. Katia highlighted that obtaining new knowledge enabled her to increase her productivity. As noted by Zopiatis et al. (2014) job involvement is an active participation in one's job, or the degree to which employees are actively engaged in it, in order to fulfil their intrinsic needs.

Managers' perspective on job satisfaction

David (Hotel Manager at Hotel C) admitted that he started his career with a set goal for career advancement. He highlighted that career progression gave him the best job satisfaction, as he recalled in his narrative account:

"But you need something to start with in the hospitality industry. I started as a waiter, later on, in about 2 years' time I moved on to Headwaiter. I had lots of training and finally experience to handle this job. …So slowly, but surely I was going up the career ladder. My salary was getting higher and higher! In 5 years' time when the opportunity arose I was promoted to Hotel Manager. All my promotions gave me great job satisfaction!"

Similarly to the employees, career progression impacted on managers' job satisfaction. David was moved when he spoke about his various promotions, revealing that his job satisfaction increased with each promotion.

Understanding TM practices in hotels

Within their individual narratives, all participants reflected on the distance travelled since their initial introduction to the hospitality industry and identified that their career journey in hospitality demanded time, commitment and determination. This chapter will analyse the TM practices that emerged as sub-themes in the study namely: Belonging to a talent pool and Staying or leaving a job

Belonging to a talent pool

This study found that employees who were not considered part of a talent pool showed an intention to leave the organisation. As Pfeffer (2001) argued, the introduction of TM and the focus on a minority can lead to a backlash among excluded employees even if, as Björkman et al. (2013) found, employees included in talent pools are more likely to accept increasing performance demands, are more committed to skill development, and to the organisation's strategic priorities.

Employees' perspective

The following section identifies employees' responses to being included in or excluded from the talent pool, using individual narratives to illustrate their feelings.

Career opportunities

Participants revealed that belonging to a talent pool was crucial, as they it offers better career development opportunities, career progression and succession planning.

Costa (Night Porter) highlighted that it was essential that an employee belonged to a talent pool. He revealed that there were numerous talent pools in the hotel where he worked:

"I believe it is important to know that you belong to the talent pool in the hotel. I know exactly what the management expect from me. Talents, who are included in the talent pools, are created at work and make the business, run smoothly and efficiently. A person, who is aware that he is considered as part of a talent pool will work harder and will be an example

to others. He can also get better career development and opportunities for growth in the hotel!"

The above extract emphasised the importance of belonging to a talent pool for hotel employees in terms of career opportunities and career growth. Costa emphasised that workplace challenges were the primary factor in his motivation. Costa highlighted that being recognised and developed is a powerful source of intrinsic motivation.

Feeling of frustration

The study revealed that some participants felt excluded from the talent pool. Exclusion can be defined as suppressing opportunities to flourish or to express individual identity and authenticity (Swailes and Blackburn 2016). The effects of exclusion in the name of boosting organisational performance can pose an ethical problem. Exclusion from a talent pool is dehumanising to the extent that it denies individuality (Haslam 2006), and could lead to underperformance. Martin (Guest Services Supervisor) verbalised his concerns about talent pools in hotels:

"Sometimes I feel that it's not fair to tell some employees that they belong to the talent pool. It means that they have more career growth, opportunities for development. On the other hand, the others feel depressed and demotivated. That's what happened to me, I do not feel that I need to go to work anymore..."

The open and secure environment of the interviews enabled this participant to vent his frustrations about feeling ostracised at work. Research on the effects of differentiation is a recent phenomenon. Whilst Björkman et al. (2013) find that employees in talent pools are more likely to have more positive attitudes on a range of factors, Marescaux et al. (2012) argue that these are offset by the reactions of employees with less favourable views. This finding would suggest that a targeted selective approach to talent management impacts on excluded employees' motivation to stay in the organisation and a planned strategy should be in place to support employees like Martin to mitigate negative effects.

Lack of fairness

Katia (Receptionist) expressed similar feelings of frustration at being excluded from the talent pool at the beginning. She felt it unfair and unethical to inform employees that they were not part of the talent pool:

"I felt very angry and frustrated to know that I am not part of the talent pool and my performance is not really valued. What rubbish! What do they think, they believe that only talented staff can make the company grow? I do not think so. It is a joined effort of all employees, of course. I think that it is not ethical to let me know that I am not a part of the talent pool. Since that day, I didn't want to come to work. Later on, the management had a couple meetings with me and offered me a development plan in order to become a part of the talent pool of the hotel. That cheered me up a lot!"

The above excerpt highlighted the negative effects of exclusion but also the TM strategy management used to support Katia to progress her career. Younger and Smallwood (2007) and Björkman et al. (2013) claim that in order to minimise adverse outcomes, it is important, that organisations consider aspects of workforce democracy when evaluating the impact and effectiveness of planned talent pool programmes. The above extract revealed the importance of understanding how employees who fall outside the talent pools felt about their exclusion.

Managers' perspective

The role of the manager in identifying talent pools

Neil (Deputy Hotel Manager) revealed that managers in hotels were responsible for finding employees to join the talent pool:

"From my personal career experience in hospitality people are not equal; the challenge is for the manager is to tap into what the person is good at. For example, we can have a Chef, who has got a fantastic personality, who could be amazing on the floor, but likes to be in the kitchen and doesn't want to step out... So, the hotel manager needs to find the stars in his department and let them shine."

The above account emphasises the need for the management team to identify talented employees to join the talent pool. This is described by Tansley et al. (2007 p.8) as an exclusive approach which is based on the notion of the segmentation of employees, on individuals who "can make a difference to organisational performance, either through their immediate contribution or in the longer-term by demonstrating the highest levels of potential."

Similar to Neil, Joseph (Restaurant Manager) recalled from his personal experience of being a manager that having talent in the company was crucial. He emphasised that those employees, who belonged to the talent pool displayed a high quality service to hotel guests:

"For me talented staff in hotels is the key. Talent is having a flare to be able to do something, being good at something, have that natural ability. I have numerous examples of talented staff in my hotel. Naturally the talented employee is my senior duty manager. Also my F&B manager and restaurant manager have all the skills required to be the top leaders...I believe you naturally have talent for hospitality or you do not have a talent. If I see someone is naturally talented, that is a tick box, I will hire them straight away and allow them to lead their teams in order to improve the service and bring more revenue to the company."

The above extract highlighted the need for talented employees in hotels. Joseph revealed that his managers in different hotel departments belonged to the talent pool. We can see from his repetition of the words *"talented employees"* that Joseph believes that naturally talented staff in managerial positions helps to improve productivity and successful business development in hotels.

Talent segmentation

Mark (Head Chef) emphasised that the hotel where he worked had a number of talent pools, without which the company would not be successful. He also highlighted that some talented staff could lead their departments:

"We have a talent pool at the bar and F&B talent pool. Some of them are our rising stars, who just started to shine... Others are well-established talents, who are considered the backbone of our hotel. Without them the business will not survive! I want all our managers to become strategic assets. It is all about getting results and management is not about keeping people happy. It is a combination: you need to have a vision, and you need to know who is going to be with you. But you need to know how to manage people, who are going to be with you."

Mark revealed that segmentation was the foundation of a more predictable, scalable and proactive company. Betchoo (2014) claims that there is a direct link between talent and leadership in hotels. He emphasises that leadership makes a major contribution to contemporary TM. The importance of having the right leadership in the organisation is highly

important (Koyuncu et al. 2014). Leaders have a key role to play in business output and performance and productivity.

Staying or leaving a job

The study revealed that employees' retention and turnover intentions depended on whether they belonged to a talent pool, managerial support, job satisfaction and training and development courses offered by the hotels. As noted by Deery and Jago (2015), retaining good staff in the hospitality industry is a constant source of concern for practitioners and hospitality academics.

Employees' perspective

Lack of support

Participants observed that a lack of support and exclusion from a talent pool increased frustration and had a negative impact on retention. During the interview, James (Restaurant Assistant at Hotel C) became visibly agitated when recounting an experience that led to a frustration that was very difficult to contain:

"There was a very busy morning at reception in our hotel. They had 33 check outs to do and after that to sort out some guest complaints as it happen in the morning. After that we had a busy afternoon. The reception supervisor Agi found out that the housekeeping staff gets more money than a supervisor in reception. She asked the Hotel Manager to increase her wage, as she has worked at reception for 3 years. She was shocked that his reply was: ─You are not good enough to pay you more! I remember her tears and frustration. The same day she walked out... Other receptionists found out what happened. All of them were good friends of Agi and the next day in solidarity with her they decided to quit."

This account highlights that mismanagement, exclusion from a talent pool and a lack of support exacerbates turnover. James' frustration with management was palpable. The failure to manage staff properly led to a massive walkout which significantly impacted on employees.

Managers' perspective

Arianne (C&B Manager at Hotel B) placed importance on WLB in the retention of staff. She recalled how having WLB influenced her own intention to stay in the company. She became

very agitated when recounting her story. Sometimes she had to pause to recall facts, which made her story vivid and sincere:

"I know that the staff feels happy when they have some social life after they finished their work. It is a great art to find time for the social life when you work in hotels... As for me, I find it difficult sometimes to balance my work and spare time... Last year my baby daughter was born, and the company wanted to help me. First of all I was given flexible working hours, so I could look after my daughter. Later on all the staff voted for me to be the best employee of the year! Oh, my God, that was emotional...I feel that the company gives me a lot!"

The above extract highlights the importance that hotel employees place on having WLB. Those who enjoy a WLB are better able to manage work and family and are more satisfied and therefore more inclined to stay.

Personal Career Development in hotels

The final findings chapter concentrates on participants' personal career development in hotels. This chapter will discuss the various aspects that allowed participants to build a career in hotels and achieve their ambition of a dream career. The chapter consists of the following sub-themes: engaging in career development courses and getting promoted.

Engaging in career development courses

The study found that most participants were engaged in career development courses to master skills and gain in-depth practical industry-related knowledge. However, for those who were not part of the talent pool, career development courses were not always offered by the company.

Employees' perspective

The study identified that internal and external career development courses are offered to employees. For Katia (Receptionist at Hotel B), participation in career development courses was essential in terms of her individual career advancement in hotels. However, she recalls career development courses were only available for employees who are considered future potentials in the company:

"Career development courses played a crucial role in my future career! They helped me to get practical knowledge and skills for my job. However, I had lots of trouble in getting management support in order to enrol for those courses. My manager said that they were provided only for managerial staff and he was not willing to support me. I was about to resign and then he agreed to send me for some..."

This extract demonstrates the positive impact career development courses can have on individual careers. It is important that they are provided for all employees in the company. Katia highlighted an improvement in self-confidence because of increased knowledge and better performance. Karatape et al. (2007) suggest that increased confidence improves job related outcomes through self-efficacy.

Managers' perspective

In his narrative, David (Hotel Manager at Hotel C) recalled how career development courses benefited his own career advancement. However, he highlighted that the company was reluctant to invest in some courses as they were expensive to run:

"Of course, in order to reach for the top in my career I have done lots of career related courses. I had an extensive wine training when I was a Head Waiter in the Hilton Hotel. Later on, I had my Liqueur Licence done, moving on I had First Aid and NVQs 4 and 5 in Customer service... Sometimes the company doesn't want to pay for the course, as it is very expensive. That's what happened to the First Aid Extensive Course! The outsourcing company asked us to pay £ 900 for the course for 10 people. So, the management decided to call off that course."

The above extract highlights that managers of the company under exploration acknowledge support external courses because they are critical for managers' individual career advancement, but, interestingly, David was keen to reveal that sometimes because of budgets the company revoked the course. Indeed, hospitality organisations are particularly likely to favour internal over external activities, presumably due to economies of scale (CIPD 2014).

Getting promoted

Participants highlighted that the company provides career advancement opportunities which impacts on their level of career satisfaction. Briggs et al. (2011) comment that conditions of employment such as wages, benefits and the work environment are extremely important for most hotel employees. Promotions are used to motivate and reward employees for performance and achievements resulting in increased salaries and job enrichment. However, promotions are not always the option for the employees excluded from a talent pool.

Employees' perspective

Didier (Receptionist at Hotel D) recalls how his promotion to Head Receptionist of Hotel D was the pinnacle of his career development journey. However, he highlighted that he felt ostracised to start with, because the management didn't consider him a future potential in the company:

To start with I worked as a receptionist in France. Then I moved to the UK...It was a big career journey, where I had to learn lots of things, get the understanding of the essence of business... At first I felt that nobody cared about my career development, no help was given whatsoever... I was about to leave the company and only then management offered me a career development course, which led to my promotion...When I had my promotion, I started to receive more benefits, bigger wages as well. My colleagues believed in me and approached me with respect ..."

As a result of promotion, Didier had financial rewards and recognition from his colleagues. As highlighted by Ineson et al. (2013), hotel employees are motivated mostly by promotion and financial gains.

Managers' perspective

Arianne (C&B Manager at Hotel B) concurs that job promotion increased her career satisfaction and impacted on her career development:

"The job promotion is very important for me, as I don't want to stop on what I achieved and want to become a C&B Group Manager in the near future, when possibility arises. When I was promoted to C&B Manager lots of opportunities came my way. I was getting lots of support from the hotel manager. I was given more room for development."

This excerpt stresses the importance of managerial support. Arianne expanded on the positive impact of promotion on her career satisfaction and her intention to remain in the company. As noted by Kwon and Milgrom (2014), hotels enhance the career satisfaction of their employees by engaging in effective career management activities, such as job rotation schemes, which are positively related to career satisfaction (Kong et al. 2012).

Limitations of the research

This study has a number of limitations including closeness to participants. Participation might have been limited due the fact that the researcher was known to the participants. Though reassurances were given about confidentiality, some employees would not take part due to fear of identification. Moreover this could also have had an impact on the narrative as participants might have not contributed as openly for fear of retribution. In addition closeness to the participants as part of narrative research may have affected author's subjectivity and biases and could have influenced the results.

The study was conducted in a chain of hotels where TM strategies are one of the key priorities in the organisation. The results might have been different in hotels where TM strategies are less formal and talent pool segmentation is not clearly identified.

Language barrier was one of the main limitations of this study. For the majority of the staff English is their second language. Their backgrounds varied from Egyptian, Portuguese and French to Italian, Polish and Latvian. Some of the questions were lost in translation. This issue of language and translation was raised by Kapborg and Berterö (2002), Squires (2009) and Walker and Dung (2016). During narrative interviews if something was not clear the author acted as an interpreter. This therefore could have influenced some of the responses and thus data quality could have been affected.

Contribution and implications

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of employees excluded from a talent pool and to identify what career development is provided for them. In order to accomplish the goals of the study 15 narrative interviews were conducted with eight employees and seven managers. Overall, the findings of this study contributes to existing literature on talent pool inclusion and exclusion raised by Pfeffer (2001); Björkman et al. (2013); Swailes and Blackburn (2016). It extends the knowledge by establishing a complete story told from the participants' perspective using narrative inquiry. It improves the understanding of the experiences of individual employees within the hotel sector, and the role of TM practices in their personal career development.

Methodological implication

This research adopts narrative inquiry for its understanding of the experiences of employees in the hotel sector, and the effects of TM practices on personal career development. Narrative interviewing is used in this context for the first time. To date, this has never been done before within the TM and career literature. By adopting this methodology, this study offers valuable and rare insights into the experience of employees in the hotel sector, and their views of personal career development. The major contribution lies in the depth of insight gained through the narrative approach, which centres on the unique and subjective accounts of individual employees.

Theoretical implication

The theories that underpin this research come from the management and career literature. However, these theories operate in silos within the management and career domains. Therefore, the theoretical contribution of this research is in the elaboration of the intersection of the latter theories, which allow for the understanding of the career development of individual employees, which could offer a way to inform and improve TM practices for mutual benefit. The researcher posits that by exploring both TM and career development, the research provides an in-depth insight into the experiences of individual employees and enhances understanding of the role TM practices play in personal career development.

Managerial implications

Firstly, for practitioners in the field, the results of this study indicate a significant need for a TM strategy for hotel employees. The study shows that talent pool optimisation needs to be implemented in order to maximise talent engagement and performance. Furthermore, no one should be disconnected from the talent agenda. Consistency in talent pool identification can bring positive results and reinforce employees' motivation, commitment and engagement. The findings suggest that succession planning needs to be done at all levels in a company to allow managers to identify the best employees for successful career development and ensure leadership continuity.

Secondly, the findings suggest that TM practices have direct implications for the personal career development of individual hotel employees. The implications of these are manifold.

The career landscape is characterised by two perspectives: employees' and managers'. From the employees' perspective, TM allowed individual employees to maintain their future competitiveness, create definite career paths and make long-term commitments. The study provides evidence that TM practices stimulate individual career growth, professional satisfaction, motivation, engagement, job security and make the individual feel highly valued by the company. From the managers' perspective, TM practices enable managers to successfully recruit, retain and develop their staff.

Thirdly, the findings suggest that successful career development strategy has a positive effect in the workforce, increasing job satisfaction and enhanced organisational loyalty, which in turn result in lower employee turnover and complaints. Furthermore, the study revealed that promotions open new career opportunities for employees and managers.

Finally, the findings from this study allow practitioners an improved understanding of what employees want from a career in hotels and how TM practices can influence the individual careers of employees. It is envisaged that the findings could be used to influence training broadly in the hospitality industry.

Conclusions

The Findings reveal that employees who were excluded from the talent pool experienced feelings of frustration and had an intention to leave the organisation. The study also found that the managers' role was significant in recognising talented employees and emphasised that talent pool segmentation allowed managers to improve performance and productivity. The study shows the importance of understanding the impact of talent pool exclusion on the workforce, supporting the works of Björkman et al. (2013) and Swailes (2013), who report that exclusion can be read as suppressing opportunities to flourish or to express individual identity and authenticity. The findings emphasise that talent pool segmentation allows managers to subdivide the broader employee population into groups of individuals who brought unique skills, knowledge, experiences and capabilities to the company under exploration. The suggestion here is that a clear understanding of the experiences of employees excluded from the talent pool will help hotel managers to build effective TM strategies, and provide career development in order to minimise adverse reactions and improve commitment and motivation.

Recommendations for further research

It is suggested that the results of this study could help to inform or extend research on TM practices across a variety of settings, specifically, for example, through developing an understanding of the experiences of individual employees and the role of TM practices in personal career development in different sectors. For example, building upon research on TM practices in banking (for example, Dhanabhakyam and Kokilambal 2014), construction (for example, FMI 2007; Agency central report 2014); real estate (for example Phillips and Roper 2009) and retail (for example Bersin and Associates 2014; Harty 2016).

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