

Research in Focus

Universities: A Talent Pipeline for Ontario Organizations?

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ABSTRACT

Two studies shed light on organizations' talent management strategies and how PSE can support organizational success. Study 1 explored human resources (HR) professionals' perspectives towards talent, including the strategies their organizations use to recruit, develop, and retain exceptionally talented people, and the role(s) that PSE can play in supporting talent management programs. Results suggested that talent is a multi-faceted concept comprised of work-readiness, "potential", and self-direction. Talent management practices may be linked with organizational challenges. Work-integrated learning (WIL) and other forms of experiential education (EE) featured prominently in participants' vision for the contribution of PSE to organizations' talent management. Study 2 analyzed a large data set of job postings in the University of Waterloo cooperative education (co-op) system. Results from Study 2 showed that the contents of job advertisements across three selected programs have not changed over the course of a 10 year period, but that job advertisements differ substantially between the most and least popular jobs (in terms of applicant data). Together, these studies suggest that descriptions of talent may be multidimensional and consistent across time. Further, these findings provide several practical implications for PSE and directions for future research which are discussed within.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Study 1:
 - Organizations are facing three over-arching talent management challenges: changing conditions (e.g., expansion, retirements), lack of resources, and poor organizational image
 - Human resources managers' descriptions of talent involve three pieces: work-readiness (previous experience and skills), potential (fit with the organization, interest in the organization and its work, and learning potential), and self-direction
 - Talent management challenges and descriptions of talent appear to be connected with each other and with talent management practices involved in recruitment/selection, development, and retention
 - There is substantial opportunity to increase integration between work and study through repositioning employers' roles in experiential and work-integrated education
- Study 2
 - Words/phrases present in cooperative education job advertisements today are similar to those used a decade previous
 - There are noticeable differences re: words/phrases present in popular job advertisements vs. less popular ones, suggesting that there are pieces of information to which students respond more and less favourably when reviewing a job advertisement

FINDINGS (OPTIONAL)

(see previous page)

METHODOLOGY

Two studies shed light on organizations' talent management strategies and how PSE can support organizational success. Study 1: Semi-structured interviews explored human resources professionals' definitions of talent, talent management challenges and practices, and perspectives regarding how PSE can support organizations' "talent pipelines". Study 2: A novel methodology for parsing and analyzing "big data" was used to compare popular words/phrases in cooperative education job advertisements from 2004 and 2014 for selected academic programs.

IMPLICATIONS

Industry does not view talent as a homogenous concept. Rather, organizations adopt a particular view towards talent (and an associated set of practices for recruit and harness that type of talent) based on related organizational talent management challenges. PSE therefore should continue to explore ways of creating opportunities for students to develop several aspects of talent.

There are several opportunities to improve the quality of work-integrated and experiential education programs in ways that create mutual value for students, employers, and institutions.

Employers who seek to recruit talented students should carefully consider the content of their job advertisements. In particular, they may want to embrace a larger view about talent that is not limited to descriptions of specific skills necessary to complete job-related tasks.