

# **Global Talent Management During Times of Uncertainty**

# Talent Management

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# Global Talent Management During Times of Uncertainty

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# Foreword

**Talent Management** is a series of books edited and authored by some of the best and most renowned researchers in the field of talent management. As its name suggests, this Emerald series focuses on talent management, one of the fastest growing areas of research in the areas of business and management. As a topic, it bridges a number of core management areas, including human resource management, organisational psychology, strategy and international business. The series features monographs and edited collections exploring both research and practical perspectives on contemporary talent management. The main aim of the series is to provide a forum for the publication of novel perspectives on talent and talent management from across disciplinary divides. It also provides the opportunity to explore new and innovative issues and topics in this area in greater depth.

This Emerald series, **Talent Management**, is intended to serve the growing market of global scholars and practitioners who seek a deeper and broader understanding of the role and importance of talent management in organisations. The series focuses on key areas of talent management practice as well as analyses at different levels from individual to societal. With this in mind, all books in the series provide a thorough review of existing research and multiple examples of companies around the world, wherever applicable. Given the nature of the subject at hand, the authors and editors of the books are global in their scope and the leading scholars in their respective areas. They bring exceptional knowledge of, and expertise in, the issues of talent management they address, and in some instances, the authors are the forerunners of their topics. We feel very fortunate to have such a distinguished group of academics involved in this series.

The sixth book in the series, entitled *Global Talent Management During Times of Uncertainty*, adopts a macrolevel lens to explore various challenges for global talent management (GTM) and International HRM (IHRM) activities that support GTM in times of crisis and uncertainty. Ably stewarded by editors Francine Schlosser and Deborah McPhee, the contributions to this volume take a thorough look at the current socio-political and socio-economic challenges that are pertinent to future research in the IHRM and GTM fields. The editors and authors explore some salient questions related to, among others, the individual, organisational and macrocontextual challenges to talent management in the present and future, the role of different stakeholders, such as corporate leaders, governments and universities in shaping talent management, and the type of talent management efforts required in the post-pandemic environment.

It goes without saying that the publisher and editor are vital partners in making this series possible. In particular, we would like to express our sincere gratitude for the work of our former series editors, Niall Kennedy and David Mulvaney, as well as the current editor, Nick Wallwork. They have been very encouraging of the **Talent Management** series and instrumental in providing the necessary support to us and the authors and editors in the series. Together we are all very excited about the **Talent Management** series and hope you find an opportunity to use and benefit from *Global Talent Management During Times of Uncertainty*, as well as all other published and upcoming books in the series!

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April 2022

# Introduction

*Francine Schlosser and Deborah M. McPhee*

In the past decade, global talent management (GTM) has emerged as a central theme in International Human Resource Management (IHRM) research (Collings & Isichei, 2018). GTM, in the context of this discussion, ‘refers to the pool of high potential and high performing incumbents that the organisation can draw upon to fill pivotal talent positions’ (Collings & Mellahi, 2009, p. 307), framed globally. Much of the literature has focused on micro- or macro-level drivers of GTM systems (Collings, Mellahi, & Cascio, 2019). Hence, IHRM is influenced by its macrodrivers, specifically significant socio-political and socio-economic changes and crises related to economy and national culture (e.g. Vaiman, Sparrow, Schuler, & Collings, 2018), which have spilled over to affect microlevel drivers at the organisational level. For example, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are continuing, even as a ‘post-pandemic’ approach sets in. There is a growing recognition of the subversive influence of disinformation on decision-making at all levels. Finally, the Ukraine-Russian war has exponentially increased levels of global uncertainty and migration. These events have driven an uncertain context in which IHRM and other talent managers are challenged at the microlevel. Such a context of uncertainty is defined as ‘ambiguity about the outcomes of various actions, when the situation is unpredictable and when information is inconsistent or unavailable’ (Brashers, 2001 in Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006, p. 629). IHRM must reduce or manage uncertainty that is created by an increasingly mobile global talent workforce, embodied in skilled international migrants (Crowley-Henry & Al Ariss, 2018) and in emerging norms of distributed and work-from home necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns (Boland, De Smet, Palter, & Sanghvi, 2020). While there are a multitude of global issues at play at any given time, both COVID-19 and the recent war have made the ‘war on talent’ more critical and more pronounced, raising concerns for uncertainty in the talent arena.

Much of this uncertainty can influence IHRM, and by extension GTM. This creates a need for research to be conducted on the meaning of GTM within this context because disruptions that cause uncertainty, which then can affect efforts to recruit, select and maintain talent. Accordingly, using a macrolevel lens, our research explores the exogenous and endogenous challenges for GTM (Tarique &

Schuler, 2010) and IHRM activities that support GTM during times of crisis leading to uncertainty in many facets in the economy, and on a global scale. This volume will consider the current socio-political and socio-economic challenges that are pertinent to future research in the IHRM and GTM fields. In particular, we are interested in finding out more about these questions: What are the individual, organisational, and macrocontextual challenges to talent management in the present and future, and how can these be overcome? We connect and synergise several topical areas and reflect upon the lasting legacies of both socio-economic and socio-political trends. We also broadly examine: What is the role of stakeholders such as corporate leaders, governments, and universities in shaping talent management? How is it possible to take their interests into account? Papers in this global volume are written from diverse cultural perspectives and geographic contexts, including Canada, Brazil, Ukraine, Russia, Finland, Norway, Denmark, India, China, United States, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. The chapters also draw from different disciplines, and include a more eclectic view of different industries and functionalities than is typically considered in prior TM research.

The first section of the book explores uncertain contexts related to socio-political change. GTM practices can mitigate such contextual uncertainties, through heightened understanding of relevant actors and environmental factors. We investigate how national policies and social changes influence the attraction, management, and retention of mobile talent. We examine how the information flows into corporations are impacted by multiple business environments (BE) and by data reduction and disinformation within these environments. Leadership lessons are learned from military experts as leaders might lead globally based talent through dynamic and often unanticipated events. We map the relationship between political city initiatives and organisational talent management practice and outline new routes for a shared regional talent management approach including creative or smart city experiments around the world and more proactive city and employer branding. The phenomenon of transferring GTM practices within MNEs is examined through a lens of perceived organisational justice. Further, we explain why GTM practices employed broadly across the MNE may not work effectively in a local context.

The second section of the book explores uncertain contexts related to socio-economic change, including how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected GTM. We discuss global high-tech talent and a requisite differentiated approach to high-tech talent management under conditions of heightened uncertainty. There is a need to include sustainability when we discuss talent management from a global perspective, otherwise the GTM war will act as one more factor to deepen economic inequalities. For example, how might adopted countries and organisations fully utilise strong GTM practices to capitalise on the prior experience levels of edu-immigrants? Alternatively, how might host countries and organisations stem the flow of highly skilled workers from developing nations to more developed countries? What type of GTM is required to retain experienced nursing professionals in a continuing post-COVID war on nursing talent? Next, we discuss the content and positioning of each chapter in this volume.

## **GTM and Uncertainty: Socio-political Change**

We begin the volume by exploring uncertain contexts related to socio-political change. More recent global issues have arisen out of political unrest that may have lasting effects on employment relationships. Building on real world examples and on prior literature, we examine how national policies and social changes influence the attraction, management and retention of mobile talent.

In Chapter 1, Ali AbdulHussein examines an emerging area of interest: the way that organisations seek out and assimilate contextual information to minimise uncertainty. During times where information is being questioned for authenticity, the chapter considers sources of disinformation that can create even more uncertainty in GTM. For example, when engaging in GTM activities, senior and HR administration staff must consider external factors such as cultural and regulatory factors, in the nation where the organisation operates. This consideration represents an information flow from the external world into the decision-making body of the organisation. Disinformation can impact this information flow and influence decision-making. A provided framework sheds light on how disinformation can impact GTM activities, particularly in terms of firm reputation which can impact on talent sourcing. This issue is significant for understanding the relationship between the increasingly important area of research on disinformation as well as the literature theorising sources of uncertainty in GTM.

In Chapter 2, Andrei Kuznetsov and Olga Kuznetsova offer examples from the Russian business environment to illustrate the complexity of contextualisation and implications for talent discovery. The Russian labour market embodies many features and contradictions characteristic of emerging market economies, including high-uncertainty business conditions and eccentric business practices. The war with Ukraine has posed significant challenges to the retention of GT within Russia and upended many MNEs. When talent is globally dispersed, as is the case with GTM, the process of talent discovery requires MNEs to process information generated within multiple BE. This results in GTM facing multiple contextual uncertainties, which can be reduced if a better and more profound understanding of the relevant BE is achieved. However, such understanding does not happen without effort and is fraught with difficulty: some important clues may be lost because of data reduction during the communication process or because the analytical instruments used to examine, measure, and define information might be missing or inadequate.

In Chapter 3, Peter A. Voyer builds upon his own military experience and provides practical guidelines upon which leaders can (and should) rely when managing global talent in uncertain times. IHRM in organisations can learn from institutions that have built up centuries of knowledge in a broad contextual setting of leading through turbulence, crisis, or disaster. This uncertain context might be caused by a variety of antecedent causes including major/macroevents (e.g. a global pandemic) or even more microevents (e.g. a brand-related crisis, a ransomware attack or computer system crash). For those whose responsibility it is to manage global talent, these anxiety-inducing situations can serve to compromise their focus and managerial effectiveness.

In Chapter 4, Torben Anderson and Erling Rasmussen, discuss the factors that affect talent flows at the municipal level. In particular, they argue that cities can act to attract and retain skilled globally mobile talent. They compare and contrast the ‘amenities’ versus the ‘jobs’ hypotheses and reflect on the socio-political ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic for talent attraction and retention at the regional or municipal level. The chapter provides examples from Canada, New Zealand, and Denmark where talent mobility differs from mainstream assumptions, by mapping the relationship between political city initiatives and organisational talent management practices, such as outlining new routes for a regional talent management approach. Such a relationship between political city initiatives and organisational talent management practice creates potential for a shared regional talent management approach.

### **GTM and Uncertainty: Socio-economic Change**

In the second part of the book, we highlight the growing realisation that an interconnected world must come to terms with great uncertainty. Consequently, there are opportunities for research and engagement centred on practical questions for both human resource professionals and academics in times of global economic and social uncertainty. We explore uncertain contexts related to socio-economic change, especially how the socio-economic aspects of COVID-19 Pandemic have affected GTM. For example, there are recruitment and retention challenges with respect to the management of a wide range of important yet mobile sources of talent, including healthcare and other skilled, often high-tech professionals. Varying approaches to pandemic management have increased global competition for essential healthcare talent and have, in many ways, exacerbated their the already stressed economies through a brain drain of highly trained talent. Simultaneously organisations and regional stakeholders have enriched their own talent pools and their economies by attracting and supporting skilled edu-immigrants. GTM involves understanding and coping with a broad range of cross-cultural issues linked to compensating talent that arise in foreign subsidiaries and in global remote working conditions.

In Chapter 5, Prantika Ray and Sunil Kumar Maheshwari examine how students are increasingly moving across borders to obtain their higher education and further seek employment in different countries around the world. These academic experiences provide a platform for the students to understand their motivation for pursuing an international career. Research suggests that academic experiences often enhance the intelligent career competencies of these international students namely – knowing how, knowing why and knowing whom. This chapter aims at understanding the relationship between the international academic experience and development of such career competencies in international students and edu-immigrants. The chapter provides insights as to how countries and organisations may fully utilise strong GTM practices to capitalise prior international academic experience levels.

In Chapter 6, Torben Anderson, Charles M. Vance, and Mitch Rufca focus on global high-tech talent, and apply a differentiated approach to talent management.

They highlight differences between high-tech talent and ‘ordinary’ talent management in a context of global changes in socio-political and economic-political conditions caused by national level policy decisions and the global COVID-19 pandemic. In this chapter they unpack the recent developments in global high-tech talent. This is of particular interest because of the global changes in socio-political and economic-political conditions caused by the national level policy decisions and the global COVID-19 pandemic. Focusing on this type of talent, the aim of this chapter is to apply a more differentiated approach to talent management than seen in the many ‘generalised’ recommendations. The authors assert and discuss how high-tech talent management differs from ‘ordinary’ talent management. The authors broaden the understanding of the phenomena by providing a more IT- and technical industry-oriented contextual perspective in examining talent management. Finally, they provide tangible suggestions for high-tech talent recruitment (and to some extent selection and retention), and theoretical contributions on how general talent management can avoid reproducing some of the mainstream assumptions and stereotypes to more effectively compete for talent in our global ‘new normal’.

In Chapter 7, Linyu Liu and Margit Suurnäkki describe how increasing uncertainties in the global context, including the COVID-19 pandemic, de-globalisation trends, and shortages of talent have complicated how MNEs manage talents in different geographical locations. The authors examine how and why certain GTM practices may not be transferrable from corporate head office to subsidiaries located in other countries. Their case study profiles how Chinese digital talents perceived GTM reward practices in the Chinese R&D Center of a Nordic MNE. It confronts local justice perceptions regarding the allocation of monetary rewards with justice assumptions underlying global TM practices. This chapter contributes to the discussion on the effectiveness of global TM practices by highlighting the individual-level justice perceptions that are so crucial to the engagement and retention of distributed talent. Individual-level perceptions are shaped by the local socio-cultural contexts, and they offer a different perspective than purely cultural or institutional factors on global TM practice.

In Chapter 8, Marcia Carvalho de Azevedo considers a sustainable approach to GTM that can alleviate economic inequalities. de Azevedo describes how less developed economies are facing a fierce competition for their skilled workforces in the twenty first century. Migration can cause what is called brain drain, that occurs when the outflow of human capital is higher than the inflow. Brain drain by definition is unidirectional as it implicitly implies that when talent emigrate they will not be able to contribute in a relevant way with their country of origin. The flow of highly skilled workers from developing nations to more developed countries represent a huge threat for less developed countries such as in Brazil. Migration processes are, however, complex phenomena and can also have positive effects for the stakeholders involved. A person’s knowledge and competencies are intangible assets and can be accessed even if the person is not physically close. Talent flow and brain circulation are concepts that are more aligned with the dynamic, fluid, and mobile characteristics of knowledge, particularly in an environment interconnected by IT (Carr, Inkson, & Thorn, 2005). Recommendations

are made to encourage sustainable GTM practices of leaders of developed and developing countries and organisations.

In Chapter 9, Francine Schlosser, Deborah M. McPhee, Jody R. Ralph, and Hanna Salminen, respond to the worsening global shortage of experienced nursing professionals and the increasingly chaotic nature of pandemic careers in nursing, identifying career issues related to professional calling, stress and burnout, and talent appreciation. Our team explicates the influence of uncertainty by applying the chaos theory of careers (Pryor & Bright, 2003) and describes healthcare HRM's role and talent management strategies for attracting, retaining, developing performance and re-attracting ageing nurses, post-pandemic. We respond to recent calls for more research on the transition from retirement to work, especially when prompted by search for authenticity, balance, and challenge as well as HRM strategies for encouraging high demand nursing professionals to re-enter the labour force (Sullivan & Al Ariss, 2021). In addition, the chapter integrates the literature on talent management and changing careers, which remain largely disconnected in HRM literature (Crowley-Henry, Benson, & Al Ariss, 2019).

This volume includes perspectives from many disciplines and cultures which provide a basis for further exploration of GTM during times of social-political and socio-economic uncertainties. Our focus on socio-political change contributes to academia by understanding changes to global talent mobility related to national and regional policies and the organisational processing of new information and prior knowledge. Our focus on socio-economic change provides new and relevant information on the social and economic impacts of changing global talent attraction and retention strategies that have surfaced during the COVID-19 pandemic and which will likely continue post-pandemic.

We build knowledge about the challenges associated with mobile global talent in uncertain times through an integrated focus on emerging, highly relevant issues profiled in emerging GTM research. The resulting discussion and conceptualisation will further the knowledge of TM, GTM and IHRM scholars by introducing unique topics not previously dealt with in research and providing rich and interesting opportunities for future research on matters related to attraction, retention, and development of talent in a global context.

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