Talent Management:
From the Perspective of Management Trainees in Hong Kong

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

The thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright act 1968.

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ABSTRACT

Organizations have always been keen to enhance their competitiveness by identifying, developing and retaining the right talents. They offer the best to talents and have great expectations of them. However, the assumption that being a special group, talents should be contended and happy and stay with the company may have over simplified the situation. Referring to resource-based view (RBV), talent is the strategic resource with cognition, emotions and free will. They are high achievers and have high expectations. Any unmet expectations may lead to disillusion and frustration. Understanding the expectations and how talents interact with other resources thus exert key implications to the effectiveness of talent management.

Bulk of extant literature has looked at talent management from the system and organizational points of view. In order to fully address the research question of what constitutes the effectiveness of talent management, this dissertation seeks to explore via semi-structured interview, the three talent management phases from a biangular approach, consisting both the system and emotional sides from the perspective of the management trainees from different industries in Hong Kong.

Findings reveal that while expectations on learning and growth, and the advancement journey match between the company and talent, the latter is particularly looking for a caring family culture and ownership and recognition of their role. At time with unmet expectations, choice and reciprocity are suggested to positively affect the trust level of the psychological contract of the talents when supported by quality communication. In addition, the capability of the companies to integrate the process, system and tools and anticipate the needs of the new generation talents all shed light to effective talent management. Identification of talents’ unique expectations and retention elements in Hong Kong contributes to organization’s TM strategies and the global talent retention inventory. This research answers the call for establishing micro-foundation of RBV and S-sensing as an HR capability complementing VRIO is suggested to make the RBV framework more holistic at least for the case of talent. A contemporary talent management model incorporating both the system and emotional aspects is proposed and suggestions are made for organizations to revisit talent management effectiveness.
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The War for Talent (Collings & Mellahi, 2009) has echoed in both academic and business worlds for decades. Globalization, aging population and demand and supply gap lead to concern about the talent pipeline in both developing and developed countries (Tarique & Schuler, 2010). The word talent has evolved throughout history and been used in different fields and professions but there is no single definition. Nevertheless, talents share the common features that they have potential which can be developed and enable them to become top performers and talent enables organizations to outperform others and ensure long term survival.

Prior studies also indicate that organizations which apply TM practices demonstrate a higher return on financial performance as compared to their competitors and ‘the best 20% of managers raise operational productivity, profit and sales revenue more than average performers’ (Axelrod, Handfield-Jones, & Welsh, 2001). However, many managers think that TM is not delivering (Coulson-Thomas, 2013; Research Demonstrates ROI of Talent Management, 2008). Talented people are in shortage and they are costly to recruit. Once recruited, they can be difficult to manage and retain. In fact, ‘star performers who were acquired by other firms exhibited a drop in performance that persisted for five years’ (Burkus & Osula, 2011). Talent’s performance cannot be guaranteed and the question about the effectiveness of TM remains an issue to be resolved.

According to the resource-based view (RBV), talent is a strategic resource and talent management (TM) is the organization’s capability in bundling the various resources to achieve organizational competitive advantage (J. B. Barney, 1995). As talent is an individual with cognition, emotion and free will (P. M. Wright, Dunford, & Snell, 2001), how they interact with other resource within the talent management system will affect the outcome.

Talent management has been widely discussed in literature since 1990. However, previous research on TM is mostly from the perspective of the company and input from
talent’s own viewpoint is very limited. While the effectiveness of talent management as a strategic process is governed by the organization’s capability in orchestrating the different system elements (Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Mellahi & Collings, 2010), the author opines that talents being the strategic resource, their expectations and perception should not be neglected. Indeed, they are often high achievers and may easily become disillusioned or frustrated if their expectations are not met (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Feild & Harris, 1991; Woollard, 2010). Overall TM effectiveness thus needs to consider from both the system and emotional angles.

1.2 Research Problem

The research problem that this thesis has explored is **Talent Management: From the Perspective of Management Trainees in Hong Kong.**

The aim of the research is to explore what constitute an effective TM process from the viewpoint of management trainees who are regarded as talents in their organizations. TM consists of three phases, namely identification, development and retention. While some of the previous research has examined the issue of talent retention only, the author argues that all the three phases are interlinked with each other and they all impact the effectiveness of TM as a strategic process. Knowing and managing the expectations of the talent at the early stage can have an impact on the later retention phase. Understanding how the various development activities help or not helping the growth of the talent allows companies to best allocate their limited resources. Third, by identifying the factors affecting talent’s intention to stay or leave can help optimize company’s investment. It is also an inevitable step for building HR capability. (K. Kamoche, 1996). Last, it is important to identify what other factors contribute to the effectiveness of TM since we notice that higher performance in the past is not a reliable indicator of the future.

When examining the talent management problem, psychological contract is applied since unmet expectations during different phases may lead to contract breach or violation as perceived by the trainees, ultimately affecting their retention and overall TM effectiveness. With both the system and the emotional aspects taken together, a comprehensive view of the TM process is established.
Based on the above, this study explores the following four fundamental research questions.

1. What are the expectations of the talents and have these been realized?
2. What activities and methods are effective /ineffective for developing talents and the rationale from the viewpoint of them?
3. What factors encourage the talents to stay or leave the companies?
4. What elements can further contribute to the effectiveness of TM as a strategic process in the organization?

Answering the research issues provide contributions as presented in Section 5.2. In summary, this research provides several contributions and aids advancement on the existing theories of RBV and psychological contract as well as the TM model. First, it answers the call for establishing micro-foundation of RBV. Second, in addition to providing empirical evident for the VRIO framework, it also identifies an element of S-sensing of the emotional transition complementing the O-organization capability. Third, it contributes to psychological contract by suggesting choice and reciprocity as two elements which generate new levels of trust and supporting the directional change of the contract content. Forth, reciprocity is suggested to be a moderator for monetary return affecting retention and this contributes to the theory of reciprocity. Fifth, it adds knowledge to the cross cultural and HR literatures to a certain extent by identifying the various factors affecting talent retention and caring family as a unique retention element in Hong Kong. Lastly, instead of having all positive organizational support elements being important in all TM phases, this research differentiates the most critical factor at each TM phase. Talent gets most of the company’s resources (Doherty, Viney, & Adamson, 1997) and the proposed contemporary TM model allows organizations to allocate their limited resources more effectively.

### 1.3 Justification

Talents themselves have apparently been neglected in extant research, meaning, most of the TM research areas focus only on the company and the system sides. The author argues that while companies know best about their business strategies, their talent strategies would not be complete without knowing what the talents expect. Thus,
expectations of the talent should not be ignored. Talents have emotions and high
expectations and unmet expectations can easily turn into psychological contract breach
or even violation, resulting not just frustration but retaliation in an extreme sense
(Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Knowing the expectations does not mean that the
companies have to submit to them but rather it provides a conscious choice for the
company to act on what is best for the organization.

A major research work comparing the expectations of the graduates and their companies
was conducted by Arnold and Davey in 1992 and 1994. Findings indicated that career
prospects and training are the two main reasons for talent joining a company. However,
training opportunities are perceived to be much worse regarding both the amount and
appropriateness. Lack of development through work and career clarity is identified as
the prime factors for intention to leave. A comparison of the expectations of the current
generation of talent with those 20 years ago may shed new light on the contemporary
TM focus. Second, the current research takes into account the emotional aspects of the
talents while previous research has mostly focused on system elements. As suggested
by Feild & Harris (1991), unmet expectations lead to frustration and the current study
explores the emotional path of talents when facing unmet as well as realized
expectation. There is a considerable mass of research relating to emotion and customer
experience in shopping malls (Avello, Gavilán, Abril, & Manzano, 2011) but apparently
none for emotion and talent experience in organizations. The author opines that
emotion is the triggering factor affecting behaviours and ultimately talents’ intention to
stay or leave. The objective is to understand what helps generate more of positive
emotions throughout the TM journey. The use of qualitative methodology to explore
the feelings of the talent is thus a new attempt and using semi-structured interview
provides the space for the interviewees to express themselves. Third, it differentiates
talent as the strategic resource and aims to identify retention strategies especially for
talents rather than broad retention policy for all employees. The findings are compared
with those identified by other researchers (Bhatnagar, 2007; Cappelli, 2000; D'Amato &
Herzfeldt, 2008; Kerr-Phillips & Thomas, 2009; Tymon Jr., Stumpf, & Doh, 2010;
Wallis & Winternitz, 2004) and provide additional perspectives to the talent retention
literature. Fourth, data are particularly lacking in Asia as succession has been based
mostly on seniority or family relations.
In Hong Kong, talent shortage is found to exist in nearly every sector and as reported by the Hong Kong Institute of Human Resource Management, a large proportion of the workforce will retire in the coming years and Hong Kong will be losing experienced people that hold critical positions (“Talent shortage”, 2013). In a survey of 1,100 financial-services leaders from seven countries and regions, 93% of respondents from Hong Kong were either somewhat or very concerned about losing top performers, 10% higher than the global average (“Talent supply in the red as finance recovers”, 2013). In Hong Kong, due to political concern, there was a brain drain in 1997 and there is clear evidence that talent management is back on the agenda of corporations. On the other hand, companies have been investing time and resources for identifying and developing their talents. This research is expected to contribute to the practice by providing solid indicators to HR and top management for coordinating the limited resources for identifying talent and designing talent management programmes and rewards strategies.

1.4 Methodology

As the research aims to explore TM from the perspective of the talents, it fits well into the interpretive paradigm and the qualitative semi-structured interview is most appropriate for this effort. Management trainees are regarded as talent in the company and are the target sample of this study. As talent shortage is a challenge for all industries, these 22 trainees are from different business sectors. Besides the trainees, eight senior executives responsible for TM were also interviewed. While the main research focuses on the talents' perspectives, viewpoints of senior executives and their expectations are important inputs to form a holistic view. Matching of expectations is also an important indicator to TM effectiveness. Guiding questions addressing the four research questions are developed with reference to previous research (Arnold & Davey, 1994; Doherty, et al., 1997; Sims, 1994) and from the experience of the author.

Initial coding was designed on the basis of existing literature. Pilot interviews were conducted and the initial coding scheme was tested. Data obtained from subsequent main interviews were analyzed and new codes were created whenever necessary. The author took an iterative process and data of each interview were compared with the rest to identify the categories and how they should be grouped into different themes.
Findings on the matching of expectations between the trainees and their companies and the effectiveness of each of the TM phases are presented in later parts of the thesis.

1.5 Thesis Outline

Chapter 2 presents a review of literature on RBV and psychological contract as well as talent management, focusing on the three phases of talent identification, development and retention. The situation in the region including Hong Kong relating to its business environment and the latter’s hybrid culture are also briefly described in the chapter. Based on the literature review, a revised TM model is proposed. Examination of the literature also brings out the gaps and suggests the research questions of this study.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology and design of the framework. It also lays out the data analysis steps using the content analysis approach. Chapter 4 presents the results and findings from analysis of the data in Chapter 3. Chapter 5 discusses the findings and contributions to both the literature and practice. It derives the implications and recommendations and describes the limitations of the study. Suggestions for future research are outlined and the study ends with the conclusions.

1.6 Limitations and Key Assumptions

This study focuses on the entry level of the leadership pipeline rather than the full leadership pipeline. With reference to the concept of psychological contract, the first contract has always been playing a critical role and thus it makes sense to focus on the entry level.

Moreover, the current study targets companies that implement Management Trainee (MT) programmes which are sometimes named as graduate trainee programme or executive trainee programmes. It is assumed that companies recruit these trainees as they meet the values and competencies requirements and they view such group of trainees as potential leader in the pipeline. Trainees joining the programme are assumed to enjoy extra care and additional resources and thus fit in with the characteristics of the talent definition.
In practice, companies can develop talents through means other than trainee programmes. This may bring up a different scope which the current TM process has not considered. Also, participants interviewed may have already completed their trainee programme for quite some times. They had been with the company for around 18 months to 6 years and the information collected is based on individuals’ memories. The full picture may not have been captured. Moreover, as these participants are still employed by the company, they may have held back certain views for various reasons. The research excludes other areas such as the pay back on talent development and talent management in small and medium sized companies in Hong Kong. These may be areas of interest for further research. The current scope of study aims to remain focused on the TM process from the perspective of the talents.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has laid the foundations for the study. It has introduced the research problem and issues on talent management. The research is then justified and the methodology is briefly described. Outline of the thesis is introduced and limitations and assumptions given. The next chapter gives an account of the research problem arising from the body of knowledge developed from previous research.
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The word ‘talent’ has evolved over a long period of time and talent management (TM) has been widely discussed in literature since 1990. This chapter reviews extant literature on this subject, starting with the definition of talent, followed by a discussion of TM from a resource-based view (RBV). For establishing a micro-foundation of the RBV, psychological contract theory is introduced as the theoretical framework for understanding talent as individual with emotion and free will. Building on this theoretical background, practices and factors affecting the effectiveness of the three TM phases, namely, talent identification, development and retention as well as the overall organizational environment are addressed. Referring to the VRIO framework, effectiveness of TM as an organizational /HR capability is discussed in relation to organizational outcomes of having the right ‘talent’ to succeed in critical positions so as to ensure sustainability of competitive advantage. A specific section is also dedicated to introduce TM in the region and Hong Kong, especially taking note of the local hybrid culture. The outcome is the identification of a gap in the literature in respect of understanding the expectations of the talents and their viewpoints throughout the TM process. The author attempts to address TM effectiveness with a biangular approach, from both the system and the emotional angles and propose a contemporary TM framework for enhancing organization /HR capability which is of significance to organizations in Hong Kong and for the city to maintain its competitiveness.

2.2 What is Talent? Who are the Talents?

Definition of talent has evolved throughout the history. In the Middle Age, it referred to some special ability or aptitude and later on it came to mean having the natural ability to do something well. In the contemporary dictionaries, it is defined as someone who has the ability to achieve exceptional or above-average performance and is able to excel in a particular field or profession (Tansley, 2011). Talent is also related to being gifted and these two words are sometimes used interchangeably (Bélanger & Gagné, 2006; Ericsson, Nandagopal, & Roring, 2005).
The notion of whether talent is more of an innate ability or can be developed has also been widely discussed (Morgan & Giacobbi, 2006; Simonton, 2001). Simonton (2001) opined that ‘generic traits do not manifest themselves all at once at birth, but they must develop according to inherited epigenetic trajectories’ (p. 41) and the innate development path needs to be reinforced through practice and training (Morgaan & Giacobbi, 2006) as talent can be lost if not developed (Simonton, 2001). This interaction process is thus important for future performance (Bailey & Collins, 2013). Some scholars argue that everyone has talent and development should be available widely rather than for a selected few (Cunningham, 2007). This has been referred to as the ‘inclusive-people’ approach (Iles, Chuai, & Preece, 2010) and later as the capacity approach which suggests that everyone matters and organizations should provide the opportunity for all to develop and flourish (Downs & Swailes, 2013). It opines that only the most talented staff is to be distinguished and survive because according to the Darwinistic view, the most adapting are successful in the long run under the changing external environment. Other scholars support the maxim that to ‘manage the talent inherent in each person is well intended but not strategic and offers no guidance to determine how many resources should be allocated to uncovering each employee’s talent’ (Lewis & Heckman, 2006, p. 141).

In an organization, talent is usually identified as a special pool of employees receiving more attention and resources than other employees. Decades ago, talent was merely the top 20% performing managers in their current roles. Before 1997, terms including ‘hi-potentials’, ‘fast-trackers’, ‘high flyers’ were all used to signify talent (Adamson, Doherty, & Viney, 1998; Doherty, et al., 1997; Feild & Harris, 1991; Iles, 1997; Iles & Mabey, 1993; Viney, Adamson, & Doherty, 1997). Recently, talent has been referred to as a pool of employees critical either in terms of competencies or positions for growth and long term survival of organizations (Ashton & Morton, 2005; Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005; McDonnell, Lamare, Gunnigle, & Lavelle, 2010). It should be noted that although the gap in terms of investment in training, promotion and rewards between talent and general employees is shrinking, the group of ‘talent including graduate populations still enjoy a higher level of investment’ (Doherty, et al., 1997, pp. 178-179).
Talents in sports, in schools or in organizations, when viewed from the expert performance perspective, share three common elements. First, talent has the innate ability which is related to potential. Second, this ability can be developed through appropriate means or support. The development concept is important because it implies that ability is not static and performance level can always be improved (Ericsson, et al., 2005; Morgan & Giacobbi, 2006). It also makes sense when looking from the competency-based approach while identifying talent. The concept of possessing or acquiring the desired competencies at one level before moving to the next (role or position) is a very important one as it means that the competencies of the talent are accumulative. Shaemi, Allameh & Bajgerani (2011) described the improved capability as increase in capacity of an individual. Thirdly, once the potential is developed, the person can excel and become the top, say 10 – 20% performer in the specific field including sports (Morgan & Giacobbi, 2006) and arts as well as academic (Ericsson, et al., 2005) and businesses. For the current study, the focus is on talent in the business world. Talent is a strategic resource and talent management is of strategic importance leading to competitive advantage of an organization (Ashton & Morton, 2005).

2.3 Talent Management: A Resource-based View

Talent Management is an important aspect in human resource management. This section elaborates the importance of TM with reference to the resource-based theory (RBT). It discusses the RBV framework and establishes the view that talent is a strategic resource and talent management is a strategic process leading to competitive advantage of an organization.

2.3.1 The resource-based theory (RBT)

The ultimate objective of an organization is to attain competitive advantage for rent and long term survival. For decades, strategies have been developed mostly based on the study of Porter’s five forces or others in relations to the external environment (M. E. Porter, 1980). Pioneered by Wernerfelt (1984) and Barney (1986), the resource-based view suggests firms to shift from an external to internal organization analysis and look inwardly to exploit resources in choosing strategies to achieve their goals. As the business environment become more globalized, complex and ever-changing, developing
strategy based on the firm’s internal resources tends to ‘offer a more durable basis for strategy’ (Grant, 1996, p. 116).

RBV forces organizations to look at their internal resources and capability at micro-level. These resources can be defined as assets such as machinery, capital, brand names, technology, patent, skilled personnel, etc. controlled by the firm (Amit & Schoemaker, 1993) and is either tangible or intangible (R. Hall, 1993; Wernerfelt, 1984). Resources which are core to sustain the firm’s competitive advantage are the strategic factors of production and they are characterized by their value, rarity, inimitability and non-substitutability (J. Barney, 1991). Resource mobility barrier is also identified as a crucial element ensuring inimitability (Mueller, 1996). In addition, organization of these resources is required to achieve competitive advantage under the VRIO framework (J. B. Barney, 1995, 2002; Coff, 1997). O-Organization is thus about the capabilities of the company to organize, bundle and deploy its resources to execute business strategies and they are of strategic importance (Amit & Schoemaker, 1993; J. B. Barney, 2001b; Stalk, Evans, & Shulman, 1992).

Variations of the capabilities as a result of management decision, organization design, policy and processes and even culture within an organization (J. B. Barney, Ketchen, & Wright, 2011; Leiblein, 2011) lead to heterogeneity across firms (Andersen & Low, 1998; Maritan & Peteraf, 2011; Peteraf, 1993). As such, capabilities may also be regarded as intangible strategic resources within the organization (J. B. Barney, 1986; Galbreath, 2005; Ngo & Loi, 2008). Some scholars view that capabilities such as practices or policy of an organization is easily imitable and therefore not a strategic resource (P. M. Wright, McMahan, & McWilliams, 1994). However, it is argued that while the principles of the practices, procedures or even the kind of culture are easy to understand, how these are cascaded, demonstrated, translated and implemented take time to mature and develop. Maximum value is only brought to the firm ‘when capabilities are deployed to utilize resources in their most suitable activities’ (K. Kamoche, 1996, p. 215). Organizations need to learn through experience, making the process evolving, dynamic (Helfat & Peteraf, 2003) and not easily imitable.

Dynamic capabilities are thus needed to orchestrate the strategic resources to achieve competitive advantage which can be defined in two ways (J. B. Barney, 2001a). First,
competitive advantage can be measured by any improvement of the firm’s efficiency and effectiveness as compared with other firms. Second, it can be measured in terms of its return as expected by the owners. The firm has achieved its competitive advantage by generating a higher than expected returns of its stockholders. While this definition is criticized by some scholar (Priem & Butler, 2001), it still helps provide an indicator for measurement within an organization which is of value to management.

RBV enables organization to look at its competitive advantage at firm’s level. From HR perspective, it is thus about the alignment of HR strategy to business direction (Stonehouse, Campbell, Hamill, & Prudie, 2004) and the management of people, who are the organization’s most valued assets contributing to the organization’s competitive advantage through acquisition, development and retention of the employees (Armstrong, 1992). The traditional view suggests that human resource i.e. people is the most important resource and is unique because of their learning capacity (Booth & Bryan, 2005; Nafukho, Hairston, & Brooks, 2004; Sweetland, 1996). Being the most important resource may not necessarily be a strategic resource. It is argued that talent is the strategic resource, different from general employees while managing talent and building HR and organizational capability to deliver value for business is a key focus of HRM (Weiss, 2013).

2.3.2 Talent: the strategic resource

Talent is the strategic resource. As previously defined, talent having the ability to excel to be top performer is a ‘superior’ asset and ‘higher quality human resources result in higher financial value’ (P. M. Wright, et al., 1994, p. 307). Also, while the rarity of human resource may depend on the employment market, from the RBV, within the firm, talent is always of rarity since it is limited to the top 10-20% performers. Talent is thus valuable and rare. Moreover, the ‘superior’ status of talent in one company is non-substitutable by another. This is not just related to the physical mobility but rather the transferability of the ‘superior’ status when operates in another organization (Peteraf, 1993; Wernerfelt, 1984). Transferability of talent is restricted as firm-specific tacit knowledge and interpersonal relationship may lose its superiority when operate in another company (Acedo, Barroso, & Galan, 2006; Mueller, 1996). Research indicates
Talent also differs from other strategic resources such as patent or brand name and possesses the potential which can be developed with time and appropriate investment, making it a more durable asset and more difficult to be imitated. While all people have learning capacity, it is argued that talent, as a superior asset will develop and renew their own value (Coff, 1997) either faster or able to create a higher than average future value than general employees. This in fact is the potential as indicated by their learning agility (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2000) which differentiates talent from general employees.

Talents are individuals with cognitive and emotional beings and can walk out of the door of the company based on their free will and objectives (Bowles & Gintis, 1975; P. M. Wright, et al., 2001). They act, react and interact with people and the environment affecting the outcome. Since they are different from general employees, managing talents may require non-traditional practices and process and from an HR perspective, this implies that different acquiring, developing or reward strategy needs to be identified (Areiqat, Abdelhadi, & Al-Tarawneh, 2010).

2.3.3 Talent management: an organization / HR capability

Talent management is thus the capability of the organization to manage talent through the deployment and management of interaction of various resources, processes and practices including but not limited to HR practices to sustain competitive advantage (P. M. Wright, et al., 1994). Research also indicates the organization’s capability mediates the performance of strategic resource (Y. Lin & Wu, 2014). Accordingly, to ensure TM effectiveness, a holistic and integrated approach (Ashton & Morton, 2005; Farley, 2005) is needed. Holistic in the sense that it must be viewed not just as a human resources initiative but should encompass all business functions, including the CEO (Ashton & Morton, 2005; Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Garrow & Hirsh, 2008) and its senior management needs to ‘play the orchestrational role’ (Mueller, 1996; Sirmon, Hitt, Ireland, & Gilbert, 2011). An integrated approach implies that talent planning needs to run in parallel with business planning and there needs to be a clear understanding of the
organization’s current and future business strategies (Areiqat, et al., 2010; Ashton & Morton, 2005). TM needs to tie in with other aspects including targeted selection, succession planning, learning and development, performance management as well as organizational support and they all need to be aligned with the business objectives.

At the same time, decision with regard to allocation of the company’s limited resources to one talent pool or another should ‘also be on the basis of a strong link to strategy and the framing of strategic options’ (Lewis & Heckman, 2006, p. 149) and resources should be invested on those possessing competencies of adding high value and who are difficult to replace. The idea that investment should be made in talent pools of specific functional or professional groups that can be expected to bring about a bigger difference in organization improvement is widely supported by scholars (Garrow & Hirsh, 2008; Iles, et al., 2010) and that the practice of applying training and development programmes ‘to everyone across the board may need to be more focused’ (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005, p. 133). However, dilemma exists since the voluntary turnover of talent will immediate cause the organization to lose its inimitable source of advantage and the firm’s performance will be adversely affected (Shaw, Park, & Kim, 2013). The capability of the organization to design a balanced approach for TM effectiveness is therefore an important issue.

The interpretation and operating mechanism in the TM context is further complicated by its change over time and this requires organization’s capabilities to be dynamic and evolving. At operational level, using complex models of succession planning in the 1950s works because ‘business was highly predictable’ at that time (Cappelli, 2009, p. 4). In the 21st century, it has become more of ‘succession development than succession planning’ as ‘the world is changing too fast for people to assume that all the current senior roles will be in the future the same as they are now’ (Cunningham, 2007, p. 5). The same logic applies to other aspects such as targeted selection and performance management. The criteria used to select and identify talent today may not be appropriate to meet the requirements in the future. As an integrated approach is needed, in the context of succession planning and development, organizations need to ‘capture a stock of human talent latent with productive possibilities’ (Boxall, 1996, p. 67) and these people may not be those top performers in their current roles. In the 90s, university or MBA graduates were widely categorized as talents and companies were
competing to recruit them. More recently, organizations have started looking for potential staff who possesses abilities in networking and learning from others (Hills, 2009) both internally and externally. At the firm level, whether talent should be ‘make or buy’ or internally developed or acquired will depend on situations and decision of individual company (Lepak & Snell, 1999).

In brief, from the resource-based view, talent is the strategic resource and TM is of strategic importance as it aims to deploy the various resources within the organization to achieve competitive advantage. To implement, TM involves a systematic identification and development of a pool of high potential and high performing incumbents, the strategic resource with the ultimate objective to retain them to fill in key positions and roles that contribute to sustain organization’s competitive advantage. These key positions are not restricted to top management team but also other key positions lower down (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Mäkelä, Björkman, & Ehrnrooth, 2010; Scullion, Collings, & Caligiuri, 2010) including the supervisory or newly graduate level (Guthridge, Komm, & Lawson, 2008). While some scholars opine that leadership development should be for all individuals (Wallin, Cameron, & Sharples, 2005), the intention to develop everyone in an organization is good but not realistic enough.

While RBT provides a framework for achieving competitive advantage at firm level, one of its limitations is the lack of how this approach is operationalized (Conner, 1991). Recently there has been calls for better understanding of the micro-foundation for RBT (Coff & Kryscynski, 2011; Foss, 2011) which enable the study of how individual’s differences, behaviour and interactions may affect the ultimate outcome (Garbuio, King, & Lovallo, 2011). At the same time, while the effectiveness of TM depends on the organization including HR capabilities, how talent acts, reacts and interacts throughout the TM phases play a vital role. ‘Competitive advantage can only be achieved if the members of the human capital pool individual and collectively choose to engage in behaviour that benefits the firm’ (P. M. Wright, et al., 2001, p. 705). It is thus important to explore how talents act and interact within the TM system and process. Psychological contract (PC) as an theory interlinking with RBT and appropriate for this study (P. M. Wright, et al., 2001) is discussed in the next section.
2.4 Psychological Contract

Psychological contract first mentioned by Argyris in 1960 is an important concept in human resource management (Lucero & Allen, 1994; Sims, 1994) and ‘the concern in the 1970s that organizations were failing to attract and retain high quality executives suggests that the problem of psychological contract is not a new one’ (Guest, 1998, p. 655).

Various scholars have studied psychological contract and although each may come up with a different definition, there exists certain major themes. First, psychological contract is an implicit or unwritten contract between the individual and the organizations (Kotter, 1973) and although Rousseau (1995) and others opine that it is individual employee’s belief in the organization’s obligations, many researchers suggest that it is about the perception of both parties (Atkinson, 2002; Cable, 2010; Herriot, Manning, & Kidd, 1997; Pearce, 1998; Randmann, 2013). It is more than mere expectation and it emerges when there is the belief that a promise or obligation exists in the future (Rousseau, 1989) and ‘although obligations are form of expectation, not all expectations held by a person need to be promissory’ (Rousseau, 1998, p. 668). This fundamental difference is of particular importance to talents because talents are often high achievers and may easily become disillusioned if their expectations are not met (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Woollard, 2010). Indeed, expectation is a cause leading to various consequences including job satisfaction, absence and intention to quit as proposed by Guest’s (1998) and perceived unmet expectation is directly related to lower job satisfaction, commitment and higher turnover (Deery, Iverson, & Walsh, 2006; Robinson, 1996; Suazo, Turnley, & Mai, 2005).

Second, psychological contract involves emotional state. An unmet expectation may lead to disappointment while an unmet perceived promise or obligation may lead to much greater emotional reactions (Anderson & Schalk, 1998; Rousseau, 1998) as an individual may see himself or herself as being betrayed or wronged (Herriot, et al., 1997; Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). With contract breach, it is confined to ‘calculative identification of injustice but the emotional response are not engendered’ (Pate, 2006, p. 34) and the relationship between the parties may still be maintained. On the other hand, contract violation consists of a
stronger emotional experience (Grame, Staines, & Pate, 1998; Robinson & Morrison, 2000) leading to decreasing sense of obligation and satisfaction (Guzzo & Noonan, 1994). In the extreme case, employees will experience negative feelings of anger, resentment, injustice resulting in negative behavioural consequences such as seeking retaliation (Morrison & Robinson, 1997) and the relationship is irreparable (Robinson & Morrison, 2000). Some scholar view that over-fulfilled is also a kind of violation (Turnley & Feldman, 2000).

Third, psychological contract is built around trust which is of essence because ‘initial trust in one’ s employer at the time of hire was found negatively related to psychological contract breach after 18 months on the job’ (Robinson, 1996, p. 574). In case of contract breach, employees with high prior trust in the employer tend to perceive and interpret the breach ‘in relatively neutral or positive terms’ (p. 580). Similarly, low prior trust leads to a more negative side of interpretation of the breach. While the level of trust affects perceived obligation (Robinson, Kraatz, & Rousseau, 1994), perceived unmet expectation affects trust level in turn (Barnhill & Turner, 2013; Jafri, 2014; Kingshott & Pecotich, 2007). Studies also stress the importance of communication and special HR practices and policies in enhancing the trust level (Barnhill & Turner, 2013; Eilam-Shamir & Yaakobi, 2014).

Forth, psychological contract is dynamic in nature. Its various dimensions including focus, time, stability, scope and tangibles (Anderson & Schalk, 1998) change during the employment cycle. Some scholars opine that the content of psychological contract has changed during the past decades from elements involving loyalty, security, stability and organizational responsibility to employability, negotiation, reward for value and individual responsibility (Anderson & Schalk, 1998; Hiltrop, 1995; Kotter, 1973). While its content is dynamic, the direction of change is inconclusive and mixed (Van der Smissen, Schalk, & Freese, 2013). Rather, research indicates that perceived obligations of the other parities will be affected by organizational change, individual value change, individual’s past experience (Eilam-Shamir & Yaakobi, 2014) and personality (Freese, Schalk, & Croon, 2011; Tallman & Bruning, 2008; Van der Smissen, et al., 2013). Moreover, the dynamic nature of psychological contract is enhanced by the reciprocal obligations (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998) i.e. the perception of what the other party has delivered affects the implicit contract terms.
formed by the receiving party and in turn, the latter’s behaviours may lead to reduction or widening of the gap between the expectations of the two parties. It is found that ‘the dynamic aspect is particularly apparent in the newcomers’ and it is ‘likely to change towards those of experienced insiders as they become accepted as an integral part of the company’ (Thomas & Anderson, 1998, p. 751).

With reference to psychological contract, identification of expectations of the talent and the building of trust should thus take place at an early stage (Arnold & Davey, 1994). Table 2.4 consolidates the limited research on talent expectations by different scholars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trainee’s (talent’s) expectations (i.e. what they look for when joining the company in order of importance)</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Personal development opportunities  
2. Interesting work  
3. Sense of meaning or purpose  
| 1. Long term career prospects  
2. Training  
3. Interesting work  
4. Pay and benefits  
5. Early responsibility  
6. Company’s people  
7. Location | UK | Arnold & Davey (1992) |
| 1. Leadership development opportunity  
2. High performance work culture  
3. A strong employer brand  

Table 2.4 Expectations of the talents when they first joined the company

The research targets of Kotter (1973) and Arnold & Davey (1992) were MBA graduates while Kerr-Phillips & Thomas (2009) interviewed top talents in two financial institutions. Talents at different times and countries tend to put longer term training and development opportunities as their expectation when they first join an organization. Ironically, this is one of the areas which general employees felt most let down by the employers (Grame, et al., 1998; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). Although no definite conclusion can be drawn from the talent’s side yet, it is noted that as organizations have shifted to focus on talent’s marketability and commercial value (Doherty, et al., 1997),
the implicit promise or obligation on career or development opportunities as perceived
by the talent will likely create an initial gap in the psychological contract, affecting the
effectiveness of TM (Atkinson, 2002). Moreover, should the dimension of
psychological contract become more focus on employability and individual
responsibility, employees are responsible for their own development (Hendry &
Jenkins, 1997) and may justify themselves for demanding interesting and important
work that they can demonstrate value to the organization (Van der Smissen, et al.,
2013). There are different studies of psychological contract and employee expectations
but research on expectation of talent as a strategic resource and their emotional state as
a consequent of either met or unmet of the perceived promises is sparse.

With the understanding of the importance of psychological contract in TM, the
following sections discuss each of the TM phases of talent identification, development
and retention in relations to their effectiveness in execution.

2.5 Talent Identification

In the talent identification phase, companies aim to look for appropriate talents either
internally or externally based on value, competencies and/or potential (G. C. Kesler,
2002; Sharma & Bhatnagar, 2009). Individual organizations may want to attract the
best employees and over-sell themselves by promising unrealistic career paths or too
high sounding development programmes. In fact, ‘the motivation of recruiters to
provide accurate information is quite low in general’ (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994)
whereas employees’ perception of organization’s obligation may also be selective and
distorted (Tekleab, Orvis, & Taylor, 2013). These unmet expectations or implied
promises as explained by psychological contract ultimately affect the effectiveness of
TM.

Referring to the matching of values and competencies, the upper echelons theory
suggests that an organization is a reflection of its top management and homogeneity of
personality exists to a greater or lesser extent within an organization (Smith & Hitt,
2009). The same notion is supported by the idea of ’culture fit’ (Brannick, 2001, p. 28)
and also by Schneider’s (1995) attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) theory that
individuals are attracted to organizations on the basis of fit between them and ‘persons
who do not fit will leave, leading to increasing homogeneity of persons in the organization’ (Schneider, et al., 1995). To a certain extent, this implies that organizations tend to select talent possessing values similar to those of the company (Hills, 2009; Low, 2010; Redman, 2006) and vice versa and those seen to possess similar leadership competencies as the top management team are more likely be considered as talents. ‘Under conditions of uncertainty and anxiety, when faced with a promotion decision critical to the future of the organization, top management will probably play it safe by selecting a “right type” executive (i.e. someone who resemble them)’ (D. T. Hall, 1986, p. 238). Thus, it is not surprising to find that most companies tend to identify potential talents based on their current performance and whether they possess competencies equivalent to those of the senior management team (Doherty, et al., 1997; Mäkelä, et al., 2010).

It is argued that with a constantly changing business environment, attributes relating to successful performance tend to be different and that competencies required in the current situation may not guarantee success in the future. Although adaptability has been shown to be ‘a critical personality attribute of future executives’ (D. T. Hall, 1986, p. 249), it is only in recent years that companies have begun to pay more attention to it. In 2000, the concept of learning agility which is highly correlated to leadership potential was proposed by Lombardo & Eichinger (2000). Managers who lack adaptability to change or learn from mistakes derail and ‘willingness and ability to learn from experience separates high potentials from others’ (De Meuse, Dai, & Hallenbeck, 2010, p. 121). The ability to learn, adapt and grow is the new measurement of potential (Fernandez-Araoz, 2014).

In addition, how an organization selects or identifies talents poses another challenge. Although organizations do have talent review meetings, such assessment is sometimes ‘carried out by people who do not have direct experience of the candidate’ (Mäkelä, et al., 2010, p. 136) as they are often senior managers in head offices or high up in the hierarchy with only limited exposure to individual talents. In France, ‘the ability to be identified by the small circle of top team members contribute to the label high potential manager’ (Roussillon & Bournois, 1997, p. 344). This particularly happens in companies with regional or global operations.
The ability of an organization to recruit and identify the right talent is the first step towards TM effectiveness. At the identification phase, organizations need to pay attention to the matching of expectations between the talents and the organization as explained by psychological contract. The implicit terms of the contract actually start to build up in both parties separately but concurrently since their first encounters and evolve throughout the TM process. These expectations include matching of values and the required competencies as well as the perception of career path or aspirations. Research actually suggests involving talent in the planning of development and career path (D. T. Hall, 1986; Hills, 2009) may provide an answer to the matching of career expectations.

2.6 Talent Development

Career expectation starts at the identification phase and continues at the development phase. Effectiveness of this phase starts with having a clear objective of the development programme. Training and development is important for preparing the talent to take up key positions in the organization and the matching of needs (Jayakumar & Sulthan, 2014) during the development stage is another important aspect for the success of TM but is often overlooked and ‘supervisors and executives were somewhat out of touch with the experiences of the participants’ (Feild & Harris, 1991, p. 5). The lack of career planning subsequent to training programmes is found to be a major source of frustration for high potential (Feild & Harris, 1991). However, since late 1990, although companies still want high potential to have a career in the organization in order to realize their return on investment, the objective of training and development has started to shift from providing career to offering of employability and marketability and place more emphasis on performance improvement and contribution to business (Nafukho, et al., 2004; Sweetland, 1996; Viney, et al., 1997).

Besides the shift in the objectives of development, there seems also be a trend on the shift relating to the content of the development programmes. In the past, contents are mostly company-related including company goal, process or job-related skills required such as management skills, human skills or organizational developments skills (Collins & Holton, 2004; G. Kesler & Kirincic, 2005; Patton & Pratt, 2002). Recently, there is a call for developing affective curriculum for talent emphasizing more on personal
meaning and vision (Dai & Speerschneider, 2012). Since some talents’ early success has become a hindrance for later career advancement especially at the time when transit from middle to high level management (Kovach, 1986) and ‘the effectiveness of managerial leadership development programmes varied widely’ (Collins & Holton, 2004, p. 232), the inclusion of the affective element in talent development for coping with stress and failure may be an answer addressing these issues.

As mentioned, talent development is not just about training courses or academic studies but include different approaches and tools such as on boarding, mentoring, coaching, career counselling, action learning or other on the job exposure (Adamson, et al., 1998; Feild & Harris, 1991; Groves, 2007; D. M. Hunt & Michael, 1983; Kovach, 1986). Development cannot relies on only one mean and the future is about ‘development challenge’ (Pertrie, 2014). These development activities will not be here for more than 30 years without reasons and their benefits and effectiveness are discussed below.

2.6.1 On boarding / Pre-departure training

On boarding and pre-departure training are especially crucial for global TM because these help the talents get familiarized with the new working environment and culture quickly and such pre-departure training is perceived as reflective of the supportiveness of the company. This has positive impact on the intention of the talent to stay later, especially when they are relocated to work on international assignment (Guzzo, Noonan, & Elron, 1994). Another aspect is that as psychological contract is dynamic in nature, co-workers and supervisors may provide information allowing newcomers to revise and update their psychological contract during organizational socialization (Thomas & Anderson, 1998).

2.6.2 Training and learning

Organizations normally offer training and development to their talents and the duration can vary from ‘five months to ten years and for fast track graduates lasting between 18 – 24 months’ (Doherty, et al., 1997, p. 177). In terms of the training content, ‘different variables are important at different stages of talent development’ (Subotnik, 2006, p. 379). Scholars in general agree that technical skills are most important for junior
position while interpersonal skill is core to managers; and conceptual skills are the focus for senior executives who are required to deal with complex environments (Chandler, Hall, & Kram, 2010; D. T. Hall, 1986; Patton & Pratt, 2002). Some scholars argue that a company should develop the general skills rather than specific skills of the talent so that they can fit into different jobs or functions. This helps reduce the risk of mismatch and while ‘the fit between candidate and the specific job may be less than perfect, just in time training and coaching can help close the gap’ (Cappelli, 2009, p. 6). Perhaps the question that an organization should ask is: what do we want our talents to get from the training programmes while from the talents’ view, it is about ‘what’s in it for me’ (Byham, Smith, & Paese, 2002, p. 6). To answer this question, there are two schools of thought. The first is that one needs to focus on the weaknesses or areas of development while the other is to focus on the strengths. The logic for the former is that with limited resources, why the talent should go to a training programme for something he or she is already good at. Other scholars argue that development should aim for the talents’ future success rather than fixing their weaknesses in the context of the current role (Blass, 2009). Individuals excel on their strength but not their weaknesses and thus development should focus on their strengths. Strength or weakness is in fact measured in relative terms. It is logical to assume that talents are already at an average standard for the various competencies while possessing some unique strength for specific competencies as required by a future leader. Based on this assumption, focusing on strength is a more logical approach. Moreover, as discussed at the talent identification phase, organizations have started to assess ‘potential’ and talent development should shift its focus towards developing capacities. ‘Talent management wants to emphasize capacities development instead of capabilities development. The heart of talent management is developing human major capacities’ (Shaemi, et al., 2011, p. 235). This shift brings about a new page in the development history and it is an important aspect to be explored further.

There are many different training methods or approaches. They vary from the most common type of classroom training, action-oriented activities (Groves, 2007; Haskins & Shaffer, 2010) to experiential learning. There can be job rotation, job assignment and academic studies while leadership development through teaching has also been mentioned as an effective way for talents to learn (Groves, 2007; Low, 2010). Kegan (1982) suggested that executives can learn through a process of self observation and
self-reflection and called it identity exploration (as cited in D. T. Hall, 1986). However, research indicates that in most cases, the skills or attributes are developed by methods that are not well thought out and there should be a better integration of the various methods. ‘When classroom activities are linked to specific job needs for new learning, these cognitive methods can be effective’ (D. T. Hall, 1986, p. 255). Thus, there needs to be an appropriate and effective combination of different methods for training programmes and the knowledge and skills learnt need to be reinforced by providing opportunities for application in real situation when back to the work environment. However, ‘the form and purpose of talent development efforts are frequently mismatched. Preferred learning styles and the design of talent programmes are often at odds’ (Pruis, 2011, p. 206). Also, while the organization may expect that the talent will proactively seize such learning opportunities, the latter may believe the company should have that arranged for them. All these affect the effectiveness of the TM process.

As talent management needs to take a holistic and integrated approach, so does talent development. Training programmes and studies focusing on knowledge or skills with post training applications are only part of the development ingredients. ‘Mentors, coach protect and stimulate growth by setting challenges and ensure visibility for their protégés’ (Iles & Mabey, 1993, p. 108). Their function is described as ‘psychosocial’ and is discussed below.

2.6.3 Mentoring and coaching

Research has identified that mentoring and coaching are among the best methods for nurturing future leaders and are practiced in Fortune 500 companies and many others (Blass, 2009; Byham, et al., 2002; Hegstad & Wentling, 2004; J. Hunt & Weintraub, 2011; Subotnik, 2006). However, mentoring and coaching nowadays are still ‘work in progress’ (Clutterbuck, 2009) and there is lack of clarity of what they really mean (Wilson, 2011). In general, mentoring often involves senior executives in the organization who share experiences and provide advice and guidance, focusing on individual’s development of career progress. It is also about the ‘passing of secrets of how to operate in the commercial world’ (Simmonds & Lupi, 2010). An exception is found in the healthcare industry where supervisors as mentors tend to be most effective
Mentoring plays a unique role in talent development. It ‘fosters a positive psychological feeling in the protégé’s career’ (Dawley, Andrews, & Bucklew, 2008, p. 239). Mentor owns ‘the people role of advising and supporting entry and upward mobility for their protégés’ (D. M. Hunt & Michael, 1983, p. 476) and mentoring provides the platform for the talent to reach out and learn from others with different functional expertise and experiences (Chandler, et al., 2010). The development of mentoring relationship enhances the visibility of high potential and helps the talents build professional networks (Goudreau & Hardy, 2006; Groves, 2007; Iles & Mabey, 1993; K. Kamoche, 2000, 2003; Rothwell, 2012; Stein, 2000). ‘Talent visibility refers to the extent to which talented people are easily, accurately and reliably identified’ (Mellahi & Collings, 2010, p. 147) in an organization. This expectation may lead to frustration if the mentor is not able to help the advancement of the protégé. Under global TM, mentors play an even more vital role in clarifying the performance expectations and helping the talent to understand the local culture, work environment and practices; and also help ensure that the talents’ families are being taken care of (Oddou & Mendenhall, 1991, p. 32).

Coaching is another integral part of talent development (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006; Wasylyshyn, 2003). It focuses on the process and is about an intended change (Enescu & Popescu, 2012). The coach tends to ask more questions and support the coachee to think and find his own answer (Wilson, 2011). ‘Coaching manager believe that by helping their employees develop, everybody comes out ahead and they show less need for control’ (J. Hunt & Weintraub, 2011, p. 93). Coaching has a long history in sports, in improving performance and supporting a diverse array of needs from acceleration to executive coaching. Performance coaching is more about on the job skill acquisition while at the other end, senior executives engage external coaches to stimulate the coaching dialogue from a different perspective (J. Hunt & Weintraub, 2011) and often it is about a person’s growth and development (Byham, et al., 2002). Despite its value, talents do not get as much coaching as they would like. ‘17% receive no coaching and of those who do, 43% say it is ‘not as much as I want’ (Hills, 2009, p. 6).
In order to be effective, both the coach and the mentor, though engaging in different objectives, require similar skills such as rapport building, questioning, listening and the ability to provide constructive feedback. Moreover, ‘the quality of it depends on the relationship’ (Hartmann, Feisel, & Schober, 2010, p. 174). Research indicates matching of coach and coachee based on their values, commonality, compatibility in terms of style, behaviours, personal traits all helps rapport building which is the first step to ensure a trustful relationship between the two parties (Boyce, Jaskson, & Neal, 2010; Mertel, 2010) and ‘relationship is core to the coaching process’ (Critchley, 2010, p. 855). For mentoring, the matching criteria are similar and they include personal values, skills, interest and socio-economic background (Simmonds & Lupi, 2010). The major difference is possibly that mentor is often a senior executive in the organization. Nonetheless, the relationship with protégé can also end with a ‘peer-like friendship’ (D. M. Hunt & Michael, 1983, p. 483).

For most MNC in China, mentoring relationship is practiced informally rather than formally and the respect for hierarchy was found to hinder the people-based mentoring practices. This element of relationship is further elaborated in the study of Chandler, Hall, & Kram (2010). They propose that development of talent should not be limited to the formal arrangement of mentoring but rather the organization should encourage or in fact, talents need to practice self learning and development through ‘relational savvy’ which is the building of networks to promote learning from others. This can be in the form of peer coaching and learning from friends, family and people from different hierarchies. As for global TM, mentoring cross culture possess additional challenges especially in considering the matching criteria of gender, race and social status. However, there is no definite answer to the research outcomes (Kent, Kochan, & Green, 2013).

In Hong Kong, formal coaching and mentoring have become more popular during the past 20 years. Within the last 10 years, there has been an increasing number of coaching institutes being established locally. For Hong Kong, with its oriental culture but western exposure, it is important to understand how talents see the values of mentoring or coaching and in what way it helps them. As hierarchy is a characteristic of the oriental culture, this may lead to role duplication or conflict between the assigned
mentor and the talent’s direct manager causing emotional strains to the talents (Yang et al., 2011). All these affect the effectiveness of talent development and TM.

2.6.4 On job training (OJT)

Training courses and coaching or mentoring account for some 10% and 20% of a person’s learning respectively while the remaining 70% of development is acquired through on-the-job exposure (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2008; Tough, 1979). Action learning in solving a real business problem with a question-based approach (Revans, 1982), taking up assignments and projects via secondment, moving laterally to gain exposures or having an expanded responsibility within current role are all examples of on-the-job training. Talent may be required to tackle a workplace issue and reflect, learn from the experience and develop during the process (Ellis & Phelps, 2000; Zuber-Skerritt, 2002). Career variety is found to be positively associated with higher learning agility (Dries, Vantilborgh, & Pepermans, 2012) and all these on job activities are critical for talent to rise to senior level (G. Kesler & Kirincic, 2005). Talents seek these opportunities ‘to rapidly developed their careers and to enhance their personal marketability’ (Glen, 2006) and they too, prefer this kind of managerial exposure (Harris, Hirschfeld, Feild, & Mossholder, 1993). However, ‘a person who is in an Acceleration Pool for 10 years might have only six assignments or fewer; a 5-year member might have only two or three’ (Byham, et al., 2002, p. 187). Real strategic assignments are needed to motivate talent in their learning while finding suitable assignments is difficult. ‘Too often the assignments for trainees are fictitious, and not grafted on a real and fundamental organizational dilemma’ (Pruis, 2011, p. 214). The challenge is that it requires the organization to be willing to sacrifice its short term performance goals for the long term development of its potential employees (Redman, 2006). Sometimes, these assignments may require the talent to work for other subsidiaries or at other locations and mobility is another challenge.

The third challenge is that it is often assumed that OJT will automatically lead to on job learning because ‘the awareness of concrete activities in the learning process provides opportunities for improvement of on-the-job learning’ (Berings, Poell, & Simons, 2005, p. 385) while factors relating to individual learning activities on reflection, practicing new skills and interpersonal activities also affect the overall learning (Berings, et al.,
In fact, OJT is important not just for talent’s development but also their retention. It is found that ‘young people who had some formal ON-JT were much less likely to leave their employer while those who participated in some form of OFF-JT were more likely to leave’ (Lynch, 1991, p. 155).

Extant literature has revealed that companies usually adopt most if not all these development activities. However, only a few studies have reported how talents perceive these activities, the benefits or whether these match their expectations. It is not the intention of the author to doubt their values. However, as time has changed and the business environment is very different nowadays, the author would like to put forward a means to look at these development activities from the receiver’s end, i.e. the talents who may have different expectations of themselves and their development. Indeed, the development of talent in an organization is no different from that of talent in schools, sports or other fields. The Talent Development Model of a high school in US (McPartland, Balfanz, Jordan, & Legters, 1998), that for a League baseball player (Chandler, et al., 2010) or even for children at sports (Vaeyens, Lenoir, Williams, & Philippaerts, 2008) have talent development approaches that are similar to that of a corporation. Apparently, a generic TM framework applicable to different industries can be formulated.

2.7 Talent Retention

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, talent as a strategic resource is a pool of special employees receiving more attention and resources than the others. It is thus obvious that retention of talent affects the ROI of the companies and it is estimated that the total costs associated with turnover can range from 90% to 200% of the annual salary (Allen, Bryant, & Vardaman, 2010). On the other hand, companies in the top quartile of TM practices have been delivering a 22% higher return to shareholders than the industry means (Garman & Glawe, 2004). Retention rate thus directly reflects the effectiveness of TM as a strategic process and it is important to identify the elements that affect talent retention.

Retention of employees has been widely studied (Allen, et al., 2010; Dawley, et al., 2008; Hay, 2002; Holland, Sheehan, & Cieri, 2007; Maimon & Ronen, 1978).
However, conclusions do not seem to have been consistent. Some scholars opine that intrinsic aspects such as supervisory or positive organizational support encourage employees to stay with the company (Dawley, et al., 2008; Friedlander & Walton, 1964; Maimon & Ronen, 1978) while satisfied employees still leave when there exists a more attractive alternative in the market (Allen, et al., 2010). Others argue that employees are most likely to leave when there is no development of their skills, failure of managers to take interest in their career development and a lack of clear direction from management (Arnold & Davey, 1994; Hay, 2002; Kennett, 2013; Tymon Jr., et al., 2010) and all these are considered to be more of intrinsic in nature than extrinsic. With reference to these findings, companies in practice, seem to have adopted a contradictory approach and ‘encourage employees to be responsible for their own careers and success within the organization’ (Tarique & Schuler, 2010, p. 130) instead of showing concern and interest to individuals’ development. Other studies have indicated that extrinsic retention rewards strategy and intrinsic long term factors such as work-life balance help retain employees. (Holland, et al., 2007). All in all, there seem to be a number of different elements that affect staff retention.

Findings of research on employee retention are often assumed to be applicable to talent (Earle, 2003; Frank & Taylor, 2004) but there doesn’t seem to be a consistent picture of what the top factors contributing to talents’ intention to stay or leave are. Wallis & Winternitz (2004) suggested that although both intrinsic and extrinsic factors are important to retain talent in the financial sector in South Africa, the top five retention elements are all intrinsic. They are challenging and meaningful work, advancement opportunities, high manager integrity and quality, empowerment and responsibility and lastly new opportunities and challenges. All these elements have changed in five years’ time. Kerr-Phillips & Thomas (2009) suggested that the seven critical factors for talent retention in South Africa for the same industrial sector are related to personal growth and development, exposure to business, being valued and recognized and being employed by a respected employer brand with a high performance work culture. The only fact that remains the same is that these elements are still all intrinsic in nature. Oehley & Theron (2010) opined that line managers influence their talent followers’ intention to quit by having job satisfaction and affective commitment as mediators while ‘outstanding monetary reward has been one cornerstone for Siemens’ successful talent management strategy in motivating and retaining local expertise’ (Li & Scullion,
With the limited research on talent retention, it is difficult to draw any general conclusion about the key factors affecting talents’ intention to stay or leave.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that besides the intrinsic and extrinsic factors, psychological contract in relation to the employee’s perception is also of utmost importance in talent retention (Wallis & Winternitz, 2004). It is noted that ‘staying and leaving involve different psychological and emotional processes’ (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, & Graske, 2001, p. 97). Such emotion is also experienced on the company side and ‘the departure of a talented employee can feel like a personal affront’ (Cappelli, 2000, p. 104). Research indicates that the intention to quit often starts with some special events and the ‘paths to turnover are often initiated by a shock’ (Allen, et al., 2010, p. 55). This ‘shock’ is similar to the suggestion that ‘psychological contracts are fully attended to in response to triggering events’ (Guzzo, et al., 1994, p. 625) which are influenced by the individual’s subjective evaluation or perception of the employer’s practices. The promise of great opportunities for career development may turn out to be quite different and ‘the reality has been that they are often left disillusioned and disengaged’ (Woollard, 2010, p. 8). This triggering event may evolve and be perceived by the talent as contract violation. Violations ‘are all found to be strongly related to employee’s intention to quit’ (Turnley & Feldman, 2000, p. 39) and ‘in comparison to unmet expectations, more strongly impact intentions to quit and turnover’ (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994, p. 257). Perceptions of violations on part of managers in different industries have also been found to be different. In MNCs, they are mostly about training and supervisory support whereas for MBA graduates, they mostly report violation relating to the magnitude of job challenges (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). Table 2.7 indicates the different factors affecting talents’ intention to leave and stay in different countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intention to leave</th>
<th>Intention to stay</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree of career guidance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job assignments were (not) intrinsically appealing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty regarding the jobs they would fill during and after the programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of development</td>
<td>Lack of career clarity</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Arnold (1994)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violation comparing to unmet expectations, more strongly impact intentions to quit and turnover</td>
<td></td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Robinson (1994)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market as the pull factor</td>
<td>Cooperate with other non-competing companies for possible career path</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Cappelli (2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The supervisor</td>
<td></td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Brannick (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High manager integrity and quality</td>
<td>Empowerment and responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New opportunities/challenges</td>
<td>Exciting work/challenge</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Bhatnagar (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career growth/learning Relationships/working with great people; Fair pay Supportive management/great boss</td>
<td>Learning and development (but with a mediating role by organizational commitment)</td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>D’Amato (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational bureaucracy An exclusionary culture An organizational culture that promotes mediocrity &amp; poor performance Employment equity</td>
<td>Merit based talent development A high performance work culture Leadership dev. &amp; mentorship prog. Exposure to all aspects of business A valuing of skills and abilities Recognition of contribution A reputable employer brand</td>
<td>S. Africa</td>
<td>Kerr-Phillips (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic reward including pride in org, managerial support and performance management practices linked positively with satisfaction in the org. and inversely related with intention to leave</td>
<td></td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Tymon (2010)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.7 Elements affecting talents’ intention to leave and stay
To summarize, retention of talent affects the ROI of companies and any dysfunctional turnover of employees is harmful to the organization (Allen, et al., 2010). The idea that all factors affect talent retention does not really help and the retention policy needs to shift its focus from a broad and general approach to a targeted approach aiming at different talent pools (Cappelli, 2000). Research on critical factors affecting talent retention and its emotional side are important areas for further exploration. It will be of value to investigate the elements affecting talent retention in Hong Kong and compare the findings with those in South Africa, India and Europe which may help build up the talent retention inventory in the global context.

This section discusses identification, development and retention phases of TM in relation to the current practices and elements affecting its effectiveness. Last, but not least, effectiveness of the TM process is reinforced through organization support.

2.8 Positive Organization Support

Organizational support is viewed as an important element of the whole TM system (Chew & Wong, 2008) and it embraces a number of soft and hard elements. Soft and intangible elements include corporate identity (Earle, 2003), the culture of leadership development (Groves, 2007; McGee, 2006; Salkey, 2005), support of line manager in terms of care, positive feedback (Bhatnagar, 2007; Dawley, et al., 2008) and fostering a sense of family and community (O'Keeffe, 2013; Stein, 2000). Best practices of performance management (Aguinis, Gottfredson, & Joo, 2012; Doh, Smith, Stumpf, & Tymon Jr, 2011; Rothwell, 2002) can also address the expectations of the talent such as clarity about career path, opportunities for challenging and interesting work, individual growth and development. This can be achieved by formulating individual development plans so that work and individual development goals and advancement opportunities can be discussed and followed up. However, it is important to note that the biggest gap lies in the perceptions of employees with the amount of recognition provided by organizations (L. W. Porter, Pearce, Tripoli, & Lewis, 1998).

On the other hand, the hard and tangible elements such as the physical environment of the office (Earle, 2003) and availability of an effective performance management or a talent management software system (McDonnell, et al., 2010) can help make the work
of talent management easier. It captures the talent and performance management information and allows easy retrieval of talent profile, maintenance of development records and the follow-up and tracking of actions.

In other words, these practices, processes, policies, etc are about the organization and to a great extent, the HR capability under RBV. Talent management often requires a particular type of mindset which needs to be reinforced through the three distinct TM phases together with positive support from the whole organization in terms of people behaviour, systems and processes at different hierarchical levels. Top talent ‘without building support within the firm will not experienced the same performance found in the prior organization’ (as cited in Burkus & Osula, 2011, p. 3). However, does having all these systems, processes and tools in place then guarantee effectiveness? How should effectiveness be measured? The next section addresses the effectiveness of TM in terms of its individual phases and being a strategic process as a whole.

2.9 Effectiveness of TM as a Strategic Process

As proposed earlier in this chapter, the ultimate objective of talent management is to retain the talent for filling in key positions and roles that contribute to the organization’s sustainable competitive advantage which is same as Lewis & Heckman’s (2006) hierarchy model of the strategic TM process at its highest level. As suggested by RBV, the effectiveness of TM can be assessed from two perspectives. One is relating to any improvement on effectiveness of each TM phase and the other is about the effectiveness of the whole TM process as measured by its ROI.

At the operational level, effective TM involves a system for identification of key positions and that talents are developed with a talent pool concept in a broader context of the organization rather than with a particular succession role in mind (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). At the identification phase, it is related to the visibility of the talents and identification of the right candidates for inclusion into the talent resource pool. Cycle time and cost are the common metrics to measure effectiveness (Racz, 2000; Sangeetha, 2010). Assessing competencies through 360 degree feedback or using multiple tools is regarded as the best practice (Robertson, 2010; Rothwell, 2002). In addition, introducing competency model allows an organization to discover what
differentiates the best and an average performer in a critical job and by doing so the organization can identify the core skills / behaviours required for such jobs, at different levels, matching the appropriate talent to the ‘next’ role. Indeed, future competency model can also be identified based on the organization’s strategies and company’s long term objectives (Rothwell, 2002). It is suggested that effectiveness at this stage can be evaluated by any improvement of the talent identification or review process.

At the development phase, effectiveness of the training or development programme starts with the matching of organizational and talent’s development needs (D. Miller & Desmarais, 2007), complemented by different interventions depending on individual’s learning stage (Cole, Harris, & Feild, 2004). Boudreau & Ramstad (2005) opined that effectiveness is measured by ‘the degree to which interventions affect the behaviours of those in the targeted talent pool’ (as cited in Lewis & Heckman, 2006, p. 146) and effectiveness must tie in with the impact on the organization. Instead of going through a standard management or leadership development, the best practice is to have an individual development plan, owned and responsible by the individual talent and the relevant manager (Rothwell, 2002) and supported by a regular follow up tracking system such as review meeting. Effectiveness can then be measured based on the assessment of individual talent, their direct managers and peers often described as 360 feedback (Waldman, E., & D., 1998).

At the retention phase, since ‘retention rate is a critical prerequisite for effective succession planning’ (Hartmann, et al., 2010, p. 174), effectiveness is to be measured by the percentage of talent that remains in the talent pools as compared to the target. As more resources are allocated to the talent, it is logical to set a higher than average retention rate as compared to general employees.

While TM can be highly effective in each phase, there is no guarantee that TM is effective as a strategic process on the whole. To be strategic, Zuboff (1988) opined that talent should be segmented and organizations should look at the value of the job in terms of contribution to the company’s competitive advantage and the difficulties of replacing that job in the market (as cited in Lewis & Heckman, 2006). It is proposed that talent at all levels should be identified in order to form the pipeline to fill in critical positions in the organization. It is thus logical to say that succession planning is an
interim milestone of the TM process, if not the ultimate goal itself. By definition, succession planning is ‘a structured process involving the identification and preparation of a potential successor to assume a new role’ (Garman & Glawe, 2004). Effectiveness of TM can therefore be measured by any improvement in the percentage of the internal talents in the segmented talent pool becoming the potential or actual successors to the critical positions and the number of potential talents available for the specific position.

From the company’s point of view, the effectiveness of TM is thus a function of the effectiveness of each TM phase and the effective outcome at one phase is the prerequisite for having an effective next phase, leading to an overall TM effectiveness.

On the other hand, when considering TM’s overall effectiveness, the viewpoint of the talent as the strategic resource plays too important a role to be neglected. From the perspective of the talent, it is proposed that effectiveness of TM can be determined by the fulfilment of career aspirations which embraces ‘notions of development and logical progression’ (Adamson, et al., 1998, p. 253). As expectations of talents when joining an organization vary from long term career to having leadership development opportunity, it is logical to assume that in the long term, the talent does aspire to have a leading role in an organization. It follows then that there is a matching of the outcome expected by the organization and the talent in terms of the succession element. Thus, the effectiveness of TM, from the talents’ perspective is whether they have achieved their targeted long term career goals and in practice, this can be measured by their progressive advancement, consisting of both vertical and horizontal moves (Adamson, et al., 1998; D. T. Hall, 1986). Herriot and Pemberton (1995) described this as a ‘series of renegotiations of the psychological contract (as cited in Adamson, et al., 1998). Overall effectiveness thus depends on the matching of expectation at each TM phase. During this period of career progression, any contract breach will lead to undesirable emotions while any perceived contract terms fulfilled or exceed may generate highly desirable emotions.

Accordingly, the emotional aspect of the talents is another major element to be considered under effectiveness. In fact, the immediate experience of emotion is a state of mind and it is bound to exist in the workplace (Ashforth & Humphreys, 1995; Fox & Spector, 2002). Research on workplace emotions is only picking up after 1990s and
Miller, Considine & Garner (2007) suggested that there are five kinds of emotion in workplace under studied. Most are related to emotional intelligent traits which is found to be correlated to successful leadership (Chrusciel, 2006) or emotional labour which is the display of the appropriate emotions at work (Huynh, Alderson, & Thompson, 2008; Mann, 1997). It is generally agreed that positive emotion leads to more committed and motivated employee while negative emotional display often results in decreasing performance and commitment and affect staff retention (Bolton, 2000; Faisandier, 2008; L. W. Lam & Lau, 2012).

As contract breach or violation is seen to be inevitable at some point of time and ‘emotional experience often persists longer than memory for neutral experience’ (Mickley Steinmetz, Schmidt, Zucker, & Kensingger, 2012, p. 1), instead of answering how to avoid such violation, it is more important to understand the possible emotion generated and their source and subsequent reaction as experienced by the talent and actions to be considered by the organizations. Feild & Harris (1991) revealed the top 6 frustration sources in Table 2.9 faced by participants in fast track programmes. These sources match closely with the sources of stress including intrinsic to the job, role in organization, career development, relationships at work and involvement in decision-making, affecting satisfaction and commitment of the talent to organization (Johnson et al., 2005).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frustration source</th>
<th>Mean*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Lack of career planning</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Lack of job challenge</td>
<td>4.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Difficulties in finding a desirable job after the fast-track programme</td>
<td>4.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Uncertainty regarding job assignment</td>
<td>4.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Lack of being given job responsibilities</td>
<td>4.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Lack of having important and significant jobs</td>
<td>4.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Rating scale: 1= not at all and 6 = very great extent

Table 2.9 Frustration sources from Feild & Harris (1991)

The author suggests that these frustrations are generated due to deviations from the original expectations of the participants which form part of the psychological contract.
Although research indicates that experiencing disappointment at work can bring learning to an individual (Clancy, Vince, & Gabriel, 2012), the capability to be aware and manage these emotions are important. While some research indicates that managers should response to staff emotion and feelings (Faisandier, 2008), having line manager helping out negative emotional experience of the staff may not be the best approach (Toegel, Kilduff, & Anand, 2013).

Extant literature has suggested the importance of TM in relation to organizational effectiveness whereas there is a lack of literature reviews relating to the effectiveness of the TM process itself. Most of the literature reviewed has mainly discussed about the current TM practices in the industry and indicate a lack of research in assessing the effectiveness of the TM process. In addition, effectiveness should be assessed from the perspective of the talent. Achieving the career goal is one aspect while understand their emotional path may pose new insight to the overall TM effectiveness.

2.10 Talent Management in the Regional and Local Scenario

Previous sections have discussed TM from an internal perspective where talent is the strategic resource and TM is the strategic process of an organization. As competitive advantage is also affected by the external market, this section presents the global / regional environment and a brief account of its TM process, followed by the discussion of the local situation and characteristics of talents in Hong Kong.

2.10.1 Talent management in the region

Globalization, demographics and demand and supply gap lead to concern of talent shortage in both developed and emerging markets (Tarique & Schuler, 2010). Talent management is a worldwide issue and the situation is even more acute in Asian. By 2020, it is anticipated that middle class consumers in Asia may represent 42% of the global consumption (Silva, 2012, p. 43). Most western multinational companies are expanding business by entering and investing in emerging markets especially China and India (as cited in Hartmann, et al., 2010). Adding Russia, ‘these three countries are the fastest growing new international assignment destinations while they also present the highest level of assignment difficulty’ (Farndale, Scullion, & Sparrow, 2010, p. 164).
This implies that the demand for internationally experienced talent to take up critical roles in this part of the world will remain high.

As in China, economic growth is expected to reach 7.7% year-on-year from 2014 to 2018 and a 2009 study by the McKinsey Global Institute estimated that China will need 75,000 senior managers with a proven global perspective and expertise over the next 10 to 15 years while there are only 3,000 to 5,000 individuals who meet the criteria currently. Many global companies have established their business in China but lack talented employees to operate the business and less than 10% of university graduates in China possess the skills required by them (Malila, 2007; Nankervis, 2013). ‘The growing need of talented managers in China represents by far the biggest management challenge facing multinationals and locally owned businesses alike’ (Silva, 2012, p. 41). With the current speed of business growth in China, the learning curve for its managers is not developing as fast as the market demands. At the same time, localization strategies also fail or take much longer time than expected (Farndale, et al., 2010). However, this does not mean that talent from other part of the world will be moving towards the China market because ‘language and cultural competencies are still must–haves for most roles in China’ (Silva, 2012, p. 42). At the same time, qualified Chinese employees used to be of relatively high mobility (Hartmann, et al., 2010) but this is no longer the case (Farrell & Grant, 2005).

This shortage of mobile talent becomes more acute because of the concern for repatriation arrangements (Tarique & Schuler, 2010). In some cases, talents in the regional countries are not visible to head offices due to geographical distance while in other cases, the regional countries try to keep their own talent and do not want to expose them (Mellahi & Collings, 2010). All these factors have made the talent issue the top agenda of many companies. To improve the TM effectiveness, organizations need to prepare their mobile talent by providing pre-departure training or socialization programmes in the new countries, reinforcing the managerial ties among the talents within the organization as well as to support through ‘greater contact with the elite of other organizations’ (Li & Scullion, 2010). More effort needs to be made to increase the visibility of the talents, possibly through the talent (data) management system and to encourage self-initiated movers to be involved in international assignments (Farndale, et al., 2010).
The considerations in the global TM process are thus slightly different from the typical TM process. For the former, identification phase needs to take into account the talent mobility factor; a socialization or familiarization phase is vital before the development phase of the TM process. For the retention phase, the repatriation arrangement is a major consideration for the talents. Research indicates that only ‘some 26% of the respondents reported being promoted upon reentry whereas some 20% reported being demoted’ (Oddou & Mendenhall, 1991, p. 28). An effective global TM process thus needs to have an effective reentry support and preparation, matching the new skills and competencies as acquired by the talent from overseas exposure with the appropriate assignment when they return back home. For both TM and global TM, it is suggested that Human Resources plays the role of the champion of the process and facilitate implementation of the above-mentioned measures whereas the organization as a whole needs to promote a talent management mindset (Adamson, et al., 1998; Ashton & Morton, 2005).

2.10.2 Talent management in Hong Kong

Locally, talent shortage has also become more pressing in Hong Kong. Back in 1997, Hong Kong experienced brain drain as people, mostly top talent emigrated due to political concerns (Shelton & Quok, 1990). Recently, government statistics indicate a continually upward trend of corporations establishing offices in Hong Kong and the number of foreign-owned companies run by local talent rises rapidly (Farh, Leung, & Tse, 1995). While these companies are reinforcing their localization strategy and developing talent as local leaders (Dunnagan, Maragakis, Schneiderjohn, Turner, & Vance, 2013), being ‘one of the lowest birth rate in the world at 0.9 per female (Tatli, Vassilopoulou, & Özbilgin, 2013, p. 544) also poses the inherent limitation for Hong Kong to grow and resolve the talent issue on its own.

The opportunities to work in China and the shortage of talent in Hong Kong have put talent management on top of the agenda of corporations in Hong Kong. Besides these external factors, it is also important to look at the more intrinsic aspects relating to culture and value system of talents in Hong Kong. These affect talent’s expectations and behaviours and are closely related to the effectiveness of talent management.
Although sharing the same origin, people in Hong Kong and mainland China have developed different set of values, culture and work attitude (Kwok, 2012). For instance, Hong Kong workforce used to work for longer hours and they are more individualistic (Farh, et al., 1995). Research indicates Hong Kong has a pluri-cultural identify (Busiol, 2012; Mak & Chan, 2013). It has developed its own unique culture but still influenced by the Chinese way of thinking (Mak & Chan, 2013). The values of talent in Hong Kong are changing from the previously more collectivistic in the 1960s to become more individualistic (M. Lam et al., 2014) in 2013 possibly due to family size. ‘The smaller the family size, the more the child is allowed to do his or her own things’ leading to individualism (Triandis, 1989, p. 510). This implies that nowadays, talent is looking more for personal achievement and independence. Also, though the younger generation in Hong Kong may not fully identify themselves with the Confucian dynamism in terms of acceptance of hierarchy, the traditional Confucian values relating to humanistic, harmony, considerations of others are still highly valued in the modern Chinese society (K. Kamoche, 2003; L. H. Lin & Ho, 2009). Such harmony applies to the society, work environment and family. In fact, leaders in Hong Kong believe that harmony is basic for happiness though it is not the sole factor (Chan et al., 2011). On the other hand, family value and other cultural norms have led to a sharp decrease of women working at senior levels (Tatli, et al., 2013). All these may bring about a unique set of expectations and retention factors for talents in Hong Kong and talent management is an important issue to explore for Hong Kong to maintain its competitiveness.

2.11 Research Gap

Based on VRIO framework, talent is argued to be the strategic resource different from the general human capital pool. Organization’s capability including decision, processes, practices, policies etc. to orchestrate all the resources is affected by but not limited to HR capability. While there are many studies about RBT, research around its application is still developing.

Talent as individual with cognition, emotion and the free will exerts a view on how they perceive the ‘O-organization’ at individual level. A clear understanding of their needs, expectations and how the met or unmet of such may affect their emotions and reactions is important aspect under HR capability.
Understanding the expectations of the talents is an important element that has been largely neglected in previous research. Majority of the literature reviewed is about the TM practices adopted by companies, mostly with research data collected from HR and/or senior management teams. There is very limited research on what may be the initial impact on the talents’ feelings and the subsequent actions due to either the matching or un-matching of expectations. Inputs from the talents’ points of view, on what they expect, how they see and feel about the development activities and the processes, etc. are lacking. The major research work that has discussed the expectations of the Graduate and the company was conducted by Arnold and Davey in 1992 and their follow up survey of the same group of interviewees plus new ones in 1994. Findings reveal that there is not much change in terms of reasons for graduates to join their companies while the latter research investigated more into commitment and motivation of these graduates.

A lot has changed during the past 20 years and a comparison of expectations of the current generation of talents with those 20 years ago may shed some light on the contemporary TM focus. Feild & Harris (1991) were one of the few to have identified frustrations of high potential talents about the fast-track programmes. The author shares the same concern and has attempted to examine the conduct of the high-potential talents in Hong Kong. In addition, the retention of talents is often fused into the more general issue about employee retention. The author argues that there should be a distinction between general employees and talent in relation to their expectations and the pull and push factors regarding the intention for them to stay or quit. The findings can be compared with other countries.

While it has been pointed out that the impact of the psychological contract is important to talent management, research works that have studied it have often related to employees in general; seldom have they been specific to talents. The existing literatures have a few studies on the emotional side of contract violation in general but not much about contract fulfilment. Without this feelings aspect, one cannot achieve a comprehensive and holistic study about TM and research relating to this is inadequate.

Most of the extant research on TM has been conducted in US or Europe. Only a limited number of researchers have covered S. Africa and Asia. Hong Kong, though an integral
part of China has a comparatively longer history on talent management and therefore is an ideal testing ground to further explore this subject. The findings will provide a good reference for companies in Hong Kong and China to enhance overall TM effectiveness.

The current study fills in the research gap by providing a biangular viewpoint from the perspective of talent relating to both the system and the emotional aspects of TM and offering empirical evidence of RBT within the scope of talent management.

2.12 Purpose of Study

This research thus aims to explore factors affecting the talent management effectiveness from identification, development to retention phases from the talents’ perspectives in private corporations in Hong Kong. Based on the literature review, a contemporary talent management model, Figure 2.12(a) which depicts a dynamic TM process, perpetuating a cyclical form is suggested.

Talent management (TM) process

Organization outcome

Positive Organizational Support (POS):
Culture of Leadership Development / Performance Management practices

Figure 2.12(a) The Talent Management Framework: A system approach (From the perspective of the organization)
The figure illustrates that the key TM process includes identification, development and retention of talents. The objective and outcome of TM is to enhance the organization’s competitive edge for growth and long run survival. On boarding or pre-departure training is suggested to be of prime importance if the talent needs to move from one region/country to another with a different culture. Mentors as assigned to talents at the development phase create a higher visibility of the talents and help them to be identified in the talent pool for next talent review. The mentor relationship also plays a significant role in career advancement of the talents and helps retain them.

Talents retained then go through the succession planning review leading to career advancement. However, this outcome is not guaranteed and may discontinue at some point of time (as indicated in dotted lines) as the opportunities for positions at higher management level become fewer as talent moves up the corporate ladder. The overall effectiveness of TM is found to be affected by positive organizational support (POS). Literature reviews suggest that POS includes the company’s culture in leadership development, support from direct supervisors and performance management practices. Talent at different hierarchical levels goes through the same process when advancing from, for example an individual contributor (entry level) to a team leader (next level) and to an operational leader. This framework is applicable to local, regional and global scenarios.

On the other hand, as suggested in previous literatures, based on the psychological contract theory, talent goes through different emotional stages when experiencing the different phases of the TM cycle. The talent’s feelings and perceptions throughout the different phases are thus suggested to play an important role affecting the effectiveness of the TM process. Based on Figure 2.12(a), a mirrored process, Figure 2.12(b) from the talent’s viewpoint is proposed. In addition to the ‘system’ element, the current research also explores the mindset of the talent in terms of their feelings and expectations with regard to an effective TM process. At each phase, different feelings develop depending on whether the talent perceives that the ‘promise’ has been realized or violated, and to what extent. Figure 2.12(b) depicts the TM model with a human feelings side and the author proposes that corporations need to manage both the system and the emotional aspects in order to achieve an effective TM approach.
2.13 Research Questions

Based on the literature review, research gaps have been identified. The research problem is: **Talent Management: From the perspective of management trainees in Hong Kong.**

The broad research issue is about what constitute the effectiveness of talent management and why from the perspective of the talents in terms of the system and the emotional aspects. The study consists of four broad research questions:

**Research question 1: What are the expectations of the talent and have these been realized?**

The purpose of this question is to identify the expectations of the talent when they join a company and what happens if the expectations are met or remain unmet? The answer is expected to provide inputs on expectations of talents as different from those of the general human resource pool. Comparison with other countries may also contribute to
the trend of talent expectations and direction on new psychological contract. It will also contribute to the emotional side of the psychological contract and the TM framework in case of any contract breach or fulfilment.

**Research question 2: What activities and methods are effective /ineffective for developing talents and the rationale from the viewpoint of them?**

This question aims to identify the effectiveness of the different development approaches and how this can be improved. As literature reveals that talents are looking for learning and development opportunities, this is an important element affecting expectation and the overall effectiveness of TM. The answer to this question will help the author better understand how the development phase contributes to the whole TM process and thus the HR capability in orchestrating various resources under this important TM phase. It also helps companies to allocate limited resources effectively for talent development.

**Research question 3: What factors encourage the talents to stay or leave the companies?**

Findings from this question will contribute to the global inventory of factors affecting retention and understanding of these factors will contribute to talent retention strategies. The result will be analyzed with reference to the available literature to fill the knowledge gap.

An understanding of what affect the talent’s intention to stay or leave is also an inevitable component affecting HR capability. The goal of TM is to ensure a continuous supply of talent in the succession pipeline to fill the critical role so that the company can sustain its long term growth and survival. Numerous studies have confirmed that retention rate is an appropriate indicator for ROI and ‘building an HR capability based on retention capacity is a preliminary step in the creation of HR strategic asset’ (K. Kamoche, 1996, p. 217).

**Research question 4: What elements further contribute to the effectiveness of TM as a strategic process in the organization?**

Talent shortage and retention is a worldwide challenge. Companies have been looking for ways to improve the overall effectiveness, mostly focusing on the system and process issues. By tapping into the talents’ viewpoints on TM effectiveness, looking
into both the system and the emotional aspects, the author expects to provide new insight into the TM framework and enhance the TM effectiveness for the organizations. At the same time, it will contribute to the RBT by identifying how the ‘O-organization’ operates at the firm level, shedding light to the enhancement of HR capability.

2.14 Limitations and Key Assumptions

The TM model proposed is based on extant literatures which mostly consist of studies of the more senior level pipelines. At the same time, the feelings aspect is lacking in general. It is assumed that there are similarities in the TM model regardless of the hierarchy levels. The key assumption is that this cycle is repeated at the next middle or senior talent management level as indicated earlier in this chapter. Also, at the entry level pipeline, as this is an important career phase of the trainees for whom it is the first job in most cases, it is highly likely that they will have a clear memory about it. The limitation mainly lie in the openness and willingness of the interviewees to reveal their perceptions and their feelings and how much of these are still vivid in their minds as described in the introductory chapter.

2.15 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the importance of TM from a resource-based view, provided fundamental knowledge about psychological contract and put forward a model for TM. RBV provides the VRIO framework for the study of TM and insight on measuring the TM effectiveness while further study on specific individual behaviour is needed in order to establish the micro-foundation for RBV. Previous study on psychological contract is mostly about violations and the author opines that contract fulfilment should also be an area of importance. On the other hand, research for TM often focuses on the system dimension. The author opines that exploring the emotional aspect of the talents is an inevitable part of the whole TM framework since TM is about humans and talent is the strategic resource. These major areas constitute the research gap. Definitely, studying TM in the Asian region also contributes to the global perspective of TM. The current study is also one of the early attempts interlinking psychological contract and the RBV framework for the study of TM.
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the research methodology addressing the four research questions derived from the literature review gap. They are:

(1) What are the expectations of the talent and have these been realized?
(2) What activities and methods are effective /ineffective for developing talents and the rationale behind from the viewpoints of them?
(3) What factors encourage the talents to stay or leave the companies?
(4) What elements further contribute to the effectiveness of TM as a strategic process in an organization?

The chapter is organized around six topics covering research philosophy, research design, research sample, the data collection method, data analysis and data reliability and validity. Three major research paradigms are discussed to provide the rationale for selecting qualitative methodology and for adopting semi-structured interview as the method. Sampling procedures, ethical considerations when collecting data and lastly, limitations of the research methodology are discussed.

3.2 Research Philosophy

There are three philosophical positions for social science research, namely, positivism, interpretivism and critical paradigm. Positivism assumes the social world exists externally and objectively. Knowledge about the social world is based on independent observations about the facts and there should be ‘causal explanations and fundamental laws that explain regularities in human social behavior’ (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2008, p. 58). The contrasting epistemology is anti-positivism and its two paradigms, interpretivism and the critical paradigm. The former argues that an individual’s perception is reality and one needs to understand the subjective meaning from the standpoint of participating individuals. It is thus ‘concerned with the empathic understanding of human actions’ (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 16) rather than identifying the existence of any causal relationship. ‘Interpretive research thus describes how different meanings held by different persons produce and sustain a sense of truth’
The critical paradigm assumes that ‘reality is shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender values’ (Scotland, 2012, p. 13) and the truth or knowledge varies by situations. Reality is alterable by human actions and the critical researcher aims to create a catalytic agenda for change.

These different epistemologies imply that different methodologies may be adopted for the study of the society and its manifestations. With the different sets of assumptions, according to positivism, ‘experiments that allow key factors to be measured precisely in order to test predetermined hypotheses’ (Easterby-Smith, et al., 2008, p. 63) are the best way to discover the truth. The critical paradigm seeks multiple perspectives and participants are involved in research processes such as designing the questionnaire or analyzing the information. Often qualitative and interpretive methodologies are used ‘to uncover divergent meanings held by groups in power-laden relationships’ (Rynes & Gephart, 2004, p. 457). For interpretivism, in order to acquire an empathic understanding, one needs to immerse oneself into the setting to understand the meaning of people’s behaviours. Thus, qualitative research is also more appropriate as ‘it emphasizes discovering novel or unanticipated findings’ and there is ‘the possibility of altering research plans in response to such serendipitous occurrence’ (Bryman, 1984, p. 78). However, as suggested by Easterby-Smith, et al. (2008, p. 83), while different methodologies are primarily associated with different epistemologies, some methods can be used to cover a range of epistemologies; epistemology is a philosophical issue while the choice of methodology is more of a technical issue (Bryman, 1984).

3.3 The Research Design

This research explores what constitutes an effective TM process from the talents’ viewpoints. It investigates both the system aspect as well as individual feelings in different TM phases. With its explorative nature and the purpose of trying to understand individuals’ perspectives and feelings, it is interpretive in nature. At the same time, the research objective contains some elements of the critical paradigm as it does aim to create an agenda for change based on the findings on enhancing the effectiveness of the talent management process. Moreover, viewpoints of two different groups, i.e. the trainees and the companies are sought.
As the strengths of quantitative methodology are about objectivity and causality, it is more appropriate for positivism and thus not considered for the current research. Rather, qualitative methodology and in specific, the in-depth understanding offered by qualitative interview is identified as the appropriate method as it can produce rich data from an individual’s experience and provide valuable contextual information to explain the TM framework. This section thus focuses on the relevance of the use of semi-structured interview and the development of the interview protocol.

3.3.1 Semi-structured interview

Qualitative research interview is considered an appropriate method because it ‘seeks to cover both a factual and a meaning level’ and it has the characteristics of being ‘descriptive’, ‘specificity’, ‘deliberate naïveté’ and ‘focus’ (Kvale, 1996, pp. 32-34) which suit the needs of the current research. Individual talents are asked to describe their unique specific experiences and personal feelings rather than being asked for a general view. The research aims to explore talents’ viewpoints, gathering rich data focusing on a theme and not to provide predetermined answers to the research questions.

Structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews exist in a form of continuum (Qu & Dumay, 2011). The structured interview is designed to invite rational responses while the unstructured interview aims to ‘explore the inner life world of the interviewees’ (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 245). The semi-structured method is in-between the two and ‘it facilitates rich description and detailed accounts of the participants’ experiences and perspectives on a phenomenon’ (Baumbusch, 2010, p. 255) which matches the key objectives of the current research. Thus, amongst these three approaches, semi-structured interview is considered as the most appropriate method.

The semi-structured interview includes a set of pre-designed broad questions guiding the conversation while supported by scheduled and unscheduled probes that encourage the participant to expand the answers and offer the freedom to talk about something interesting or important to him or her (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006), generating new themes that the author may not be aware of or ‘redirect them back to the main topic if they get sidetracked’ (Baumbusch, 2010, p. 256). The interviewer can invite the fullest
response from interviewees while the latter can respond using their own terms and languages. This method is also flexible and allows openness and richness in the data collection process, especially on the disclosure of important but often hidden parts of the human and organizational behaviours. ‘One of the strengths of the semi-structured interview is that it facilitates a strong element of discovery, while its structure focus allows an analysis in terms of commonalities’ (Gillham, 2008, p. 72).

The interview is on a one-on-one basis. Group interviews or focus group is not preferred as the research questions are about an individual’s personal experience and feeling. With one-on-one interview, ‘the personal worldview of the interviewee is explored in detail’ (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000, p. 46). With group interaction, it is more about facilitating the participants to interact with each other, comparing their experiences or sharing impressions of what the others say regarding a specific topic. This is not the objective of the current research. To summarize, ‘with the single respondent, far richer detail about personal experiences, decision and action sequences can be elicited, with follow up probe questions focusing on motivation about the particular circumstances of the person’ (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000, p. 48).

As the data collection process took three months to complete and there were a number of interviews, to bring out the benefit of the semi-structured interview, a protocol was developed for the collection of data in a systematic and consistent manner as the same questions were asked of all those involved, and the pre-designed questions ‘go through a process of development to ensure their topic focus’ (Gillham, 2008, p. 70).

3.3.2 The interview protocol

A protocol has been designed to ensure that the interview remains focused within the broad framework while providing a degree of freedom to the interviewees. The guiding questions and the flow were developed with reference to research relating to talent management (Brannick, 2001) and on semi-structured interviews (Baumbusch, 2010; Pathak & Intratat, 2012; Roulston, 2010). The final interview scheduled was then developed with the experience of the author. Guided questions were re-written from the perspective of the trainee with reference to concepts culled from the literature.
As the research framework is built around the concept of psychological contract between the talents and the company, two sets of interview schedules were designed. The one for talents aims to seek inputs about their own experiences, expectations and feelings throughout the three TM phases by asking the three broad research questions (RQ) in a sequential and logical order. Interviewees were prompted to express their views further when necessary. The other interview schedule for senior executives aimed to collect data relating to the TM system, processes and expectations of the companies. While the main research focuses on the talents' perspectives, expectations of the senior executives are important inputs for a holistic view and for forming a comprehensive picture of an effective TM framework in terms of the system and the emotional aspects. (See Appendix A for the full interview pack)

Both interview protocols were designed with reference to the five stages of the interview process suggested by Baumbusch (2010). First, there is the opening stage which serves as more than a social gesture. It aims to put the interviewee at ease and to state explicitly the purpose of the interview. Confidentiality is stressed. Special attention has been paid in the interview protocol for building a rapport between the interviewee and the researcher. As suggested by Bauer & Gaskell (2000), the topic of discussion is chosen by the interviewer while the interviewees may not have given much thought to it. They may be defensive or answer in ways that look like the norm. In order to engage the interviewees, it is important to create rapport as early as possible. In the second stage, it shifts to more in-depth questions which are more focused on facts and in the third stage, the more difficult questions relating to the interviewee’s emotional response are asked. In the forth stage, the interview returns to the less stressful questions and to prepare for the closing. The last stage is the closure of the whole interview. It is more than just showing an appreciation to the interviewees’ time and input, but also helps secure follow up clarifications on the content later if necessary. Table 3.3.2 indicates how the questions for the talents flow from the factual to the more difficult questions about the interviewee’s feelings.

With the research design in place, the next thing to consider is the research sample. This includes who the target interviewees are and how many samples should there be.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research questions addressed</th>
<th>*Question # (extract)</th>
<th>Stages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the expectations of the talent and have these been realized?</td>
<td>1. Could you please tell me…</td>
<td>2nd stage with more factual questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| | 2. What selection processes did you go through when first joined?  
- How do you find the process?  
- How did you feel when you got the confirmation that you’ll be recruited? | Transit from the factual to the 3rd stage |
| | 3. What were the factors that make you take the offer and join the company?  
- What was your expectation at that time?  
- What has the company promised you about this role?  
- What is the number one expectation you had when you joined the company but that has not been met? How do you feel? | Having the more difficult questions that may have emotional response |
| What activities and methods are effective/ineffective for developing the talents from the viewpoint of the talents? | 4. Can you describe (in details) your development journey since you joined? | 2nd stage  
- questions are more factual |
| | 5. How do you find these activities (as mentioned under Q4)? Are they helpful? If yes, in what way? | Transition to the 3rd stage |
| What factors encourage the talents to stay or leave the companies? | 6. What do you find discouraging about working here? What happened? | Having the more difficult questions which may have emotional response |
| | 7. How about challenges? | |
| | 8. By now, in the 2nd (or later year), what is your career aspiration? | |
| | 9. What encourage you to stay with the company? | |
| | 10. What do you think may make your quit the current role? | |
| What affect the overall effectiveness of the TM process? | 11. Assuming you have absolute power (control). What may be the ONE thing you want to change regarding the following? | Return to the less stressful questions (less personal) |

*The opening and the closing stages are not included in the table*

Table 3.3.2 The interview protocol indicating the question flow and stages of the interview process
3.4 Research Sample

The target research sample was the management trainees (MT) who fitted in with the definition of talent. As discussed in Chapter 2, talents in organizations refers to a pool of employees critical in terms of either competencies or position for the growth and sustainability of the organizations; and the company allocates comparatively more resources to them than to the general employees. This pool included not just the senior but also the supervisory or newly graduated employees. In Hong Kong, terms like management trainee, graduate trainee or executive trainee are often used interchangeably. These trainees were all university graduates, having no more than 2 years’ work experience (as based on information from two most popular recruitment websites in Hong Kong: hk.jobsdb.com and classifiedpost.com) and they all needed to go through rounds of interviews and recruitment selection exercises in order to be recruited as trainees. For the sake of convenience, the term management trainee is used to represent the group.

The targeted samples were trainees who had been employed for 18 months and to six years by their respective companies. This is because the minimum duration of the MT programme for most companies in Hong Kong is at least 18 months while they typically end by the third year though some may last for as long as eight years or more. In order to capture the richness of feelings, viewpoints on the TM process, expectations, and any changes throughout the TM phases, selected participants need to have gone through a substantial part of the management trainee programme. This is an important criterion because perceptions of employees’ obligations to the company may change and the change ‘will be less rapid after the early years since employees will become better able to anticipate the predict employers’ actions and responses’ (Robinson, et al., 1994, p. 150). At the same time, the trainees need time to reflect and be aware of whether certain development activities are useful to them and if so, in what way. They can better justify what activities are helpful and what needs to be changed with reference to their actually work challenges and they may take some years to get that experience and exposure. In addition, a suggested research area about the psychological contract theory is to investigate how employees’ perceptions of obligations continue to change after their first two years in an organization (Robinson, et al., 1994). Thus, instead of having sample trainees who have worked for only a few months or a year, the sample targets
those who have been in the same company for up to six years. This brings richness to the data with a longer time span and partly serves the purpose of the longitudinal approach which is not taken in this research due to limited resources and timeframe. The sample is thus targeted for an individual trainee who satisfies the following criteria:

a. Have joined a management / graduate /executive trainee programme of a company in Hong Kong with regional / international operations
b. Have been with that same company for at least 18 months and no more than 6 years.
c. Can read and understand English without difficulty
d. Can communicate fluently in either English or Cantonese

Besides the management trainees, another sample group is the senior executives of the companies. They are expected to describe the TM issues in the company and so need to be in the position for at least one year. The sample is targeted for those satisfying all of the following criteria:

a. Is responsible for talent management matters of the company
b. Has been in that position for at least one year
c. Can read and understand English without difficulty
d. Can communicate fluently in either English or Cantonese

Data were first collected from two participants as a pilot run and then from another 20 participants from different business sectors. Although an individual’s experience is somewhat unique, its formation is an outcome of a social process which is shared among individuals. This implies that there comes a point of saturation where no additional new experience is found. On the other hand, analyzing the interview data was time consuming as the author needed to immerse into the data to identify the linkage and recall what has happened during the interview. Thus, for a single researcher, the proposed number of interviews is ‘somewhere between 15 to 25’ (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000, p. 43).

Eight senior executives responsible for TM were interviewed, adding up to a total of 30 interviewees. Previous studies using semi-structured interview have reported similar sample sizes, ranging from 20 – 30 (Doherty, et al., 1997; Hartmann, et al., 2010; Illes, et al., 2010; Morgan & Giacobbi, 2006).
3.5 Data Collection Method

Participants were referred by human resources practitioners or were contacted through the author's personal connection. Emails were sent to the potential participant together with the Personal Information Statement, followed up by telephone to explain the objectives and seek their support. They were invited to participate at the interview on voluntary basis and those willing needed to confirm by email. Immediately prior to the interview, participants were invited to sign a Consent Form, including consent to be audio-recorded. This same process applied to both the trainees and the senior executives for both the pilot and the main interviews. In addition, organizational consent was obtained by sending the Organization Consent Form to the appropriate official of the organization. Approvals from organization were obtained before conducting any interview.

3.5.1 Pilot interview

In order to ensure that the interview schedule for the management trainees had the right focus, two pilot interviews were conducted satisfying all the pre-set criteria and adhering to the process described.

Two pilot interviews took place on September 28, 2013 and lasted for 1½ hours each. This served several key purposes. First, it allowed the author to get a feel of the whole interview process including the flow of the questions, the wordings, the time required, when to prompt and if any additional questions were required or some of the questions needed to be deleted (Gillham, 2008). Second, based on the two pilot interviews, a preliminary content analysis was conducted. The content was categorized and this important step helped the author judge whether the questions asked were providing the kind of information or answers required for the research. The interview schedule was also slightly refined afterwards.

3.5.2 The main interview

Subsequent to the pilot interviews, the main interviews were conducted for 22 management trainees and eight senior executives coming from different industry
sectors. The data collection process followed the same rules as in the pilot interview. Interviews were arranged and held at a convenient time and place, mostly in English and some in Chinese, as preferred by the participants. Broad questions were given to the interviewees beforehand as recommended by Pathak & Intratat (2012). Most interviews for trainees lasted for 1½ hours and it started with an opening greeting and introduction of the purpose of the research. The ethical concerns of the interviewees were addressed and once all the concerns or queries had been clarified, the core questioning part began. Interviewees were required to discuss their expectations, experiences, and perception of the development programmes provided by the company, their career aspirations and reasons for them to stay with the company. They also described their feelings including the inspiring and frustrating moments since joining the trainee programme. The interviews for the senior executives lasted from 30 to 60 minutes each and they were asked to describe their current TM process and their expectation of the talents; things they felt proud in the current system and challenges encountered.

All interviews were audio-taped with written consent of the participants prior to the interview. The author still took field notes which were used later to cross check the audio taped information. The author also noted down the body language, specific gestures or expressions of the interviewees which were parts of the inputs of the interview. The author is an experienced observer for development centre based on her own profession and this helps the recording of non-verbal signals appropriately. The audio recordings were transcribed and when needed, translated by the author and sent to participants for verification unless the latter explicitly expressed that it was not necessary. On the other hand, follow up phone calls or emails were made for clarification or further information when necessary. Once the transcriptions were confirmed, these were analyzed by coding and grouped into themes using content analysis as discussed in the data analysis section.

3.5.3 Quality of interview data

The quality of the data collected affects the outcome of the research. Careful planning and preparation are the initial steps to ensure data quality and these are achieved through careful design of the interview protocol. The question that remains is how to
ensure the interviewees are providing a true and complete picture of the issues discussed. Skill and knowledge of the interviewer are found to be of prime importance and the author being an experienced interviewer in her profession is proficient in the techniques as described below.

As suggested in extant research (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Kvale, 1996; Pathak & Intratat, 2012; Qu & Dumay, 2011), several techniques help enhance the interview quality. First is rapport building which encourages quality response and generates counter-perspectives on an issue. Second, it is the thought provoking interjections which require listening and questioning skills as well as expert knowledge of the interviewer of the topic discussed. Third, it is the critical event analysis which requires the researcher to probe further and encourage the interviewee to describe specific incidents in detail to illustrate perspectives rather than just abstract descriptions. Forth, the interviewer needs to stay neutral and avoid any leading questions or offering opinion through any non-verbal body language. Lastly, silence with pause ‘which allows the interviewees to have time to associate and reflect and break the silence themselves with significant information’ (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 249).

In addition to the above techniques, precautions relating to confidentiality and the ethics consideration also help.

3.5.4 Ethical considerations

This research was conducted in a manner consistent with the policy and guidelines of the University of Newcastle. Adhering to ethics was approved by the University’s Human Research Ethics Committee before the research commenced. Ethical issues relating to informed consent, confidentiality, data security and identity of the researcher are fully considered.

‘Informed consent entails informing the research subjects about the overall purpose of the investigation and the main features of the design, as well as of any possible risks and benefit from participation in the research project’ (Kvale, 1996, p. 112). These were stated in the Personal Information Statement sent to the potential interviewees and the decision to participate was voluntary. After deciding to participate, interviewees were
free to withdraw at any time without having to give any reason up till they had confirmed the transcript or been given reasonable time and opportunity to do so.
Confidentiality implies that ‘private data identifying the subjects will not be reported’ (Kvale, 1996, p. 114) and also ‘making clear that there are restrictions on who has access to this information and for what purposes’ (Gillham, 2008, p. 13). Accordingly, personal particulars such as names and gender of the interviewees would not be revealed. Data were aggregated to present a general picture of the interview samples. Individual company’s industry nature was revealed but the name was replaced by a number. Interviewees can withdraw any data which may identify them.

Data security is another ethical issue that needs careful consideration. Information on paper was kept in a locked cabinet while the raw data were saved in the author’s personal computer which needs a password to access. A brand new tape recorder serving specifically for the interview was purchased instead of using a personal smart phone in order to avoid mixing the different personal information. Audio files were downloaded from the recorder to the author’s personal computer immediately after each interview. The tapes will be erased and the documents will be destroyed after five years.

Last, but not least, identity of the author is also considered as an ethical issue. For the interviews, the author identified herself in order to build trust and respect. Interviewees were offered specific channel to file any complaint or objections. Since the author is working at a conglomerate, some participants were from the group’s subsidiaries also. However, the author does not have any day-to-day business contact with such interviewees and there is no conflict of interest. On the whole, the ethical policies and procedures advised by the University of Newcastle have been followed.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

‘Content analysis is a method of analyzing written verbal or visual communication messages’ (as cited in Elo & Kyngas, 2008, p. 107) and it is ‘a process that begins with identification of concepts of interest that are represented through variables that depict them … and these variables may be deductively identified through existing theories and literature or inductively derived from the data’ (Sonpar & Golden-Biddle, 2008, p. 801). A directed approach to content analysis is adopted since the research aims ‘to validate
or extend conceptually a theoretical framework or theory’ (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1281). Content analysis procedures used here followed Insch, Moore & Murphy (1997) and that by Elo & Kyngas (2008). They are discussed under three broad stages below, namely the preparation stage, the organizing stage and the reporting stage (see Figure 3.6).

Data Preparation
(Steps 1 – 4)

1. Identify research questions
2. Identify texts to be examined
3. Specify unit of analysis
4. Preparation about category (Mental thinking)

Data Organization
(Pilot interviews)
Steps 5 – 8
5. Open coding
6. Coding sheet creation
7. Categorization
8. Abstraction

Data Reporting
(Steps 9 – 10)
9. Analyze data
10. Model, concept formulation

Figure 3.6  The Process of Content Analysis adopted from Insch, Moore & Murphy (1997) and Elo & Kyngas (2008)
3.6.1 Data preparation

The data preparation stage consists of four steps. It started as early as the time when the research questions are identified (Insch, et al., 1997) and ‘the method of analysis has to be decided or at least considered’ before the interviews are conducted (Kvale, 1996, p. 178). For step two, the ‘texts’ to be examined include the interview data as transcribed into written format as well as the non-verbal data as noted down by the author. For step three, it is about the unit of analysis. As the data were coming from interviews rather than from pre-existing documents such as annual report, the units of analysis include word, phrase and sentence while paragraph and the whole document were used at a lesser extent. Indeed, ‘specific words and phrases have substantially higher reliability than sentence, paragraphs and document’ (Insch, et al., 1997, p. 10). Step four is about the specification of categories which arise from the research questions and underlying theory on psychological contract. As there is no related Content Analysis Dictionary available, part of the categories for analysis was identified with reference to previous research studies (Arnold & Davey, 1992; Kerr-Phillips & Thomas, 2009). The use of pre-existing categories also increases the validity of the findings (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). A broad category of the current research is thus identified to be the key research questions. A preliminary categories looked something like below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ</th>
<th>Category (examples) / code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expectation</td>
<td>Met / Unmet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarify of career path</td>
<td>Learning and development opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of development</td>
<td>(1) Effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>programme</td>
<td>(2) To be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Negative</td>
<td>Mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) Effective</td>
<td>Post training support such as real projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) To be improved</td>
<td>Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talent retention</td>
<td>(1) Push factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Pull factor</td>
<td>- push to leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Pull factor</td>
<td>- encourage to stay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling</td>
<td>Supervisor’s attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) Positive</td>
<td>External opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Negative</td>
<td>Supportive leadership culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Neutral</td>
<td>Relationship with mentor / supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>Appreciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To be identified at the initial stage and the later stage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.6.2 Data organization

In the data organizing stage, the category and the coding scheme were tested based on the two pilot interviews. The whole process involved open coding, creating categories and abstraction.

First, as speaking and writing are different, ‘clarification of the transcribed material is needed. This was done ‘by eliminating superfluous material such as digressions and repetitions’ (Kvale, 1996, p. 190) and the author needed to differentiate the substantive statements and the redundant ones from the transcripts. There is actually no applies-to-all process for identifying what is substantive because it depends on the research questions (Gillham, 2008). Following this step, open coding was done. The transcribed material was read through three to four times by the author and as many headings as necessary were written down along the margin. ‘The headings are transferred to the coding sheet and categories are freely generated at this stage’ (Elo & Kyngas, 2008, p. 111). The development of a good coding scheme at the pilot interviews helped the later work. The coding scheme has categories that were exhaustive, meaning the relevant aspects were mutually exclusive in the different categories. It also has clear definitions with unambiguous examples (Sonpar & Golden-Biddle, 2008; White & Marsh, 2006). The code sheet enabled consistency in coding subsequent interviews and helped the interpretation of textual data.

Step four and the coding stage serve different purposes. The former is mainly to prepare the mindset of the author about what to look for in a broad framework. The open coding during the pilot interviews and the subsequent main interviews is the core process used to identify new themes, particularly the emotional aspects of the TM framework. Emerging themes and any text that has not been discussed within the suggested framework or specified in the preliminary coding were given a new code and constant comparative method was deployed to compare one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences regarding the participant’s perspectives on TM (Piansoongnern & Anurit, 2010).

The text and non-verbal data were coded following the same process for every interview. Some new themes emerged and naming the category is a creative work. The
essence is that the category heading ‘should indicate the character of the statements allocated to them – they should be descriptive and not too abstract’ (Gillham, 2008, p. 138). The whole process took an iterative approach. From the initial coding of the pilot interview to the tentative development of themes, the author has doubled checked the field notes and the confirmed transcription 3 to 4 times to verify the themes. Moreover, once the transcript of each interview has been confirmed, the tentative themes identified was compared across the new interview data to identify any new theme or any further sub-category of the theme or re-categorization was required to ensure that no category was too narrow or too broad and that the themes are relevant to the research questions.

3.6.3 Data reporting

‘The real purpose of qualitative research is not counting opinions or people but rather exploring the range of opinions, the different representation of the issue’ (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000, p. 6). The data reporting is mainly about the findings of commonality and range of opinions identified. Quantitative data is limited to sample size and certain word counts as deemed meaningful to the findings.

The data report also draws comparison of the current and previous research findings relating to the following aspects:

(a) Expectation and reasons for joining the company as compared to those identified by Arnold & Davey (1992) in UK;
(b) Retention factors as compared to those identified by Jymon, Stumpf & Doh in India and those by Kerr-Phillips & Thomas (2009) in S. Africa; and
(c) Overall effectiveness of the talent management process as compared to the suggested framework depicted in Figures 2.12 (a) & (b) based on literature review.

The whole coding process and the subsequent interpretation were done manually by the author. Manual analysis is widely used by scholars (Burchill & Pevalin, 2014; K. Kamoche, 2003; K Kamoche & Maguire, 2011) and it achieves the outcome and serves the purpose of this study. It also has the benefit of embracing the tone and voice of the interviewees when expressing their thoughts. Although computer-based content
analysis such as NVIVO is powerful, ‘such analyses are limited in what they can economically tally and what they can logically interpret’ (Thayer, Evans, McBride, Queen, & Spyridakis, 2007, p. 272).

3.7 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are important criteria for assessing the quality of research. However, the approaches in quantitative and qualitative research are not the same. The current section discusses the criteria in the context of content analysis for qualitative interview with the aim to identify ways to minimize subjectivity.

3.7.1 Reliability

For content analysis, reliability can be enhanced with stability or intra-rater reliability which refers to whether the same coder gets the same results with different trials (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). In the current research, the audio tapes were transcribed by the author herself. Each passage has been listened more than one time and often double checked for details and the exact wordings used by the interviewees. Moreover, the author has re-done the coding for the two pilot interviews after two weeks’ time to ensure stability reliability. From the transcription to the tentative development of themes, the author often revisited the transcript for verification of the theme. Lastly, in case of inconsistency, the author redefined the coding to clarify any ambiguity regarding the classification.

Inter-rater reliability or re-productivity (sometimes called inter-judge reliability) refers to whether there is consistency in different people coding the same text under the same category (Stemler, 2001). As the current research was done by a single researcher, deploying different coders was not practiced. However, based on the pilot interviews, a preliminary category table with definitions helped improve this criterion and this also ameliorates the problem of ambiguity of word meanings and category definitions as suggested by Weber (1990).

3.7.2 Validity
'Validity is defined as the extent to which an instrument measure what it purports to measure’ (Kassarjian, 1977, p. 15) and ‘content analysis relies heavily on face or content validity that can only be determined by the judgments of experts in the area’ (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992, p. 320). Downe-Wamboldt (1992) suggested that taking the results to the interviewee to have them validate the interpretation is a useful approach. To a certain extent, the semi-structured interview helps the author probe for further understanding including the intention and reasons.

Moreover, ‘ascertaining the validity of the interview transcripts is more complex than assuring their reliability’ and ‘there is no true, objective transformation from the oral to the written mode’ (Kvale, 1996, pp. 164, 166). In order to ensure transcripts convey a meaning similar to the actual scene, the author has noted down any noticeable non-verbal body language to the extent possible. In addition, the audio-tape was transcribed within 3 days after the interview and the first round of reading and coding was done within the next two days, when the memory of what had happened was still vivid.

3.7.3 Trustworthiness and authenticity

Some researchers opine that a qualitative researcher should be evaluated by different sets of criteria. Guba & Lincoln (as cited in Bryman & Bell, 2011) propose trustworthiness and authenticity as a different set of criteria for assessing qualitative studies. Trustworthiness comprises credibility, transferability (both relate to validity) and dependability (parallel to reliability) and confirmability (objectivity). For dependability, the author adopted an auditing approach, keeping a complete set of records of all raw data including the field notes, coding process, transcript, analysis decision, etc. Confirmability was achieved with the author acting in good faith and ‘has not overtly allowed personal values or theoretical inclinations to sway the conduct of the research and findings deriving from it’ (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 398).

Authenticity refers to fairness and it is important that interview data are not collected through one target group or just one representative in the organization. The current research was designed to collect data from both senior management and the trainees to represent a holistic view.
3.8 Limitations and Assumptions

The research methodology faced several limitations and assumptions in relation to the data collection method, the analysis and the target sample.

First, using semi-structured interview is comparatively more time consuming than the quantitative questionnaire survey and it relies very much on the researcher’s experience and skills while the element of subjectivity cannot be fully eliminated. Data were collected within a limited time frame and it is assumed that the interviewees were willing to tell the whole truth. To minimize this kind of limitation, the techniques of the interviewer are significant as described in the earlier section. Moreover, although the author is an experienced observer, taking field notes of what’s being said and the non-verbal signal can be demanding. ‘The human eye is not camera: it does not just record but selects and interprets. The meaning of behaviour is not self-evident: motives are the hidden dimensions’ (Gillham, 2008, p. 166). Knowing these limitations, the author asked the interviewees questions relating to what had been observed in a subtle way which helped the subsequent interpretation. Thirdly, four interviews were conducted in Chinese. When the interviewees expressed themselves with colloquial phrases, the author would probed further to clarity the meaning immediately. This was to avoid any assumption or misinterpretation of the terms. Interviewees were also given the opportunity to review and verify the translated material. Last but not least, although a longitudinal study may be a more ideal approach, due to limited time and resources, this is not adopted. Nevertheless, the research has minimized such limitation by targeting trainees joining the MT programme from 18 months up to six years. This allows the collection of abundant data relating to individual’s perception and feelings as expressed throughout the TM phases rather than just focusing on their initial first or second year. This serves the key purpose of the current study.

Relating to the analysis approach, ‘content analysis does not proceed in a linear fashion and is more complex and difficult than quantitative analysis’ (Elo & Kyngas, 2008, p. 113). The results depend very much on the skills, insight, analytical ability and the style of the researcher. It is also often seen as having the element of inherited subjectivity.
The study targets companies implementing MT programmes. In practice, companies can develop talent through other means which the current TM process has not considered. Also, the data drawn rely fully on individuals’ memory which may not capture the full picture. As these participants are still employed by the company, the majority will likely have views with positive connotation since the probability of staying with the company is high. It also means that they may hold back certain views for various reasons including the bias toward a socially desirable answer (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The awareness of the above limitations enabled the author to apply various means to reduce their impacts, including building rapport to create trust and openness during the interview.

3.9 Conclusion

Considering the explorative nature of the current research, qualitative research methodology is more appropriate. Semi-structured interview is adopted as this one on one interview allows the researcher to identify individual perspectives on the talent management process and their feelings throughout the process. Having a semi-structured approach enables a more relevant comparison of the findings with previous research framework and at the same time, it allows sufficient flexibility to ensure the interviewees can express their in-depth feelings freely. Pilot and main interviews were carried out and direct content analysis used to analyze the data. While every research design and method has its own constraint, the awareness of such limitations has helped the author to identify ways to minimize its impact. Quality outcome of the research data and thus the findings as discussed in the next chapter are enhanced.
CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter starts with a summary of the interviewees’ demographics. Findings are analyzed and the eight themes emerged from the interviews are then presented. This chapter focuses on the interview results while their implications will be discussed in the next chapter.

4.2 Respondent Demographics

30 interviews were conducted between September 2013 and January 2014, comprising 22 management trainees and eight senior executives from different industrial sectors including apparel manufacturing, banking and finance, construction, engineering, hotel, luxury goods, property, transportation and public utility as listed in Tables 4.2(a) & (b). Six of the senior executives held a human resources or people development role while two were from business functions. Management or graduate trainee (MT) programmes in these companies lasted for 24, 30 or 36 months. The luxury product company’s management trainee programme was targeted at management level while all others were at entry level.

Among the 22 trainees, 10 were female and 12 were male. 15 of them joined the management trainee programme as fresh graduates; five had full time previous work experience and two were recruited internally. Since joining the programme, three trainees had been with the companies for 18 months, 10 were in their third year, five in their fourth year, two had started their fifth year and two had just completed their fifth year. Only nine trainees were still undergoing the MT programme at the time of interview while the rest had been placed in permanent positions. Two trainees have been transferred out of the programme on their own choice before completing the programme.

Based on the interviews with these 30 participants, eight themes emerged relating to talent management in Hong Kong.
### Table 4.2 (a) Senior executive demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee (Sr. Executive)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Industry nature</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Property</td>
<td>Learning &amp; Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Textile and apparel manufacturing</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E3</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Luxury product goods</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>Learning &amp; Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Public Utility</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E6</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Learning &amp; Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E7</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E8</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Trainees still undergoing the MT programme at time of interview

### Table 4.2 (b) Trainee demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee (trainee)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Industry nature</th>
<th>Year joining the MT programme</th>
<th>Duration of the MT programme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>24 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Textile and apparel manufacturing</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>36 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>36 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Textile and apparel manufacturing</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>36 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*T5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Textile and apparel manufacturing</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>36 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*T6</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>24 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*T7</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>24 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*T8</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>24 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T9</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>36 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T10</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>36 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*T11</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>36 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>24 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T13</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>24 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T14 (transfer out)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Luxury product goods</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>36 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T15</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Public Utility</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>24 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Public Utility</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>24 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T17</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Public Utility</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>24 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T18 (transfer out)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Property</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>36 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*T19</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Banking &amp; Finance</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>30 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*T20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Banking &amp; Finance</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>30 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*T21</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Banking &amp; Finance</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>30 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*T22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Banking &amp; Finance</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>30 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Trainees still undergoing the MT programme at time of interview
4.3 The Eight Themes

Eight themes emerged from the analysis. Based on the nature and relatedness of the elements, they are categorized into the following: fast track advancement journey, learning and growth, caring family, ownership and recognition, choice, reciprocity and remuneration, communication and perception, integration and last but not least, the new generation talent (Table 4.3). Each is analyzed below.

4.3.1 Fast track advancement journey

This theme echoed throughout the whole TM process as an expectation of the trainees as well as the reason for them to join the company. It consists of three elements, namely advancement, fast track and the journey. First, advancement refers to the trainees’ expectation regarding promotion, having a better title and career prospect.

They told me about the career path and I find what they offer to me is attractive, something that meet my expectation. (T4)

...it seems that the career prospect looks good and the company is willing to invest in you. (T12)

After the completion of the programme, we’ll be given the managerial responsibility in the organization. (T22)

Findings revealed that all trainees were eager to have promotion after the trainee programme and they admitted that having a new title and salary increment were something they looked forward to. Positive feelings of appreciation, being grateful and motivated were displayed when they were promoted or placed in their expected role or department. On the other hand, if they perceived that the promotion opportunity was slim as ‘we see that not too many people are being promoted; not so many as we think’ (T4), they were disappointed. There tends to be a hidden message that this promotion opportunity is keeping them with the company and if it is not realized in the near future, it will turn into a push factor for them to leave.

For the expectation from the company and from ourselves was that we can be promoted after the end of the programme to the next level to be assistant manager but judging from the previous MT’s promotion, I think these expectations can hardly be met. (T2, in a disappointing tone)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme / category</th>
<th>Sub-category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fast track Advancement Journey</td>
<td>Fast track</td>
<td>- faster than others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advancement</td>
<td>- promotion opportunity, better title or prospect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Journey</td>
<td>- clarity on long term career path with time line and milestone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning and Growth</td>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>- opportunity to acquire new knowledge and skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- exposure to new challenges including in other industry or new role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- gaining insight of own strengths and weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>- personal growth and development including shift in attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring Family</td>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>- centre of attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- nice, friendly, supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- being taken care of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>- nurturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- forgiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- family tie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership and Recognition</td>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>- taking up of responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>- have sense of owning the task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- sense of achievement in proving own ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- feeling of being valued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- sense of importance and pride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- contributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice, Reciprocity and Remuneration</td>
<td>Choice</td>
<td>- perceived options or alternatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- self decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- with sense of appreciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
<td>- feel having the obligation not just to give back but it involves appreciation and thus the given back has no condition and individual may even lose something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Remuneration</td>
<td>- including salary, benefits, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication and Perception</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>- the purpose of communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception</td>
<td>- for understanding and information sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- include both implicit and explicit message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- how the message is perceived from the receiver’s end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration: People, System, Process, Tools</td>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>- the capability of the company to align and integrate people at all levels, system, processes effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- have proper system, process and tools in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Generation Talent</td>
<td>Next generation</td>
<td>- relating to Gen Y’s specific view</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 The Eight Themes
Having advancement is not sufficient. Fast track is of essence. This meant that trainees would be promoted to the next level faster than others. ‘I’ll have a good career path. That means it will be shorter than others and will be promoted quicker than others.’ (T2). They would constantly monitor and review their own progress and the career progression of ex-MTs and peers was often used as a yardstick.

If after the training, when compare with a general candidate, you find that your paths are very similar, you will be disappointed...For me, it just happens that there is another trainee who joined the company a year before. This serves as a very important reference to me. (T18)

The third element is the notion of a journey meaning it is a long term and continuous expectation with clear milestones on career path and a clear timeline. Trainees were looking for advancement not just right after the trainee programme but for better career prospect in the long run. ‘I have the general idea that they’re trying to train us to become middle level manager’ (T9). They also expected a clear career path with definite time line. It was found that trainees expected sizable company with good employer brand and growing business will offer a good career prospect to them. Employer brand thus affects the trainee’s perceptions on career prospects rather than as their direct expectations. Regardless of its importance, uncertainty and lack of career clarity were common among the trainees and this made them feel confused and worried. It is kind of not very fulfilling...I don’t really know exactly the time point that I’m going to be promoted. (T5).

The expectation of fast track, advancement and long term prospect was shared by the companies as well. All the senior executives would like to see the trainees grow into their top management team.

We want to train them up as talent. They can grow together with the company; the company has new challenges and we hope that they can take up and face them and have the ability to become senior management. (E8).

As I said in the very beginning, this is the first step of the whole talent pipeline that we are introducing. So obviously, hopefully in 20 years down the road, these MTs will become the management team of the company. (E2)

Trainees believed that sizable and growing company with good employer brand would offer a better career path for them. In reality, four companies clearly indicated that theirs were fast track programmes and ‘normally one will be senior officer after 6 years but as MT, they can be senior officer within 3 years’ (E1). Another confirmed that ‘after the completion of the programme, they’ll be at least be at a senior supervisory
position, only on level down to the manager. So it is a very fast track progress for graduates with only 3 years’ experience within the corporation’ (E7). However, only one company guaranteed promotion in the contract and promotion was generally seen to be dependent upon the trainees’ performance and availability of vacancy. The biggest gap was thus on the timing of promotion. Two companies had a specific time line for title and grade change if the trainees passed the assessment and the rest offered no guarantee and no time line.

On the whole, the theme of fast track advancement journey signified the key expectation of the trainees and it aligned with the company’s expectation while there was a slight discrepancy on the expectation on the timing of advancement. This theme also forms the major reasons affecting the retention of trainees.

4.3.2 Learning and growth

Learning and growth was the most common reason for trainees to join the company and the most frequently mentioned expectation of the MT programme. This was also a key factor affecting the intention of the trainees to stay or leave the company. It refers to the opportunity to acquire new knowledge and skills; gain insight and be aware of own strengths and weaknesses, exposure to new challenges including exposure in other industry leading to shift in attitude, personal growth and development of the trainees.

Learning and growth was mostly realized in the development phase. It could be in the format of on-boarding, mentoring, on job attachment and classroom training and trainees found that job attachment was the most useful and effective approach.

For my personal experience, really on job training I think, is most useful. As long as you’re placed in the position, you are responsible to handle stuff and you have to connect different parties...You have to think how to push through others, which is difficult to learn in the classroom setting. In terms of mentoring, they can only give you guidance. Whether or not you can execute that, it depends on how you perform in the true job context. (T20)

On job attachment allowed the trainees to gain an in-depth understanding and hands on experience of the operations through daily routine work and specific tasks or projects. It created four kinds of values for the trainees. First, the trainees saw themselves improving in terms of knowledge about the company’s operations and culture and their skills in terms of analytical thinking, and problem solving and interpersonal
relationship. Second, it helped create their connections and build up relationships with others. ‘The programme is helpful to my career as it helps build the network with other colleagues, top management…these are important to our career path’ (T4) and they found that it was most important when they were later placed to a permanent role. ‘The people network is something out of my expectation as I never thought that it would play such an important role in helping my work’ (T17). Third, it shifted their attitude. Through job attachment, they realized that they could not always resolve business issues alone in the complex environment and ‘I have established the mindset that you need to seek help from others’ (T17). ‘Your attitude while talking or the talking manner is important because you’re involved in different projects’ (T19). Forth, on job attachment accelerated their growth as they were being assigned to work outside their comfort zone in an unfamiliar environment. All these helped trainees to grow.

Trainees also learn from mentors and training courses. However, there were contrasting views about mentoring. While individuals might appreciate that their mentors asked them questions and helped them think from different perspectives, none of the trainees quoted any inspiring moment as shared by their mentors. Moreover, there was no mentioning about increasing the visibility via the mentor as proposed in our TM framework. Mentor was mostly described by trainees as a senior person giving them assignment. The interactions between them could be quite limited and in some cases, trainees did not see any value in mentoring.

*I was told that he is my mentor…and my feeling is that it is more of the title as mentor rather than actually performing the role of the mentor…Mentor’s grading is usually at department head level and thus, our contact with the mentor is very limited. They may prefer us to rely more on our direct supervisor.* (T18)

*I didn’t know the purpose of the mentor; I don’t know how I can use him.* (T2)

Training courses were also not mentioned by the trainees unless the author asked about them. Nevertheless, individual trainees indicated that they still remembered the content of courses they attended a few years ago and they have acquired the technical knowledge and people skills and were able to apply them in their daily work.

While trainees were not too enthusiastic when talked about the courses, they were quite excited when discussing the non-job related projects which brought unexpected benefit to their growth. One trainee described he was somehow forced to be the master of ceremony but commented ‘that’s a good experience that we try something we normally
won’t do. That’s good for my personal growth’ (T19). Other trainees who had participated voluntarily at company events found that ‘I learn a lot, it is just like running a small business’ (T6).

Trainees perceived that this learning and growth element can be fulfilled by joining sizable companies with good branding as they had a more structure training programme and growing business. ‘The potential of this company to expand is huge and it has a very solid foundation on this business’ (T16) and T10 expressed that he joined the current company because of the ‘very diversified business nature of the company; there are more things for me to try.’

The expectations on learning exposure matched between the companies and the trainees in all cases. Companies wanted the trainees to grow and learn. They expected the trainees ‘can absorb the new things easily and learn faster as well’ (E5) and ‘they are smarter than the others of the same years of experience or same age after they join the MT programme’ (E1). Moreover, individual companies had demonstrated their learning culture during the identification phase and trainees were usually impressed by such. ‘The company encourages you to learn even during interview sessions. The interviewer will give you some feedback that probably helps you to improve yourself... and the feedback is very useful’ (T5).

While the trainees valued the gaining of interpersonal skills during their development phase, companies also found this an important competency.

*We look for this kind of integrity and accountability in our employees; also their problem solving skill, communication skill, how they communicate with client, how to handle and manage people...we look for these. (E8)*

*Interpersonal skill, for a lot of talent for what I see is not good enough to really work with different kinds of people...their challenge from what I saw, is interpersonal skill to deal with the client, deal with boss, deal with staff and deal with the environment (E3, who recruited trainees at management level)*

*For some companies they will put a lot of emphasis on academic. For us it is important but not of the most important. We put more emphasis on attitude and personality and the interpersonal skill. (E5)*

On the whole, 20 of the 22 trainees felt satisfied or very satisfied about their learning and growth. The remaining two expressed that ‘personally, I feel that the whole year rotation is waste of time’ (T2). However, though majority found their development
satisfactory, 2/3 of the trainees expressed certain concerns about the effectiveness of the development phase and they looked for improvement in this area. As expressed by T18 ‘so the training programme seems not very well structured or is it very consistent regarding the two years. The expectation gap is quite big in this aspect’. In fact, 13 out of the 22 trainees mentioned that they liked new challenges and learn new things and the lack of or unmet expectation on learning and growth was a major reason leading them to leave.

Learning and growth is thus important as an expectation of the trainees, as a reason for them to join the company and affecting their retention. While this theme relates more to the cognitive side, the next theme on caring and family caters more about the emotional being.

4.3.3 Caring family

The caring family theme comprises two concepts. First, from the trainees’ viewpoint, care is about being the centre of attention. Indeed if the number of intake of trainees was too many, the trainees would not join those companies. ‘When the company admits too many management trainees a year...the attention you can get from the senior management may be less’ (T19). It is also about others to take care of them and members should also be helping, supporting and being friendly and nice to each other.

Second, there is the family concept. The senior would take care of and nurture the junior, teaching and sharing experiences and knowledge with them. There is also an element of forgiveness. ‘If you do not perform well, this company would give you better support. They would give you another chance and they would hope that you’ll do better next time. In such cases, it is not so discouraging’ (T11). Third, the family tie would always remain there. ‘MT is like life time here...when you come in as a MT, they’ll be MT forever’ (T5). With the element of the family tie, trainees also expected that such care would continue even after the programme has been completed and they would continue to enjoy the special attention. ‘We are not supposed to feel special but we want to feel special, to understand that we haven’t been forgotten after the programme is ended’ (T12). If this tie was broken, a slightly negative emotion would be generated.
We weren’t given as much focus. We just flow back to the respective department and then it is good luck with you and do good and you got your promotion naturally.’ (T12) I’m a bit disappointed at that time and things are ambiguous, there is no one to talk to you or care about your career path. The company may not care so much when you’re in your 2nd and 3rd years as you are already at your own department. (T4)

HR’s involvement is limiting and you feel like you’re just like a general staff…for the first 3 months, it is very impressive. Suddenly everything is missing. (T18).

However, it should be noted that the current theme is not the same as the traditional Chinese family concept. For the latter, hierarchy, status and seniority are important elements. The current theme does not comprise these characteristics and ‘bosses do not see themselves being high in the hierarchy and they are very friendly’ (T16).

This caring family concept emerged from both the trainees and the company sides throughout all TM phases. At the identification phase, all trainees had more than one offer and they decided to join the current company for different reasons. The experience of the caring nature during recruitment was an important one. Care experienced at the initial stage helped establish the trust and set the expectation of the trainees when they later worked for the company.

The company gives me a very different impression from other different companies. So it shows me a very special type of like care and attitude…and the HR…personnel is warm, make you feel so warm. (T5)

It provides me a feeling that it is a cosy…and it gives me the feeling of warmth …and they are very sincere in answering your questions. (T17)

I feel that he wants to include me…it helps me not to be so afraid in the first instance. (T1)

During the development phase, trainees experienced the caring family theme through the interactions with their mentors, supervisors and other colleagues. All trainees had mentors. Though the structure of the mentor arrangement could be quite formal, all trainees described their relationships with their mentors as rather informal and their discussions could be around personal interest and not just about work related issues. ‘Our relationship is rather informal. I’ll whatsapp him, communicate via face book. As I observe this relationship of other trainees, I also see that most are relatively informal’ (T16). Some mentors were ex-MTs and they played the role of a senior family member.

Two trainees who had already completed their programmes expressed that ‘there are new MT every year and I try to talk to them, tell them about my experience and make sure they carry on the good name’ (T12) and ‘you want to look after the new GT. Don’t
understand why. I do not know why the relationship is like this. This is so...may be just some kind of magic’ (T17). One trainee actually suggested the idea of Big Brother and Sister, having someone to look after and take care of them.

Besides the mentors, trainees also appreciated the caring and helping attitude of their supervisors and the other colleagues during their attachment.

My team leader care about the colleagues and he talks to me about my coming career path. (T4)

The other 2 colleagues are also taking care of me...not that you better not trouble me. They’ll have lunch with you and if you ask, they’ll provide you the information. (T17)

While most colleagues were nice and friendly, most trainees have come across the ‘not so friendly’ or even ‘hostile’ colleagues. However, more positive feelings relating to sense of belongingness were created by the caring people and environment and these encouraged the trainees to stay with the company.

Contrarily, when this notion of caring family broke down and people were not playing their nurturing role or trainees were no longer the centre of attention, it generated negative emotions of feeling depress, lonely and helpless. One company had changed its programme arrangement and the trainee expressed ‘then that creates quite some problems in term of psychological concern among the trainees; because they have no where to go; there is no home, no home base’ (T20). T2 also mentioned in a sad tone that ‘I hope to get more care from the company...I don’t think I have the same interests as before...’ and ‘I am quite isolated... sometimes, I feel I’m quite lonely. I don’t chat with others’.

The caring family concept was also highlighted by most senior executives. They held high expectation of the trainees, just like parents having high expectation of their children and would like to see them grow up happily. ‘Besides work, we have social gatherings and I think the atmosphere is very good. We can see the smiling faces on them from the photos. We hope they will work happily and fit in with the company culture’ (E8) and ‘we have brand, we have a lot of caring’ (E2). Those responsible for talents saw themselves having this nurturing and caring role and like parents, they felt proud to see the trainees grow and there was the bonding and emotional tie.

Most of the bosses are ex-GT and most of them may want to get connected with the GT. So this is not a corporate policy but rather an emotional tie. (T16)
The first day, when I saw those trainees, they were shy; they could not express themselves clearly in a very structured manner. Now they are very confident. They can you know, do a project and presentation in a very clear and professional manner. So I think you are really proud of and satisfied with their growth. (E5)

I’m also happy and even after the program has completed, our relationship is very good. I’m just like their caretaker…and this is frustrating that they leave after graduation…it is sad as I have put a lot of effort onto them. (E1)

The caring family is important for attracting, developing and affecting the intention of the trainee to stay or leave.

4.3.4 Ownership and recognition

The forth theme on ownership and recognition depicted another important need of the trainees. Ownership refers to owning the task and the taking up of responsibility. Recognition involves the sense of importance, proving own ability and having contributions and be of value to the company as a result of ownership.

Trainees believed that they were to be held responsible for their own development and ‘For the first months, all the trainees about 10 of us, we have meetings and discuss which departments we want to visit and then make a proposal’ and ‘I will pay extra effort to absorb all the required industry knowledge and meet the requirement of the company within a short time frame’ (T18). They also wanted to take up more responsibilities. Overall, ownership was not just about owning the task but also having the chance to voice out their viewpoints and gained a sense of self achievement when things were implemented by the trainees themselves. I work on the whole project myself and I have some solid task to accomplish. I have a sense of importance (T8) and ‘there are more opportunities to express own viewpoints’ (T15).

This eagerness of having ownership was most strongly expressed during the development stage. Besides taking on what the company had arranged for them, trainees felt it was about ‘how much you yourself want to get from this programme. What do you want to try, what do you want to learn’ (T11) and ‘I totally understand that and you can only learn by observation, identify what may be the difficulties…and you learn by yourself” (T1). Many trainees felt that they could take up more responsibility and it would help them grow faster if they were assigned with critical
tasks. They also believed that these important tasks could serve as a test on whether they had learnt and had the capability to take up a bigger role.

The need of recognition was also strongly displayed by the trainees. They wanted to be valued and have contribution to the team and they ‘don’t really want to feel like we are liability and burden to the operations department’ (T12).

The programme provides us the opportunity to spot the area that the company can improve...I quite like seeing the company will change and I’m involved in it. (T6)

I feel achieving the result...I feel the importance and value to the company have increased. (T14)

So I’m very happy, I have something to contribute and not just trouble them. (T8)

I do hope that I can make a contribution. I do hope that I can say to someone, hey, I was involved in this new project. (T11)

I don’t mind working for a few more hours each day on something that contributes to the company. (T16)

The sense of importance and being valued generated much of the positive feelings. I got the chance to act as the deputy. I’m a bit tense while I find it challenging and the feeling is good’ (T8). The feeling of confidence and strength also built up gradually and ‘I’m more at ease and the working experience helps build up my confidence’ (T15).

More importantly, this sense of importance was a factor affecting the retention of the trainees. ‘I need more challenge to prove my ability. In a smaller or new company, you may have more things to do...as a GT I want to stay in this company as they see us so important’ (T16). T21 also stated that he stayed because ‘there are only 3 management trainees in the department and there is the sense of pride.’

Nevertheless, reality was different to a greater or lesser extent. ‘Some of the tasks and responsibilities are too trivial’ (T9) or ‘you want to do a lot of things but you don’t have lot of things to do. It is kind of discouraging sometimes and there are times that you feel idle and lost’ (T10). One point to note was that when trainees were given some bigger roles to take on, such as from an individual contributor to leading a team of more than 10 members, they felt ‘frustrated, tense as well and afraid to take on the new step because it is such a big gap’ (T13). Ownership and recognition tends to work best together with the theme on caring and family as the latter could provide the guidance and support for the trainees’ development.
Trainees treasured ownership themselves did expect the same from the company side and that HR or line departments could take up the ownership on providing a more structured learning opportunity for them such as the design in terms of training materials and guidance as ‘on what to observe / know when we are rotated to different departments will be most helpful’ (T1). Sometimes other colleagues were too busy to explain things to them or just briefed them on the process without explaining the rationale behind. T21 commented that ‘it depends on individuals who teach you. Individuals do it depending on their own experience and knowledge. For the same things, there will be different ways of presenting from different colleagues. I think this is not good enough.’

Companies shared similar thought on this theme of ownership. Senior executives viewed that they had the responsibility to develop the trainees. ‘You may say it is our social responsibility or we see it as necessary for continuity and growth of our industry. It is not something great as we’re trained like this and we will train up others similarly’ (E8). At the same time, they believed that trainees needed to take up the ownership and show their career ambitions to move up the ladder. ‘We also mention to them that development is a self driven process. If you don’t want, we cannot take you on’ (E7). Companies also understood the needs of these trainees. ‘They feel that you know, their talent could be used and was treasured by the company and they were given the opportunities, at least they felt that they were given the opportunities and they were willing to stay’ (E3).

The idea of ownership and recognition were aligned between the companies and the trainees whereas dilemma existed regarding the readiness of the trainees in taking up more responsibilities as senior executives were concerned about ‘how they gain the credibility and respect from others’ (E8) within the short timeframe.

4.3.5 Choice, reciprocity and remuneration

These three elements are grouped together due to their inter-relatedness. Choice is the existence of option or alternative as perceived by the trainees. Reciprocity is the mindset that the trainees felt obliged to stay with the company with no condition or in some cases, may lose something instead. Its definition is different from ‘mutually
contingent exchange of gratifications’ (Gouldner, 1960, p. 161) or ‘the behavioural response to an action that is perceived as either kind or unkind’ (Falk & Fischbacher, 2006, p. 294). Remuneration is the total monetary return such as salary, benefit, etc. Choice and reciprocity injected the sense of appreciation into the trainees and were found to affect the trust level between the trainee and the company. The offering of choice was found to lead to reciprocity in some cases and this has a moderating effect on monetary return affecting the retention of trainees.

Choice existed as early as in the identification phase. Although in some cases, the career stream was assigned by the company, they offered a choice to the trainees. ‘So this is more of my own initiation as I also like to work at this department and I have considered if I need to change, I may like to work at this team and I have talked to the department head before about this’ (T4). During the development phase, company often provided different development paths and while the end goal was pre-determined by the company, the MT had the freedom to choose the departments of interest within the pre-determined function.

With choice, trainees viewed the TM system more positively. The choice they had during the identification phase as mentioned above, the choice offered to them during the development phase, ‘Again I have a choice. This company always give you a choice’ (T11) and at the completion of the programme such as ‘So at the end, it is more about my own choice’ (T16). ‘It really depends on what I want in my position of career…it is the choice to me and I have to face it.’ (T14). Positive emotions were generated as long as trainees were given the choice. ‘I was excited that they would allow me to choose.’ (T12)

The existence of choice affected the intention of the trainees to stay. Most trainees had thought about leaving and some had taken actions and tendered the letter of resignation. They stayed behind since the companies provided them the alternatives of attaching to another department or having another role that met their career expectation and they appreciated the effort. ‘They have really put a lot of effort to find a suitable department / role for me and I do appreciate it very much’ (T18). Although the alternative offered might not be the first choice of the trainees, they chose to stay.
Choice creates a sense of appreciation and this is a triggering element for reciprocity. T18 who has resigned finally stayed with the company because he was offered a choice which met his expectation and he appreciated the company providing him the opportunity. Nevertheless, with choice, the outcome is that trainee may or may not stay with the company. With reciprocity, even though the external market was paying a higher salary, trainees chose to stay. Interestingly, reciprocity was most strongly expressed by the two trainees recruited internally. ‘I feel I have a commitment...as my boss has made such an arrangement and although the market salary is higher, I won’t just leave and walk away...’ (T1) and ‘my company has nominated me to join the training. So I won’t be so bad and leave. At least, need to work for some more years’ (T3). With reciprocity, a much greater market force in terms of salary and benefit was needed to pull the trainee away. As expressed by T3 ‘I believe if I get another job, I am very confident that the salary will be 20 – 30% higher than now. I keep having this thought, even at this moment. This is about your choice’. However, reciprocity might lose its retention effect after some time since the trainee admitted that he would keep having such thought and that monetary return was a factor that might ultimately cause him to leave. Externally recruited trainees showed appreciation to what the company has done for them but had not explicitly cited this notion of reciprocity.

Monetary reward was a reason affecting the retention of some trainees. Three trainees mentioned they stayed with the current company because the package was competitive while six mentioned they would consider leaving if the monetary return was more attractive in the external market. Trainees did not mention remuneration as the first or second reasons to leave and this might imply that it was not as important as other reasons. Nevertheless, it will affect the retention rate in the longer run. Moreover, although monetary reward was not frequently mentioned, it was also a consideration of individual trainees to join the company. ‘The salary here is much higher’ (T16) and ‘the salary part is particularly outstanding’ (T17).

To the company, the challenge of choice was about having more choices and making the right choice in identification of the trainees. Senior executives mentioned that they would like to expand the choice coverage to include first overseas candidates and ‘we go out to all major universities in HK, in China or even overseas to try to get the most appropriate talent’ (E2); second, through engaging the talents earlier at the college
level rather than at the university; and third, to promote across the industry. ‘We do not just talk about our company but rather the industry as a whole’ (E8). Companies engaged in 3 to 4 rounds of selection processes to ensure they made the right choice in recruiting the best fit person to join them. It was also noticed that for the entry level of talent, most companies chose from external source. Only two of the 22 trainees were recruited internally.

Choice, reciprocity and remuneration are inter-related and they exert impact on the retention phase.

4.3.6 Communication and perception

The theme on communication and perception is about the purpose of communication and consists of both the message itself which could be either be explicit or implicit as well as how the message is perceived by the trainees. The purpose of communication is for both understanding and obtaining information.

Communication started as early as the companies posted their recruitment message onto the website at the identification phase. On the whole the purpose was to project a positive image about the company and the MT programme so as to attract the potential trainees. Companies on one hand did not guarantee any career path or promotion plan while on the other hand, they described the success stories.

Personally, I don’t think they would send up a message as a promise. But they do share with us some stories from previous MTs and that’s why we would see if we can do as that person can be, you’ll see how he or she is doing now and so you’d see how you guys will be in the future. (T5)

I find what they offer to me is attractive, something that meet my expectation...you may have the chance to be promoted as assistant manager. They have mentioned that and there are success cases. (T4)

Despite of the explicit non-commitment message, trainees tended to perceive that promotion would take place right after the MT programme which was partially instilled and reinforced by the companies. This built up the psychological contract and when these ‘promises’ were not realized, negative emotions were generated. ‘So I’m a bit uncertain and doubtful about the future. I’m not sure where I’ll be in 7 months’ time and I feel a bit unsure as the department is not yet confirmed’ (T6). As already
discussed under the fast track advancement journey and learning and growth themes, unmet expectations or perceived unfulfilled promise would cause the trainee to leave.

Indeed, communication tended to affect retention. When asked what kept them stay with the company, a trainee replied that by ‘keep me consistently updated with what they’re doing next, like new developments’ (T12). As the purpose of communication is for better understanding, an early awareness of what the trainees think or how they feel would help prevent the later possible resignation action. The decision for trainees to leave a company was not a spontaneous ad hoc action. 16 trainees admitted that they had thought of leaving the company when they were still undergoing the programme. Four had applied for other jobs and three had tendered resignations or had verbally communicated to HR that they would like to resign. Findings revealed that there was a triggering event for generating the thought of leaving. Trainees shared that usually at the time of discouragement, they thought whether they were good enough or was the role suitable for them and this triggers them to think about leaving the company. ‘At time when you have the discouraging moment, you’ll think whether you should quit and start fresh somewhere else’ (T17). Then, with the mismatch of expectations, it led to the taking of action and trainees started searching for jobs and resign.

It was found that the lack of communication led to insufficient understanding of the trainees’ expectations as well as their feelings throughout different TM phases. While there might be a general assumption that trainees were mostly happy as they just went around the departments and did not need to take up much responsibility, the trainees did not see this as positive. Trainees actually felt nervous and had a slight negative feeling during their attachment. They felt ‘uncomfortable, every time when I move to a new area, you feel you don’t know what’s going on; but the department believes you are ready...’ (T13). Most trainees also felt confused during the development phase as they were not sure how to position themselves and as an individual would be ‘quite worried about myself whether I’m up to others’ expectations’ (T20) and they experienced some pressure as ‘people expect a lot more from you. You have to step up and prove yourself’ (T13). It is important to note that most trainees did not share these thoughts and feelings with others. Perhaps, as T18 shared, ‘as a trainee, we need to take initiative but if we’re too proactive, it can be a concern.’ Thus, while the company encouraged
open communication between the trainees and management, trainees looked for more proactive role by HR or line departments in reaching out to them.

Senior executives were aware of the importance of communication. As stated by one of the senior executives, ‘in 2008, we lost every one, 4 of them, mainly because of mismatch of expectation…and there is some miscommunication…’ (E4). Also, E5 agreed that ‘I think the major challenge is the time you need to spend to understand more about the trainees.’ For others, ‘We pay a lot of effort to have a very close communication or get in touch with them very frequently, to see what they think, to see what they want, to see what happen to them in term of priority or their career aspirations’ (E7).

Quality communication with the aims to understand trainees’ needs, their perception, feelings and challenges faced is required before companies can take any precautions or interventions to help improve retention.

4.3.7 Integration: people, system, process and tools

Integration is about the alignment of the shared vision, the people, the system, structure and processes together to bring about an effective outcome of TM as a strategic process. First individual’s career interest should be linked with the company’s needs. Talent development was described as ‘an individualized career planning which fits in with the individual aspiration as well as the corporation requirement with a long term development need’ (E7). With this required outcome, all departments with their people, systems and processes needed to align with the same goal. T18 expressed that ‘there should be a very in-depth discussion between the corporate level and the departmental level, how they want to train up and develop the trainee. Unless the objectives and communication process between these two parties were strengthened, the effectiveness of the development phase would be impaired. Same view was shared by senior executives. ‘People development department should be communicating with trainees regularly enough to see, to understand their career aspirations and communicate back with managers’ (E4). ‘Every one at the top management level, they have to be patient…I think the company is not patient enough; they are expecting these guys to
behave like very mature manager. I think this is not fair to them’ (E3). Alignment of the goal and expectation is important.

From the people aspect, there is the role of supervisor, middle management as well as top management. Findings indicated that the impact of supervisors was most critical in the development phase. They directly affected the trainees’ learning attitude, their pace of learning, inspired them and acted as a role model whereas their impact at the identification phase was limited only to those internally recruited trainees.

My supervisor is very open and he has mentioned that I can initiate if I would like to see anything as otherwise, he may not know...So I won’t feel shy and I’ll ask if I can have such an opportunity ...I will ask. (T1)

I also find myself depressed, ineffective...that lasts for almost half a year and later I was assigned...another supervisor. She is very good. She is very experienced and I learn a lot from her. (T2)

This is a turning point for me, too! At first, I get so...in fact I get so confused already, my supervisor always help me even if I haven’t asked for as she’s good at observing. (T5)

As I hear from other trainees, the boss is also very supportive. And he checks if it is difficult for them to adapt... (T16)

They could create much positive emotions as well as negative emotions of the trainees for ‘hating’ them.

Findings also indicated that senior or top management was highly engaged in all TM phases. They were always involved as observers and at the final panel interview during the identification phases. The involvement of senior management sent a positive message and as perceived by the trainees, they ‘anticipate that the company will put lot of resources into this programme’ and there is ‘a strong confidence that this programme has the support from top management’ (T16). The main concern was whether their interest would persist. T7 actually worried that ‘after a while, the manager lose interest into the induction...oh my god, it is the 4th time I’m doing it.’ On the other hand, top management also realized that it was important for them to support TM and their role was to ‘work out the career path in medium term at least with the talent...and then we’ll provide them opportunities by exposure to different areas of the business’ (E3).
While top management showed strong support, the full engagement of the middle management was missing and this was a critical factor for improving the overall effectiveness of the TM process.

...is the communication with middle managers because they are the people who coach and give them feedback and if they don’t know how to do these things...it becomes...really...not easy. (E4)

'Communication with middle management...They need to understand the company’s expectation on our MTs and support' (E4)

So he or she doesn’t feel like it is good to take fresh graduates in the company. May be she or he would rather hire experienced persons as employees. (T19)

In all companies interviewed, HR department took care of the overall rotation and attachment plan in alignment with the company directions and the line department was the one to implement the plan. While all levels had their roles, HR was seen by both the trainees and the senior executives to be the party responsible for the overall coordination for alignment and effectiveness.

From the system aspect, companies were keen to ensure that good practice was in place. For example, at least four companies sought constant feedback from the trainees on the talent development programme through formal meetings or survey and for these companies, the survey indicated that the current talent development practices were effective as they helped achieve the aims and meet expectations of both the company and the trainees. E2 expressed that ‘our mentor programme has a rather long history and our senior managers have the experience and know how to be a mentor. We also provide them the training. In fact, if some managers are not so o.k. to be mentors, then we will not choose them’. E1 ‘reviews the contract every 1.5 years, to see if the mentor / mentee are o.k. There is a break clause.’ Internal promotion as a policy is also practiced by nearly all companies. ‘For internal promotion of senior management team, we hope that 75% will be internally promoted’ (E4) and management trainees formed the main source of supply for this internal talent pool and the senior executives admitted that trainees were usually more easily recognized and visible in the leadership pipeline than other internal staff.

At the same time, companies looked for continuous improvement. For instance, ‘HR needs to have a greater authority’ (E1) which was echoed by a trainee that ‘there
should be a much bigger career path or appraisal system between HR and the big bosses’ (T12). Senior executives and trainees shared the same viewpoint that a balanced attachment plan catering for both the breadth and depth of the learning is needed. Lacking a well defined system and structure of the development phase would generate negative feeling of the trainees.

Having rotation in the company is very uncertain, like where they will post you and you cannot see very clearly like where is the final place, like which department you’ll settle with at the end...So I was confused and I was worried, quite worried... whether I was spending my time on learning something or I’m wasting my time here. (T9)

However, although companies were looking for best practice, only few would consider setting a retention target. E2: ‘We don’t want to go for zero turn over just because we don’t want people to leave us. There are cases when people are leaving us and it is good for both parties’. In general, most senior executives were satisfied with the talent retention rate which was up to 70 - 90% right after programme completion. ‘I think our retention rate is up to 80-90% and they stay for more than 10 years’ (E8) and ‘Out of 10 directors, 5 started as sales management trainees and they have been with us for something like 15, almost 20 years’ (E2).

For processes and tools, trainees have suggested various areas for improvement. The first was about shortening the duration of the recruitment process. Three trainees had to reject the offers they have already accepted or resigned from the company they had just joined. It was not known how many trainees actually joined another company because the recruitment process took too long. The second area was about the selection tools. Most trainees described taking a similar online test. T21 mentioned that ‘Actually, most companies use the same test from XXX; and there are the sample answers and people can do the test together. I ask if the assessment can serve the purpose.’ Indeed, this was echoed by a senior executive of another company (E1) that ‘not XXX because particularly, for people in China, they all have the model answers.’

Theme on integration was recognized by both the trainees and the company as having rooms for improvement. HR was expected by both parties to play the overall coordinating role.
4.3.8 The new generation talent

The last theme on generation deserves some special attention since it is about the new generation talent’s thought and it provides valuable insight to the company on enhancing the TM effectiveness forward. This theme emerged in all the TM phases. As described by a trainee, ‘The selection process is quite formal...doesn’t match the post 80s or 90s style which is more active, exciting and energetic’ (T20) and ‘staff communication activity can be more creative in a sense that they are more suited for the staff of my generation...and sometimes the activities sports or family day are more suitable for the older generation of staff’ (T9). Also at the development phase, the effectiveness of mentoring seemed to have been impaired by the generation gap.

Because the mentor and mentee relationship here is like the big bosses and the very young candidates; and my mentor is already like the age of my father. Of course, there are things that I can talk to him and there are things I can’t talk to him or may be even if I talk to him, he can’t understand or doesn’t have the same feeling. (T22)

Similarly, senior executives uttered same concerns. New approaches at different talent management phases may be needed to guarantee effectiveness.

Especially I think in the past 2 to 3 years, you know there are more generations, new generations, the 80s and 90s joining the work force. So there are some differences in thinking and work practices. So we need more time to share with them their practices and feedback as well... to adjust sometime our communication style as well. (E5)

Besides the eight themes which all have significant impact to a greater or lesser extent on the overall effectiveness of TM, there are some other findings worth mentioning and are discussed below.

4.3.9 Other findings

From the interviews, there were elements not frequently or commonly mentioned by the trainees but they contributed to the findings and provided input for our research questions.

One of the interview questions was about why the trainee joined the company. In addition to the various themes as discussed, other reasons such as fit in with own study discipline (4), family in Hong Kong (1), commuting time (1) and by coincidence (1) were mentioned by individual trainees. Although they were not commonly mentioned,
they were important considerations by some. When asked about what encouraged the trainees to leave, being too stressful (1) and lose of passion (2) were two other reasons and factors that encouraged the trainee to stay included employer brand; passion (2) and personal reasons such as studying (1) or family issue (2) had also been mentioned.

There is also area not necessarily relate to the current research but may be of interest and importance. This research studied the emotional path of the trainees and it was found that senior executives were also emotionally bonded with the trainees. They have expectations and if the trainees resigned and left, they felt sad and disappointed. As mentioned by E1, this relationship also provided the satisfaction as ‘there is a sense of closeness and even for MT who have graduated for many years and when they meet you, they still feel that you are the mentor.’ Questions relating to the emotional side had not been asked during the interview with the senior executives and this theme may deserve effort for further study to identify if it plays any role in the effectiveness of the TM strategy and second, to explore the psychological contract from the management side.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter reveals important findings about talent management in Hong Kong and eight themes have been identified. Themes on fast track advancement journey, learning and growth are the key expectations of the trainees and they match with the company’s expectations with a gap in the timing of promotion. Expectation is differentiated from the reasons to join a company. While these two themes are also reasons for trainees to join their current company, caring family is another important one. They all affect the retention of the trainees.

Moreover, companies were found to adopt similar approaches for developing their trainees. From the trainees’ perspective, on job attachment is most valuable to them, not just in terms of gaining knowledge and skills but rather in building up their networks. Support of supervisor is found to be particularly important in the development phase. Trainees are looking for ownership and sense of importance during the development phase and effectiveness of this phase can be improved with a more balanced and structured approach. Themes on choice and reciprocity tend to build up
the trust level as early as the identification phase and when reinforced, would positively affect the retention of trainees. Communication with trainees to understand their needs as well as communication across departments is found to be important throughout the whole TM process. This needs to be well integrated with the company’s system and tools to ensure alignment on company’s ultimate TM goal and HR is the one for the overall coordination.

Emotional paths as experienced by the trainees were identified. Trainees as the strategic resource are individuals with ‘cognitive and emotional’ being. Talent management is about people and without the understanding of how the trainees see and feel throughout the process, one cannot claim to have a total understanding of TM.

Last but not least, the way forward for effective talent management should take into account of the new generation talent theme, not just to understand the trainees’ need but perhaps companies may need to adjust their approach as well.

All in all, there is a relatively high alignment between the trainees and the company in the overall expectation about TM and the execution part is where most of the gaps exist. The eight themes though discussed separately, are to a certain degree interwoven and affecting each other. They provide valuable inputs in addressing the four research questions which are discussed in the next Chapter.
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the purpose of this study and with reference to the literature context discussed in Chapter 2 and the findings analyzed in Chapter 4, it draws the conclusions and proposes a new contemporary talent management framework. Implications for the theories and for organizations and policy makers are addressed and limitations and possible future research are suggested.

The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of talent management as a strategic process from the perspective of the talents. According to RBV, talent is a strategic resource and the capability of the company to orchestrate talent and other resources affect the effectiveness of TM. By applying psychological contract in TM, the author attempts to formulate a theoretical framework consisting of both the system and the emotional aspects of TM as a strategic process. The current research explores the TM subject by interviewing management trainees from different industrial sectors in Hong Kong. It aims to fill the research gap by addressing four key research issues:

(1) What are the expectations of the talent and have these been realized?
(2) What activities and methods are effective /ineffective for developing the talents and the rationale from the viewpoint of the talents?
(3) What factors encourage the talents to stay or leave the companies?
(4) What elements can further contribute to the effectiveness of TM as a strategic process in the organization?

Each is discussed in details below.

5.2 Research Issues

Under each research issue, new themes are revealed. Findings that conform to the existing literatures are also brought up as they help provide advancement on the previous research by adding a new depth to the existing concept or theory.
5.2.1 Research question 1

The first research question is ‘What are the expectations of the talents in Hong Kong and have these been realized?’

Data analysis in Chapter 4 revealed that fast track advancement journey, learning opportunity and ownership are the main expectations of talent in Hong Kong. Previous research has not clearly differentiated expectations and reasons of the trainees for joining a company. The current research asked these two questions separately and both are discussed below.

5.2.1.1 Expectations of talents

Learning and growth and fast track advancement journey are the trainees’ key expectations. While learning opportunities and career prospects coincide with ‘personal development opportunity’ in US (Kotter, 1973) and ‘long term career prospect’ in UK (Arnold & Davey, 1992), other expectations cited by trainees in western countries such as interesting work, or high performance work culture are not mentioned in Hong Kong. Also, although ‘long term career prospect’ is an expectation that concurs with other research findings, it is not cited as the number one expectation. It is suggested that since the unemployment rate in Hong Kong has been consistently low at around 3% for years, it is not difficult for these trainees to find other opportunities in the market.

On the other hand, this study has identified two unique expectations not revealed previously. They are ‘fast track’ and ‘responsibility’. Fast track programme is the intention of the organization (Doherty, et al., 1997) rather than cited explicitly as an expectation by trainees in western countries. In Hong Kong, both the companies and the trainees expect a fast track promotion path. Hong Kong is viewed as a city of fast pace (Chen, 2014) and ‘speed’ is often regarded as its competitive edge. Another reason may be that since there is no guarantee of promotion in majority of the cases, the trainees would like to bring this up as an unfulfilled expectation. The third reason is that to the trainees, fast track promotion is part of the psychological contract of the MT programme.
The second unique expectation is ownership and recognition. This is not in line with extant research as ‘graduate joined their companies principally for their own development and interest in the work itself, more than for responsibility’ (Arnold & Davey, 1992, p. 64). This may be due to time element as some of the research was conducted 20 years ago. However, even for research conducted by Kerr-Philips & Thomas in 2009, this self responsibility element is missing. Thus, this may be more related to the Chinese philosophy that individuals should be able to take up their own responsibility first before taking up greater responsibility of the family and then the country. This concurs with the values of Chinese executives (Lynton & Beechler, 2012). However, responsibility for self development is aligned with the research findings for managers (Roussillon & Bournois, 1997). Perhaps, trainees see themselves already as ‘manager’ or ‘to be manager’.

This research further identified that self responsibility is linked to being valued and having a sense of importance. This is consistent with individual responsibility and having own value (Hiltrop, 1995) which points to the directional change of the psychological contract to employability and responsibility, at least for talent.

5.2.1.2 Reasons for talent to join an organization

The reasons for joining an organization differ from one’s expectations. It is more about what a trainee expects the organization to offer. Kerr-Phillips & Thomas (2009) identified leadership development opportunity, high performance work culture, a strong employer brand and competitive remuneration as the four reasons for trainees in S. Africa to join a company. Findings indicate that three of them, learning and exposure, employer brand and remuneration are relevant in Hong Kong, too. Remuneration is a reason but not an expectation possibly because trainees do not mind to start with a lower salary in ‘exchange for higher future salaries as the training begins to pay off’ (Blaug, 1976, p. 837).

Instead of a high performance work culture, the caring family is an important reason for trainees in Hong Kong to join an organization which may be explained by different reasons.
The first is related to cultural differences at national level. ‘National cultures differ primarily in the fundamental, invisible values held by a majority of their members, acquired in early childhood’ (Hofstede, 1993, p. 92). Hofstede proposed that Asian countries, including Hong Kong and China are medium in masculinity which is associated with values like success and achievement. Other researchers such as Iyengar and Lepper (1999) also suggested that in non Western and particularly East Asian cultures, people need a sense of belongingness with their social groups as it is more important than the needs of self esteem or the desire of autonomy as compared to Anglo-Americans. This may explain why a caring and friendly culture instead of a high performing culture attracts trainees. Perhaps, Hong Kong being such a competitive society, trainees long for a balanced and more people-oriented environment. Second, with reference to Maslow’s need hierarchy theory, the first two levels of physiological and security needs should have been fulfilled. Thus, a sense of belongingness, satisfying the social needs become the next desirable level. The third reason may be related to generation issue. Most of the trainees belong to generation Y. They want community, to be accepted and included and focus on relationship (Goldgehn, 2004; McCrindle, 2006). As the companies project the image of a big caring family, it matches the trainees’ needs. The last reason may be related to the Confucian values as discussed under section 2.10 which is still highly valued in the modern society in Hong Kong.

The other less frequently mentioned reason for talents to join an organization is the fitting in with their study discipline. This reason is quite obvious and it is not clear why it has not been identified in previous research. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the current study differentiates expectations of the talents from the reasons for them to join the company.

A recent survey covering 6,254 employees from 75 large corporations in Hong Kong has found that when choosing an employer, 43% of the interviewed employees are concerned with salary and benefits, 40% long-term job security, 40% pleasant working environment and 37% career development (“Employee benefits and loyalty”, 2014). This reveals that considerations of talents are different from general employees.
5.2.1.3 Matching of expectations

While previous research has indicated mismatch between most of the expectations of the managers and the trainees (Arnold & Davey, 1994), findings reported in sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 reveal that expectations of these two parties in Hong Kong are quite aligned, particularly for learning exposure and long term career prospects. However, there is a short term gap in speed of promotion and on career path clarity. The fast track element has been discussed above. For clarity of the career path, this is very much in line with previous studies that trainees find ‘career clarity was generally low. That is, graduates could not see clearly ‘what career possibilities were potentially open to them in their organization, nor how to attain them’ (Arnold & Davey, 1994, p. 11).

After 20 years, career clarity remains an unresolved or unmet expectation. This may be due to different reasons. First, company may not want to commit or take risk. A lot can change in the business world in three years’ time and long term manpower requirement can no longer be estimated accurately as desired. Companies invest on a MT programme just for minimizing risk of lacking future leaders in the pipeline. Second, companies are concerned that with the guarantee, trainees may lose the motivation to learn and demonstrate their abilities. Third, company wants to have the flexibility to manage their manpower.

In order to match or manage expectations of both parties, the concept of involving talents in planning their career development has been proposed by some scholars (D. T. Hall, 1986; Hills, 2009). The current research supports this concept as many of the trainees were particularly energized when taking ownership in the planning of their career development. Involving trainees in their career planning is recognized as an important TM strategy.

For research question 1, it is concluded that different from previous research, expectations between the trainees and the company are quite aligned in Hong Kong. Short term deviations in the speed of promotion and career path clarity with time line are the unmet expectations. Fast track advancement and responsibility are two unique expectations found in Hong Kong. Results also point to the fact that employer brand is a variable that positively affects the perceptions on career prospects rather than as a
direct expectation of the talent. On the other hand, reasons for talents joining a company in Hong Kong tend to concur with other research but with an added caring family theme. Most important, the needs and expectations of talent concur with the directional shift of psychological contract and are different from the general human resource in Hong Kong.

5.2.2 Research question 2

The second research question is: What activities and methods are effective /ineffective for developing talent and the rationale from the viewpoint of them?

This question is addressed mostly by the learning and growth theme which is a prime expectation of the talent while its effectiveness is found to be partly related to ownership and recognition. The effective methods are first discussed followed by the less effective ones.

5.2.2.1 Effective methods for developing talents

Concurs with previous research, development activities and methods adopted include on job training, non-job related projects, mentoring and training courses and among these, on job training is perceived to be the most useful and effective approach as it provides the sense of importance and brings different values to the trainees. Such needs are consistent with the literature finding discussed under section 2.10.2. Finding also supports the notion that talents often learn by self observation and self-reflection and by discovering via practicing (Pruis, 2011).

Indeed, what the trainees refer to as ‘useful’ is more about the connections they built through job attachment or projects in addition to the hands on knowledge they gained. This supports previous research in that talents need to learn from others through their own networks. As an organization becomes globalized, instead of knowing most, if not all of the answers by oneself, it is more important to know where to get the answer or information and from whom. Connections and relations built via job rotation are thus of high value to the trainees. The author also suggests that building a network contributes to capacity development (Section 2.6.2). As ‘most explicit knowledge and
all tacit knowledge are stored within individuals’ (Grant, 1996, p. 111) and knowledge received is determined by the absorptive capacity of an individual (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990), this network building is the first step for trainees to learn and build their knowledge through socialization, externalization i.e. the transferring of the knowledge to another through expressing or explanation while an individual receiving the information needs to combine it and digest it before internalising the knowledge (Nonaka & Konno, 1998). Trainee, T17 uses the analogy of carrying a basket along his development journey. ‘Different kinds of things are thrown into the basket’ and ‘you find that there are more things than the basket can hold’. Thus, the author opines that internal capacity for development takes time to expand in the long run whereas an individual’s capacity can increase externally in the short run via own interpersonal network as ‘around you, there are 9 different people like you holding the baskets and walking around’.

The current research points to the fact that network or relationship and interpersonal skills have already shifted to become an early core requirement rather than a later middle management need. Decades ago, Hall (1986) opined that interpersonal skills is most important at middle management level while at a lower level, technical skills are more important. Patton & Pratt (2002) proposed that the ability to work well with employee is the deciding qualification of a potential manager. Nowadays, with the complex business environment, the ability to build personal network and maintain the relationship is becoming more important. As the Chinese says ‘at home one depends on own parents; leaving home, one relies on friends’. Thus, while technical competency remains fundamental, personal network and interpersonal skill are seen to be an earlier rather than a later competency that needs to be built and developed. They are also suggested to be the elements differentiating strategic HR resource from the general one.

5.2.2.2 Less effective methods for developing talents

Contrary to previous studies, mentoring is found to be less effective and there is a contrasting view about its value. It is perceived to be more important under the caring family theme than the learning and growth theme. Most of the mentor-mentee relationships are informal and this is consistent with the previous research and practices for MNC in China (Hartmann, et al., 2010). However, only some cases concurs with
previous research that the effectiveness of the mentoring programme depends on the quality of relationship and how the programme is developed (Groves, 2007). In other cases, the role and value of mentoring is not highly or commonly recognized and some trainees are confused about the role of mentor and coach. The finding partially deviates from previous research which emphasizes the developmental and psychosocial functions of mentoring as discussed under Section 2.6.3. This may be explained by several reasons.

First, in Hong Kong, mentoring is a comparatively new concept for most organizations and they may still be in the process of establishing the best practices. Second, seniority is the only factor confirmed as mentor selection criterion. As suggested by the generation theme, mentors are very senior people and some are of the age of the trainees’ parents. This will affect the effectiveness of mentoring because ‘if mentors are 20 or 30 years older than their proteges, there may be significant communication or value problems caused by historical generational differences’ (D. M. Hunt & Michael, 1983, p. 480). This brings up the third reason of the matching criteria. Interviewees never mentioned that there is any specific matching process, except in some cases, they come from a similar discipline. Age, in fact, is a perceived barrier for successful mentoring (Kent, et al., 2013). Forth, HR department seldom follows up with the mentoring arrangement. Previous research suggests that a successful mentoring programme often matches individuals who are roughly two job levels apart. In addition, orientation, training programmes for mentors, a structured and formal process and periodic phone check-in to monitor the programme’s effectiveness are all essential elements to support mentoring (Hegstad & Wentling, 2004). A lot can be improved in this area.

Finding also reveals that majority of the interviewees did not mention proactively about training courses as a development activity. This may be due to the fact that most of the senior executives interviewed are not training programme designers or responsible for organizing the courses. Trainees’ responsibilities keep changing or are unclear and they may not tie in with the knowledge or skills learnt from the training courses. Another reason may be that supervisors of the trainees change when they undergo job rotation and they are not clear of the course content or its schedule. Seldom does the supervisor follow up with the trainees on their learning. They may actually perceive such follow
up as the responsibility of HR or the mentor. All these may have diminished the impact of the training courses. However, their effectiveness cannot be concluded because the inability to recall these training courses may be due to its ineffectiveness or trainees may already be at the unconscious competence stage (Bradley, 1997).

To conclude, on job training and projects are perceived to be the most useful and effective development method and it creates the platform for trainees to build their networks. Linking courses with real work situations and identifying meaningful projects that allow ‘ownership’ and ‘sense of importance’ as valued by the trainees should be a factor of consideration when designing the programme. The author proposes while internal capacity development may reach its limit, knowledge can be expanded externally through individuals’ networks. This study also supports the trend that interpersonal skill is becoming more important as a competence to be developed at an early stage and for differentiating potentials.

5.2.3 Research question 3

The third research question is: ‘What factors encourage the talents to stay or leave the companies?’

Factors leading the trainees to stay or leave are highly correlated with their expectations or reasons to join the company. Among these factors, some are consistent with extant literature and four others, namely the caring family, the opportunity to try new things under the learning theme, passion and lastly reciprocity are unique for Hong Kong. The role of trust and the power of choice is also discussed.

5.2.3.1 Factors leading to quit

This study provides strong evidence consistent with the ‘shock’ (Allen, et al., 2010) and the ‘triggering event’ (Guzzo, et al., 1994) discussed in Section 2.7. The thought of leaving is triggered at discouraging moments. Factors affecting the intention to leave then play their role in inducing the action to resign when expectations were unmet and breach or violation of psychological contract was perceived.
Factors were consistent to some extent with previous literature. Under the fast track advancement and learning themes, lack of development and promotion or career clarity, leading talents to quit is highly consistent with findings in the UK (Arnold & Davey, 1994). Other factors such as the supervisor or direct boss (Brannick, 2001), market as pull factor (Cappelli, 2000), specifying as salary and benefits and organizational bureaucracy (Kerr-Phillips & Thomas, 2009), as expressed as company processes in Hong Kong are also in line with previous research. Job assignment not intrinsically appealing (Feild & Harris, 1991) is identical to job lacking the sense of importance as found in Hong Kong.

Despite of these commonalities, three new elements are identified. First is the caring family theme which is explained by the social needs under Maslow’s needs theory. Individual trainee has expressed loneliness and this ultimately affects the retention of trainee (Riketta, 2005). In Hong Kong, the caring family theme is far more important than just being an element under POS. It has been discussed under research questions 1 and 2 and it is also a direct variable affecting the retention of talent.

The second factor is the opportunity to try new things under the theme of learning and growth. It has an additional notion of moving on to something new rather than developing along the current path as the trainees are thinking about ‘trying different industries and roles’ (T4) and ‘learn new things in a different environment or industry in the market’ (T13). As most trainees are fresh graduates, they tend to have the mindset of taking the chance to see the world when they are young and the opportunity cost to leave is comparatively low. Also, there are relatively more job opportunities in Hong Kong and individual trainees mention they do not have much financial burden.

The third element not so frequently mentioned is the loss of passion. Recent research on generations in Australia (McCrindle, 2006) has identified the family and relational needs and the search for a fulfilling purpose as two different values of generation Y and these are supported by this study. The author opines that both passion and the caring needs are about an individual’s emotional side.
5.2.3.2 Factors leading to stay

A number of factors encouraging the trainee to stay also agree with previous research (Bhatnagar, 2007; Kerr-Phillips & Thomas, 2009; Tymon Jr., et al., 2010). These include the learning and growth, long term career prospect, recognition, challenging task and the company people. While there is consistency, every country tends to have its own unique elements. In South Africa, it is the high manager integrity and quality (Wallis & Winternitz, 2004) and in India, fair pay (Bhatnagar, 2007) is the unique factor. In Hong Kong, they are reciprocity and caring culture.

Reciprocity is related to the Chinese philosophy that ‘you offer me one yard, in return I give you an extra mile’ and is an element identified in internally recruited trainees. As discussed, reciprocity, with the sense of appreciation helps create a higher level trust under psychological contract. As the internally recruited trainees have been with their companies for a long time, it is logical to assume that they have had a higher frequency of communication and interactions with others in the company. The building up of the higher trust level is further strengthened by reciprocity. At this new trust level, breach or violation of contract is perceived to be more neutral at least than in the initial trust stage. The author shares the same view as Wernerfelt (2011) who opined that organization should build on their existing resource to amplify heterogeneity and instead of acquiring, HR may pay more attention to the grooming of internal strategic resource.

The other factor relating to the Confucian ethics is the recurring theme of caring family. In India, relationships and working with great people are factors leading the talent to stay (Bhatnagar, 2007). In mainland China, it is about the benevolence that extends to manager caring about personal and family issues of the trainees (Lynton & Beechler, 2012). In Hong Kong, these great people are the ‘nice and friendly colleagues’ and ‘inspiring and caring mentors’. The caring and social need is different from the empowerment or encouragement from the boss. It is more about the overall culture of the company. It is an important factor to retain talents but not likely as the most important factor since most trainees mentioned it only after the learning and growth theme.
Clearly factors affecting trainees in Hong Kong to stay are different from those affecting general employees. For the latter, reducing working hours (47%), less intense working schedule (45%), reducing physical work and stress (40%) helped improve employees’ loyalty and the intention to stay (“Employee benefits and loyalty”, 2014).

5.2.3.3 Trust and the power of choice

Trust and choice play an important role for talent retention though they are not cited directly as retention factors. As discussed under section 2.4, trust and communication are important elements for psychological contract. Findings are consistent with the concept that initial trust at the time of hire was negatively related to psychological contract breach later (Robinson, 1996) and that communication and the opportunity to express one’s opinion is important especially during change leading to greater acceptance and commitment to the decision (Burton, Pathak, & Zigli, 1977).

This research further suggests that at the point of breach or violation, trust helps emit an early signal to the other party and that choice helps re-establish a new expectation or new contract, creating a new trust level for the psychological contract. In this study, trainees have built trust with the company under the caring family theme at the identification stage. Later, at time with unmet expectations, the trainees sent the signal and communicated their intention and needs to the company. The fact that the trainees are willing and open to voice out their needs has helped reinforce trust. This supports the notion that ‘truthful and accurate communication regarding expected obligations will minimize incongruence’ (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). In all cases, the companies have successfully retained them by offering the choice to them.

To answer research question 3, it is necessary to differentiate the intention to leave and to stay. Previous research seldom examined these two dimensions separately. Overall, lack of development opportunity and promotion / career clarity have continued to be the key factors affecting talent retention. The caring family theme is a unique element in Hong Kong that affects the intention of trainees both to stay and quit. For the push (leave) factor, it tends to shift from extrinsic factors such as salary, organizational process to more people-oriented factors like passion, family and caring needs. Reciprocity is a new pull factor supported by strong evidence for internally identified
talent and it tends to establish a higher level trust under psychological contract. Overall, the retention factors for talent and general employees are different.

5.2.4 Research question 4

The forth research question is: ‘What elements further contribute to the effectiveness of TM as a strategic process in the organization?’

Findings on the integration and communication themes concur with extant literature on the importance of interaction between resource and capability (K. Kamoche, 1996) and capability mediates the firm’s strategic resource for performance (Y. Lin & Wu, 2014). It also supports the notion that HR plays a strategic role in orchestrating the various resources as discussed in section 2.3. All these affect TM effectiveness. Factors further contribute to TM effectiveness are discussed from the system and the emotional angles below.

5.2.4.1 Effectiveness of TM: from the system angle

According to RBV, competitive advantage can be measured based on the improved effectiveness of core processes or practices. Companies invest a great deal of resources in identifying the right talents. Consistent with literature, this is appealing to the talents. Still, companies in Hong Kong may want to pay more attention to two specific areas. First, it is the consistency of impression projected to and perceived by the trainee. Companies interviewed were careful not to overpromise on career development but they had a tendency to project the image of a caring and family culture. It is not clear whether this is something being done intentionally. However, the essence is that the whole organization needs to align in demonstrating the consistent behaviours. Trainee T13 commented that ‘What the company can do is to make sure that people in different departments are delivering the same message, not different messages.’

Another area is the use of selection methods. Using similar tools for the first screening seems to be a common practice. It is quite alarming to note that candidates can get model answers. In Hong Kong, most companies purchase assessment tools from the market as it is more economical. Hong Kong is a small city and at the end of the day,
these companies may be using similar tools as there are limited suppliers. Having the model answer is also not surprising as the internet technology enables individuals to post and share anything and everything. Thus, it is essential that HR professionals can come up with creative solutions to resolve this issue.

During the development phase, previous study suggested that the direct manager should have ownership and be responsible for the talent’s development (Rothwell, 2002). To the trainees, the ownership of this phase is ambiguous. Also, despite the importance of the development phase, it is the least structured. The cause is not clear. Some companies have introduced MT programme for less than 5 years and are still developing. Others have had it for over 20 years but have stopped intermittently. Perhaps, it is also due to the changing people in the organizations.

Previous study suggested that role of supervisor is important throughout the whole TM process (Dawley, et al., 2008) while the current study indicates that the role of supervisor is most important during the development phase whereas middle management is critical throughout the whole TM process but largely neglected by the companies interviewed. Companies focus less on the importance of the middle level possibly because previous literature mainly highlighted the importance of top management.

At the retention phase, finding is inconsistent with best practice. Only two companies have a clear target for retention or succession rate. As mentioned by one executive, he did not want to retain a trainee for the sake of having to meet the retention target. While this can be a reason, the author opines that recruiting from internal resource may be an answer to the retention issue since ‘external source of candidates have been shown to have lower success rates than those promoted internally’ (Blouin, McDonagh, Neistadt, & Helfand, 2006).

5.2.4.2 Effectiveness of TM: from the emotional angle

From the system aspect, the theme on integration strongly supports the VRIO framework. On the other hand, this study suggests that under O-organization, it is more than the process, practice or policy. Even when one refers to capability, it is more than
just behaviours, skills, knowledge or competencies. Taking a helicopter viewpoint of the overall findings and relating all the themes, there is the ‘sensing’ element which is about the understanding of the emotional aspect of the trainees.

Finding supports the view that frustrations are generated due to deviations from the original expectation as discussed under section 2.9. Feild & Harris (1991) identified the major sources of frustration, which excepting the difficulties in finding a desirable job, agree with the findings and there is an added source of frustration, slow career progression or promotion, in Hong Kong. All these generate negative emotions. The author opines that the first step to improve the TM effectiveness is to be aware of the emotional path as experienced by the trainees with the aim to reduce their negative feelings while promoting neutral feelings to become more positive.

As discussed under section 2.9, emotion affects productivity and commitment and thus understanding the emotional aspect is important in workplace. Encouraging a non-Cantonese speaking trainee to speak in Cantonese is not a good way to help the trainee mix with the group. It only makes them feel uncomfortable. Instead of assuming trainees are all excited about job rotation, effort should be made to address any sense of uneasiness as experienced by them. More care and attention may help the trainees adapt to the new environment quickly. Disappointment or helplessness is very different from frustration. Trainees described themselves as ‘nomad’ and the lack of being given real job responsibility made them feel worried. Their titles give them a sense of pride but that also triggers envy, jealousy and resentment from others, to a greater or lesser extent, generating a negative emotional mode. In addition, the company may need to address the issue of hostile treatment encountered by the trainees. It is not clear how serious the situation is but based on the author’s experience in organizations, most HR or senior executives are not aware of such phenomenon. Preventive measures such as more quality communication within the department and recruiting internal trainees are recommended. Last, at the retention phase where nearly all trainees display slightly negative emotions with the feeling of uncertainty, managing the expectations throughout the TM process is of utmost importance.

Turning negative emotions into more neutral or even positive feelings may be achieved through positive organizational support and findings are in line with previous research.
In addition, this study identifies a new element of ‘choice’ that affects how trainees view the whole TM system. Choice does not just create a new level of trust. It frequently leads to appreciation by the trainees. Although the best option may not be available, availability of choices often makes them feel better. This may be due to several reasons. First, trainees perceive they have a direct say in their growth and development and are in control. Second, the atmosphere in Hong Kong is about democracy and individual freedom. Third, more choices exist in the market in Hong Kong. All these factors may contribute to the importance of choice to the trainees.

For research question 4, the system and emotional aspects need to work together. O-organization under VRIO plays a vital role in achieving the TM effectiveness. At the same time, ‘S-sensing’, addressing the emotional path of the trainee is an added element important to HR capability. The author suggests that while the system aspect can help create an environment for better ‘sensing’, the core lies within the heart of the company’s people relating more to the caring theme. The communication and integration themes together with the element of choice help build trust and generate positive feelings. HR capability in orchestrating the various resources needs to take note of both the system and emotional aspects.

5.3 A Contemporary Framework on Talent Management

A suggested conceptual framework on talent management is depicted in Figure 5.3(a) on the TM system aspect and Figure 5.3(b) on the feelings aspect, which describes the emotional path of the talents. Together they provide a holistic view of TM from both the organization and the talent’s perspectives. Positive feelings are usually generated at identification phase. Trustful relationship is established during induction and special attention should be paid to address any negative emotions here. At the development phase, effectiveness of TM is affected by whether the expectations of both parties are met. This relies much on the O-S elements. The feelings of achieving, motivating and encouraging should be promoted possibly through recognition. The green boxes indicate where choice exists. Choice helps turn disappointing or stressful emotions into neutral or even positive. It also implies that the company may need to re-adjust its expectations, which can be a dedicated path or role originally assigned to the trainee. In this re-adjustment process, the objective is to identify a common goal, meeting the
needs of both the company and the talent. At the same time, one should not assume that talents are having the best in the company and they should be happy and contented. Even at the retention phase when talent is offered a new role based on their choice, meeting the new challenge posts another round of stress and anxiety as they may be doubtful about their own capability.

Moreover, POS is further refined, differentiating the focus of different organizational support as required in each TM phase. While there needs to be an overall caring and nurturing culture, the role of supervisor is particularly important during the development phase. Themes on ownership and integration are found to be most critical during development and retention phases. Communication and perception should be carefully managed and alignment is sought through the theme of integration as the HR capability. Moving forward, the new generation theme should not be neglected.

To conclude, both O-organization and S-sensing are critical for success. With the retention of the entry level talent for the leadership pipeline, the whole cycle starts again with the talent anticipating for the next level development and further career advancement.
Proposed Theoretical Framework of Talent Management (TM)

Talent management (TM) process

Identification phase
- Talent identification / review (I)
- Induction

Development phase
- On-boarding / pre departure training (B)
- On job rotation/attachment (A)
- Mentoring relationship (M)
- Visibility of Talent (V)

Retention phase
- Meet career interest / expectation
  - No
  - Yes
    - Company re-adjusts to meet talent’s career interest / expectation
    - Talent exits the company
    - Talent retention (R)

Re-start
- New role as requested
- Succession planning / career advancement (S)
- Organization competitive edge (O)

Organization outcome

Themes on Communication and Perception:
- HR capability, supervisor support (internal)

Themes on Integration / Ownership & Recognition:
- Communication and Perception
- New generation talent: HR capability, role of middle management

Themes on Integration / Ownership:
- Recognition / Communication and Perception
- New generation talent: HR capability, role of HR and line departments

Figure 5.3(a) A Contemporary Talent Management Model: A System Approach
Figure 5.3(b) A Contemporary Talent Management Model: An Emotional Approach
5.4 Implications for Theory

The current research is one of the early attempts to interlink RBV and psychological contract as the two theoretical frameworks to explore the effectiveness of talent management. As there is a growing call for establishing micro-foundations for RBV (Coff & Kryscynski, 2011; Foss, 2011), this study makes an additional contribution to this stream of research and answers the how about RBV which has been criticized as lacking in previous literatures. It provides important empirical evidence supporting RBV and that RBV is a useful and important theoretical framework for HRM.

Barney (2002) himself views that the VRIO framework has its limitation when organization faces the Schumpeterian revolutions which can ‘drastically change the value of a firm’s resources by changing the threats and opportunities that face a firm’ (p. 183) due to radical changes in the external environment. The current research indicates that talents are truly different from the general human resource pool. They are the strategic resource and in facing any radical changes, talents having higher learning agility as defined should be able to sustain their values. In support of the VRIO framework, it is argued that the limitation does not lie with the framework but on how the firm identifies its true strategic resource. Rather, the author would suggest complementing the VRIO framework with the S-sensing element so as to make it more comprehensive, at least for the case of talent as the strategic human resource.

This study also reveals implication to the psychological contract and suggests a model with trust levels and a new element of choice (Figure 5.4). Level 1 trust is built around the initial realization of the expectation i.e. the realization of the learning and growth opportunity. Level 2 trust is the enhancement stage based on continuous and open communication with good intention. This higher level trust helps emit early signals to the other party at the point of perceived unmet expectation. This signal may help re-establish a new expectation with ‘choice’. If this choice materializes and meets the expectations, it leads to reciprocity and a stronger bonding and a new trust level 3 will emerge, as identified from the internally recruited trainees and those who stay with the company for a longer tenure, showing their eagerness to support the new batch of trainees. With choice but if this does not meet the expectation, the trust level is expected to drop to somewhere between Levels 1 and 2.
Figure 5.4  A suggested model on the trust level of the psychological contract (from the perspective of talent)
This suggested model is not without ground. The theory of reciprocity has long studied about the relationship between choice, trust and reciprocity (Berg, Dickhaut, & McCabe, 1995; Cox, 2004) and its effect on performance (Hoppner & Griffith, 2011). In fact, findings also contribute to the reciprocity theory by suggesting reciprocity as a factor affecting retention.

Second, this study provides empirical evidence in support of the two propositions suggested by Morrison & Robinson (1997) about the model on psychological contract violation. First, communication minimizes incongruence. In fact, the current study proposes that continuous and open communication induces a higher trust level. Next, high self-esteem individuals such as the trainees are vigilant in monitoring the contract fulfilment when uncertainty about it is high.

The third contribution to psychological contract is that previous research mainly studies contract violation or breach but not much about contract fulfilment and its emotional attachment. This study confirms that both contract breach and fulfilment affect trainees’ emotions. Trainees waiting for promotion are seen to have shown low energy level and anxiety while fulfilment of their expectation leads to appreciation. Although quantitative analysis of effectiveness has not been conducted, information obtained from the interviews provides a vivid picture of whether trainees are excited about and committed to their current job. Indeed, the author supports the notion that emotions and effectiveness are positively related to one another. Negative emotions induce lower effectiveness whereas positive emotions tend to generate higher level of effectiveness.

The study also enhances our knowledge about the cross cultural differences between Hong Kong and other countries in terms of talent expectations; and has implications to the HRM literatures relating to organization’s acquisition and retention strategies to some extent. This study supports with strong evident that in Hong Kong, talents’ needs and expectations are different from general employees. For talents, fulfilling their learning and growth expectation is the major factor affecting retention and the overall effectiveness of TM. Retention rate on one hand affects TM effectiveness while its effect is moderated by learning and development realization. This means, even if the retention rate is high, unmet learning and development needs will affect the overall TM
effectiveness negatively. The caring family theme is more important than just a POS element. It is a variable affecting acquisition, development and retention directly.

To conclude, the study provides empirical evidence for RBV, suggests a complementary element of S-sensing for VRIO framework and further elaborates psychological contract on the notion on trust, communication, choice and reciprocity. To a certain extent, the research also adds knowledge to the HRM literature relating to organization’s acquisition, development and retention strategies in Hong Kong.

5.5 Implications to Policy and Practice

Besides theoretical implications, this study has provided solid learning and implications for management and HR practitioners on improving the talent management practice. The proposed TM model in the present research is most useful to human resource management, enabling improvement in HR capability.

Companies reviewing their TM approach may want to open up more opportunities for internal employees at the entry level of the leadership pipeline. Although companies in Hong Kong provide equal opportunity to all employees, only two candidates were recruited from within in this study. Selecting internal candidates brings about several advantages. First, the company has already observed and assessed the potential and cultural fit of the candidates and both parties have the trust established. Second, this will likely be a motivational factor for both the selected staff as well as others. Findings indicate that internally identified trainees show reciprocity and appreciation to the company and their bosses. Third, the psychological contract of the new trainees will be affected by internal candidates who will likely project a more positive and appreciative view about the company. Thus, having internal talents mixed with the external candidates can bring much benefit to the organizations.

Companies spend considerable resources for recruiting the right talents. Two trainees wondered if companies are spending the right amount of resources or too much and whether top management’s interest in the process last and persist. There is no one answer to these questions but organizations practicing talent management may want to review the cost and the return.
Third, it is about managing and matching of expectations. While cultural fit is a general factor for talent selection, from the perspective of the talent, a caring and learning environment tends to be most welcomed in Hong Kong. It is important that the image project is embedded within the company culture rather than being an impression created at the selection phase. Moreover, different levels of management have different expectations of the talents. This has an important implication for HR professionals in terms of alignment and management of expectations. In particular, more involvement of middle management in the TM process is recommended. In matching the expectation, companies may take into consideration the choice element, meaning that company may explore more options in terms of the ‘role’ that the talent is interested in or the path to reach that ‘role’.

Forth, it is important to ensure that the talent’s learning needs are realized. This can be enhanced by involving them in planning their own development and through open and constant communication to monitor any changing expectations. Companies may want to put more effort in identifying projects, including non-business ones in order to provide a wider exposure to the trainees, increase their visibility and polish their management and leadership skills. The feeling of being valued by the company and having the sense of importance are of essence during the development phase. The author also highly recommends that the skill and knowledge to be acquired through training courses, the mentoring programme and on job training should be closely tied in together to create the learning synergy. Mentor may observe any behavioural change or have post-training discussion with the trainees on sharing insights, experience and how the trainee may apply the skill / knowledge in their assignments. This will require the HR department to closely partner with the functional departments and there needs to be a clear ownership of talent development in the organization. Company may also explore more on the matching of mentor and mentee, ways to support both parties in creating a positive relationship and establish the measuring criteria about the outcome of mentoring. Ex-MT two levels higher than the trainees can serve as good mentor source. They are of a closer age group and the trainees feel that they understand them better. Involving the middle management is also an option. The study by Hegstad & Wentling (2004) can further provide good mentoring practices for companies.
Fifth, this study also reveals that there is abundant and rich emotional attachment throughout the TM journey. The author agrees that while trainees need to deal with emotional ups and downs on their own, the company can support and help them go through the cycle. HR especially should pay more attention to the feeling aspect of TM. Nowadays affective commitment, ‘a term which emphasizes the feelings that a person has towards his or her organization’ (Smith & Hitt, 2009, p. 176) tends to become a more important element for talents in Hong Kong. As indicated by the trainees, they seldom share their feelings with HR or mentors. Ex-trainees, particularly those who graduated recently are recommended to play the role of big brothers or sisters.

Sixth, after having invested additional resources in the talent, the company should aim for a higher than average target retention rate for talents. Senior executives interviewed questioned whether talent development might be a kind of corporate social responsibility. If we do not measure, review and improve, then it should be company’s conscious choice.

Last but not least, the effectiveness of the TM tends to rely too much on the luck of having a good supervisor. Selection of supervisor may not just be by convenience or based on position but also on their willingness and attitude. A clear, regular and structured communication process and clear role and responsibility between the HR and the functional departments are the immediate actions required.

Besides the implications for practitioners, this study also draws important implications for the policy-makers. As talent was on the agenda in 1997 due to emigration and is now back in board room discussions, the government needs to learn from experience. Hong Kong has scarce natural resources and what we treasure most is our people. Senior executives have expressed great concern about the adequate supply of talent locally. The question is: can Hong Kong self sustain its talent pipeline? Why are our university graduates not meeting the requirements of the local environment? What are the ultimate goals of our education system? Hong Kong seems to have spent resources and grown people through an education system that does not fit in with the demand of the society. While this study is about matching the expectations of the talent and the company, matching the needs of the industries and the talent development direction of Hong Kong is fundamental. Definitely, a more robust investigation of the industry’s
needs is necessary and the government needs to ensure that our education system and other resources are aligned with the needs. Instead of importing talent, more long term planning and support is needed to sustain the competitive edge of Hong Kong.

Second, mentoring has been practiced in certain professions such as engineering for a long time and is found to be successful. With the growing activities around mentoring in Hong Kong, the government may take lead in supporting the transfer of such knowledge and skills to different industries and professions.

Last, findings indicate that a caring and family culture is important to attract talent. Currently, the Hong Kong government has been working with the Hong Kong Council of Social Services for a Caring Company Scheme for some 10 years. The scheme is mainly in the form of a contest which is only one of the ways to promote this culture. From this end, policy-makers should think about the bigger picture, i.e. enhancing caring in the society. This is not about providing benefits which is more of the materialistic needs. As indicated by this study, this is about the heart, the feeling that the government creates via all its other policies and decisions.

To conclude, matching the needs of the industry, starting from education, providing support on mentoring and coaching and promoting the caring culture of the society are areas that policy makers need to focus on.

5.6 Limitations

The current research has interviewed 22 trainees and eight senior executives from large corporations from different industrial sectors. These trainees have been with their companies from 18 months to 6 years. The vast amount of data analyzed provides valuable inputs regarding the effectiveness of talent management in Hong Kong. It also contributes to the global inventory regarding the expectations of the talents of the 21st century, factors leading the talents to leave or stay and in particular their emotional transition throughout the talent management process which has scarcely been discussed in the past. The study also introduces the S-sensing element to complement the VRIO framework. However, the author is cautious that while ‘S-sensing’ applies to talent, it
may have limitation to other strategic resources which do not possess the ‘cognition’, ‘emotion’ or ‘free will’.

Regarding the contemporary TM framework proposed, it is based on the research findings of trainees mainly at entry level. The author believes that this model is still applicable at higher levels but with some variations. First, it is the element on mobility. Instead of rotating to different departments, senior leaders may be relocated to another city or region. How this will affect the TM framework has not been covered by this study. Second, it is the emotions. Previous research suggests that for senior leaders, the same emotional attachment exists and the author opines that the emotions displayed may be evened out since the more mature and experienced senior talents will likely have less emotional fluctuations. This may post limitation on the importance of the S-sensing element or the TM framework.

Third, since there were only two internal recruited trainees and with the limited sample size, the suggested elements of choice and reciprocity in affecting the trust level of psychological contract is mainly a new finding that requires further investigation.

### 5.7 Further Research

To date, more researchers have studied at micro-foundation for RBV. Current research indicates that interlinking RBV and other related theories such as PC provide further contributions, in this case in HRM. The author is in support of having more research in this direction.

Another recommendation is to collect longitudinal data of the same batch of trainees in say three years’ time using the same questionnaire. Based on the comparison of the data, we will be able to track any change in the content of psychological contract and to confirm any directional change. A similar research for middle to senior level talent can be conducted to identify the full talent management cycle for different leadership levels and to test and further refine the proposed TM framework. Replicating the research in China can be beneficial as a number of companies in Hong Kong would like to expand their business across the boarder. This also provides important data to support a global TM framework.
The current study also suggests a 3-level trust hierarchy under psychological contract and choice and reciprocity as variables affecting the trust level and reciprocity is suggested as a moderator for remuneration affecting the ultimate retention of talents. Further research on the personal experience on contract fulfilment or violations and the effects of choice is suggested in order to draw a concluding model. This can be done by using quantitative approach testing the relationship between trust, choice and reciprocity at time of contract fulfilment and breach. Reciprocity is a more Chinese philosophy and perhaps further research on this concept in the western world will be helpful before confirming the proposed model.

Last, mentoring and coaching for oriental culture is worth investigating. What are the key success factors, the challenges and pitfalls that companies in Hong Kong or in China need to be aware of. The criteria of measuring the effectiveness of mentoring should be established. Compared to the western model, what differences are there. This will bring much value to companies in Hong Kong and China as mentoring and coaching are of growing importance in the region. As this may still be at a more explorative stage, qualitative methodology is suggested.

5.8 Conclusion

By interlinking RBV and psychological contract theories, this study has explored the effectiveness of TM from the perspective of management trainee as a strategic resource. Overall effectiveness of TM is affected by psychological fulfilment or breach as perceived by the trainees and understanding their expectations as an HR capability is the first step to ensure TM effectiveness since the outcome of each TM phase affects the next. Eight themes are found to affect TM effectiveness and they include fast track advancement journey, learning and growth, caring family, ownership and recognition, choice, reciprocity and remuneration, communication and perception, integration and lastly the new generation talent. Choice is a new element identified affecting psychological contract and ‘S-sensing’ of the emotional aspect of talents complementing the VRIO framework is suggested to be a vital HR capability to ensure competitive advantage of the firm.
REFERENCE


APPENDIX - The Interview Pack

Interview schedule (For Trainee)

1. Opening

Self introduction and thanks the participant for his /her time. Note the referral if appropriate.

2. Introduction

Explain the purpose of the research: ‘This research aims to identify an effective Talent Management model by answering the questions on ‘How does an effective TM process look like from the perspective of the talent in terms of the system and the sensational aspects?’

The study aims to understand what has happened throughout the TM process from the identification, development to the retention phases and the reasons that things are considered as effective or not so effective from the viewpoint of the talent. Also, how these affect their emotional side.

This interview will follow a guide while will be conducted in a conversational style to allow free flow of input from the talent.

3. Ethical consideration

Participant is guaranteed of the confidentiality of the interview. All information will be treated with the strictest confident and individual and company names will not be disclosed in the result. Participant can stop at any time if he/she doesn’t want to continue.

Explain that this interview will last for about 1 to 1 ½ hrs and will be audio-taped. Meanwhile, the interviewer may also take down some notes.

Confirm with the participant that it can be audio-taped.

Ask the participant if he /she has any specific question in mind that he /she would like to clarify before the interview.

(Ensure own mobile phone is OFF)

4. Interview Questions

Q1 Could you please tell me:
   - When did you join the current company?
   - What are your roles since then? (1st, 2nd, to present)
   - Why you choose to work here?
Q2 What selection processes did you go through when first joined?
   - How do you find the process?
   - How did you feel when you got the confirmation that you’ll be recruited?

Q3 What were the factors that make you take the offer and join the company?
   - What was your expectation at that time?
   - What has the company promised you about this role?
   - What is the number one expectation you had when you joined the company but that has not been met? How do you feel?

Q4 Please describe (in details) your development journey since you joined. (Let’s start with the first year).
   - How long does the MT programme last?
   - What are your key responsibilities for your role(s) in the first year? Who (position) do you report to?
   - What job assignment were you involved in?
   - What training programmes / activities have been arranged for you?
   - Do you have any mentor or coach? If yes, is there a formal arrangement such as an introductory session, a briefing to both parties, etc.?
   - Do you feel your training and development needs are fully addressed? Why or why not?
   - (Will continue to explore what happened in the 2nd to 3rd to current year if needed)

Q5 How do you find these activities (as mentioned under Q4)? Are they helpful? If yes, in what way?
   - Probe: What activity do you find most helpful and why?
   - Probe: What concepts / skills learnt or activities (including job posting, assignment, mentoring if so) engaged are most important to you and why?
   - How well do/have the organization’s development activities meet/met your needs?
   - Probe: What are some of your inspired moment? This can be the time when you discover something new, can be new perspective, new ideas, awareness of things that you’ve never thought about before? How do you feel at that time?

Q6 What do you find discouraging about working here? What happened?
   - Probe: How was that overcome?
   - Probe: What encourage you at that time?
   - Probe: Who gave the greatest support?

Q7 How about challenges?
   - Probe: Any particular pressure from yourself / peers / family?
   - Probe: How you overcome them?

Q8 By now, in the 2nd (or later year), what is your career aspiration?
   - Probe: Has it changed?
   - Probe: What is your expected next career move? Anyone in the company knows? How do you feel?
- Probe: How satisfied are you with your career path progress so far in a scale of 5? Say, one is not satisfied at all, 3 is partly satisfied, 5 is fully satisfied.
- Probe: (What can the company does to make up to 5?)

Q9 What encourage you to stay with the company (even if your needs are not fully met)?
- Probe: Has any headhunter ever contacted you or any opportunity that you have come across? What is the number one reason you choose to continue working for the company?

Q10 What do you think may make your quit the current role? (If participant names more than 3, ask him/her to rank the top 3 factors)
- Probe: Actually, have you (1) thought of quitting? Or (2) made efforts to do so, i.e. searched for a job, or (3) gone on interviews? (Further probe: did you receive any offer?)
- Probe: What is the one thing the company does that makes you think about quitting?
- Probe: (If they stay), why do you stay on?

Q11 Assuming you have absolute power (control). What may be the ONE thing you want to change regarding:
- the recruitment / selection process?
- the programme arrangement including the training activities, job posting, assignment schedule, coaching/mentoring arrangement?
- the company as whole which can be related to salary, culture, system, structure, leadership style?

Q12 Ask any follow up questions and probe further if necessary.

5. Closing

Ask the permission of the participant for follow up clarification if needed. Check whether he or she would like to verify the transcript and get a copy of it. Confirm the timeline by email. Thanks the participant again and that a final summary of the findings will be provided in due course.
Interview schedule - (For senior executive)

1. Opening

Self introduction and thanks the participant for his /her time. Note the referral if appropriate.

2. Introduction

Explain the purpose of the research: ‘This research aims to identify an effective Talent Management model by answering the questions on ‘How does an effective TM process look like from the perspective of the talent in terms of the system and the sensational aspects?’

The study aims to understand what has happened throughout the TM process from the identification, development to the retention phases and the reasons that things are considered as effective or not so effective from the viewpoint of the talent. Also, how these affect their emotional side.

This interview will follow a guide while will be conducted in a conversational style to allow free flow of input from the talent.

3. Ethical consideration

Participant is guaranteed of the confidentiality of the interview. All information will be treated with the strictest confident and individual and company names will not be disclosed in the result. Participant can stop at any time if he/she doesn’t want to continue.

Explain that this interview will last for about 30 minutes and will be audio-taped. Meanwhile, the interviewer may also take down some notes.

Confirm with the participant that it can be audio-taped.

Ask the participant if he /she has any specific question in mind that he /she would like to clarify before the interview. *(Ensure own mobile phone is OFF)*

4. Interview Questions

Q1 Could you share with me your company’s talent management strategy?
   - Probe: Who are considered as talent in your company?

Q2 Could you briefly describe the current management trainee process?
   - Probe: Besides the Management trainee programme, is there any other programme for talent?
   - Probe: How long has the management trainee programme been in place?
   - Probe: What is the duration of the management trainee programme?
   - Probe: May I know your role in the TM process? (if appropriate)
Q2  What are you particular proud of (e.g. can be something special or unique or best practices) about the current management trainee programme?  
Probe: What has been improved so far? (If the interviewee finds nothing to be proud of)

Q3  What are some of the challenges regarding talent management in your company?

Q4  The Company has spent a significant amount of resources on the trainees. What is your expectation of the trainees?  
Probe: Anything you think they should have paid back to the company?

Q5  Do you consider the TM programme successful in your company?  
Probe: What are the success factors?  
Probe: What is the average retention rate of the trainee? Does this meet your expectation?

Q6  What may be the ONE thing you want to reinforce about the TM programme?  
   - Regarding the recruitment / selection process  
   - Regarding the programme itself?  
   - Relating to the company in terms of its salary, culture, system, structure, leadership style, etc. whatever that you may find important to the TM programme?

Q7  Ask any follow up questions and probe further if necessary.

5. Closing

Ask the permission of the participant for follow up clarification if needed. Check whether he or she would like to verify the transcript and get a copy of it. Confirm the timeline by email. Thanks the participant again and that a final summary of the findings will be provided in due course.
Information Statement for the Research Project:
Talent Management: From the Perspective of Management Trainees in Hong Kong

Document Version 002; Dated 23/08/2013

You are invited to participate in the research project identified above which is being conducted by Ms. Leigh Soo Mai, Flora and supervised by Prof. Kamoche at the University of Nottingham, U.K. This research is a requirement of Ms. Leigh’s Doctor of Business Administration study from the School of Business and Law at the University of Newcastle. You have been invited to participate at this research because you meet the criteria as set out under ‘Who can participate in the research’ section below.

Why is the research being done?

The purpose of the research is to investigate ‘What constitute an effective talent management (TM) process from the perspective of the talent?’ Previous research has discussed much about talent management from the viewpoints of human resources or senior management in organizations. However, only few studies aim to investigate the effectiveness issues from the perspective of the talents themselves. Findings from the current research will help companies to better consider how they can optimize their resources to bring about an effective TM process from a different angle. While the main research will focus on the perspective of the talents, viewpoints from senior executives on talent management and their expectations are important input to form a holistic view. This study aims to increase academic and practitioners’ understanding of the expectation of and the feeling experienced by the current generation of talents. By filling this gap, the study helps identify a model that depicts an effective TM process.

Who can participate in the research?

You are eligible to participate in the research if you fit into the following criteria:

A senior executive of the companies who satisfies all the criteria below:

e. Is responsible for the talent management matters of the selected company
f. Has been in that position for at least one year
g. Can read and understand English document without difficulties
h. Can communicate fluently in either English or Cantonese

What choice do you have?
Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Only those people who give their informed consent will be included in the project. Whether or not you decide to participate, your decision will not disadvantage you. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw from the project without giving a reason up till you have confirmed your transcript or been given reasonable time and opportunity to do so. Once you indicate your withdrawal from the project, any data collected will be destroyed immediately. You will also have the option of withdrawing any data which identifies you.

What would you be asked to do?

Once you have read and understand this Information Statement and that you agree to participate, please contact Ms Leigh by phone call or email. Ms Leigh will arrange with you for a personal interview at a time and location convenient to you. Prior to the interview, you will be asked to sign a letter of consent indicating your permission for the interview and for it to be audio-taped.

The interview will be conducted in English or Chinese as you preferred. During the interview, you will be asked to describe the current TM process in your company and your expectation of the talents. Things you feel proud about the current system and challenges encountered. The interviews will follow a guide while a conversational approach will be adopted to allow free flow of ideas. Once the audio-recording has been transcribed, you will receive a copy to confirm or change where you think is necessary. You will be able to review the recording and transcripts to edit or erase your contribution.

How much time will it take?

The interview will take about 30 minutes. Once the recordings are transcribed, you will be asked to check and confirm the transcriptions.

What are the risks and benefits of participating?

There is minimal risk to participate the interview. Confidentiality is assured as names and other information that may lead to the reveal of your identify will be coded. There are no direct benefits to you in participating in this research while the more general benefit will be to the business and profession in understanding how companies can optimize their resources with an effective talent management process.

How will your privacy be protected?

Any information collected by the researcher which might identify you will be stored securely and only accessed by the researcher and supervisor. Confidential data will be kept for at least 5 years and then destroyed. Access to the data will be limited to the researchers except as required by law.

The digital recordings will be transcribed by the researcher herself and all identifying names or words replaced with pseudonyms or codes. The recordings will be kept in soft copy until the transcripts have been verified by you. Transcripts will be stored
electronically on the researcher’s password protected computers and is accessible only by the researcher and the supervisor. You will have the chance to check and ensure that your transcript is clear of identifiers before it is finalized.

**How will the information collected be used?**

Information collected will be analysed and submitted to Prof. Ken Kamoche. It will be used and published as part of Ms. Leigh’s DBA dissertation and may subsequently be published in scholarly journals. Individual participants will not be identified in any reports arising from this project.

Upon successful completion of the dissertation, a one-pager summary of research results will be sent to you by email.

**What do you need to do to participate?**

Please read this Information Statement and be sure you understand its contents before you consent to participate. If there is anything you do not understand, or you have questions, please contact the researcher.

If you would like to participate, please complete the attached consent form and return by email to Ms Leigh at c31317878@uon.edu.au. Ms. Leigh will then contact you to arrange a personal interview at your convenience.

**Further information**

If you would like further information, please contact Ms. Leigh at 91079456 or via email to c31317878@uon.edu.au or through project supervisor Prof. K. Kamoche at kkamoche@yahoo.com

**Complaints about this research**

This project has been approved by the University’s Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval No. H-2013-0253

Should you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to the local DBA Secretariat, The Hong Kong Management Association, 16/F, Tower B, Southmark, 11 Yip Hing Street, Wong Chuk Hang, Hong Kong. Tel: 852 2774 8564 or email to unc.dba@hkma.org.hk

Thank you for considering this invitation and we look forward to receiving your favourable reply.

Yours faithfully,
Organisation Information Statement for the Research Project:
Talent Management: From the Perspective of Management Trainees in Hong Kong

13/09/2013 Version 2

Your company’s management trainee and / or senior executive are invited to participate in the abovementioned research project which is being conducted by Professor Ken Kamoche and Ms. Flora Leigh from the Newcastle Business School at the University of Newcastle, Australia. The research is being carried out as a requirement of Ms Leigh’s Doctor of Business Administration Degree. Professor Kamoche is Ms Leigh’s research supervisor.

Why is the research being done?
The purpose of this research is to investigate what constitutes an effective talent management process from the perspective of the ‘talent’. Trainees and senior executive from companies in Hong Kong engaging in regional or international operations will be invited to take part in this project. Findings will help identify a model that depicts an effective talent management system and help companies to better consider how they can optimize their resources in achieving the ultimate company objective in talent management.

What is being asked of?
We request the consent of your company to interview two to three management trainees who have joined the company for at least 18 months but no more than six years; and your senior executive responsible for talent management. The interview with the trainees will be about their experience, viewpoint and expectations of the development programme. For the senior executive, the interview will be about the company’s current talent management process and practices. The interview will be one-on-one basis and audio-taped.

What are the risks and benefits of participating?
Participation in this study entails neither risk nor direct benefit to your company while the more general benefit will be to the business and profession in understanding how companies can optimize their resources with an effective talent management process. Also, there is minimal risk to participate the interview. Confidentiality is assured as names and other information that may lead to the reveal of the company’s identify will be coded.
How will privacy be protected?
Your company will not be named or identified by taking part in this research. Information will be coded and anonymity is guaranteed as there are a number of similar companies in terms of industry, scale and scope operating in Hong Kong. Responses from the trainee or senior executive are anonymous and the data reported in aggregate. An electronic copy of the aggregated data will be securely stored on password protected computers accessible only to the researchers. The data will be kept for a minimum of five years from the date of approval of the Ms Leigh’s dissertation and then destroyed.

How will the information collected be used?
The findings of this study will form part of Ms Leigh’s Doctor of Business Administration dissertation and may be published in scholarly and professional journals. Access to the data will be limited to the researchers except as required by law.

What do you need to do to participate?
Once this Information Statement has been read and understood, should the company wish to provide its consent for the management trainees and senior executive to participate in this research project, you are required to sign the attached form on behalf of the company so providing informed written consent. The Participant Information Statement for the trainee and the senior executive are also attached for information.

Further information
If you would like more information about this study, please contact Ms Leigh or Professor Kamoche at the above emails or phone numbers. Thank you for considering this invitation.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Ken Kamoche                        Flora S.M. Leigh
Chief Investigator                        Student Researcher

Complaints about this research:
This project has been approved by the University’s Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval No. H-2013-0253

Should you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to the local DBA Secretariat, The Hong Kong Management Association, 16/F, Tower B, Southmark, 11 Yip Hing Street, Wong Chuk Hang, Hong Kong. Tel: 852 2774 8564 or email to unc.dba@hkma.org.hk
Consent Form for the Research Project:
Talent Management: From the Perspective of Management Trainees in Hong Kong
Document Version : 002 ; Dated : 23/08/2013

I agree to participate in the above research project and give my consent freely. I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Information Statement, a copy of which I have retained. I understand I can withdraw from the project at any time and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing until I have returned and confirmed my transcript.

I consent to participating in an interview and having it recorded. I also understand that I can review and edit my own transcript.

I understand that my personal information will remain confidential to the researchers. I consent that I can be quoted anonymously in the report of the research findings and I have had the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.

Print Name: ________________________________________________________
Signature: __________________________ Date: ________________________

If you would like to receive a summary of the findings, please check the box below and provide your contact details.

☐ I would like to receive a summary of the findings.

Please send to the following email address: ____________________________
Organisation Consent Form for the Research Project:
Talent Management: From the Perspective of the Management Trainees in Hong Kong

23/08/2013 Version 002

This is to confirm that I have read the Information Statement on the above named research project to be conducted by Ms. Leigh under the supervision of Professor Ken Kamoche from the University of Newcastle, Australia and I have had the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.

On behalf of the company, I consent the following:

1. the researcher to interview 2 - 3 management trainees who have joined the company for at least 18 months but no more than five years and on voluntary basis about their own experience and viewpoints of the talent development activities provided by the company
2. the researcher to interview a senior executive about the company’s current talent management practices
3. the information collected is solely for the purpose of the above-mentioned research project

Print Name: _____________________________________________________________
Signature: ____________________________ Date: _____________________________

If you would like to receive a summary of the findings, please check the box below and provide your contact details.

☐ I would like to receive a summary of the findings.

Please send to the following email address: ___________________________________