

Titel:

Shared Responsibility: Understanding the Devolution of Talent Management Responsibilities from the HR Function to the Line

Abstract:

Given the current talent shortage, Talent Management (TM) has been a top priority for CEOs, HR professionals, and line managers. As a “joint venture” among different organizational actors, the effectiveness of TM depends on coordinated, multi-actor participation across the TM cycle – identification, development, communication, and placement – where interdependent roles must be coordinated rather than optimized in isolation. Patterns of TM devolution – defined as the allocation of TM responsibilities formally undertaken by the HR function and now increasingly shifted to the line – vary significantly in practice, giving rise to the question of what type of collaboration between the HR function and the line yields the highest effectiveness of TM. Drawing on the HRM strength perspective, this study employs a sequential mixed-methods design. First, a survey of HR professionals in 183 organizations in Switzerland was conducted to test whether the relationship between TM devolution and the effectiveness of TM follows an inverted U-shape. Second, qualitative interviews with 47 HR professionals and 16 line managers were conducted to shed light on how collaboration between HR professionals and line managers unfolds in practice. Quantitatively, we found a curvilinear relationship: effectiveness is lowest at very low and high levels of devolution and highest at medium levels. Qualitatively, interviews confirmed this pattern and deepened understanding of how effective collaboration across the TM cycle can produce the process features of TM required for a “strong” HR system – distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus – thereby increasing the effectiveness of TM.