Book Review

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Talent Management in Education
by: B. Davies and B.J. Davies
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188pp
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Talent Management in Education by Davies and Davies (2011) captures the essence of the *IJBEM* special issue on business education, as it illustrates some of the challenges facing the management of talent in that sector. Notable recommendations are provided in areas of academic freedom, talent identification, management support and collegiality – all key ingredients for the management and retention of talent in the education sector across levels, be it primary, secondary or tertiary/higher education.

The book consists of ten chapters and split into five main sections even though this does not reflect the published sectioning. While the first two chapters and the last chapter form the opening and closing sections respectively, chapters 3 and 4 are grouped into section 1 entitled 'Talent identification'. In the second official section entitled 'Talent development', three chapters (i.e., chapters 5–7) are discussed. In section 3, there are two additional chapters – notably chapter 8 on 'Building a talent management culture', and chapter 9 on 'School or system talent'.

Going by the published sections, however, the book obviously seeks to achieve three central purposes: exposition of talent management at three distinct levels viz: talent identification; talent development; and 'talent culture', the focus of section 3. While the book does not read as a textbook *per se*, it does serve as a worthy guidebook for school administration in a broader sense where school may apply across levels from primary through secondary to tertiary education. Indeed every chapter has, at its end, a checklist of performance measures in a reflexive manner.

In the light of the above, four chapters from the book are worth elaborating upon. The first and last chapters (i.e., chapters 1 and 10) which are evidence of good practice in talent management and also consistent with scholarly discourse requiring a good opening and closing section, as well as chapters 5 and 6 on talent development and professional learning respectively.

Taking these in turn, chapter 1 provides a broad brush on what the book seeks to achieve and takes the reader on a step-by-step guide as to what the 'bone of contention' is, and more importantly, how the subject matter in the book is unpacked. In this opening chapter, the authors cite the research of a leading British recruitment outfit, the Hays Group, highlighting what might be deemed as a 'best practice' illustration, which

suggests that top CEOs in the corporate world tended to dedicate half of their time mentoring, coaching and developing the next generation of leaders (see p.67). This is evidence of succession planning in education and even across sectors including sports with the number of assistant coaches and player-managers.

Chapter 5 is an interesting one by all means as it reflects the title of the book – i.e., talent management. However, the key emphasis here is on leadership and this is outlined in the 'stages of leadership development' as illustrated on p.87, which lists five key stages encompassing:

1 trust

2 empowerment

3 collaboration

4 alignment

5 transformation (see Figure 5.1).

These attributes are revisited in the third chapter discussed as core to this review – i.e., chapter 6, which focuses on professional learning. Key ingredients identified here include the need for leaders to be learners in order to discharge their duties effectively – with key attributes being shared values, a shared vision, and the ability to nurture an atmosphere of trust, respect and support (see p.97). There are also some illustrative matrices indicating how leadership support may enhance staff commitment (see Figure 6.4) as well as the synergistic effects between staff and leadership involvement in research (see Figure 6.5). These topics are discussed on pp.110–112 and capture the signs of the times in higher education that craves academic freedom and institutional support for not just learning and teaching but also scientific research.

In the final chapter, i.e., chapter 10, the authors talk readers through their 'integrated talent-management model for schools'. Using metaphors of the whale and minnows, i.e., external changes and internal staffing dynamics. The chapter discusses the need to embrace diversity as well as how to make talent management work based on a '3-S' philosophy of *signals* (explicit communication), *symbols* (personal behaviour), and *systems* (measurements and rewards). These are elaborated further on p.174 as being the responsibility of everyone.

Overall the book, while providing some reflexive insights into where schools – broadly defined across levels from primary to tertiary – currently are, in relation to where they ought to be, focuses more on leadership matrices rather than on talent management development. This may lead critics to argue that the title might not be a true reflection of the contents. In order to remedy this kind of validity concern, therefore, the authors may be best advised to reconsider the title of any planned follow-up to the book to ensure an inclusion of the keyword 'leadership' in a title that captures and/or subsumes the 'devil in the detail'. Perhaps a title along the lines of *Leadership and Talent Management in Education* might just nail it.