
Leadership Role In Nurturing Talent At Scientific Institutions

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ABSTRACT: Measure of an organization's success is not just limited to its financial performance but is reflected by the intellectual capabilities it has. In the present world wherein war for talent is a norm, identifying the right talent and nurturing them defines the success stories of sustained organizations. Leaders at various levels play a very important role in this whole process of identifying high potential candidates, nurturing them and creating a robust talent pipeline for the future. Good organizational branding can be done through robust talent management practices, right performance outcomes and a strong talent culture. This has to be espoused by efficient leadership which leverages on the intellectual assets, by cultivating and harnessing the competencies required for a continuous growth. Leader, as a talent steward has to identify critical talent, nurture individuals with such talent and ensure sustenance of such talent for futuristic use.

Scientific institutions are an embodiment of highly competitive talented scientists. Designing high impact talent management activities should be the initiatives of top leaders of such organization in order to build a strong intellectual bank. For this the role of a HR executive is functional in nature, but the involvement of leaders is imperative in ensuring that the talent management challenges are addressed. This ensures that the organization transcends benchmarks in managing talent by reflecting talent culture as the foundation to nurturing right talent.

Role of a leader as a talent steward and the impact of leadership on building scientific talent pipeline is the core of this study. This study is done with specific reference to the scientists in research institutions in India. Scientific leadership and its influence on nurturing scientific talent has not been studied so far. This study being exploratory and descriptive in nature tries to identify those components of leadership influencing talent identification, development and nurturing. To identify the potentially correlated variables, data was subjected to Principal Component Analysis (PCA). Impact of Leadership identified as one of the component has nine variables which show significant influence on talent nurturing. It was found that scientific leaders have an expanded critical role to cultivate talent internally by assessing talent and capabilities and identify emerging leaders. The findings suggest that Leadership can effectively leverage and deploy the identified nine variables and ensure better talent nurturing.

Key words: leadership, scientific institutions, talent culture, talent stewards.

INTRODUCTION

An Organization's success is not limited to the measure of its financial performance but is also influenced by the intellectual capabilities it possesses. Organizations today, have diverse talent, which needs to be continuously identified and nourished, ensuring that the organization sustains talent. Contributing to this development of intellectual capital, are the leaders who play a major role by holding the baton of both - profitability of the organization and developing potential for sustained growth in the future. Organization's growth and success is often credited to the great minds behind the wheels steering the company and those are of the Leaders. 'Leadership', Giuliani writes 'is a privilege with responsibilities'. Leadership harvests change and establishes direction while aligning people towards the goal achievement, motivating, inspiring and enabling the followers, (**Peter G Northhouse 2007**). People who can influence others using these approaches are Leaders, who motivate, inspire, enable, nurture, challenge, question and support the followers. A leader has to develop strong beliefs, articulate and execute. Leaders in organizations are the pillars of championing a culture of excellence by developing various approaches to effectively manage and cultivate talent.

Business champions compete with each other to possess the most talented individuals who can steer the organization to gain a competitive advantage on the business front. Though talented individuals with unique capabilities are existent at all levels in an organization, individuals with high order competencies, who can don many hats and gel into different roles have to be mined from within. The challenge of mining talented people rest on the shoulders of leaders at various levels. Jack Welch said "I view my primary job as strengthening our talent pools. So, I view every conversation, every meeting as an opportunity to talk about our talented people". It is this fundamental understanding of a good leader which leads to the development of an efficient talent pipeline. A leader, along with possessing attributes like global

mind-set, ability to lead change, manage diversity and complexity, must have the capability to bring out the best in the people.

Designing high impact talent development activities should be the initiatives of top leaders of an organization. Along with HR executives, the leaders have to develop an exclusive leadership development team, wherein a collaborative relationship exists between all the members, and they overtly work towards the strategic goal which is clearly to garner relevant talent for the future, **(Berger and Berger 2011)**. Such indulgence should not be restricted to identifying competencies but should assess an individual inside-out, have a real relationship and make them realize what influences their behavior in good and bad times. However, the new economy poses greater challenges to the development of future leaders because people have to equip themselves with skills which are not part of the traditional leadership package, **(Ram Charan et al 2001)**. It has become increasingly difficult to find and develop leaders for the new economy and the burden on the top management has increased manifold.

Scientific institutions are an embodiment of talented scientists. With their expertise in different fields, they focus on individual enrichment through continuous learning and development activities. The institutions have well planned initiatives directed towards human resource development. The role of leaders on various positions in these institutions is to drive projects to completion, establish a vision, foster innovation and collaboration, and ensure that all the individuals are motivated to deliver organizational objectives. Leaders must devote greater amount of time in becoming an influencer in the scientific community. They have an expanded critical role to cultivate talent internally by assessing talent and capabilities and identify emerging leaders.

LEADERSHIP IN ORGANIZATIONS

Northouse (2000) defined Leadership as a process by which an individual can influence a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. This being one among hundreds of definitions of Leadership, gives fairly the same meaning as the rest of them. This definition specifically relates Leadership as a ‘process’ and not as a characteristic or a trait. Leadership is persuasion, not domination, **(Robert Hogan et al 1991)** and is not restricted to the influence of an individual on a group **(Richard L Hughes et al 2008)**.

Leadership can be defined as a process which has three ingredients: Leaders, followers and the situation **(Peter G Northouse, 2007)**. Leadership is contextual and the role of a leader varies based on the organization and situation. There is no one single definition which can give a perfect explanation to the role of a leader. Individuals are called as leaders who can navigate in the critical path to achieve the goal while taking along the brains behind the achievement towards newer challenges. The demand of the new economy in a very disruptive environment is for leaders to possess those skills which aren't a part of the traditional leadership package. And that being, not just communicate, motivate, develop and mentor but develop a leadership brand as well. In the study by Mc Kinsey's group, they found that most companies are poor in the area of talent management because leaders don't realize that talent management is their area of involvement.

Effective talent management practices, performance outcomes and talent culture are management tools that good leadership leverage to build organizational brands through intellectual assets. The task of building this intellectual asset though a collective effort of all the organizational leaders at the top, leaders at various functional levels play a pivotal role in enabling team members thus building a strong intellectual bank within the organization. The role envisages these individuals being critical talent identifier, nurturer and developer, ensuring that talent within the organization continuously transcends benchmarks while keeping in focus future vision for talent.

LEADERSHIP IN SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTIONS:

India is a country of great visionaries in the field of science, technology and research. Great innovations and research work of pioneers like Sir C V Raman, Chandrashekar Subramaniam, Homi Jehangir Bhabha, Vikram Sarabhai, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam and the like has inspired and built confidence in the budding aspirants to progress in the same field. Their scientific and technological leadership qualities are the guiding mantras for exploring the uncharted terrains in science and technology.

Leaders in scientific institutions are like magnets, said Dr APJ Abdul Kalam (2008). They attract best people into the organization and inspire them to fulfill the vision and mission of the organization. These leaders institutionalize dedication, risk taking and accepting failures as a requirement of every leader. Leadership, for these individuals cannot be defined based on the general theory that involves leader, followers and situation; or explained based on their traits. In this context we may define scientific leadership as a combination of process leadership along with trait based leadership which follows the construct that leaders exhibit some traits and these traits are essentially the ingredients for a leader to ensure organization effectiveness. On this premise, a leader, in these organizations must have a vision for the organization, the courage to take decisions, exhibit extraordinary nobility in management, (i.e. handling success and failure equally well) and be transparent in functioning. Cultivating excellence as a culture is a basic skill of such

exemplary leaders. A successful scientific leader is one who has great clarity in the objective and mission accomplishment of various projects in a short term perspective. Keeping oneself and the team aligned around clear and inspiring strategy and set of strong values is the leadership capability which he/she has to display. However, the future orientation is towards development of relevant skills, building of newer systems and practices in order to accomplish change agenda and this, is considered to be a part of continuous learning capabilities of the an organization.

ROLE OF LEADERS IN TALENT DEVELOPMENT

'Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime'

(An old Proverb)

Building capabilities from within the organization is a fundamental shift in talent management. Greater impetus is given to developing a talent mindset and an environment conducive for talent breeding. The beneficiaries of the deliverables of these institutions is the society and concerns advancement in nation building. With such a mission and vision, these institutions have a different work environment. People here have rich scientific talent unlike other talents, and this is unique in its own way because of the nature of the job. Be it in the field of space, ocean or earth, the type of work they are involved in is very different from a profit oriented, business entity. It is just not the leader at the top, steering the organization, but every single leader at various positions like a group head or a division head or even a team head playing a signification role in the success of this mission.

In an environment which is talent rich, donning a leadership role is a daunting task for most of the scientists. Developing leader capabilities is often considered as an additional task in their fully occupied full time job. **Rao et al (2012)** in a study to investigate the readiness of the scientists in the organization to take up the leadership role, analyze various factors which may influence an individual to decide on a leadership role. They deduce that, value of autonomy of the organization and independence they get on their profession impacts their readiness to take up leadership roles. The dilemma of a leader in accepting the role is due to the authority and control which one needs to exercise being a leader. Thus, the hesitance in executing the responsibility as a leader in terms of talent development and nurturing exists and this percolates in the area of identifying high potentials too.

Possessing a talented workforce with dynamic capabilities does not suffice to gain a sustainable advantage. In order to achieve optimal productivity, individuals must be engaged. Organizational initiatives, culture and leadership have to work in coherence to ensure this. While working in teams, leaders identify potential candidates for critical projects and critical roles, nurture them and build a robust talent pipeline for future position in the organization. Scientists working on the same project get well acquainted with each other and associate with each other for professional growth and development. Functional and moral support to co-workers in these small circuits enhances their performance and brings in a feeling of citizenship in the organization. Talented individuals, be it the group head, division head or directors who lead diverse teams are chosen based on meritocracy and they are identified based on their capability to perform, competence to lead and the commitment to the profession. They spend time in identifying potential scientists who have unique capabilities in handling various functions efficiently.

TALENT CULTURE IN SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTIONS

Culture and leadership are two pillars of an organization's credibility, brand image and sustenance. However, it is true that they compliment each other. Efficient leaders and extraordinary leadership go hand in hand. While leaders focus on people and their growth, leadership focuses on the organization that creates future leaders. In a study, it was found that Leadership impacts integrated and proactive strategies for sustaining talent in non-profit organizations. They identified three categories of organizations based on leadership and functioning and the type of commitment they have towards talent building and sustenance. They called them as 'talent oblivious', 'talent aware' and 'talent focused'. Organizations which fall into any one of these three categories determines where the organization stands in talent sustainability continuum.

Scientific institutions are workplaces with a well-defined hierarchical structure. Protocols are well defined and systems and processes are followed in all functional aspects. HR professionals play a primary role in all HR related activities and leaders in different positions are held responsible for the performance of their team, division or department. Interaction of leaders with HR professionals though regular, is limited to the development and engagement activities of scientists. Scientific institutions engaged in research work, with a different work culture and environment, face some unique set of challenges in attracting, motivating, retaining talented people and sustaining talent. While the HR team addresses these unique challenges to some extent as "one" of their "to do" activities, it is imperative that the leaders are proactively engaged in these dimensions of HR functions.

BUILDING TALENT PIPELINE: IDENTIFYING AND NURTURING SCIENTISTS

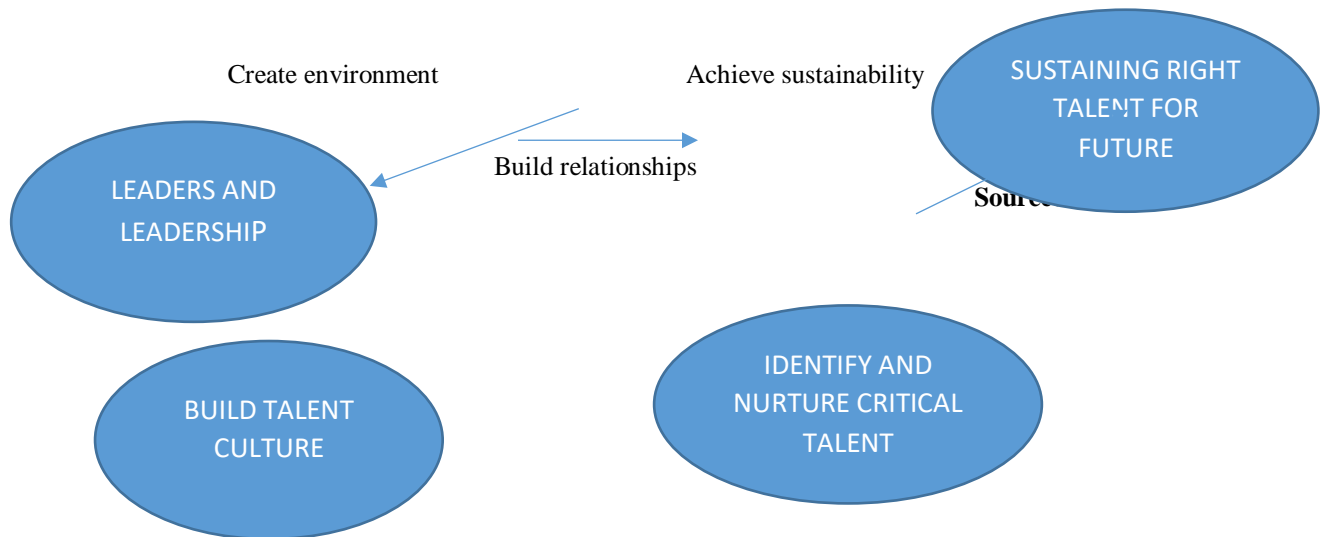
With technological advances and disruption being the norm of the day, all that would be meaningless if there is no human talent to put it to use. In a survey done with 631 senior managers and HR professionals, it was found that 31% of the respondents felt that lack of high potential leaders in the organization is the most pressing HR challenge for an organization (2012)

Building an efficient talent pipeline and ensuring efficacious talent management practices in a scientific organization is based on the robust systems which work in tandem with the leadership. **Micheals et al (2001)** identifies the action plan for leaders to effectively implement Talent management practices in the organization. According to the authors, ‘Talent mindset’ is a deep-rooted belief that right talent should be available at all levels in the organization which directly enables the organization to outperform competition. While recognizing Talent to be the primary lever pulling the other performance levers in the organization, it is the duty of the leaders to develop strategies in order to ensure that TM practices are given top priority. The authors have devised six critical strategies for leaders to ensure that they substantially improve the standard and technique of managing talent better. Establishing the talent standard, strengthening the direct reports, influencing people decisions right to the bottom most level in the organization will necessitate a well-informed leader. These leaders have to further develop rigorous and effective talent review process, hold managers responsible for strengthening of their talent pool and finally instill a talent mindset throughout the organization.

With their tightly packed schedules which is sometimes stretched beyond permissible limits, dedicating time for identifying and nurturing talent though difficult for scientists, is essential. **Yamuna (2015)** opines that the need of the hour for India in the scientific research domain is to have early stage mentorship. With some outstanding scientists in the nation, India, which is trying to be the best egalitarian society, needs to strategize towards channelizing efforts to make cutting edge research. This, she adds, is possible when experienced scientists are identified and are assigned to mentor and nurture five to ten emerging junior scientists and move them to the level of outstanding excellence.

TALENT STEWARDSHIP: ANATOMY OF SUCCESS IN BUILDING FUTURE TALENT

Fig: Role of Leaders as talent Stewards



Talent stewardship is a leadership role which scientific organizations must design in such a way that it envisages the thought of inbreeding of talent right from the beginning .It should become the mindset of leaders who play a major role in ingraining talent management practices into the culture of the organization. This induces ownership for every leader in building capabilities from within. Scientific leaders must create an environment of trust and longevity in order to ensure sustainability in terms of intellectual capability building. One’s intellectual capability is one of the major tool to growth. With technology being the backbone of all innovations, development of talent has to focus on building a dynamic team which can execute the present challenges and endure all future challenges as well.

Press and Goh (2018) stresses upon the need for a leader to disrupt himself/herself in order to be successful in today’s disruptive world. The authors recommend three actions by the leaders: disrupting one’s role; disrupting one’s identity and disrupting one’s meaning towards person, organization and society, which will facilitate them to succeed in the

disruptive environment. They throw light upon the necessity for current models of leadership to go through a paradigm shift since new realities calls for new imperatives. Scientific talent is evolving and so are these organizations. Scientific organizations are learning organizations as they evolve continuously with the revolutionary changes in research, technology and innovation. Leadership is the driving force behind organizational behavior and performance and that is collectively achieved by the integration of various interacting systems like the organization structure, processes, value systems, leadership styles, HR practices and policies. Organizational learning is dependent on two pillars i.e., organizational leadership and organizational culture opines the author (**Sanjay Singh, 2007**). He argues that Organization learning which relates to the organization not losing out on its learning abilities though talented employees leave the organization, would be possible only with the right leadership and a supportive organization culture. While basing his thoughts on Senge's generative learning and Aygyris & Schon's double loop learning, he suggests that for an organization to become a Learning organization through the process of organizational learning, redesigning culture and leadership to ensure the right blend is very essential.

Talent stewardship encompasses all the factors under Talent management(TM) and it is understood that TM can be used as a dynamic tool in nurturing leaders who are vital for future success(**Zeynep,2010**). Recruitment process for scientists in research institutions are highly objective wherein the technical capabilities along with acumen in the area of practical applications are tested. Once into the organization, they are assigned under various departments based on their capabilities and skills. Under the able guidance of the senior scientists, younger scientists are guided through various missions, applying their technical expertise and progressing in the field of innovation. Interaction between the senior scientists and budding scientists is on a regular basis. Leaders do hand holding and ensure that their commitment to team success is achieved.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

This study is an attempt to identify the role of a leader as a Talent steward, their impact on talent building, nurturing and development with specific reference to select scientific organizations in India. The objective of the study is to assess the influence of leadership on talent management practices, critical talent identification and most essentially the role of a leader in building of a talent pipeline for meeting future demands in these organizations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research settings for this study spans across nine highly acclaimed scientific research organizations in India. Empirical evidence is drawn from qualitative interview and quantitative data, along with inputs from literature reviews. A questionnaire with items specific to research organization was developed and administered. Additional information was gathered through in-depth interviews with Division heads, Group Heads and HR head. With 185 scientists as the sample, scientists having grades between Sci B to Sci H (read Scientist), formed the major respondents. A few HR leaders and managers are also part of this study.

SPSS is used to understand multivariate relationship between the factors and regression analysis is done.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

A. KMO and BARTLETT'S test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.918
Approx. Chi-Square		5888.007
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	1081
	Sig.	.000

The KMO measure is .918 and verifies the adequacy of the sample size. .918 being greater than Kaiser's indicated correlation between items, we may deduce that reliability is high.

Chi square value is 5888.007 with 1081 degrees of freedom, which is significant at .05 Level of significance.

B. TOTAL VARIANCE EXPLAINED BY 5 FACTORS

Total Variance Explained			
Component	Initial Eigenvalues	Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings

	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	17.641	37.534	37.534	17.641	37.534	37.534	7.218	15.357	15.357
2	2.542	5.409	42.943	2.542	5.409	42.943	5.239	11.146	26.503
3	2.279	4.849	47.792	2.279	4.849	47.792	4.592	9.770	36.272
4	2.010	4.276	52.068	2.010	4.276	52.068	4.516	9.608	45.881
5	1.579	3.359	55.427	1.579	3.359	55.427	4.487	9.546	55.427

Source: Primary data

Analysis of data:

Data precision: Data on talent leadership variables were collected using a tested instrument. Data was subjected to KMO and Bartlett’s test for sampling adequacy and for the purpose of capturing levels of variation. KMO statistics at .918 indicates very high level of a sampling adequacy. Further chi square statistics computed at 5888.007 is statistically significant at .000 level. The Bartlett’s test of sphericity indicates that all variables have been captured sufficiently for further analysis. The basic tests of sampling adequacy and sphericity are indicative of high level of data precision. Thus the data has been subjected to factor analysis to identify factors of variations concerning talent leadership.

Factor analysis:

Using Principal Component analysis (PCA), five factors have been identified. Five factors accounted for 55.427 percent variance in the investigated items. Five factors have Eigen value greater than 1. The variance explained by each of them is 37.53 percent, 5.409 percent, 4.85 percent, 4.28 percent and 3.36 percent respectively.

C. VARIABLES OF EACH FACTOR

FACTOR-1 Leadership Involvement

Leaders express their intent of building a strong talent pipeline	0.59
Leaders engage in talent management practices	0.64
Leaders set standards for individual creativity	0.66
Leaders monitor overall performance of the organization	0.69
Leaders plan activities to translate policies into actions	0.69
Leaders concentrate on sustaining the right talent by exuding confidence	0.69
Leaders set standards for individual excellence	0.74
Leaders construct an inspiring vision for the organization	0.75
Leaders set standards for innovation	0.77

Table: 1.1

Source: primary data

The first factor is Leadership Involvement wherein the component values indicate Leadership in terms of expression, engagement, setting standards, monitoring performance, planning activities, concentration on sustenance, levels of individual excellence, vision and standards of innovation. Leadership in a talent dominant organization requires these nine variables to play a greater part for setting standards and fulfilling the vision of the organization which further permeates into individual levels.

FACTOR-2- Critical talent management

Identified talent is assigned challenging roles under leadership supervision	0.49
High performers are rewarded for their outstanding work	0.599841

Continuous feedback is provided for improvement	0.48533
Identified talent is tested for right fit against key performance indicators	0.586158
Critical positions contributing to organization's success and its related competencies are well defined	0.590399
High performance is considered the 'way of functioning'	0.45413
Scientific methods are adopted to screen and identify talent	0.562538
HR managers use formal processes for identifying high potential talent	0.433975
The quality of work of an individual is an essential criteria for identifying potential talent	0.474236
Effectiveness of retention strategies is reflected by low attrition	0.477832
Individual accomplishments are recognized	0.67971
Individual accomplishments are rewarded	0.627939

Source : Primary data

Second factor is critical talent identification. As many as 12 variables have been identified out of which only 3 contribute to nurturing. They are rewards, accomplishments and recognition. These variables play a greater role in nurturing talent. The question remains as to what kind of rewards and recognition should be accorded. It can be understood that the existing formal HR systems and processes contribute very little to identify critical talent.

FACTOR-3 Development and Engagement

Development activities have significant effect on employee outcomes such as motivation	0.52212
Developmental activities focuses on preparing employees for future challenges	0.636283
Personal goals are aligned to organizational strategies	0.43343
Interaction with teams leads to an effective goal achievement	0.689325
Training provided is practical and experiential in nature	0.621079
Management makes adequate developmental efforts	0.599791
Employees are encouraged to work without supervision	0.522301
Leaders are responsible to ensure appropriate talent development functioning	0.483904
When identifying talent for critical positions, internal talent is preferred	0.484373

Source :Primary data

Third factor is development and engagement. Out of nine variables only 3 variables contribute with higher levels of significance. The variables are preparation, goals, and experiential learnings. Well-defined development goals should include both the personal and professional development of the individuals. The goals of the organization must match with the goals of the person. Team leaders interact with team members and ensure goal achievement

FACTOR-4 Organization environment and functioning

Leaders play a major role in identifying critical talent within the organization	0.41
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Peer relationships encourages interactions for mutual growth	0.426222
Leaders play a major role in nurturing critical talent within the organization	0.50217
Quality of work life promotes cordial relationship	0.621558
Social environment encourages cordial relationship	0.540717
Career opportunity encourages talent to continue to work	0.570417
Feeling of belongingness encourages continuation in the organization	0.654529
Fairness encourages individuals to continue in the organization	0.754238
Transparency encourages individuals to continue in the organization	0.815489

Fourth factor is organization environment and functioning. Out of the nine variables, 4 variables highlight the contribution of organization environment and functioning. The variables are quality of work life, belongingness, fairness, and transparency. Transparency and fairness, in that order must be factors to reckon with in identifying talent. Belongingness and quality of work life are variables internalized after a person is inducted. The latter two variables are experiential in nature. However identification of talent with the organization will enable mutual safety, security leading to sustenance.

FACTOR-5 Talent retention

Management invests time and money to retain critical talent for future roles	.701
Management care to retain critical talent for future roles	0.66
Leaders invests time to retain critical talent	0.56
Leader is a role model for talent to continue	0.45
Fringe benefits provided are at par with industry standards	.634
Remuneration is at par with industry standards	.654
Leaders invest money to retain critical talent	.692

Fifth factor is talent retention. Out of the seven variables identified, five are most influential. They are investment of time and money by management, retention, leader’s intervention, leaders’ role, benefits, remuneration and investment. These factors suggest that talent nurturing has to be simultaneously by the system and the leaders of the organization. In totality, all the identified factors indicate that an organization should manifest through leadership, management, nurturing and by proper identification of talent for development

Conclusion:

The socio-economic progress and industrialization of a nation depends on the wide range of research done by scientific research organizations. They form the backbone of innovation and institution building. The future of these legacy institutions is in the hands of the leaders who have to don the role of a Talent steward. With the rapidly changing dynamic environment, creating an enduring legacy of value is enabled only by choosing the right individual with the right capabilities and providing an environment conducive to draw the best outcomes and that, is the primary responsibility of leaders in the organization. Scientific leaders need to develop internal successors who will carry on the vision of the institution with a greater rigor and fresh perspective. Devotion of time and self into identifying, nurturing and developing future talent should become an integrated function of individuals who have the role of

choosing and nurturing a successor. It was found that Leadership involvement in talent development in research organizations encompasses setting high standards, continuous monitoring of performance and individual growth, coaching and guiding. With multiple projects and project deadlines, finely defined structure should be chalked out for talent development activities. Leaders have to be equipped with tools, systems and technological infrastructure which will espouse this exercise of talent building in a more organized and structured manner.

Influence of transformational leadership in specific along with transactional leadership, can be explored in further research with the help of theoretical background laid down in this paper. External factors can be considered in tandem with leadership roles in developing and sustaining talent.

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