

Talent Management Practices, Leadership Skills, and Professional Values in Higher Education Institutions: A Review

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Abstract

This review paper synthesized existing literature on talent management practices, leadership skills, and professional values in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), with special emphasis on the Philippine context. Based on peer-reviewed research, theoretical considerations and some empirical evidence this paper analyzed how talent attraction, talent retention, learning and development and career management relate to the leadership skills and professional values of the academic as well as non-academic regular staff. Particularly, it analyzed the theoretical bases pertinent to these variables such as the Resource-Based View Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, Family Values Framework and Signaling theory. Results from the literature consistently reflected a significant contribution of successful talent management strategy in leadership performance outcomes, while professional values served as an important moderator within these relationships. Possible gaps in the literature are identified and discussed, especially with regard to the moderating role of professional values in Philippine HEIs. This research adds to the strategic human resource management literature in education and suggested avenues for future empirical investigations.

Keywords: Leadership Skills; Learning and Development; Professional Values; Talent Attraction; Talent Management; Talent Retention

1. Introduction

Human resources form the backbone of any organization — small or big, private or public sector. Human beings are what make innovation, productivity, and the very survival of a company possible. The success of any institution in the long run depends not only on its strategies and systems, but on how well it manages its people, how it develops them, and how it retains them. As such, human resource management has become a strategic partner in developing an organization's vision and performance (Purnomo et al., 2025).

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are particularly crucial among different entities. They are more than teaching institutions — they are social institutions shaping future members of society. Thus, HEIs need professionals, whether teaching or non-teaching, who are competent, dedicated, and value-driven individuals to deliver quality service to students and other stakeholders. These institutions cannot function properly without aligning their human capital strategy with their leadership orientation and values (Wiyono et al., 2025).

Talent management - encompassing talent attraction, retention, learning and development, and career management — is now recognized as a hallmark of sustainable organizations. In HEIs, a successful talent management strategy ensures that suitable and motivated persons are not only acquired but also developed and retained. Nonetheless, the efficacy of these activities may be dependent upon the values of the individual and organizational performance. For instance, in the absence of a strong value base, even well-designed talent management initiatives may not lead to desired leadership outcomes (Shahzad et al., 2024).

Although previous research has illuminated separate relationships between talent management and leadership, few attempts have been made to investigate the moderating role of professional values in this relationship — particularly in Philippine HEIs. Other research focuses on corporate or Western contexts without considering how educational culture and values influence these dynamics. This review seeks to address these gaps by synthesizing the current state of knowledge on talent management practices, leadership skills, and professional values in educational settings.

2. Theoretical Framework

The review is anchored on four theories: the Resource-Based View Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, the Professional Values Framework and Signaling Theory. These theories are useful for examining the relationship of talent management practices and leadership styles and professional values.

2.1 Resource-Based View Theory

The Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory that emphasizes the strategic value of an organizations resources was established by Barney (1991). Under this perspective, human capital is one of the key internal resources that firms can leverage to create talent-driven sources of competitive advantage. Resource-Based View (RBV) explains that firms which focus on acquiring, developing and retaining top talent—employees with superior skills, institutional knowledge and leadership potential—sustain performance and innovation over time.

2.2 Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory, in its original form from Burns (1978) and later extended by Bass (1985), is a particularly robust model for understanding leadership capabilities as they pertain to talent. Transformational leadership leads followers with a vision towards ways of ignoring the self for a long-term benefit to the organization. This type of leadership is especially critical within private educational institutions where the ability to attract, cultivate, and retain talent is a is essential for institutional culture and continuity.

2.3 Professional Values Framework

Professional Values Framework is the expansion of core human values into professional life such as integrity, respect, accountability, compassion, excellence and fairness that define ethical practice across professions. Specifically in this review, this framework enables decision-makers and organizations to apply ethical standards which promotes their professional identity and accountability in an organizational setting.

2.4 Signaling Theory

Signaling Theory provides an explanation for how organizations and employees communicate hard-to-verify attributes (e.g., professionalism, integrity, leadership potential) through an observable action or credential (Connelly et al., 2011). Firms with a reputation for ethics, value-based leadership development and integrity-based performance convey that they care about professional values in their human resource strategy, attracting talent who share those values.

3. Review of Related Literature

3.1 Talent Management in Higher Education

In a knowledge-based economy, talent management has been recognized as a critical strategic priority for organizations. As demographics shift, globalization intensifies, and competition for human capital increases, organizations recognize that employees — when effectively attracted, developed, and retained — serve as a key source of sustainable competitive advantage (Tsaousiotis et al., 2025). Talent management, defined as the structured strategy encompassing the systematic attraction, development, and retention of the best people with the right skills, is closely linked to improved organizational efficiency and job satisfaction (Al-Dalahmeh, 2020).

The landscape of talent management is undergoing a profound transformation, influenced by rapid technological advancements, shifting workforce demographics, and evolving organizational needs. Kerr and Ng (2020) emphasize the necessity for organizations to adapt their talent management strategies to remain competitive in the future of work. In a systematic review, Sinisterra, Peñalver, and Salanova (2024) found that successful talent management is related to employee engagement, which in turn plays a role in reducing intention to quit.

3.1.1 Talent Attraction

Talent attraction in business refers to an organization ability to attract targeted prospective employees (attract the talent) and with qualifications appropriate of filling specific vacancies. It can also generally refer to employer branding, value proposition, recruitment and selection strategies, hiring methods (Sembiring 2023). It has already been shown that compensation fairness is the basic driver of attraction across industries and over time, with fair wages boosting both organizational commitment and perceived quality of work life (Lee et al., 2025). Internationally, growth opportunities for career progression and the work–life balance also rank among the main 10 attractions (Murfat et al., 2025; Randstad Hongkong, 2022).

Organizational value congruence is also an important determinant of attraction. Employees who align with their work values value organizations with strong talent cultures characterized by development, collaboration, and inclusion (Shah et al., 2024). Supportive organizational climates and social and networking acts geniuses highlight workplace appeal (Lee et al., 2025).

3.1.2 Talent Retention

Talent retention helps organizations to achieve long term accountability of their high performing or high potential employees. Early studies say, that the retention strategies were quite effective if there is trust and mechanism of communication by well-placed leadership, providing recognition to good performance, job satisfaction, freedom or autonomy at a work place and organization commitment (Sembiring, 2023). Ardthaisong et al. (2021) developed a framework based on their qualitative research focused of facilitating recognition programs, professional development and supportive culture in private schools. Likewise, Mollel and Moshi (2024) showed that career growth opportunities, salary equity as well as having motivated leaders had direct impact on the sustainability of teacher performance.

The results of their study also indicated a significant influence of job satisfaction and pedagogy on teacher intention to remain in the teaching profession (Hungo, Casinillo & Dagohoy 2024). When viewed together, these results suggest that educational contexts where institutions invest in organized talent management practices are correlated with greater retention and lower attrition risks among employees who play a role in delivering quality education.

3.1.3 Learning and Development

Learning and Development is a function within human resources dedicated to enhancing the development of individuals and groups through better skills and knowledge. It is a component of an organization's talent management strategy specifically designed to align group and individual goals with the greater vision of the organization (HRZone, 2025). Internal development programs — such as customized workshops, mentorship, and rotational assignments — are critical to establishing a culture of learning. Organizations investing heavily on upskilling show increased agility and satisfaction throughout the workforce (Almashyakhi, 2024) – and as such appear to be winning at engaging their people.

As per PsicoSmart (2024), personalization and adaptive content in e-learning solutions boost learner engagement, course completion rates, and learning retention. Meta-analytic evidence supports the role of both managerial coaching (increasing performance and engagement, building leadership competencies for sustainable change) especially so in volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) environments. Cannon-Bowers et al., (2023).

3.1.4 Career Management

Career management is a form of self-management process where individuals explore themselves and their environments, set career objectives and plans to realize them, and experience feedback on their careers progress (Kamal et al., 2024). Formal career management programs — such as Individual Development Plans (IDPs) or succession plans, for example — result in a higher perceived internal employability and commitment while decreasing turnover and burnout (Soares & Mosquera, 2021). Defining different career ladders and competency-based job families ushers clarity in role and fairness (Balamurugan & Akila, 2024).

3.2 Leadership Skills in Educational Settings

Leadership skills are the qualities and traits that a person demonstrates to manage processes, guide projects, and support employees in order to meet objectives (Yasar, 2024). Leadership in the educational context means not just good management but also vision, influence, emotional intelligence and ethical soundness. Both effective teaching approach and student learning process are similarly developed by professional development and collaborative leadership as a vital (Thawilphrai et al, 2024).

In a recent study, Jackson (2023) studied the roles emotional intelligence plays in serving as school leader and showed that principals who possess skills related to emotional self-management, empathy and social abilities have higher confidence in fostering positive school climate. This is in line with evidence that leadership as emotionally intelligent strategies leads to higher teacher job, student learning gains, and professional culture in schools. Reeser-Mazur (2024) reiterates that leadership is multidimensional in nature, and wellness programs are essential to cope with the challenges of leading a school.

Bhavikatti et al. provided empirical support to the importance of leadership and social skills as determinants of entrepreneurship performance confirming that developing those skills directly determines business continuity. Wilhelm (2024) provided an update related to gender and leadership, reporting continuing considerable gender biases in academic medicine and the importance of supportive structures for moving women into leadership. Taken together, these studies confirm that leadership skills are necessary across all educational, entrepreneur and institutional sectors.

3.3 Professional Values

Professional values are guideposts for action accepted by professional groups and specialists, directing a framework to evaluate beliefs and attitudes that influence behaviour. Such values inform the behavior of professionals, and provide the foundations of norms and standards at work (Tehranineshat et al., 2020). Professional values like integrity, accountability, and respect maintain ethics in professional life and steer behavior and mindset in the working place (Vveinhardt & Gulbovaite, 2016)

Research by Martinson et al. (2025) is clear about the role that respect, accountability, and sensible ethical norms play in fostering psychological safety, trust and prosocial behavior among members. Nulty et al., (2025) also stress the need to acknowledge values and leadership in practice settings, increasing the ability of higher education institutions to function with a unified professional culture that furthers their vision.

Karabacak and Korkmaz (2021) focus on Turkey educational context, mentioned that the main professional values of primary teachers are; recognition of students in terms of personalized education, learning contexts organization (organization of learning environments), continuous evaluation of students, lifetime commitment to a profession, cooperation with schools-families-community. Additionally, Liu and Tahir (2024) also show that for vocational college teachers, professional values fully mediate the association between social support and role cognition, reiterating the significance of institutional supports in enhancing a teacher's sense of their profession.

3.4 Relationships Among Talent Management, Leadership Skills, and Professional Values

According to the existing literature, organizational talent management practices are strongly associated with managerial skills such as leadership and practical ethics. Yang and Baker (2024) discovered an observed significant positive link between competence development, strategic leadership, coaching and mentoring with talent management practices and employee performance among secondary school teachers. In addition, demographic variables such as age and education were discovered to moderate the association between these practices and effectiveness.

Almashyakhi (2024) identified a very strong positive relationship between employee retention and talent management practices within the Saudi Arabian civil service, confirming that relevant & well constructed talent retention policies underpins the retention of high performers. Balkar and Alev (2023) examined the moderating role of professional values in these relationships within the Turkish context, where teachers with internalized professional values characterized by higher levels of confidence, dedication, awareness, conduct, ethical orientation and accountability — which leads to higher work engagement — were found to be more effective.

In another study, Aktan, Toraman, and Orakci (2020) specifically identified the same conclusion that shown professional values are a significant predictor of teachers' attitudes toward the profession; but the professional concern plays a partial mediator in between. These results together indicate value-driven professional learning approaches in education. Although empirical studies that examine how professional values moderate the relationship between talent management practices and leadership skills have increased, this is still a scarce research theme in Philippine higher education (Dizon, 2021).

4. Gaps in the Literature and Directions for Future Research

While the literature robustly supports the importance of talent management practices and leadership skills in organizational success, several notable gaps remain. First, much of the existing research on talent management and leadership has been conducted in corporate or Western contexts, with limited attention to educational institutions in Southeast Asia, particularly the Philippines. The unique cultural, institutional, and policy contexts of Philippine HEIs may produce different dynamics than those observed elsewhere.

Second, while individual relationships among talent management practices, leadership skills, and professional values have been studied, the moderating role of professional values in the talent management–leadership relationship has received limited empirical attention — particularly in educational settings. Most existing studies treat professional values as an independent or mediating variable rather than as a moderator.

Third, many studies in this area have been constrained by small sample sizes, restricted variable sets, and single-respondent data. Future research should employ larger and more diverse samples, ideally across multiple institutions and regions, to produce findings with broader scope. There is also a need for longitudinal designs that can capture changes in talent management practices, leadership skills, and professional values over time.

5. Conclusion

The present review paper has collated the existing literature on talent management practices, leadership skills, and professional values in Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs). The evidence shows that good talent management practices – around attraction, retention, learning and development, career management – are positively associated with better leadership performance and organizational outcomes. It is professionalism, as a set of shared professional values—integrity, accountability, respect for others, commitment to excellence—that emerges as one of the influential forces driving individual conduct and institutional culture.

The Resource-Based View Theory (Barney, 1991; Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass, 1985), the Professional Values Framework and Signaling Theory (Connelly, 2011). collectively lend strong theoretical underpinnings to these relationships. Meanwhile, professional values appear to have a moderating effect between talent management and leadership — especially in Philippine HEIs — but this area warrants further empirical investigation.

The reviews findings can have significant implications for HR practitioners, educational administrators and policymakers. And those institutions that deliberately put energy into talent management, workforce professionalization, and values-based leadership are likely to deliver better long-term value (as organizations) and more sustainable educational outcomes to their stakeholders. Through use of cross-sectional, descriptive-comparative, correlational designs with moderation analysis in a broader variety of HEIs, future research can close the identified gaps and provide evidence-based guidance for institutional development.

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