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Talent in international business defined

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CHAPTER 3

International perspectives on the profile of highly talented international business professionals

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Abstract

There is a global demand for talented managers and leaders. To meet this demand, higher education institutions are developing talent programs. However, international perception of talent is diffuse. In this study, our profile of highly talented international business professionals was internationally validated by 172 participants, representing East Asia and Western Europe. Results indicate consensus on three domains: communicating, achieving results, and seeing patterns and interrelationships in a global context. Strikingly, diverse country-specific interpretations of the accompanying behaviors were observed. The findings contribute to the talent literature and offer insights for educational practitioners when developing competence frameworks for talent or professionalization programs.

Keywords

Highly talented international business professionals; international business education; international perceptions; talent

Introduction

International business education programs prepare students to meet the demands of internationally operating businesses. With globalization, increased mobility, and new technologies, these demands are rapidly changing and more sophisticated skills are needed (Basri & Box, 2008; Dieck-Assad, 2013; Milhauser & Rahschulte, 2010; Stahl et al., 2012). Global companies realize that talented workers offer a competitive advantage (Allen, Bryant, & Vardaman, 2010; Buckingham & Vosburgh, 2001; Mellahi & Collings, 2010), resulting in a strong demand for highly talented workers, with a set of competencies deemed critical by companies (Azevedo, Apfelthaler, & Hurst, 2012). This demand for talent impacts education, where it is increasingly important to prepare talented students to become highly talented workers. Special talent programs in higher education are being developed to prepare such talent with the specific set of competencies required from the professional field (Bullock, 2015; Lanier, 2008; Wolfensberger, 2015). Talent programs, here called honors programs (HPs), are defined as “educational offers for talented students in higher education” and are designed for talented students who want to do more than the regular program offers (Wolfensberger, 2015). What the specific set of competencies is, to become a highly talented professional, should be clear so to educate these talented students in special HPs, and talented professionals in professionalization programs. Moreover, gaining international perspectives on what constitutes highly talented international business professionals will enable better alignment between undergraduate business honors education and the expectations of global businesses, which are not always in line (Abraham & Karns, 2009).

Much competencies research has been conducted in an American and Western context (Vilkinas, Shen, & Cartan, 2009), but due to increasing globalization and the emerging East Asian market, it is important to include Asian perspectives on talent competencies. This study concentrates on broader international perspectives on competencies of highly talented international business professionals, including East Asian and additional Western perspectives.

Literature review

Talent in international business and education

Talent is described in relation to giftedness, innate to few individuals. These gifts become talent when developed (Gagne, 2004; Persson, 2014). In the context of international business, this description of talent is referred to as the exclusive-object dimension (Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, & Gonzalez-Cruz, 2013). Exclusive

refers to a select group of gifted employees, the high potentials (Thunnissen, Boselie, & Fruytier, 2013), and object refers to their characteristics, skills, knowledge, and abilities, or competencies, they possess to perform far above average (Stahletal., 2007). In this study, we adhere to the object dimension to talent.

Competencies for international business managers and leaders have been researched since the 1970s (Boyatzis, 2008; Bücken & Poutsma, 2010; Dries & Pepermans, 2012; Jokinen, 2005; McClelland, 1973; Osland, Bird, Mendenhall, & Osland, 2006), and only since the late 1990s in relation to talent (Ashton & Morton, 2005; Guthridge, Komm, & Lawson, 2008; Stahl et al., 2012; van Heugten, Heijne-Penninga, Paans, & Wolfensberger, 2016). However, many concerns about competency frameworks are described, for example, that they are conceptually confusing (Levy, Beechler, Taylor, & Boyacigiller, 2007; Mendenhall, Reiche, Bird, & Osland, 2012), not concise (Conger & Ready, 2004), and not related specifically to talent (Brown & Tannock, 2009).

In response to such concerns, van Heugten et al. (2016) published the talent profile of highly talented international business professionals (HTIBP), concisely describing competencies only related to talent. The HTIBP talent profile has five domains and 16 subcategorized items, or behaviors, which can be used for identifying and developing talent.

Research question

Whilst van Heugten et al. (2016) add to the literature on what constitutes talent in international business, their research has been conducted in a single European country, a valid point of criticism on competencies research since perceptions of competencies may vary between countries (Suutari, 2002). Besides, East Asia is becoming an increasingly important destination for international business students, and in turn, East Asian international business students increasingly visit European destinations (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2013). By gaining additional European perspectives as well as East Asian perspectives on the talent profile, HPs can use this information to better prepare talent for the global workplace.

Therefore, our exploratory research question is the following: What are East Asian and Western perspectives on the profile of HTIBP?

Research methodology

To gain international perspectives on talent, an online survey was conducted. For this survey, the talent HTIBP profile was used (van Heugten et al., 2016). This profile consists of five domains (achieving results, communicating, innovating, seeing patterns and interrelationships in a global context, and self-reflecting), subdivided into 16 items (Appendix 1). The HTIBP profile has been developed in the Netherlands by a mixed methods approach, using focus group design and Delphi study for validation. The latter was conducted administering an online survey with the concept profile, asking the Delphi panel to indicate their level of agreement to the domains and items, leading to the final HTIBP profile representing the perspectives of professionals on talent (van Heugten et al., 2016). In the present study, international perspectives on this HTIBP profile were gained by administering the same online survey in the respective countries.

Participants

In total, 183 participants were recruited from East Asia (China, Japan, South Korea) and Western Europe (Germany and the United Kingdom). These countries have been ranked among the highest gross domestic product, showing their economic performance and their growing importance in international business, with Asia as a strong upcoming market. These countries are also important stakeholders in international exchange among higher education students (Nuffic, 2015; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2013). Participants were purposefully selected using the following criteria: at least eight years of experience in international management or leadership positions, or high profile positions at academic or policy level related to international business.

Participants in China, the United Kingdom, and Germany were recruited by senior undergraduate international business students of the respective nationalities employed by the researchers. Students used their personal network, social media, contact lists, available databases, and personal calls. Participant recruitment in South Korea and Japan was carried out by a local recruitment agency.

Survey

Survey design

As we were interested in international perspectives on the talent profile, this has led to the following survey questions, divided into four sections. In section

1, participants were asked to provide demographic information.

In section 2, participants were asked to provide their professional opinion on 16 items and, in a separate question, on the domains of the HTIBP profile (Appendix 1). Respondents were asked if the items shown represent highly talented international business professionals. This was measured by scale anchors: essential, important but not essential, or not necessary. The question for all items was, “to what extent do you consider the characteristics listed below important in determining the profile of highly talented international business professionals?”

The question for the five domains was, “to what extent, in your opinion, do the domains listed below, with the corresponding items, contribute to defining highly talented international business professionals?”

Besides their opinions on whether the items and domains contribute to defining talent in international business, participants were asked, in section 3, to indicate whether the items had been correctly categorized under the appropriate domain. The statement per domain was, “the items listed below fit within the domain ‘...’ for highly talented international business professionals.” The statement was scored on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (completely agree) to 4 (completely disagree). A score computed between 70% and 100% indicated the items fit the respective domain.

In survey section 4, participants answered open questions regarding whether any domains, items, or anything else was missing in the profile. In a separate question, participants were given the opportunity to provide any additional comments.

Survey administration

The survey was administered online and participants entered via an email link, containing background information. The survey was available in English, Chinese, Japanese, and South Korean. It was translated back into English to ensure that the message conveyed stayed the same.

Submitting completed surveys was possible once, as per IP address, to prevent multiple submissions by single participants. All data were processed anonymously.

Data analysis

Validity of the data was checked by calculating the content validity ratio (CVR ratio) to quantify the degree of consensus. In accordance with Lawshe (1975), the following formula was used: $CVR = (N_e - N/2)/(N/2)$, where CVR represents content validity ratio, N_e is the number of participants indicating “essential,” and N is the total number of participants. This yields values ranging from 0 to 1. Only domains and items containing positive ratios of 0.0 and above, are considered essential.

Findings

In total, 183 responses were received from five participating countries, summarised in Table 1. As four surveys were incomplete and seven respondents did not meet the selection criteria, those survey results had to be excluded from analysis.

Table 1. Demographic information.

| Variable | Germany | United Kingdom | Japan | South Korea | China |
|----------------------------|-------------|----------------|------------|-------------|----------|
| No. of participants | 31 | 33 | 45 | 45 | 18 |
| % Males | 80.6 | 71.9 | 80 | 77.8 | 61.1 |
| Age (mean ± SD) | 46.4 ± 10.8 | 43.8 ± 9.3 | 49.4 ± 7.4 | 45.1 ± 8.0 | 39 ± 8.1 |
| Years of experience (mean) | 15.6 | 15.9 | 19.6 | 12.0 | 9.8 |

Note. Participants were 172 international business professionals from five countries who completed an online survey to provide international perspectives on the five domains and 16 items of the talent profile described in the profile of highly talented international business professionals (van Heugten et al., 2016).

Different international perspectives

Our research question was focused on gaining international-, specifically, East Asian and Western European perspectives on the talent profile of HTIBP. Therefore, we will describe the survey results at country level as well as at aggregated level.

At country level (Table 2), only one domain, communicating, receives general agreement to be distinguishing for talent (CVR: Japan 0.47, South Korea 0.51,

China 0.67, Germany 0.79, United Kingdom 0.88). Although the items belonging to this domain show intercountry variation, South Korean participants did not rank any as being essential to talent. In fact, South Korean participants structurally have a divergent view and have not agreed on any items, belonging to any domains to be distinguishing for talent, apart from one item, taking responsibility for achieving goals. Although outliers can provide a rich source for further thinking (Huberman & Miles, 1994), it does inhibit aggregation of results at regional level. Therefore, South Korea has been excluded for further analysis, which will be discussed more elaborately subsequently.

The item “using language effectively in different cultural and professional settings” within the domain communicating has different international perspectives. Although Japanese participants regard it to be distinguishing for talent, Chinese participants do not (CVR: Japan 0.29, China $\bar{0}$.11). Also, German respondents do not regard this item as distinguishing for talent, while the UK respondents (marginally) do (CVR: Germany -0.16, United Kingdom 0.00).

Similar intercountry variation is seen in the domain seeing patterns and interrelationships in a global context, for example in the item combining expertise from different specialties (CVR: Germany $\bar{0}$.42, United Kingdom 0.03, Japan 0.64, China $\bar{0}$.44). In contrast, the item showing patience and control in culturally diverse environments is regarded by all countries as distinguishing for talent (CVR: Germany 0.03, United Kingdom 0.27, Japan 0.20, China 0.11).

Also within the domain achieving results, international perspectives differ whether the behaviors are perceived as distinguishing to talent. The behavior showing perseverance in complex environments is not regarded as essential for talent by German participants, differently than participants from United Kingdom, Japan and China (CVR: Germany -0.03, United Kingdom 0.56, Japan 0.20, China 0.29). Surprisingly, the item showing entrepreneurship is only considered as essential for talent by Chinese participants (CVR: Germany -0.16, United Kingdom -0.09, Japan -0.16, China 0.22).

Table 2. Results CVR* domains and items (behaviours) of five individual countries, showing international perception of whether the items and domains of the HTIBP profile are distinguishing to talent.

| | Germany | | UK | | Japan | | China | | South Korea | |
|--|-----------|--------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| | N | CVR | N | CVR | N | CVR | N | CVR | N | CVR |
| Domain Communication | 29 | 0.79 | 32 | 0.88 | 45 | 0.47 | 12 | 0.67 | 45 | 0.51 |
| <i>Items</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Using language effectively in different cultural and professional settings | 31 | -0.16 | 32 | 0.00 | 45 | 0.29 | 18 | -0.11 | 45 | -0.02 |
| Continuing to ask questions to get a clear understanding of the situation | 31 | 0.68 | 33 | 0.70 | 45 | -0.02 | 18 | 0.00 | 45 | -0.33 |
| Listening actively to identify a problem or an opportunity | 31 | 0.48 | 33 | 0.70 | 45 | 0.29 | 18 | 0.11 | 45 | -0.02 |
| Domain Seeing patterns and interrelationships in a global context | 29 | -0.03 | 32 | 0.13 | 45 | 0.33 | 12 | 0.00 | 45 | -0.42 |
| <i>Items</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Adapting one's professional approach to another culture | 31 | 0.10 | 33 | 0.21 | 45 | 0.51 | 18 | -0.11 | 45 | -0.11 |
| Combining expertise from different specialties | 31 | -0.42 | 33 | 0.03 | 45 | 0.64 | 18 | -0.44 | 45 | -0.38 |
| Showing patience and control in culturally diverse environments | 31 | 0.03 | 33 | 0.27 | 45 | 0.20 | 18 | 0.11 | 45 | -0.11 |
| Domain Innovating | 29 | -0.31 | 32 | -0.06 | 45 | 0.02 | 12 | 0.50 | 45 | -0.29 |
| <i>Items</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Coming up with creative ideas proactively | 31 | -0.16 | 33 | -0.21 | 45 | 0.29 | 18 | -0.33 | 45 | -0.24 |
| Improving ideas from others | 31 | -0.48 | 33 | -0.45 | 45 | -0.20 | 18 | -0.33 | 45 | -0.16 |
| Keeping up with the latest professional developments | 31 | -0.29 | 33 | 0.15 | 45 | 0.16 | 17 | 0.41 | 45 | -0.42 |
| Showing inventive, new possibilities by thinking 'out of the box' | 31 | 0.10 | 33 | -0.03 | 45 | 0.24 | 18 | 0.22 | 45 | -0.29 |

table continues

| | Germany | | UK | | Japan | | China | | South Korea | |
|--|-----------|--------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| | N | CVR | N | CVR | N | CVR | N | CVR | N | CVR |
| Domain Achieving results | 29 | 0.38 | 32 | 0.75 | 45 | 0.20 | 12 | -0.17 | 45 | -0.11 |
| <i>Items</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Showing perseverance in complex environments | 31 | -0.03 | 32 | 0.56 | 45 | 0.20 | 17 | 0.29 | 45 | -0.29 |
| Taking responsibility for achieving goals | 31 | 0.42 | 33 | 0.64 | 45 | 0.29 | 18 | 0.00 | 45 | 0.02 |
| Showing entrepreneurship | 31 | -0.16 | 33 | -0.09 | 45 | -0.16 | 18 | 0.22 | 45 | -0.47 |
| Domain Self-reflecting | 29 | -0.17 | 32 | 0.00 | 45 | 0.20 | 12 | 0.17 | 45 | -0.42 |
| <i>Items</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Showing independence in thinking of new possibilities | 31 | 0.03 | 33 | 0.03 | 45 | 0.20 | 18 | 0.27 | 45 | -0.73 |
| Understanding one's strengths and weaknesses, and acting upon it | 31 | 0.23 | 32 | 0.38 | 45 | 0.07 | 18 | -0.67 | 45 | -0.11 |
| Improving oneself beneficial to the organisation | 31 | -0.03 | 31 | 0.10 | 45 | 0.11 | 17 | 0.29 | 45 | -0.16 |

*CVR = Content Validity Ratio, calculated by $(N_e - N/2)/(N/2)$, Values ranging ≥ 0.0 indicate consensus.

East Asian and Western European perspectives

Our research question concentrated on the regions East Asia and Western Europe, therefore, we aggregated the data per region. Level of agreement on the domains and items of the profile at regional level is depicted in Table 3.

Three domains are seen as distinguishing for talent by both regions: (a) communicating (CVR: East Asia 0.51; Western Europe 0.84), (b) seeing patterns and interrelationships in a global context (CVR: East Asia 0.26; Western Europe 0.05), and (c) achieving results (CVR: East Asia 0.12; Western Europe 0.57). A number of items belonging to these domains showed inter-regional variation at aggregated level (see Table 3).

The self-reflecting domain is regarded as essential in East Asia (CVR: 0.19), but not by professionals in Western Europe (CVR: 0.08). And the innovating domain was only considered distinguishing in characterising highly talented international business professionals by East Asia (CVR: East Asia 0.12; Western Europe -0.18).

Additional survey results

Survey section 3 gauged whether the items had been correctly categorized under the appropriate domain. Results show high levels of consensus, ranging from 80% to 100% agreement, with one slightly lower consensus of 73% for the item showing perseverance in complex environments.

Table 3. Aggregated results CVR per item and domain for East Asia and Western Europe, showing regional perception of whether the items and domains of the HTIBP profile are distinguishing to talent.

| | Western Europe * | | East Asia ** | |
|--|------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| | N | CVR | N | CVR |
| Domain Communication | 61 | 0.84 | 57 | 0.51 |
| <i>Items</i> | | | | |
| Using language effectively in different cultural and professional settings | 63 | -0.08 | 63 | 0.17 |
| Continuing to ask questions to get a clear understanding of the situation | 64 | 0.69 | 63 | -0.02 |
| Listening actively to identify a problem or an opportunity | 64 | 0.59 | 63 | 0.24 |
| Domain Seeing patterns and interrelationships in a global context | 61 | 0.05 | 57 | 0.26 |
| <i>Items</i> | | | | |
| Adapting one's professional approach to another culture | 64 | 0.16 | 63 | 0.33 |
| Combining expertise from different specialties | 64 | -0.19 | 63 | 0.33 |
| Showing patience and control in culturally diverse environments | 64 | 0.16 | 63 | 0.17 |
| Domain Innovating | 61 | -0.18 | 57 | 0.12 |
| <i>Items</i> | | | | |
| Coming up with creative ideas proactively | 64 | -0.19 | 63 | 0.11 |
| Improving ideas from others | 64 | -0.47 | 63 | -0.24 |
| Keeping up with the latest professional developments | 64 | -0.06 | 62 | 0.23 |
| Showing inventive, new possibilities by thinking 'out of the box' | 64 | 0.03 | 63 | 0.24 |

table continues

| | Western Europe * | | East Asia ** | |
|--|------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| | N | CVR | N | CVR |
| Domain Achieving results | 61 | 0.57 | 57 | 0.12 |
| <i>Items</i> | | | | |
| Showing perseverance in complex environments | 63 | 0.27 | 62 | 0.23 |
| Taking responsibility for achieving goals | 64 | 0.53 | 63 | 0.21 |
| Showing entrepreneurship | 64 | -0.13 | 63 | -0.05 |
| Showing independence in thinking of new possibilities | 64 | 0.03 | 63 | 0.21 |
| Understanding one's strengths and weaknesses, and acting upon it | 63 | 0.30 | 63 | -0.14 |
| Improving oneself beneficial to the organisation | 62 | 0.03 | 62 | 0.16 |

** East Asia includes Japan and China. *Western Europe includes Germany and the

Finally, in section 4, as far as any missing items and domains goes, suggestions were made related to the HTIBP profile: Germany: sense of humor, positivity, trust in ability of colleagues, and soul; United Kingdom: building credibility in a new environment; Japan: English ability, happiness, and stability; China: language ability.

Discussion and conclusions

In line with the increased global demand for talent (Beechler & Woodward, 2009), the literature expresses the need for a description of competencies perceived as essential for talented professionals in international business, not only in Europe but also in East Asian perspectives (Litrell, 2002; J. Wang, 2011; L. Wang, James, Denyer, & Bailey, 2013; Wickramasinghe & Zoyza, 2009; Yamazaki, 2014).

By conducting a survey in different countries in the regions East Asia and Western Europe, we obtained insight into international perspectives on the competencies of talented international business professionals. Our findings contribute to better alignment of HPs within international business education with expectations from the field. Aggregated results indicated consensus between Western Europe and East Asia on the three domains of the talent profile: (a) communicating, (b) achieving results, and (c) seeing patterns and interrelationships in a global context. However, perceptions of the behaviors belonging to these domains show variation per individual country and region.

Communication is the domain of the talent profile most clearly seen by international business experts from East Asia and Western Europe as distinguishing for talent. The importance of communication for business managers and leaders has been described in the literature (de Waal, van der Heijden, Selvarajah, & Meyer, 2012; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004; Trinko, 2004) and is also recognized in business education (Du-Babcock & Tanaka, 2013; Morreale & Pearson, 2008; Waldeck, Durante, Helmuth, & Marcia, 2012). In their review study, Conrad and Newberry (2012) described 24 communication behaviors desired in business, and the HTIBP profile describes the three related specifically to talent, which should be the focus of HPs. Our research indicates that perception of communication behaviors could be culturally specific, congruent with the literature (Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, & Roy, 2014). For example, the regional variation found in continuing to ask questions to get a clear understanding of the situation, is in line with the

expected responses from two different cultures: the individualistic, low power distance culture, such as Western Europe on one hand, and high power distance, collectivist cultures, such as East Asia on the other hand (Hofstede, 1984). In high power distance, collectivist cultures, managers and leaders are expected to know the answers, and asking questions may be seen as lack of expertise or even a weakness (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 1991). Hall (1976) describes high-context versus low-context cultures and in high-context cultures such as Japan and China it may be offensive to continue asking questions. However, Germany not perceiving the behavior using language effectively in different cultural and professional settings as being distinguishing for talent, whereas the United Kingdom (marginally) does, suggests that communication behaviors are country specific (Waldeck et al., 2012). One may wonder if cultural dimensions can be a good explanation for our results. Trompenaars, & HampdenTurner (2011) proposed that culture is how groups of people interpret things and the meaning that they attach to them. Our exploratory research was focused on gaining insights into perceptions of talent by business professionals from different national perspectives; future researchers can clarify the underlying reasons why certain perceptions are held. It is nonetheless important to prepare talented international business professionals to be adaptable communicators, who are aware of cultural differences and can code switch as the specific cultural context requires.

Similar patterns were identified for the two other talent domains: achieving results and seeing patterns and interrelationships in a global context. There is consensus on the importance of the domains, but with country-specific perceptions of the behaviors. The importance of achieving results and taking responsibility for achieving goals is in line with the literature, where being performance-oriented is found to be one of six global leadership dimensions in the extensive GLOBE research (Dorfman, Javidan, Hanges, Dastmalchian, & House, 2012). Also, the seeing patterns and interrelationships in a global context is domain described in international business, for example, in relation to being culturally intelligent (Earley & Ang, 2003), managing effectively in culturally diverse settings (Earley & Peterson, 2004), having a global mindset (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002; Javidan & Teagarden, 2011; Javidan, Dorfman, De Luque, & House, 2006; Levy et al., 2007; Osland et al., 2006), and being adaptable (Emmerling, Boyatzis, Gutierrez, Spencer, & Zhu, 2012; Molinsky, Davenport, Iyer, & Davidson, 2012).

Differences in perceptions between countries were also found regarding the domains and items related to innovation and self-reflection. Professionals may have thought that some items are mandatory for all ordinary professionals, and not specifically for talented professionals.

Suutari (2002) called for more perceptions of competencies for talent, and we have found that three talent competencies are perceived as distinguishing for talent by both East Asia and Western Europe. However, every country or region emphasizes certain behaviors more than others. Such varying perceptions of the behaviors belonging to talent, creates a necessity to be adaptable to the various contexts. Osland et al. (2006) contend that requirements for leaders and managers can vary by level, culture, and situation, making it important to be able to decide which competency to deploy in a certain context. Morrison (2000) suggested that leaders need a set of context-specific skills as every situation is unique. Our research confirms that, in different contexts, specific behaviors related to talent competencies are not perceived the same. Early and Peterson (2004) argued that in education, we need to create cultural chameleons, who are highly adaptable in different situations.

In response to the high global demand for talent in international business, HPs are growing, especially in Europe. Our research adds, besides Western perceptions, East Asian perceptions of talent, which provides valuable insights into the design of HPs, aiming to better prepare talented students to excel in the global market. According to our results, we recommend HPs of International business schools to focus on educating graduates who are able to see patterns and interrelationships, achieve results, and communicate effectively, while considering the cultural context or setting.

HPs can expose students and faculty to a multitude of cultural experiences, and apply the required competencies in real situations by encouraging participation in international exchange and work placement programs. McCarthy and McCarthy (2006) referred to experiential learning, integrating students' academic knowledge with direct learning experiences like in internships and job-shadowing, or different training interventions. However, it is unattainable to expect and train students for all cultural contexts and settings (Earley & Peterson, 2004). Helping students to recognize and reflect on their behavior becomes increasingly important (Gregersen, 2015). With our research showing varying perceptions of the behaviors of the talent domains, the ability to modify

and adapt own behavior according to the cultural environment and context becomes more important than trying to train all. To achieve international corporate results, adaptability is thus key and is described as the new competitive advantage of the 21st century skills (Robles, 2012).

Recommendations for future research

Due to resource limitations, we studied a selected number of countries, limiting the generalizability of the results. However, the countries included in the study were chosen due to their growing importance in international business, and because they are important countries of origin and destination for international business students (Nuffic, 2015, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2013). Although the sample size of 172 respondents is limited, it is sufficient to provide insights into international perceptions of talent. Our findings can be used to provide direction for future researchers, for example by expanding our datasets and by conducting in-depth interviews to begin to understand why our results occur. Also, the open-ended questions in section 4 provide a first inventory of possible missing domains or items from the talent profile, and future in-depth research is needed to better understand this.

Furthermore, the results from South Korea led us to exclude these from our analysis at this point. Careful cross-checking for possible misinterpretations of scales by experts did not explain the negative CVR scores. Despite having excluded South Korea from the aggregated results in this study, these findings should still be used in future research to further investigate South Korean participants' opinions on the HTIBP profile by conducting additional in-depth interviews, for instance.

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